

RUN FOR SOMETHING ACTION FUND

Running for Office in North Carolina: First Steps

Run for Something's State Guides are not meant to be all-encompassing nor covering the full breadth of a campaign's lifespan. Instead, their purpose is to serve as jumping-off points for candidates so that they have an idea of how to begin to proceed at the outset of their political journey. This document is for advisory purposes, does not constitute legal advice, and each candidate should confirm that there have not been changes to election guidance since the date the document was last updated.

Important things to know as a potential candidate in North Carolina

Do your homework

Learn the terms

Assemble your team

File your campaign statement

Open a campaign bank account

Connect to your local party

Determine when you need to file additional financial disclosures

Understand the endorsement process

Develop a financial record-keeping system

Apply for an employer identification number (EIN)

Hit the ground running

Important Things to Know as a Potential Candidate in North Carolina

- ❑ ***The North Carolina General Assembly consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Members of both chambers serve two-year terms without term limits.***
 - ❑ ***North Carolina has 120 state representatives, 50 state senators, and 13 congressional districts. Find your legislative district [here](#).***
 - ❑ ***Federal and state candidates are elected to office in statewide general elections that take place during even-numbered years. Candidates for most municipal offices (though not all) are elected during odd-numbered years. See the [Election Information](#) for more information on North Carolina elections and terms of office.***
 - ❑ ***Candidates for state and local office are required to meet certain age and residency requirements that differ by the office. Contact the [State Board of Elections](#) if you are not sure of any office's qualifications.***
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1. Do your homework. Familiarize yourself with the following resources (where appropriate) published by the North Carolina State Board of Elections:

- *Election Information: Statewide General and Municipal Elections* [[here](#)]
- [Candidate Filing Information](#)
- [Municipal Candidate's Guide](#)
- [Candidate Campaign Finance Manual](#)
- *Campaign Finance Reporting Schedules* [[here](#)]
- *Campaign Finance Reporting Forms* [[here](#)]
- *Candidate Fact Sheets*
 - [United States Senate and House](#)

2. Become a candidate. All candidates for federal, state, and local office must file a Notice of Candidacy to appear on the ballot for a primary election. Notice of Candidacy forms and filing deadlines can be found on the [State Board of Elections website](#). An example of the form can be found [here](#). Candidates for Federal and Statewide office should file their forms with the [State Board of Elections](#). Candidates

for state legislative and local office should file with their [County Board of Elections](#) office.

Candidates must also pay a filing fee equal to 1% of the annual salary of the office sought, though some candidates can provide a [petition signed by registered voters in lieu of the filing fee](#). In addition, candidates must file a certificate signed by the Director or Chairperson of the [County Board of Elections](#) where they are registered to vote. Contact your [State](#) or [County Board of Elections](#) if you have any questions on filing requirements.

3. **File your forms.** The State Government Ethics Act requires candidates for some offices to file a [Statement of Economic Interest](#). Contact the [Ethics Commission](#) for information and to see if the requirements apply to you.
4. **Campaign finance requirements.** Candidates for office must file campaign expenditures and contributions reports with the State Board of Elections. The [Candidate Campaign Finance Manual](#) is a great resource to get you started in understanding campaign finance requirements. All campaign finance forms can be found on the [State Board of Elections Website](#) along with [campaign reporting software](#).

An [organizational report](#) must be filed with the State Board of Elections within ten days of becoming a candidate. For campaign finance purposes, you may be considered a candidate as soon as you begin receiving campaign contributions or making campaign expenditures **even if you have not yet filed your candidacy**. Make sure you are complying with campaign finance law early and always!

North Carolina requires that the treasurer of every campaign committee receives campaign finance training. More information on training can be found [here](#).

It is **extremely important** to keep up with campaign finance requirements and be **on time** with all filings. Be sure to reach out to the [State Board of Elections](#) if you are unsure of any requirements.

5. **Know your deadlines.** Consult the [Reporting Schedules](#) posted by the State Board of Elections to keep track of your campaign finance forms and get them in on time.
6. **Stay out of trouble.** Navigating election law can be confusing. Keep your campaign on a straight path and be sure to seek out help from the [State Board of Elections](#) or

your [County Board of Elections](#) if you are unsure about anything. Get to know the contribution limits, which are evaluated every two years and posted on the [State Board of Elections website](#).

Election laws are often re-worked and updated. Stay up to date on your candidate responsibilities!

- 7. Connect to your local party.** The importance of being a known quantity to your local constituency and infrastructure cannot be overstated. Local voters and groups, whose votes you'll ultimately need in your primary (if you have one) and general elections, will be far more likely to go to bat for you and provide support if you make a concerted, clear effort to connect with them and learn what local issues they believe are important. Make a list of your local neighborhood groups, both entities chartered by the party and independent local clubs, and reach out to them **as early as possible**.
- 8. Apply for an Employer Identification Number (EIN).** An EIN, also known as a federal tax identification number, formally identifies a corporation, partnership, political committee, and other entities for tax filing and reporting purposes. An EIN is needed to open a bank account. Submit an [electronic application](#) to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Make sure to select "Political Organization" when asked for the type of organization. Consult [this guide](#) from Minnesota's Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board for more information.
- 9. If you're not sure, ask!** Contact the [State Board of Elections](#) if you have any uncertainty, especially related to compliance with state law. The information here is far from complete or definitive.
- 10. Hit the ground running.** Running a political campaign can be an exceedingly time-consuming slog, no matter how many hands you have helping you along the way, so make sure that you always keep in mind why you're running in the first place and what things you'd be able to do for your community if you won. Make sure to keep abreast of all early candidacy responsibilities and requirements!

Being a political candidate can be stressful, so don't shy away from asking questions or seeking advice when you need to. If you have questions...

- **Run for Something Action Fund:** hello@runforsomethingaction.net
- **State Board of Elections Office:** (919) 814-0700