



DeKalb County
G E O R G I A

CANDIDATE
QUALIFYING
GUIDE
2026



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A LETTER FROM

Executive Director
Keisha L. Smith

Dear Candidates and Campaign Representatives,

On behalf of the DeKalb County Voter Registration and Elections Office, welcome to Candidate Qualifying for the upcoming election cycle.

We appreciate your commitment to public service and your willingness to engage in the democratic process. Our office is committed to administering elections with integrity, transparency, and professionalism, and to ensuring that every candidate receives clear guidance and equitable access to information throughout the qualifying period.

During Candidate Qualifying, our team will assist you with required documentation, fee processing, and procedural questions to help ensure compliance with state and local election laws. We encourage you to carefully review all qualifying requirements in advance and to seek clarification from our staff if needed.

We look forward to working with you and wish you a smooth and successful qualifying experience.

Keisha L. Smith, MPA
Executive Director
DeKalb County Voter Registration and Elections



2026 QUALIFYING INFORMATION

In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 21-2-131 (a)(1)(A) and (1)(B), the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners set the qualifying fees for offices to be elected by DeKalb County Voters in 2026.

Qualifying Begins: 9:00 AM Monday, March 2, 2026

Qualifying Ends: 12:00 PM Friday, March 6, 2026

Qualifying Fees set by the Board of Commissioners are as follows:

2026 QUALIFYING FEES

In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 21-2-131, the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners set the qualifying fees for the following offices to be elected by DeKalb County voters in 2026.

| Office | Qualifying Fee |
|---|-------------------|
| Judge of State Court of DeKalb County - Divisions A-1, A-2, A-4, A-7 and B-10 | \$5,912.74 |
| County Commissioner (Districts 2, 3, & 7) | \$2,101.28 |
| Board of Education (Districts 2, 4, & 6) | \$750.00 |
| Soil & Water Conservation Supervisor | Petition |

NON-PARTISAN, INDEPENDENT & POLITICAL BODY CANDIDATE QUALIFYING INFORMATION

DeKalb County Board of Registration and Elections Office

4380 Memorial Drive, Suite 300

Decatur, Georgia 30032

404-298-4020

voterreg@dekalbcountyga.gov

PARTISAN CANDIDATE QUALIFYING INFORMATION

DEMOCRATIC PARTY

4380 Memorial Drive, Suite 300

Decatur, Georgia 30032

REPUBLICAN PARTY

4380 Memorial Drive, Suite 300

Decatur, Georgia 30032

QUALIFYING GUIDELINES FOR PARTISAN CANDIDATES

In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 21-2-153, partisan candidates seeking office for the following races shall file their Declaration of Candidacy and Affidavit with the appropriate county political party, beginning at 9:00 AM on March 2, 2026, and ending at Noon on March 6, 2026. Qualifying for partisan offices will take place at 4380 Memorial Drive, Suite 300, Decatur, Georgia 30032.

PARTISAN OFFICES

County Commissioner (Districts 2, 3, & 7)

Procedures for Qualifying

- Provide valid photo I.D.
- File a Declaration of Candidacy & Affidavit (Documents must be notarized)
- Pay the qualifying fee for the office being sought or file by Pauper's Affidavit.
 - Cashier's check, money order, or personal check payable to "DeKalb County Democratic or Republican Party"
 - Cash
- File a Declaration of Intention to Accept Campaign Contributions (Form DOI) or,
- File the Affidavit of a Candidate's Intent Not to Exceed \$2,500.00 in Contributions and/or Expenditures.

QUALIFYING GUIDELINES FOR NONPARTISAN CANDIDATES

In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 21-2-132, candidates seeking nonpartisan county offices shall qualify by filing their Notice of Candidacy and Affidavit with a county Qualifying Officer beginning at 9:00 AM on March 2, 2026, and ending at Noon on March 6, 2026. Qualifying for nonpartisan offices will take place at 4380 Memorial Drive, Suite 300, Decatur, Georgia 30032.

| NONPARTISAN OFFICES |
|--|
| State Court Judge - Division A-1 |
| State Court Judge - Division A-2 |
| State Court Judge - Division A-4 |
| State Court Judge - Division A-7 |
| State Court Judge - Division B-10 |
| Board of Education (Districts 2, 4, & 6) |
| Soil & Water Conservation Supervisor |

Procedures for Qualifying

1. Provide valid photo I.D.
2. File a Notice of Candidacy & Affidavit (Documents must be notarized)
 - o Candidates seeking office for Local Board of Education must submit an additional affidavit.
3. Pay the qualifying fee for the office being sought (if applicable), or file by Pauper's Affidavit.
 - o Cashier's check, money order, or personal check payable to "DeKalb County"
 - o Cash
4. File a Declaration of Intention to Accept Campaign Contributions (Form DOI) or,
5. File the Affidavit of a Candidate's Intent Not to Exceed \$2,500.00 in Contributions and/or Expenditures.

