



**SAN FRANCISCO  
ELECTIONS**



# Candidate Guide

## County Central Committees and County Councils

March 5, 2024, Presidential Primary Election

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## I. Introduction

This guide is to assist potential candidates in preparation for the March 5, 2024, Consolidated Presidential Primary Election, addressing the most commonly asked questions about nomination processes. The political parties that allow voters to participate in the Central Committee process are: the American Independent Party, the Democratic Party, the Peace and Freedom Party, and the Republican Party. The Green Party also allows voters to participate in electing members of that organization's County Council.

This document provides general guidance for the processes in which candidates are placed on the ballot. The nomination processes are set by the California Elections Code (CAEC) and San Francisco Municipal Election Code (SFMEC). The City Charter and other State codes may also clarify definitions and processes associated with the Central Committee elections and County Council as well. For any conflict of information amongst this guide and any law or regulation, the law or regulation shall always apply. As such, candidates should not solely rely on this guide as their only source of information regarding Central Committees and County Council candidacies and elections. The Department of Elections always encourages candidates to examine pertinent codes and laws.

The Department recommends that anyone considering membership to Central Committees or County Councils to do the following:

- **Begin the nomination process as early as possible.**  
This will ensure that you do not miss important deadlines or neglect to submit required forms. The Department recommends allotting at least 30 minutes for a nomination filing. Department personnel will provide you with the necessary forms and documents you must complete, conduct intake of necessary documents and fees, and assist you with questions related to nomination processes.
- **Schedule an appointment with our staff.**  
Request an appointment online: [sfelections.org/tools/csappt](https://sfelections.org/tools/csappt) or contact us by phone: **(415) 554-4375**. The Department will prepare documents prior to your visit to expedite the processing of your forms.

## II. Candidate Resources

In addition to this guide, the Department encourages candidates and campaigns to familiarize themselves with other important resources:

- A. The Department hosts Candidate Workshops on such topics as signatures-in-lieu-of-filing fees, nomination procedures, and voter registration drives.
- B. The Department’s website, [sfelections.sfgov.org](https://sfelections.sfgov.org) contains information for candidates and voters, including registration and voting calendars, details about ranked-choice voting, opportunities to observe elections processes, and up-to-date results reports from Election Night through certification of the results.
- C. Candidates may apply to purchase voter registration information for election-related purposes.
- D. The San Francisco Ethics Commission publishes a general candidate guide that explains state and local requirements concerning campaign finance and campaign disclosure; the Ethics Commission and the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) also provide information regarding laws that govern political literature and advertising.
- E. The California Secretary of State (SOS) and FPPC play a role in the administration and enforcement of laws regulating candidates and elections. The FPPC has created “Campaign Disclosure Manual 2”, available online at [fppc.ca.gov](https://fppc.ca.gov) which details filing and disclosure requirements for local candidates.

This guide will reference the various state and local laws that regulate nomination processes. The table below lists the citations to these laws and regulations referenced in this guide.

<b>Code References:</b> <i>the following abbreviations are used throughout this guide for citations of supporting legal codes</i>	
CA Const.	California Constitution
CAEC	California Elections Code
CA Gov. Code	California Government Code
CA Admin. Code	California Administrative Code
CCR	California Code of Regulations
SFMEC	San Francisco Municipal Elections Code
SOS	Secretary of State
FPPC	Fair Political Practices Commission

### III. Important Dates

Dates	Description	Code Reference(s)
<p><b>09 / 29 / 2023 – 12 / 08 / 2023</b></p> <p>E-158 – E-88</p>	<p><b>Nomination Period</b></p> <p>The period during which all candidates for Member of the County Central Committee and County Council must file their declarations of candidacy, their ballot designation worksheets, circulate their nomination papers and deliver them to the Department of Elections. Additionally, candidates filing for Democratic County Central Committee are required to file a Declaration of Eligibility. All nomination documents must remain with the Department of Elections.</p>	<p>CAEC Division 7, §§7209(4), 7227, 8020, 8040, 8041, 8062(a)(3), 8068, 8069, 8101, 13107.3</p>
<p><b>12 / 09 / 2023 – 12 / 19 / 2023</b></p> <p>E-87 – E-77</p>	<p><b>Public Examination Period: Candidate Materials and Chinese Transliterations Provided for Candidates</b></p> <p>Period of public review and filing legal challenges of candidate legal names, ballot designations, and translated or transliterated Chinese names.</p>	<p>SFMEC §§401, 590(a)</p>
<p><b>12 / 23 / 2023</b></p> <p>E-73</p>	<p><b>Candidate Appointment(s) When Fewer Candidates File than available membership</b></p> <p>If the number of candidates nominated for election to a committee from an Assembly District does not exceed the number of seats to elect, the designation of the seats and the names of the candidates shall not be printed on a party’s ballot. In lieu thereof, the Board of Supervisors shall declare elected the candidates who have been nominated.</p>	<p>CAEC §§7228, 7422, 7673, 7772.1</p>

