

RUN FOR SOMETHING ACTION FUND

Running for Office in Hawaii: First Steps

Run for Something Action Fund 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 Hawaii

Do your homework

Become a Candidate

Gather your signatures

File your forms

Know your deadlines

Stay out of trouble

See if you qualify for public funds

Connect with your local party

Apply for an employer identification number (EIN)

Hit the ground running

Contact Info

IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW AS A POTENTIAL CANDIDATE IN HAWAII

- *The Hawaii State Legislature consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Members of the House serve two-year terms and members of the Senate serve four-year terms; members of both chambers serve without term limits.*
- *Hawaii has 51 state representatives, 25 state senators, and two congressional districts. Find your legislative district [here](#).*
- *Under state law, all candidates for state and local office must be a qualified voter in the district or county the person seeks to represent.*

1. DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Familiarize yourself with the following resources (where appropriate) published by the Hawaii Office of Elections and Campaign Spending Commission:

- *2022 Candidate's Manual* [\[here\]](#)
- *Candidate Filing Factsheet* [\[here\]](#)
- *Guidebook for Candidate Committees* [\[here\]](#)
- *Candidate Committee Forms* [\[here\]](#)
- *Election Laws* [\[here\]](#)
- *List of Public Offices, Current Officers, and Next Election* [\[here\]](#)
- *Qualifications for Elective Office (2022)* [\[here\]](#)

2. BECOME A CANDIDATE

All candidates for federal, state, and local office must file nomination papers to appear on the ballot. Candidates for state and federal office can file their nomination papers with the [Office of Elections](#), the [County of Hawaii Clerk's Office](#), the [County of Maui Clerk's Office](#), or the [County of Kauai Clerk's Office](#). Candidates for county offices can file their nomination paper with their [respective county](#). Contact the appropriate authority first for an [Application for a Nomination Paper](#).

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 nomination papers**. Make sure you are complying with campaign finance law early and always!

3. GATHER YOUR SIGNATURES

Your nomination papers must be signed by a [minimum number of registered voters](#) qualified to vote for you as a candidate. [Contact the Office of Elections](#) if you are unsure of any of the signature requirements.

4. FILE YOUR FORMS

Within 10 days of filing your nomination papers, or within 10 days of when you are otherwise considered a candidate for campaign finance purposes, you must file an Organizational Report with the [Campaign Spending Commission](#). Candidates should first file the [Candidate Committee Electronic Filing Form](#), to get access to the electronic filing system. In addition, candidates must file a [Financial Disclosure Form](#) with the [State Ethics Commission](#) (candidates for state offices) or their [County Clerk's Office](#) (candidates for county offices).

5. KNOW YOUR DEADLINES

All candidates for office are required by law to periodically file campaign finance disclosure reports **even if you raise or spend no money**. Consult the [Candidate Committee Guidebook](#) for more information on what must be included in these disclosure reports. The [Campaign Spending Commission](#) has great resources to help you comply with laws. Check out the [Candidate Filing System Manual](#) as well as the 2018 and 2020 [reporting schedules](#) for each public office you are considering.

It is **extremely important** to keep up with campaign finance requirements. Be sure to reach out to the [Campaign Spending Commission](#) if you are unsure of any requirements.

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 [Campaign Spending Commission](#), the [Office of Elections](#), or your [Local County Clerk](#) if you are unsure about anything. Review the [Summary of Campaign Spending Law](#) in the 2016 Candidate's Manual and consult the full [Hawaii Election Laws](#) if needed. Get to know the [contribution limits](#). For each election period:

- Candidates for 2-year office can receive no more than \$2,000 per person or entity
- Candidates for 4-year non-statewide office can receive no more than \$4,000 per person or entity; and
- Candidates for 4-year statewide office can receive no more than \$6,000 per person or entity

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

7. SEE IF YOU QUALIFY FOR PUBLIC FUNDING

The Hawaii Election Campaign Fund provides partial public funding to all qualified candidates. For more information and to see if you qualify, see the resources from the Campaign Spending Commission [here](#).

8. 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**.

9. 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.

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
- **Hawaii Office of Elections:** (808) 453-8683
- **Hawaii Campaign Spending Commission:** (808) 586-0285