



State of Wisconsin
Ethics Commission

THE LIFECYCLE OF A CANDIDATE COMMITTEE

FROM REGISTRATION TO TERMINATION

DECEMBER 2019



State of Wisconsin
Ethics Commission

OUTLINE

- WHO IS REQUIRED TO REGISTER?
- COMPLETING A REGISTRATION STATEMENT
- FILING FOR EXEMPTION STATUS
- TERMINATION OF A CANDIDATE COMMITTEE

WHO IS REQUIRED TO REGISTER?

Any candidate for election to public office must register a candidate committee with the appropriate filing officer as soon as:

- (a) The individual takes any of the following actions;
 1. Files nomination papers with the appropriate filing officer;
 2. Is nominated by a caucus or political party, and that nomination is certified by the appropriate filing officer;
 3. Receives a contribution, makes a disbursement, or gives consent for another person to do so in order to bring about the individual's nomination;
- (b) The individual holds public office and is the subject of a recall petition; or
- (c) The individual holds a state or local office.



APPROPRIATE FILING OFFICERS

Office:

County Executive
County Supervisor
County Clerk or County Treasurer
Clerk of Circuit Court
Coroner
Register of Deeds
Sheriff
Multi-Jurisdictional Judge*
Mayor, Village President
Alderspersion, Village Trustee, Town Board Member
Municipal Clerk or Municipal Treasurer [if elected]
Municipal Judge
School District Board Member

Filing Officer:

County Clerk
Municipal Clerk
Municipal Clerk
Municipal Clerk
Municipal Clerk
School District Clerk

Referendum committees acting to support or oppose a school district referendum shall file with the school district clerk.

*If a multi-jurisdictional judge serves a district with municipalities in more than one county, the filing officer is the County Clerk in the county with the largest population within the district.

Wis. STAT. § [11.0102\(1\)\(b\)-\(g\)](#).



COMPLETING A REGISTRATION STATEMENT



CAMPAIGN FINANCE REGISTRATION STATEMENT STATE OF WISCONSIN

Note: An amended registration statement must be filed within 10 days of any changes in information.

1. Is this an Amendment? No Yes If yes, please enter your committee number:

SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION				
A1. Candidate Committee/Committee/Conduit Name		A2. Registrant Type (Choose One) <input type="checkbox"/> Candidate <input type="checkbox"/> Referendum <input type="checkbox"/> Recall <input type="checkbox"/> Conduit <input type="checkbox"/> Political Action (PAC) <input type="checkbox"/> Independent Expenditure (IEC) <input type="checkbox"/> Political Party <input type="checkbox"/> Legislative Campaign Committee		
A3. Email	A4. Phone			
A5. Mailing Address		A6. City	A7. State	A8. Zip
Depository Institution Information				
A9. Institution Name	A10. Street Address	A11. City	A12. State	A13. Zip
Treasurer/Administrator Information				
A14. Name		A15. Email	A16. Phone	
A17. Mailing Address		A18. City	A19. State	A20. Zip
Other Officers (Optional) <i>Independent and local non-partisan candidates: Indicate by an asterisk (*) which officers are authorized to fill a vacancy in nomination due to death of candidate.</i>				
A21. Name	A22. Title	A23. Email	A24. Phone	
A25. Name	A26. Title	A27. Email	A28. Phone	
Filing Exemption <i>Registrants that will not accept contributions, make disbursements, or incur obligations in an aggregate amount of more than \$2,000 in a calendar year are eligible for exemption from filing campaign finance reports. Exempt status is effective only for the calendar year in which it is granted. Registrants wishing to remain on exempt status must renew each year. Candidates may not claim exemption in the year of their election before the day they appear on the ballot.</i>		A29. Exemption Affirmation <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this registrant is eligible for exemption <input type="checkbox"/> No, this registrant is not eligible for exemption		

Local committees must use the [campaign finance registration statement](#) form prescribed by the Commission to register a committee.

The Committee Number field is for the filing officer if they use numbers to organize committees. It is not always applicable.

Candidates serving as their own treasurer may designate a personal account for this section.

If the candidate will be serving as the treasurer, indicate so in this section.

Be sure to choose the appropriate exemption status.



COMPLETING A REGISTRATION STATEMENT (CONT.)