*\* If the legal deadline falls on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, the deadline will move forward to the next working day.*

*CA Gov. Code §6707*

## IV. General Information

Currently five political parties form Central Committees or County Councils in the state of California: the American Independent Party, the Democratic Party, the Green Party, Peace and Freedom Party, and the Republican Party. The eligible seats for each party are determined by registration figures enumerated in the State Elections Code. Below is a table that unofficially lists the number of seats based on registration totals from March 1, 2023.

Party	Assembly District 17	Assembly District 19	Total Number of Seats	Date to Determine Number	Code Provision(s)
American Independent	8	6	14	October 22, 2023 ( E-135 )	CAEC §7651
Democratic	14	10	24	January 31, 2024	CAEC §7226
Green	countywide		7	November 11, 2023	CAEC §7903
Peace and Freedom	countywide		7	October 22, 2023 ( E-135 )	CAEC §7752
Republican	12	13	25	January 31, 2024	CAEC §7421

Candidates may be subject to financial filing requirements before they obtain or file nomination documents. Candidates must contact the San Francisco Ethics Commission at **(415) 252-3100** or [sfethics.org](https://sfethics.org) for more detailed assistance regarding public financing, fundraising, or campaign finance requirements.

**A. Eligibility of Candidates**

CAEC § 8001(c)

Party	Eligibility	Code Provision(s)
American Independent	Registered as affiliated with the American Independent Party at time of appointment or election	CAEC §7654
Democratic	Registered as affiliated with the Democratic Party at time of election	CAEC §7209(a)
Green	Registered as affiliated with the Green Party at time of filing nomination documents	CAEC §7914
Peace and Freedom	Registered as affiliated with the Peace and Freedom Party	CAEC §7852
Republican	Registered as affiliated with the Republican Party at time of appointment or election	CAEC §7407

**B. Filing Fee**

There is no filing fee for candidates for County Central Committees or Councils.

**V. Nomination Documents**

The nomination period begins September 29, 2023, and ends December 8, 2023. The Department recommends that candidates allot approximately one half-hour to file nomination papers. Candidates must submit all nomination documents to the Department of Elections at the same time – no later than 5 p.m. on December 8, 2023.

**A. Declaration of Candidacy**

CAEC §8040

Each candidate must file a Declaration of Candidacy form which consists of several sections:

1. Declaration of Eligibility (Democratic County Central Committee) CAEC §7209(a)(4)
2. Declaration of filing under legal name
3. Name as it should appear on the ballot
4. Ballot Designation (optional; see Section VII. c., below)
5. Name in Chinese Characters (if a candidate does not request a particular Chinese name, the Department will provide a transliteration)
6. Candidate's Political Party Affiliation



If a candidate personally obtains and files the nomination documents, the Declaration of Candidacy must be executed in the presence of Department personnel. If a candidate authorizes another person to obtain and file the nomination documents, the candidate must execute the declaration, including the oath of office, in the presence of a notary public.

**B. Nomination Petition**

CAEC §§100, 100.5, 102, 104-106, 8062(a)(3), 18200-18205

Each candidate must file a nomination petition with the Department of Elections containing a minimum of 20 valid signers. The Department of Elections can accept a maximum of 40 signers and strongly recommends that candidates submit more than 20 signers in the event some signers are invalid.

Public terminals are available at the Department of Elections for candidates to verify the validity of signers in their possession prior to filing them with the Department of Elections.

All signers must be registered San Francisco voters and members of the same political party and Assembly District, if applicable, as the candidate. No signer shall sign nomination petitions for more candidates than there are seats to be filled. For example, if there are 4 open seats and 7 candidates, a voter may only sign 4 nomination petitions.

Each signer must print their name and address.

Ditto marks are not permitted when successive signers have the same address.

Circulator affidavits must be complete when petitions are submitted.

**1. Petition Circulator Information**

CAEC §§102, 104, 106, 2138, 2158-2159.5, 8106, 18200, 18610-18614

A candidate may circulate and sign their own petition. The petition contains an Affidavit of Circulator. The circulator must complete each affidavit by hand, sign the affidavit, and return the petition to the candidate or a person authorized by the candidate. The circulator may not complete a section of the affidavit and then duplicate the petition. When making a copy of a petition form, the candidate or circulator should ensure that no fields have been prefilled.

