Candidate Filing Guidelines

Fair Campaign Practices Act ◆ Election 2026

Elections Division ◆ Office of the Secretary of State ◆ State of Alabama
Wes Allen, Secretary of State

BECOMING A CANDIDATE FOR STATE AND COUNTY OFFICE FOR PURPOSES OF THE FCPA

The Fair Campaign Practices Act (FCPA) defines a candidate as a person who has:

1. **Qualified to be listed on an election ballot** by filing qualification forms with a political party or municipal election official or by submitting a petition to run as an independent candidate; or
2. **Received contributions or made expenditures for an election campaign in excess of $1,000.**

APPOINTING A PRINCIPAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

Within **five (5) days** of becoming a candidate, you must file an **Appointment of Principal Campaign Committee Form** with the Secretary of State, if seeking election to a state or county office.

Beginning August 1, 2023, all municipal candidates will be required to file their campaign finance reports with the Secretary of State's office. A candidate running for a municipal office is exempt from the filing requirements of Sections 17-5-4 and 17-5-8, unless and until the candidate receives contributions or makes expenditures in excess of one thousand dollars ($1,000) [§ 17-5-4.1]

This form establishes the candidate's finance committee. A candidate may either serve as their own committee or may appoint a committee of two to five persons. This committee must report until dissolved. If a candidate serves as their own principal campaign committee, they shall designate a person responsible for dissolving that principal campaign committee in the event of death or incapacity. [§ 17-5-4(c)]

FILING ELECTRONICALLY

1. Go to fcpa.alabamavotes.gov and click on "Candidate Committee Registration."
2. You will be asked to provide the following information: Candidate's Full Legal Name, Office Sought, Jurisdiction (State, County, District), Political Party, Committee Name and Mailing Address, Contact Information (phone and email).
3. At this stage in the registration process, you will select how your Principal Campaign Committee (PCC) will be organized. FCPA presents two options depending on whether you plan to serve as the sole committee member or designate additional individuals to help manage the campaign's financial responsibilities.
   - Option A: I Appoint Myself as the Sole Committee Member:
     - If you are running your campaign independently and will be solely responsible for all reporting, financial, and compliance duties, you may choose to serve as the only member of your PCC. In this scenario, FCPA will prompt you to complete the following actions:
       - Enter your full contact information, including address, email, and phone number.
       - You must also assign a Committee Dissolution Designee, which must be a separate individual from the candidate who will be responsible for officially closing the committee in the event the candidate becomes incapacitated or deceased and is unable to file. This person ensures that all debts are settled, reports are finalized, and any remaining funds are disbursed according to law in case the candidate is unable to do so.
   - Option B: I Appoint Additional Individuals to the Committee
     - If other individuals will be involved in your campaign's financial reporting or oversight, you should select this

option. For each individual, you will need to enter their:
    - Full legal name, mailing address, email address, phone number, assigned role within the committee.
- Each person will receive system credentials (if applicable) and will be expected to fulfill the legal responsibilities associated with their role.

4. After entering all required information in the Campaign Finance Management System (FCPA), the final step is to review and submit your committee registration.
5. Once you click submit, the system will generate an Appointment of Principal Campaign Committee form. This document will include a timestamp indicating the date and time of submission.
6. Download, print, and sign the complete form using the link provided on the confirmation screen.
7. Send the signed form to:

Elections Division
Office of the Secretary of State
PO Box 5616
Montgomery, AL 36103-5616

8. Your registration is not considered complete until the original signed form is received and reviewed by the Elections Division. Your registration will remain in a "pending" status and will not be a final document viewable to the public until the Elections Division receives your original form signed by ALL committee members.
9. Once your submission is approved, the Elections Division will send a confirmation email containing:
    - Committee members username
    - A temporary password for the FCPA portal
        - You will use these credentials to login, set a new password, and begin performing key tasks in FCPA, including:
            - Submitting campaign finance reports
            - Recording contributions and expenditures
            - Managing supporting documentation
            - Updating committee member information
            - Maintaining compliance with Alabama's Fair Campaign Practices Act (FCPA)

After Registration:

- Once you have completed committee registration, follow these steps to set up your FCPA account and begin managing your campaign activities:
    1. Check your email inbox for a confirmation message from the FCPA. This email contains your username and a temporary password.
    2. Go to the FCPA login page: https://fcpa.alabamavotes.gov/
    3. Log in using your credentials.
    4. Set your new password: When prompted at first login, create a secure password for your account.
    5. Review and update your profile: Verify your contact details and update any incorrect or missing information to ensure you receive important communications and alerts.