QUALIFYING GUIDELINES FOR INDEPENDENT/POLITICAL BODY CANDIDATES

In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 21-2-132 (e) and O.C.G.A. § 21-2-170, any person desiring to run as an Independent or Political Body Candidate must qualify with a county qualifying officer beginning at 9:00 AM on March 2, 2026 and ending at Noon on March 6, 2026. There is a second qualifying period beginning at 9:00 AM on June 22, 2026, and ending at Noon on July 14, 2026. Qualifying will take place at 4380 Memorial Drive, Suite 300, Decatur, Georgia 30032.

Procedures for Qualifying

1. Provide a valid photo I.D.
2. File the Notice of Candidacy & Affidavit, AND
3. File a Nomination Petition. The Nomination Petition must be signed by five percent of the registered voters eligible to vote in the last election held for such office the candidate is seeking. No nomination petition shall be circulated prior to 180 days before the last day on which such petition may be filed (Noon on July 14, 2026).
4. Pay the qualifying fee for the office being sought.
 - o Cashier's check, money order or personal check payable to "DeKalb County"
 - o Cash, OR
 - o File a Pauper's affidavit. If filing a Pauper's affidavit, the candidate must also file a qualifying petition at the time of qualifying.
5. File a Declaration of Intention to Accept Campaign Contributions (Form DOI) or,
6. File the Affidavit of a Candidate's Intent Not to Exceed \$2,500.00 in Contributions and/or Expenditures.

COUNTY COMMISSIONER

Qualifications

1. Must have been a resident of the county in which seeking the office for at least 12 months prior to election or appointment.

O.C.G.A. §§ 45-2-1, 21-2-6

Annotations:

- i. The residency requirement refers to domicile. There must be either the tacit or explicit intention to change one's domicile before one can change his legal residence. If a person leaves the place of his domicile temporarily, or for a particular purpose, and does not take up an actual residence elsewhere with the avowed intention of making a change in his domicile, he will not be considered as having changed his domicile. *Haggard v. Graham*, 142 Ga. App. 498, 236 S.E.2d 92 (1977).
- ii. A candidate for office of county commissioner must be a resident for a period of months prior to his or her election but does not have to reside in the commission district from which he or she seeks election for that period. Op. Atty. Gen. 86-23.
- iii. A county is not authorized to establish more stringent residency requirements for election of county commissioners than the requirements in the O.C.G.A. Op. Atty. Gen. 97-27.

2. Must be a qualified voter.

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-6

3. Must affirm during the candidate qualifying period the requirement to complete all mandatory training if elected, as required for county governing authority or local board of education members.

O.C.G.A. § 21-5-50 (a) (3.2)

4. Must be a citizen of the state and must have attained the age of 21 years; provided, however, that upon passage of appropriate local ordinances, citizens of the state who are otherwise qualified and are at least 18 years of age shall be eligible to hold any county office, except offices of a judicial nature.

O.C.G.A. §§ 45-2-1, 21-2-6

Term of Office and Election

5. Elected by qualified voters of the county.

6. Term of office is four years.

Ga. Const. Art. 9, § 1, ¶ 1

O.C.G.A. §§ 21-2-9 and local legislation enacted for individual counties

7. Elected in the general election held on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November in the year preceding the expiration of the term of office. See Ga. Const. Art. 9, § 1, and local legislation enacted for individual counties.

O.C.G.A. §§ 21-2-9, 21-2-2 (15)

8. A candidate for county commissioner must pay a qualification fee or file a pauper's affidavit.

O.C.G.A. §§ 21-2-131, 21-2-132, 21-2-153

Annotations:

i. If a candidate is unable to pay required qualifying fee, candidate may execute a pauper's affidavit in lieu of qualifying fee and be afforded the opportunity to run. Op. Atty. Gen. 72-48. See *Georgia Socialist Workers Party v. Fortson*, 315 F. Supp. 1035 (N.D. Ga 1970).

ii. A candidate for the final half of an unexpired term must pay the full qualification fee just as if he or she were running for a full term. Op. Atty. Gen. U70-77.

iii. For the purpose of computing qualifying fee, only the salary which the law provides for the office directly involved should be included and not the additional compensation paid for the ex-officio position held by the incumbent. Op. Atty. Gen. 70-53.

iv. An elected official cannot rely on payment of an incorrectly advertised qualifying fee to compel the governing authority to compensate the elected official beyond the salary permitted by statute. *Rowland v. Tattnall County*, 260 Ga. 109, 390 S.E. 2d 217 (1990).