For signers to be eligible to nominate a candidate, the signer must indicate a residential address on the petition that matches the address in their voter registration record. A candidate or circulator may obtain voter registration cards for signers to complete. Registration cards must be turned in to the Department within three days of receipt from a voter.

Circulating a petition knowing it contains false, forged, or fictitious names is a misdemeanor.

**2. Invalid Petition Signers**

CAEC §§100, 100.5, 102, 104, 105

The California Elections Code imposes strict rules governing the verification of petition signers. For example, a petition signer is invalid and cannot be counted if:

- a. The signer is not a registered voter in the appropriate Assembly District, if applicable
- b. The signer does not provide a San Francisco residential address
- c. The signer provides a different residential address from the address listed in their voter registration record
- d. The signer provides a post office box, mail drop, or business address, rather than a residential address
- e. The signer is registered under a different political party affiliation than the available seat
- f. The signer's address is pre-printed
- g. The signer uses ditto marks for an address
- h. The signature appears as a voter's mark but is not witnessed
- i. The petition circulator fails to complete or sign the affidavit portion of the petition
- j. The circulator is not 18 years of age or older

**C. Name in Chinese Characters / Transliteration**

SFMEC §401

For bilingual English / Chinese ballots, each candidate's name will appear on the ballot in Chinese characters, as well as in English. Candidates may, but are not required to, submit a proposed translated or transliterated Chinese name.

Please note that the Department uses traditional Chinese characters, rather than simplified. If a candidate does not submit a proposed Chinese name, the Department's translator will prepare a transliteration of the candidate's name. The Director of Elections determines whether to accept a candidate's proposed Chinese name based on the following:

1. Information submitted by the candidate regarding established use of the proposed name
2. Information regarding how the Chinese community refers to the candidate at community meetings or in the media
3. Whether or not a proposed translation or transliteration has another meaning in the Chinese language
4. Any other information the Director deems relevant in order to prevent voter confusion

The Director of Elections' determination whether to accept a candidate's proposed Chinese name shall be final. The submitted or transliterated Chinese names of all candidates for local office are available for public review and possible legal challenge for ten calendar days.

## VI. Ballot Designation / Ballot Designation Worksheet

CAEC §§13107-13107.5

A candidate may request that their occupation appear below their name on the ballot; statement of occupation is considered as the candidate's "ballot designation". The nomination packet provided to all candidates includes a copy of the most recent ballot designation regulations issued by the Secretary of State which may also be found on the [Secretary of State's website \(sos.ca.gov\)](https://sos.ca.gov). The Ballot Designation Worksheet is a required document, designed to guide a candidate's proposed ballot designation or an alternate, that shall be filed with the Department at the same time that the candidate files their Declaration of Candidacy. Candidates should attach copies of any supporting documentation. The Ballot Designation Worksheet is available at the Department as well as the Secretary of State's website: [sos.ca.gov/elections/upcoming-elections](https://sos.ca.gov/elections/upcoming-elections)

If a candidate does not want a designation to appear on the ballot under their name, the candidate must write the word "none" on the ballot designation section of the Declaration of Candidacy and sign the form. The word "none" will not appear on the ballot. Instead, this space will remain blank.

No candidate may change their designation after the deadline for filing nomination documents except as "specifically requested by the Department under CAEC§13107(g) or by a writ issued by San Francisco Superior Court.

### A. Acceptable Designations

CAEC §13107(a)

Each candidate may choose one of the following types of designation (or no designation):

- 1. Elective Office Title:** The office title is the word or words designating the office (federal, state, county, city, district, or judicial) that the candidate holds at the time of filing nomination documents and to which the candidate was elected by a vote of the people (or was appointed, in the case of appointed office holders). If the candidate is seeking election to a nonpartisan office, this title may not include political party affiliation.  
**Acceptable Examples:** "City Attorney," "Member, Board of Supervisors," "Sheriff."
- 2. Incumbent:** The word "incumbent" may be used if the candidate is running for the same office that the candidate holds at the time of filing nomination documents and to which the candidate was elected by a vote of the people or was appointed.
- 3. Appointed Incumbent or Appointed and Office Title:** If the candidate was appointed to an office and is filing as a candidate for election to the same office, the words "appointed incumbent" or the word "appointed" and the title of the office may be used. The appointed officeholder may not use the unmodified word "incumbent."

4. **No More than Three Words Designating the Candidate’s Principal Professions, Vocations, or Occupations:** The candidate may use up to three words to describe the principal profession, vocation, or occupation that he or she currently holds or held during the preceding year; however, California geographical names such as “City and County of San Francisco” are considered one word. Hyphenated words that appear in a Standard English dictionary are also considered one word. Each part of all other hyphenated words will be as separate words.

