

Campaign Finance Law: Know Your Responsibilities!

Step 1 File Your Statement of Organization with the County Clerk

All candidates are required to file the **Statement of Organization** within 20 days of becoming a candidate for office.* A late fee of \$10/day applies. If you expect that income (including contributions from self) or expenditures will total less than \$1,000 in the election cycle, use this form to request a waiver of future reporting requirements, and skip to step 3.

**Although candidates for school boards in districts with fewer than 2,400 students (Climax-Scotts, Comstock, Galesburg-Augusta, Parchment, and Schoolcraft) are exempt from filing, keep records in case contributions (including those from self) or expenditures exceed \$1,000, at which point filing will be required.*

Step 2 Know Your Campaign Finance Disclosure Requirements and Penalties for Non-Compliance

Candidates without the reporting waiver must file **Campaign Statements** according to the schedule below.

| If seeking election in 2019 | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Pre-election statement | Books close 10/20/2019 | Due by 5:00 pm 10/25/2019 | Late fee \$25/day |
| Post-election statement | 10/21/2018 - 11/25/2019 | Due by 5:00 pm 12/5/2019 | |
| If not seeking election in 2019 | | | |
| July quarterly statement | Books close 7/20/2019 | Due 7/26/2019 | Late fee \$25/day |
| October quarterly statement | 7/21/2019 - 10/20/2019 | Due 10/25/2019 | |
| Annual statement | 10/21/2019 - 12/31/2019 | Due 1/31/2020 | |

Step 3 Contributions: Know What's Allowed

Cash contributions over \$20, corporate, and anonymous contributions are not allowed. More information—including contribution limits and fundraising rules—are available on the Bureau of Elections website.

Step 4 Attend Campaign Finance Reporting Training—Educating Yourself is YOUR Responsibility

Avoid late filing fees by educating yourself on campaign reporting requirements. Watch your mail for an invitation to a live session planned for May and August on candidate responsibilities under Michigan campaign finance law. This opportunity to acquaint yourself with the statements and have your questions answered is a courtesy offered by County Clerk Tim Snow. Attendance is optional and highly encouraged for both candidates and campaign committee treasurers.

Step 5 Dissolve Your Campaign Committee

If your bid for office is unsuccessful, you may dissolve your campaign committee using either the **Candidate Statement** (if not waived) or the **Dissolution Campaign Statement** (if waived). If you were elected or appointed, your campaign committee must remain open until you are no longer in office.

For More Information

Read the State of Michigan resources **Getting Started as a Candidate** and **Candidate Committee Manual**, available on the Bureau of Elections' website. Also read the **Kalamazoo County Candidate Manual**, available at the County Clerk's office. Questions? Call Elections Specialist Sarah Joshi at 269-384-8080. We're here to help!



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

In the Pursuit of Extraordinary Governance...

Frequently Asked Questions

I'm not planning to form a campaign committee. Do I still need to file campaign finance statements?

With the exception of candidates for precinct delegate and school boards in districts with fewer than 2,400 students, every candidate for public office must create a campaign committee within 10 days of becoming a candidate, and they must file a **Statement of Organization** within 10 days of forming the committee. While naming a treasurer can help with recordkeeping and reporting, the candidate may choose to assume these functions themselves.

I'm funding my campaign with my own money. Do campaign finance laws apply to me?

Candidates may make unlimited contributions to their own committees. The contributions received from the candidate must be recorded, deposited and reported like all other contributions.

Where do I obtain the *Statement of Organization* form and the *Candidate Statement* form?

Forms are available for download from the Bureau of Elections website. Hard copies are available at the County Clerk's office. All statements must be submitted to the County Clerk's office (without staples, please) by the deadline in order to avoid late filing fees.

What is a *Late Contribution Report*?

A late contribution is any single or cumulative contribution of \$500 or more received from the same person between the day following the close of books of the last **Campaign Statement** required to be filed by the committee and the third day before the date of any election in which the committee/candidate participates. All types of contributions that meet the definition must be reported. This includes contributions of money, loans, in-kind contributions of goods and/or services and contributions from the candidate himself or herself.

What topics do I need to read about on the Bureau of Elections' website?

To avoid problems, familiarize yourself with contribution limits, prohibited contributions, prohibited expenditures, and the identifier statements required committee publications and advertisements. Mistakes can be costly, so adherence to the law is important.

Are campaign finance reports made public?

Yes. Campaign finance disclosure reports are available on the Kalamazoo County website. Enter your name or committee ID number to track your activity or the statements of any other candidate for public office.

What is a *Campaign Finance Compliance Affidavit*?

Before assuming office, a candidate who has been elected to county, city, township, village, or school office whose committee does not have a reporting waiver must sign an affidavit indicating that all statements, reports, late filing fees, and fines have been submitted to the County Clerk. Like other campaign finance reports, this form is available for public viewing on the Kalamazoo County website.

I won the election! Can I dissolve my campaign committee now?

No. Campaign committees must remain open until you are no longer in office. If eligible for the reporting waiver, request it by amending the **Statement of Organization**; if ineligible for the waiver, continue to submit **Campaign Statements** to the County Clerk's office according to the schedule on the Bureau of Elections website.

What is required of a candidate who is not elected?

If the candidate was not successful, two options exist: 1) if you choose to keep the campaign open, request a reporting waiver if eligible by amending the **Statement of Organization**; if ineligible for the waiver, continue to file **Campaign Statements** according to the schedule on the Bureau of Elections' website, or 2) you may dissolve the committee by following the instructions listed in step 5 on the reverse. Neglecting reporting requirements can cause fees to accrue. Instead, work with the County Clerk's office to wrap up the committee.