9. Eligibility of write-in candidate:

a) No person shall be eligible as a write-in candidate in a special or general primary, a special or general primary runoff, or in a special or general election runoff.

b) No person shall be eligible as a write-in candidate in a general or special election if such person was a candidate for nomination or election to the same office in the immediately preceding primary.

c) No person elected on a write-in vote shall be eligible to hold office unless notice of his or her intention of candidacy was filed and published no earlier than January 1 and no later than the Tuesday after the first Monday in September prior to the election in the case of a general election or at least 20 or more days prior to a special election. In a general or special election of county officers,

i. notice must be filed with the superintendent of elections in the county in which the person is to be a candidate and published in the official organ of the same county by the person giving notice of intention to be a write-in candidate or by some other person or group of persons qualified to vote in the subject election; and

ii. a copy of the notice as published and an affidavit that the notice has been published, including the name of the newspaper and the date of publication, must be filed with the superintendent of elections not later than the fifth day after the deadline for filing and publishing such notice. Ga. Const. Art. 2, § 2, ¶ 3

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-133

10. No person shall be nominated, nor shall any person be a candidate in a primary, election, or special election for more than one of the following public offices to be filled at any one election or special election: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, State School Superintendent, Commissioner of Insurance, Commissioner of Agriculture, Commissioner of Labor, United States Senator or Representative in Congress, Public Service Commissioner, Justice of the Supreme Court, Judge of the Court of Appeals, members of the Senate and House of Representatives of the General Assembly, judge of superior court, district attorney, any elected county officer, and any elected municipal officer.

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-136

11. No person shall be nominated or elected who has been adjudged a "subversive person," as defined in the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act of 1953.

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-7

Oath of Office

12. Every public officer must take the oath of office and any oath prescribed by the Constitution of Georgia and must swear that he or she
- a) is not the holder of any unaccounted for public money due this state;
 - b) is not the holder of any office of trust under the government of the United States, any other state, or any foreign state which he or she is by the laws of the State of Georgia prohibited from holding;
 - c) is otherwise qualified to hold said office according to the constitution and laws of Georgia; and
 - d) will support the constitutions of the United States and of this state.

O.C.G.A. § 45-3-1

Note:

The official acts of an officer are valid regardless of his or her omission to take and file the oath, except in cases where so specially declared. See O.C.G.A. § 45-3-10.

Cross-Reference:

Any public officer who willfully and intentionally violates the terms of his or her oath as prescribed by law shall, upon conviction thereof, be punished by imprisonment for not less than one nor more than five years. O.C.G.A. § 16 -10-1.

13. A loyalty oath, which must state that such person will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of Georgia and is not a member of the Communist Party, is also required for all elected officers of this state.

O.C.G.A. §§ 45-3-11, 45-3-12, 45-3-13

Annotations:

- i. See Georgia Conference of Am. Ass'n. of University Professors v. Bd. of Regents of University System of Ga., 246 F. Supp. 553 (N.D. Ga. 1965), limiting the coverage of the loyalty oath.
- ii. The portion of the Georgia loyalty oath which requires one to swear to support the constitutions of Georgia and the United States is valid, and that portion of the oath which requires disavowal of membership in the Communist Party is unconstitutional and should not be administered. Op. Atty. Gen. 85-19.

Vacancies in and Succession to Office

14. When a vacancy occurs in the office of a county governing authority in any county in which the local act creating that governing authority for the county makes no provision for succession to fill the vacancy and the unexpired term of office exceeds six months in duration, it shall be the duty of the judge of the probate court of the county to call a special election to elect a successor and fill the vacancy in not less than 30 nor more than 60 days. The election shall be held as provided by Chapter 2 of Title 21, the Georgia Election Code, and the cost of the election shall be defrayed by the proper county authorities. If the unexpired term to be filled is less than six months in duration and the local act creating the governing authority makes no provision to fill the vacancy, the judge of the superior court of the county shall have the power to appoint a successor to fill the unexpired term. O.C.G.A. § 36-5-21 (a) See O.C.G.A. § 21-2-540, conduct of special elections. See also local laws pertaining to specific counties.