If a candidate has more than one principal profession, vocation, or occupation, the candidate may use slashes or commas to separate them. Dashes may be used only if required in the spelling.

**Example: “Attorney/Accountant” or “Teacher, Mother”.**

Basic Test of Acceptable Ballot Designation:	Answer:
Is it true?	Yes
Is it factually accurate?	Yes
Does it mislead?	No
Is it generic?	Yes
Is it neutral?	Yes
Is it how the candidate makes a living?	Yes

**Examples of Acceptable Ballot Designations:**

- Teacher
- Plumber
- Homemaker
- Retail Salesperson
- Computer Programmer
- Community Volunteer (if volunteer activities are the candidate’s principal occupation)

**B. Unacceptable Designations**

CCR §20716

Candidates **may not** use a designation that:

1. Would mislead the voter
2. Would suggest an evaluation of the candidate, such as “outstanding,” “leading,” “expert,” “virtuous,” or “eminent”
3. Abbreviates the word “retired.” A candidate may use “retired” in non-abbreviated form before the word it modifies as long as state law requirements for use of “retired” are met
4. Uses a word or prefix, such as “former” or “ex-,” which means a prior status; the only exception is the use of the word “retired”
5. Uses the name of any political party, whether or not it has qualified for the ballot
6. Uses a word or words referring to a racial, religious, or ethnic group
7. Refers to any activity prohibited by law

### **Examples of Unacceptable Ballot Designations:**

- Concerned Citizen
- Taxpayer
- Philanthropist
- Neighborhood Community Leader

If the Director of Elections determines that a proposed ballot designation does not meet any legal requirement, the Department will contact the candidate immediately. Within three business days of receiving this notification, the candidate must provide an alternative ballot designation. If the candidate does not provide an alternative designation or affirm that a previously listed alternate is acceptable, the candidate's name will appear on the ballot without any designation.

## **VII. Public Examinations and Challenges**

CAEC §§13313, 13314; SFMEC §590(a)

All nomination documents are available for public review during the 10-calendar-day period starting at noon the day after the nomination period ends. During this period, any voter of the jurisdiction in which the election is being held, or the Department, may challenge a candidate's legal name, ballot designation, or a translated or transliterated Chinese name requested by a candidate. Chinese transliterations of candidates' names that are provided by the Department's translator are also available for a 10-day examination period, which starts at noon on the 87th day before the election.

Any challenges must be submitted to the Department in writing during the 10-day public examination period. The challenge must demonstrate that the material is inconsistent with election law requirements and that action by the court to correct or remove the material will not substantially interfere with the conduct of the election. Following the close of the public examination period for each category of material, the Department may proceed with publication of that material.

## **VIII. Position on Ballot**

CAEC §13112(b)(1)(B)

On December 14, 2023 (E-82) the California Secretary of State will conduct a random drawing of the alphabet and the Department of Elections will use the results to arrange the names of candidates on the ballot.

## **IX. Withdrawal of Candidacy**

CAEC §8550

No candidate may withdraw their candidacy in a Primary election after filing their Declaration of Candidacy.

## **X. Election Day Through Certification of Results**

### **A. Election Day**

CAEC §§319.5, 18370

The polls open at 7 a.m. and close at 8 p.m.

Electioneering, which is any visible or audible activity that advocates for or against any candidate or measure on the ballot, is prohibited within 100 feet of the entrance of a building that contains a Polling Place or Voting Center, or within 100 feet of Ballot Drop-off Boxes. Examples of prohibited materials and activities include displaying a candidate's name, likeness, or logo; buttons, hats, pencils, pens, shirts, signs, or stickers with information about candidates or issues on the ballot; or any audible broadcasting of information about candidates or measures on the ballot. Electioneering also includes soliciting petition signatures within 100 feet of a polling place. Violations can be charged as misdemeanors.

### **B. Election Results**

CAEC §§8141, 15372(a)

On Election Night, the Department will release the first preliminary summary report of election results at approximately 8:45 p.m. This report will provide the results from the vote-by-mail ballots processed before Election Day.

Approximately hourly after that, the Department will release additional summary results reports that include votes cast at the polling places.

After all polling places have reported, the Department will release a final summary report.

The Department will release updated results reports at approximately 4 p.m. on every day on which it counts ballots. On any days during which no ballots are counted, the Department will post a notice on [sfelections.org](https://sfelections.org) stating that no update will be issued.

The Department will release final election results at the end of the official canvass period, no later than 30 days after the election.

If no candidate receives a majority of votes for a nonpartisan office, the candidates with the two highest vote totals will appear on the ballot for the general election.

For more information about results reporting, visit [sfelections.org](https://sfelections.org)