Tip: If you have trouble at any step or do not receive the confirmation email, check your spam folder and verify your registration information. For further assistance, contact the Elections Division at (334) 242-7210.

ELECTRONIC FILING REQUIREMENT

All state, statewide, county, and municipal candidates must file their FCPA disclosure reports online at fcpa.alabamavotes.gov.
Changes in committee members, committee contact information, or updated information must be submitted electronically to the Secretary of State through the online FCPA filing system.

FILING FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REPORTS

After exceeding the $1,000 threshold amount in either contributions or expenditures, a candidate is required to file disclosure reports at specific times. The candidate is not required to file disclosure reports if the filing threshold has not been exceeded. Please remember all late filings are subject to civil penalties. Please see Code of Alabama 1975, § 17-5-19.1 for details on administrative penalties that may be levied against a committee.

TYPES OF REPORTS

Pre-Election Reports

Beginning 12 months out from an election, campaign finance disclosure reports are required once a candidate meets the filing threshold of $1,000. These reports must be filed at the following times:

- **Monthly reports** are due the second business day of the subsequent month, beginning 12 months before any election for which the committee receives contributions or makes expenditures with a view toward influencing the election.
- **Weekly reports** are due on the subsequent Monday for each of the 4 weeks prior to the election.
- **Daily reports** are due on that day, beginning eight (8) days prior to the election if the committee receives or spends funds of $5,000 or more for any legislative, state school board, or statewide election (applies to only a legislative, state school board, or statewide election).
- **Major contribution reports** are due when a candidate receives a single contribution of $20,000 or more. A report is due within two (2) business days of the date of the receipt of the contribution if it is not included in a monthly, weekly, or daily report.

On the summary page, the report should include the amount of cash on hand at the beginning of the reporting period, a total of all contributions and expenditures made during the reporting period, and the ending balance.

Note: Once total contributions from or expenditures to a specific entity exceeds $100, contributions or expenditures received or expended during the reporting period are to be itemized and will appear on pages 2 through 6 of the report.

Annual Report

An **Annual Report** is required every year that a committee is in existence, unless the candidate is filing monthly reports in the current election cycle. This **Annual Report** may be filed after January 1st but must be filed no later than January 31st. ***All candidates and all state, county, and municipal elected officials who have not dissolved their principal campaign committee must file this report.***

The summary page for the annual report includes two sections:

- **Section I**: The candidate uses this section to report any activity since their last filing. The beginning balance is the ending balance from the last report filed. Forms 2 through 6 are used to itemize any contributions and expenditures that have not previously been reported.
- **Section II**: In this section, the candidate reports the total contributions and expenditures for the calendar year. The beginning balance is the ending balance from the last annual report filed.

DUPLICATE REPORTS

Each report must include all reportable transactions occurring since the most recent prior report; however, duplicate reporting is not required by this section.

- A committee that is required to file a daily report is not required to also file a weekly report for the week preceding the election.
- A committee that is required to file a weekly report is not required to also file a monthly report in the month in which the election is held.
- A committee that is required to file a monthly report is not required to also file an annual report in the year in which the election is held.

ELECTRONIC FILING SYSTEM INSTRUCTIONS

OPTING INTO THE FILING CALENDAR

1. Login to your account at fcpa.alabamavotes.gov, by clicking the red “Registered User Login” icon in the top right corner.
2. From the Home page select “Opt Into Election Cycle Calendar”
3. You will then select the year, election cycle name, election type, & report type.
4. Finally, enter the date on which you met the required filing threshold (raising or spending in excess of $1,000 to influence an election) in the “Threshold Date section. A calendar will appear on the screen. Use the calendar to input the date. Then click the “Assign Schedule” button.
5. You will be directed to the “Report Filing” page and all upcoming reports will be shown.