Note:

See O.C.G.A. § 36-5-21(b) and (c) concerning simultaneous vacancies in all commissioner offices or a vacancy in the office of sole commissioner.

Annotation:

The general law is not applicable if the local act creating the governing authority for the county provides for the manner of succession to fill the vacancy. Op. Atty. Gen. U90-9.

General Disqualifications

15. The following persons are ineligible to hold any civil office, and the existence of any of the following acts shall be a sufficient reason for vacating any office held by such person, but the acts of such person, while holding a commission, shall be valid as the acts of an officer de facto, namely:
- a) Persons who are not citizens of this state and persons under the age of 21 years, provided, however, that upon passage of appropriate ordinances, citizens of this state who are otherwise qualified and who are 18 years old shall be eligible to hold any county or municipal office, other than a judicial office.
 - b) Persons who are the holders of public funds who have refused or failed to account for and pay over such funds to the proper officer.
 - c) Persons holding any office of profit or trust under the government of the United States other than that of postmaster and officers and enlisted persons of the armed forces. Membership on any federal commission, panel, or other fact-finding or policy-making agency, where the appointment is temporary and the duties do not interfere materially with the person's duties as a public officer, shall not bar any person from holding office in this state or acceding to a state office.
 - d) Persons of unsound mind and persons who, from advanced age or bodily infirmity, are unfit to discharge the duties of the office to which they are chosen or appointed.
 - e) Persons who are not registered and qualified voters entitled to vote.
 - f) Persons who have been convicted of a felony involving moral turpitude, unless that person's civil rights have been restored and at least 10 years have elapsed from the date of the completion of the sentence without a subsequent conviction of another felony involving moral turpitude.
 - g) Persons who have been convicted and sentenced in any court of competent jurisdiction for fraudulent violation of primary or election laws or malfeasance in office unless such person's civil rights have been restored.
 - h) Persons who are constitutionally disqualified for any cause.

GA. Const. Art. 2, § 2, ¶ 3

O.C.G.A. §§ 45-2-1, 21-2-8

Cross-Reference:

“Public office” means every federal, state, county, and municipal office to which persons can be elected by a vote of the electors under the laws of this state or under the respective municipal charters, except the office of soil and water conservation officer. O.C.G.A. § 21-2-2 (30).

Note:

Each candidate is required to file an affidavit which states that he or she is eligible to hold the office for which he or she is running. See O.C.G.A. §§ 21-2-132 (e), 21-2-153 (e).

JUDGE OF STATE COURT

Qualifications

1. Must be at least 25 years of age at the time of election.
O.C.G.A. § 15-7-21 (a)(1)
2. Must have been a citizen of the state for three years preceding the beginning of the term of office.
Ga. Const. Art. 6, § 7, ¶ 2 (e)
O.C.G.A. § 15-7-21(a)(1)
3. Must, at the time of election, have been admitted to practice law for seven years.
Ga. Const. Art. 6, § 7, ¶ 2 (b)
O.C.G.A. § 15-7-21 (a)(1)
4. Must reside in the geographical area in which selected to serve.
Ga. Const. Art. 6, § 7, ¶ 2 (d)

Note:

If no candidate meets the residency requirement, qualifying must reopen and any person who has been a resident of the judicial circuit for three years and who meets all other requirements for the office may qualify. See O.C.G.A. § 15-7-21.

Annotation:

State court judges must continue to maintain residency in the county from which they are elected to remain in office. If he or she fails to do so, then the office becomes vacant as a matter of law. 1995 Op. Atty' Gen. U95-6.

5. Must be elected by the qualified electors of the county or counties in which the court is located.
O.C.G.A. § 15-7-20
A full time judge of the state court may not engage in the private practice of law. A part-time judge of the state court may engage in the private practice of law in other courts but may not practice in his own court or appear in any matter as to which that judge has exercised jurisdiction.
O.C.G.A. § 15-7-21 (b)

Term of Office and Election

6. Elected on a nonpartisan basis for a term of four years. The term begins on January 1 after the election.

Ga. Const. Art. 6, § 7, ¶ 1

O.C.G.A. §§ 21-2-138, 15-7-20

Annotations:

i. The omission of the phrase “until his successor is qualified” in the 1983 Constitution does not prevent a legally qualified incumbent from remaining in office after his or her four-year term of office ends. *Garcia v. Miller*, 261 Ga. 531; 408 S.E. 2d 97 (1991).

ii. There is no constitutional or statutory bar to continuing to serve as judge of the state court until the effective date of resignation from that office, notwithstanding having taken the oath of office of judge of the superior court a few days before that term of office was to begin. *Carey Canada, Inc. v. Hinely*, 181 Ga. App. 364; 352 S.E. 2d 398 (1986).

iii. An appointee to fill a vacancy occurring in a superior or state court judgeship will serve until January 1 following the next general election which is more than six months after the date of the person’s appointment, at which time the appointee will be required to run for a new four-year term of office regardless of the time remaining in the original term of office. *Op. Atty. Gen.* 86-31.