SECTION B: CANDIDATE COMMITTEES			
B1. Office Sought (include District/Branch)		B2. Political Party	B3. Election Date
Candidate Information			
B4. Name		B5. Email	B6. Phone
B7. Mailing Address		B8. City	B9. State B10. Zip
Second Candidate Committee <i>An individual who holds a state or local elective office may establish a second candidate committee to pursue another state or local office.</i>		B11. Is this your only registered candidate committee in Wisconsin? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, this is my only candidate committee in Wisconsin <input type="checkbox"/> No, this is my second candidate committee in Wisconsin	
B12. Other Office Held or Sought (include District/Branch) <i>Only complete B12 if you responded "No" to B11.</i>			

Most local offices are nonpartisan, so place "n/a" in the B2 field.

This section can contain the same information as section A.

SECTION G: CERTIFICATION		
Accurate Information <i>I certify that I am an authorized representative of the registrant and that to my knowledge all of the information contained within this registration is true, correct, and complete.</i>		
Timely Amendments <i>I am aware of the requirement to amend this registration statement within 10 days of any change of information contained within, as well as the requirement to register within 10 days of meeting the requirements to register under Chapter 11 of Wisconsin Statutes.</i>		
Records Retention <i>I further acknowledge the requirement to maintain the records of the registrant in an organized and legible manner for three years from the date of the most recent election in which this registrant participated.</i>		
Ongoing Compliance <i>This registrant shall continue to maintain its registration and comply with all applicable reporting requirements under Chapter 11 of Wisconsin Statutes.</i>		
Treasurer/Administrator		
G1. Printed Name	G2. Signature	G3. Date
Candidate (if applicable)		
G4. Printed Name	G5. Signature	G6. Date

If the candidate is serving as the treasurer, they only need to sign once on the candidate line.

Further instructions are provided on the last page of [the form](#).



IMPORTANT NOTES ON REGISTRATION

- Every candidate for election to public office must have a committee.
- The candidate does not register themselves for campaign finance purposes; they register a committee.
- Candidates cannot receive contributions or make disbursements until they have registered a committee, except to
 - open a bank account for the committee
 - rent a PO box
 - Produce nomination papers
- Any change of committee information requires an amendment to be filed within ten days of the change.



FILING FOR EXEMPTION STATUS

If a committee anticipates that it will:

- Not accept or make contributions (including the candidate's contributions);
- Not make disbursements; or
- Not incur loans and other obligations

in an aggregate amount exceeding \$2,000 in a calendar year, they can note that they are eligible for exemption from filing periodic reports in item A29 of the campaign finance registration statement.

Exemption is effective only for the calendar year which it is granted. The Commission is seeking guidance from the Attorney General's office on interpreting and enforcing this statute. Pending that guidance or legislative change, the Ethics Commission is not requiring committees to renew their exemption status annually.

Committees that are exempt from filing campaign finance reports are still required to maintain all financial records from the date of registration until three years after the date of the election the candidate participated in.

Wis. Stat. §§ [11.0104](#), [11.0201\(4\)](#).



EXEMPT STATUS: EXCEEDING \$2,000

If the committee exceeds the \$2,000 threshold for exemption the committee must amend its campaign registration statement by checking the box: "This registrant is no longer eligible to claim exemption," in A29 within ten days of exceeding \$2,000.

The committee is then required to file campaign finance reports beginning with the next regular report due after the earlier of either the date that the amended registration was filed, or the date that the committee exceeded \$2,000 inactivity.

The first campaign finance report filed after a committee is no longer exempt covers activity from January 1 of that calendar year, or the date the committee was registered, whichever is later.



TERMINATION OF A CANDIDATE COMMITTEE

A candidate committee can terminate its registration if it:

- Will no longer engage in financial activity;
- Files a final report showing that all obligations have been satisfied, and the cash balance has been reduced to zero; and
- Completes a [termination request form](#) (CF-13).

A candidate committee cannot be terminated prior to a primary or election in which they are a candidate. However, if a candidate committee loses in a primary election, the candidate does not have to wait until after the general election to terminate the candidate committee.

Current office holders cannot terminate their candidate committee while in office.

[WIS. STAT. § 11.0105](#)



TERMINATION: DISPOSAL OF RESIDUAL FUNDS

A committee that wishes to terminate can dispose of its residual funds by:

- Repaying outstanding loans, or receiving forgiveness for them;
- Returning contributions in an amount not more than the original (candidate or treasurer may choose which contributions to return);
- Donating to any tax-exempt charitable organization or the Common School Fund;
- Transferring money to another registrant within contribution limits; or
- Using any combination of the above.

WIS. STAT. §§ [11.0105](#), [11.1208\(2\)\(a\)](#).



WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

- [Local Candidate Committee Overview Manual](#) (2019)
- [Candidate Committee Overview Page](#)
- Wisconsin Ethics Commission website (<https://ethics.wi.gov>)

- Wisconsin Ethics Commission staff:
campaignfinance@wi.gov or (608)266-8123

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