INPUTTING A TRANSACTION

1. From the home page, select “Go to My Committee”
2. Go to the “Transaction” tab on your committee page.
3. Click the “+New” button on the toolbar.
4. Select the transaction type needed: Contribution, Expenditure, or Other Receipt.
5. Complete all required fields. This will usually include the date, amount, donor or payee information, and a transaction description. Attach any supporting documentation if available or required.
6. Verify that all information is accurate.
7. Click “Save” to add the transaction.

MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS

When a major contribution of $20,000 or more is entered as a Contribution or Other Receipt, the system will automatically add a Major Contribution Report on the "File Reports" page under the "Reports Due" section, unless the major contribution is included in a monthly, weekly, or daily report. If the report is not automatically added to your reports due list, you can opt into the report. This type of contribution must be disclosed within two (2) business days of receipt.

REVIEWING AND FILING REPORTS

1. From the Home page, select "Go to My Committee"
2. Go to the "Report Filing" section and find and select the report that says, "Report Due."
3. Confirm the report period and ensure all contributions, expenditures, and other relevant transactions have been entered for that timeframe.
4. Once you have opened the report, you will select "Begin Report Filing."
5. This will generate a button for your electronic signature which will be the password associated with the account.
6. Once your electronic signature has been submitted, you will scroll down and select "File Report."
7. To check to see if your report has been filed, click the "Report Filing" tab at the top of the page, and look under the "Filing Status" to double check that it states it has been filed.

AMENDING REPORTS

1. Correct any errors under the "Transaction" tab by clicking on the individual transaction you wish to amend.
2. Then click on the "Report Filing" tab. If a report needs to be amended, there will be a check under the "Amendment Needed" column beside the correct report.
3. Once you select the report, you will scroll down and select "Initiate Amendment"
4. After you initiate the amendment, you will follow the same steps as when you originally filed (electronic signature and then "File Report"

REPORTING DEBT ON ANNUAL REPORT

Campaign debt is typed directly onto the Annual Report Summary Form 1A in box "15" titled "Total campaign debt (total debt owed as of December 31)".

DISSOLVING A PRINCIPAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE

If the committee wants to dissolve, the campaign committee must submit a **Statement of Dissolution Form** ***<u>and a</u>*** **Termination Report** electronically to the Secretary of State. The **Statement of Dissolution** ***<u>must be accompanied by a</u>*** **Termination Report** detailing all contributions and expenditures not previously reported and indicating how any excess funds will be distributed. [§ 17-5-5(d)]

FILING THE STATEMENT OF DISSOLUTION AND TERMINATION REPORT

1. Once a person is no longer considered a candidate (lost in the Primary, Primary Runoff, or General Election or after the General Election for candidates who have won the election), they can choose to dissolve their campaign committee.
2. All required reports or a current report that is due must be filed before dissolving.
3. The ending balance of the account must be zero. Make sure that all transactions have been entered under the appropriate tabs before submitting the Statement of Dissolution.

4. Once you have entered all transactions to date, from your Home page you will select "Dissolve Committee."
5. You will then be required to input your Termination Date and then select "Initiate Committee Termination."
6. A confirmation message will appear saying "Are you sure that you would like to initiate the process to terminate your committee?' and you will select "OK."
7. You will then be redirected to your termination report where you will have to input your total campaign debt.
8. After you have entered your total campaign debt, you will file the report as normal.

Note: If you do not properly dissolve/terminate the committee, you will be required to file Annual Reports by January 31st of each calendar year until you successfully complete the 2-step process.