7. Elected in the general election held on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November in each even-numbered year next preceding the expiration of the term of office.

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-9

Annotation:

It is settled in this state and in many other jurisdictions of this country that an election is absolutely void when not held in the proper time and place and by persons qualified to hold it. *Davis v. Page*, 217 Ga. 751, 125 S.E.2d 60 (1962).

8. A candidate for judge of state court must pay a qualification fee or file a pauper's affidavit.

O.C.G.A. §§ 21-2-131, 21-2-132, 21-2-153

Annotations:

i. If a candidate is unable to pay required qualifying fee, candidate may execute a pauper's affidavit in lieu of qualifying fee and be afforded the opportunity to run. Op. Atty. Gen. 72-48. See Georgia Socialist Workers Party v. Fortson, 315 F. Supp. 1035 (N.D. Ga. 1970).

ii. A candidate for the final half of an unexpired term must pay the full qualification fee just as if he or she were running for a full term. Op. Atty. Gen. U70-77.

iii. For the purposes of computing qualifying fee, only the salary which the law provides for the office directly involved should be included and not the additional compensation paid for the ex-officio position held by the incumbent. Op. Atty. Gen. 70-53.

iv. An elected official cannot rely on payment of an incorrectly advertised qualifying fee to compel the governing authority to compensate the elected official beyond the fee to salary permitted by statute. Rowland v. Tattnall County, 260 Ga. 109, 390 S.E. 2d 217 (1990).

9. Eligibility of write-in candidate:

a) No person shall be eligible as a write-in candidate in a special or general primary, a special or general primary runoff, or in a special or general election runoff.

b) No person shall be eligible as a write-in candidate in a general or special election if such person was a candidate for nomination or election to the same office in the immediately preceding primary.

c) No person elected on a write-in vote shall be eligible to hold office unless notice of his or her intention of candidacy was filed and published no earlier than January 1 and no later than the Tuesday after the first Monday in September prior to the election in the case of a general election or at least 20 or more days prior to a special election. In a general or special election of county officers,

- i. notice must be filed with the county superintendent of elections and published in the official paper of the same county by the person giving notice of intention to be a write-in candidate or by some other person or group of persons qualified to vote in the subject election; and
- ii. a copy of the notice as published and an affidavit that the notice has been published, including the name of the newspaper and date of publication, must be filed with the superintendent of elections not later than the fifth day after the deadline for filing and publishing such notice.

Ga. Const. Art. 2, § 2, ¶ 3

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-133

10. No person shall be nominated, nor shall any person be a candidate in a primary, election, or special election for more than one of the following public offices to be filled at any one election or special election: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, State School Superintendent, Commissioner of Insurance, Commissioner of Agriculture, Commissioner of Labor, United States Senator or Representative in Congress, Public Service Commissioner, Justice of the Supreme Court, Judge of the Court of Appeals, members of the Senate and House of Representatives of the General Assembly, judge of superior court, district attorney, any elected county officer, and any elected municipal officer.

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-136

11. No person shall be nominated or elected who has been adjudged a "subversive person," as defined in Part 2 of Article 1 of Chapter 11 of Title 16, the "The Sedition and Subversive Activities Act of 1953".

O.C.G.A § 21-2-7

Oath of Office

12. Before entering on the duties of their office, state court judges shall take the same oaths which judges of the superior courts must take: "I swear that I will administer justice without respect to person and do equal rights to the poor and the rich and that I will faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent on me as judge of the state courts of this state, according to the best of my ability and understanding, and agreeably to the laws and Constitution of this state and the Constitution of the United States. So help me God."

Note:

The federal constitution requires that the judicial officers of the state be bound by oath or affirmation to support the federal constitution. See U.S. Constitution, Art. 6, § 3.

13. Every public officer must take the oath of office and any oath prescribed by the Constitution of Georgia and must swear that he or she
- a) is not the holder of any unaccounted for public money due this state or any political subdivision or authority thereof;
 - b) is not the holder of any office of trust under the government of the United States, any other state, or any foreign state which he or she is by the laws of the State of Georgia prohibited from holding;
 - c) is otherwise qualified to hold said office according to the constitution and laws of Georgia;
- and
- d) will support the constitutions of the United States and of this state.
 - e) if elected by any circuit or district, swear that he or she has been a resident thereof for the time required by the Constitution and laws of this state.

O.C.G.A. §§ 15-7-20, 45-3-1

Note:

The official acts of an officer are valid regardless of his or her omission to take and file the oath, except in cases where so specially declared. See O.C.G.A. § 45-3-10.

Cross-Reference:

Any public officer who willfully and intentionally violates the terms of his or her oath as prescribed by law shall, upon conviction thereof, be punished by imprisonment for not less than one nor more than five years.

O.C.G.A. § 16 -10-1.

14. A loyalty oath, which must state that such person will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of Georgia and is not a member of the Communist Party, is also required for all elected officers of this state.

O.C.G.A. §§ 45-3-11, 45-3-12, 45-3-13

Annotations:

- i. See *Georgia Conference of Am. Ass'n. of University Professors v. Bd. of Regents of University System of Ga.*, 246 F. Supp. 553 (N.D. Ga. 1965), limiting the coverage of the loyalty oath.
- ii. The portion of the Georgia loyalty oath which requires one to swear to support the constitutions of Georgia and the United States is valid, and that portion of the oath which requires disavowal of membership in the Communist Party is unconstitutional and should not be administered. Op. Atty. Gen. 85-19.

Vacancies in and Succession to Office

15. Any judge may be removed, suspended, or otherwise disciplined for:
- a) willful misconduct in office;
 - b) willful and persistent failure to perform the duties of office;
 - c) habitual intemperance;
 - d) conviction of a crime involving moral turpitude;
 - e) or for conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice which brings the judicial office into disrespect.

Any judge may be retired for disability which constitutes a serious and likely permanent interference with the performance of the duties of office. The Supreme Court shall adopt rules of implementation.

Ga. Const. Art. 6, § 7, ¶ 7

Annotation:

The Supreme Court possesses the authority to regulate the conduct of judges—including conduct during judicial elections. *Judicial Qualifications Commission v. Lowenstein*, 252 Ga. 432, 314 S.E.2d 107 (1984).

16. In case of vacancy by resignation, death, or otherwise, the vacancy shall be filled by appointment of the Governor. The appointee shall serve until a successor is duly selected and qualified and until January 1 of the year following the next general election which is more than six months after such person's appointment.

Ga. Const. Art. 6, § 7, ¶ 3 and ¶ 4; Art. 5, § 2, ¶ 8 (a)

O.C.G.A. § 45-5-3

General Disqualifications

17. The following persons are ineligible to hold any civil office, and the existence of any of the following acts shall be a sufficient reason for vacating any office held by such person, but the acts of such person, while holding a commission, shall be valid as the acts of an officer de facto, namely:

- a) Persons who are not citizens of this state and persons under the age of 21 years, provided, however, that upon passage of appropriate ordinances, citizens of this state who are otherwise qualified and who are 18 years old shall be eligible to hold any county or municipal office, other than a judicial office.
- b) Persons who are the holders of public funds who have refused or failed to account for and pay over such funds to the proper officer.
- c) Persons holding any office of profit or trust under the government of the United States other than that of postmaster and officers and enlisted persons of the armed forces. Membership on any federal commission, panel, or other fact-finding or policy-making agency, where the appointment is temporary and the duties do not interfere materially with the person's duties as a public officer, shall not bar any person from holding office in this state or acceding to a state office.
- d) Persons of unsound mind and persons who, from advanced age or bodily infirmity, are unfit to discharge the duties of the office to which they are chosen or appointed.
- e) Persons who are not registered and qualified voters entitled to vote.
- f) Persons who have been convicted of a felony involving moral turpitude, unless that person's civil rights have been restored and at least 10 years have elapsed from the date of the completion of the sentence without a subsequent conviction of another felony involving moral turpitude.
- g) Persons who have been convicted and sentenced in any court of competent jurisdiction for fraudulent violation of primary or election laws or malfeasance in office unless such person's civil rights have been restored.
- h) Persons who are constitutionally disqualified for any cause.