FCPA GUIDELINES FOR RAISING AND SPENDING CAMPAIGN FUNDS

RAISING MONEY

Candidates may begin fundraising 12 months prior to the election. They may continue fundraising for 120 days after the election to the extent of any campaign debt and the amount of the filing threshold. Only the amount of debts that are directly related to lawful campaign expenditures can be raised. [§ 17-5-7(b)(3)]

The FCPA prohibits candidates from receiving contributions from other principal campaign committees. However, principal campaign committees are allowed to transfer money from one principal campaign committee to another if the two principal campaign committees are for the same person. [§ 17-5-15(b)]

The FCPA limits state and local principal campaign committees from receiving more than $1,000 from a principal campaign committee of a federal candidate. (§ 17-5-15.1)

Legislative and statewide candidates cannot solicit or receive contributions any time the Alabama Legislature is in session, except within 120 days of an election. However, candidates should note that this prohibition does not apply to self-funded loans to their own campaign committee. Fundraising by candidates for county and municipal offices is not affected by legislative sessions. [§ 17-5-7(b)(2)]

ELECTIONEERING COMMUNICATIONS

Candidates who spend more than $1,000 on an **"electioneering communication"** are required to file disclosure reports. The reports must identify the source(s) of the funds used for the electioneering communication and the recipient(s) of expenditure(s) related to the electioneering communication. [§ 17-5-8(h)]

This reporting requirement applies even if the candidate has not yet reached the filing threshold for the office sought by the candidate. However, the candidate is not required to duplicate any reporting. For more information, consult Campaign Advertising Guidelines, available from the Secretary of State's Elections Division.

USE OF CAMPAIGN FUNDS

Candidates may use their campaign funds only as follows [§ 17-5-7(a)]:

1. For necessary and ordinary expenditures of the campaign.
2. For expenditures that are reasonably related to performing the duties of the office held. Expenditures that are reasonably related to performing the duties of the office held do not include personal and legislative living expenses, as defined in this chapter.
3. For donations to the State General Fund, the Education Trust Fund, or equivalent county or municipal funds.

4. Donations to an organization to which a federal income tax deduction is permitted under subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1) of subsection (b) of Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, or any other charitable, educational, or eleemosynary cause of Section 501 of Title 26 of the U.S. Code.
5. For inaugural or transitional expenses. [Warning: The Ethics Act prohibits converting to personal use contributions from an inaugural or transitional fund. (§ 36-25-6)
6. Donations to a legal caucus organization registered under this chapter which does not operate as a political action committee.
7. Legal fees and costs associated with any civil action, criminal prosecution, or investigation related to conduct reasonably related to performing the duties of the office held. (§ 17-5-5.1.)

The FCPA prohibits candidates from giving contributions to [§ 17-5-15(b)]:

- Political action committees
- 527 organizations
- Principal campaign committees for other candidates

Principal campaign committees are allowed to transfer funds from one principal campaign committee to another if the two principal campaign committees are for the same person. [§ 17-5-15(b)]

A principal campaign committee, during a two-year period commencing on the day after each regularly scheduled General Election and ending on the day of the next General Election, may pay qualifying fees to a political party and may expend up to a cumulative total of ($5,000) of campaign contributions for the following purposes [§ 17-5-7(d)]:

- Tickets for political party dinners or functions.
- State or local political party dues or similar expenses incurred by independent or write-in candidates.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS FOR CANDIDATES

Some offices, such as county superintendent, may require additional documents to be filed when you qualify to run. Please check the Code of Alabama, 1975, or visit our website, www.sos.alabama.gov/alabama-votes, for more information. You may also contact your local party chair to make sure that you have all of the necessary paperwork.

STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS

All candidates are required by state ethics laws to file a Statement of Economic Interests with the Ethics Commission within five (5) days of filing the election qualifying paperwork with the appropriate election official. (§§ 36-25-14, 36-25-15) For more information on this requirement, contact the State Ethics Commission, P. O. Box 4840, Montgomery, AL 36103-4840, (334) 242-2997. The State Ethics Commission website is ethics.alabama.gov.

FEDERAL CANDIDATES

Candidates for federal office must comply with federal laws administered by the Federal Election Commission. The FEC can be reached by phone at 1-800-424-9530. The FEC website is www.fec.gov.

JUDICIAL CANDIDATES

Judicial candidates are required by Canon 6C of the **Canons of Judicial Ethics** to submit additional filings with the clerk of the Alabama Supreme Court.