GA. Const. Art. 2, § 2, ¶ 3

O.C.G.A. §§ 45-2-1, 21-2-8

18. Suspension and removal from office upon felony indictment or conviction:
- a) Upon indictment for a felony by a grand jury of this state or of the United States, which felony relates to and adversely affects the administration of justice, the state constitution provides a means by which the indicted judge may be suspended, with pay, pending the final disposition of the case or the expiration of the judge's term of office, whichever occurs first.
 - b) Upon initial conviction for any felony in a trial court of this state or the United States, the convicted judge shall be immediately and without further action suspended from office without pay.
 - c) Upon final conviction of a felony, the office shall be vacated immediately without further action. Said vacancy shall be filled in the manner provided by law for filling vacancies in such office caused by death or resignation.

Ga. Const. Art. 6, § 7, ¶ 7

O.C.G.A. § 45-5-2

19. It is unlawful for the judges of the state court to accept or hold office or employment in the executive branch of the state government, or any agency thereof, or in the legislative branch of the state government.

Ga. Const. Art. 1, § 2, ¶ 3

20. A full-time judge of the state court may not engage in the private practice of law. A parttime judge of the state court may engage in the private practice of law in other courts but may not practice in his or her own court or appear in any matter as to which that judge has exercised any jurisdiction.

O.C.G.A. § 15-7-21(b)

MEMBER, COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Qualifications

1. Must be a citizen of this state.
2. Must have been a resident of the county from which elected for 12 months immediately preceding election.
3. Must be a qualified voter.
O.C.G.A. § 45-2-1
4. Must affirm during the candidate qualifying period the requirement to complete all mandatory training if elected, as required for county governing authority or local board of education members.
O.C.G.A. § 21-5-50 (a) (3.2)
5. Must reside within the school district in which he or she seeks election and in the election district which he or she represents.
Ga. Const. Art. 8, § 5, ¶ 2
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-51

Cross-Reference:

Art. 8, § 5, ¶ 2, and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-51 establish county school districts under the management and control of a county board of education.

Annotation:

Residency requirements for the election of local school board members cannot be established by local board bylaws. Op. Atty. Gen. U97-25.

6. Must not be
 - a) employed by or serving on the governing board of any private educational body or institution;
 - b) employed by the local board of education and be on the same board;
 - c) employed by either the State Department of Education or the State Board of Education.
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-51 (c)

Term of Office and Election

7. Term of office is four years unless otherwise provided by local act or constitutional amendment.
Ga. Const. Art. 8, § 5, ¶ 2
O.C.G.A. § 20-2-52
8. Elected in the general election held on Tuesday following the first Monday in November in each even-numbered year next preceding the expiration of the term of office.
O.C.G.A. § 21-2-9
9. Elected in partisan elections unless nonpartisan elections are provided for by local law.
O.C.G.A. §§ 20-2-56, 21-2-139
10. A candidate for member of a county board of education must pay a qualification fee or file a pauper's affidavit.
O.C.G.A. §§ 21-2-131, 21-2-132, 21-2-153

Annotations:

- i. If a candidate is unable to pay required qualifying fee, candidate may execute a pauper's affidavit in lieu of qualifying fee and be afforded the opportunity to run. Op. Atty. Gen. 72-48. See *Georgia Socialist Workers Party v. Fortson*, 315 F. Supp. 1035 (N.D. Ga. 1970).
- ii. A candidate for the final half of an unexpired term must pay the full qualification fee just as if he or she were running for a full term. Op. Atty. Gen. U70-77.
- iii. For the purpose of computing qualifying fee, only the salary which the law provides for the office directly involved should be included and not the additional compensation paid for the ex-officio position held by the incumbent. Op. Atty. Gen. 70-53.
- iv. An elected official cannot rely on payment of an incorrectly advertised qualifying fee to compel the governing authority to compensate the elected official beyond the salary permitted by statute. *Rowland v. Tattnall County*, 260 Ga. 109, 390 S.E. 2d 217 (1990).

11. Eligibility of write-in candidate:

- a) No person shall be eligible as a write-in candidate in a special or general primary, a special or general primary runoff, or in a special or general election runoff.
- b) No person shall be eligible as a write-in candidate in a general or special election if such person was a candidate for nomination or election to the same office in the immediately preceding primary.
- c) No person elected on a write-in vote shall be eligible to hold office unless notice of his or her intention of candidacy was filed and published no earlier than January 1 and no later than the Tuesday after the first Monday in September prior to the election in the case of a general election or at least 20 or more days prior to a special election. In a general or special election of county officers,
 - i. notice must be filed with the superintendent of elections in the county in which the person is to be a candidate and published in the official organ of the same county by the person giving notice of intention to be a write-in candidate or by some other person or group of persons qualified to vote in the subject election; and
 - ii. a copy of the notice as published and an affidavit that the notice has been published, including the name of the newspaper and the date of publication, must be filed with the superintendent of elections not later than the fifth day after the deadline for filing and publishing such notice.

Ga. Const. Art. 2, § 2, ¶ 3

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-133

- 12. No person shall be nominated, nor shall any person be a candidate in a primary, election, or special election for more than one of the following public offices to be filled at any one election or special election: Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, State School Superintendent, Commissioner of Insurance, Commissioner of Agriculture, Commissioner of Labor, United States Senator or Representative in Congress, Public Service Commissioner, Justice of the Supreme Court, Judge of the Court of Appeals, members of the Senate and House of Representatives of the General Assembly, judge of superior court, district attorney, any elected county officer, and any elected municipal officer.**

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-136

- 13. No person shall be nominated or elected who has been adjudged a "subversive person," as defined in the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act of 1953.**

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-7

Oath of Office

14. Every public officer must take the oath of office and any oath prescribed by the Constitution of Georgia and must swear that he or she
- a) is not the holder of any unaccounted for public money due this state;
 - b) is not the holder of any office of trust under the government of the United States, any other state, or any foreign state which he or she is by the laws of the State of Georgia prohibited from holding;
 - c) is otherwise qualified to hold said office according to the constitution and laws of Georgia; and
 - d) will support the constitutions of the United States and of this state.

O.C.G.A. § 45-3-1

Note:

The official acts of an officer are valid regardless of his or her omission to take and file the oath, except in cases where so specially declared. See O.C.G.A. § 45-3-10.

15. A loyalty oath, which must state that such person will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of Georgia and is not a member of the Communist Party, is also required for all elected officers of this state.

O.C.G.A. §§ 45-3-11, 45-3-12, 45-3-13

Annotations:

- i. See *Georgia Conference of Am. Ass'n. of University Professors v. Bd. of Regents of University System of Ga.*, 246 F.Supp. 553 (N.D. Ga 1965), limiting the coverage of the loyalty oath.
- ii. The portion of the Georgia loyalty oath which requires one to swear to support the constitutions of Georgia and the United States is valid, and that portion of the oath which requires disavowal of membership in the Communist Party is unconstitutional and should not be administered. Op. Atty. Gen. 85-19.

Vacancies in and Succession to Office

16. When a member of a local board of education moves his or her domicile from the district which that person represents, such person shall cease to be a member of the local board of education.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-51 (b)

17. All elected or appointed offices are deemed vacant upon the incumbent's

- a) death or resignation;
- b) ceasing to be a resident of the state, county, or district from which elected;
- c) failing to obtain commissions or give bond within the time prescribed by law; or abandoning the office or ceasing to perform its duties. Upon the occurrence of a vacancy, the officer or body authorized to fill the vacancy or call for an election to fill the vacancy shall do so without the necessity of a judicial determination that a vacancy has occurred.

O.C.G.A. § 45-5-1

18. Methods of filling a vacancy:

- a) Except as otherwise provided by local law, a vacancy occurring more than 90 days prior to a general election preceding the general election at which a successor will be elected for a new full term of office will be filled for the unexpired term at a special election held at the time of the next general election. The remaining members of the board of education shall select a qualified person to serve until such special election.
- b) If the vacancy occurs 90 days or less before the date of a general election preceding the next general election at which a successor will be elected for a new full term of office, the remaining members of the board will appoint a person to serve for the remainder of the unexpired term.

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-54.1

General Disqualifications

19. The following persons are ineligible to hold any civil office, and the existence of any of the following acts shall be a sufficient reason for vacating any office held by such person, but the acts of such person, while holding a commission, shall be valid as the acts of an officer de facto, namely:
- a) Persons who are not citizens of this state and persons under the age of 21 years, provided, however, that upon passage of appropriate ordinances, citizens of this state who are otherwise qualified and who are 18 years old shall be eligible to hold any county or municipal office, other than a judicial office.
 - b) Persons who are the holders of public funds who have refused or failed to account for and pay over such funds to the proper officer.
 - c) Persons holding any office of profit or trust under the government of the United States other than that of postmaster and officers and enlisted persons of the armed forces. Membership on any federal commission, panel, or other fact-finding or policy-making agency, where the appointment is temporary and the duties do not interfere materially with the person's duties as a public officer, shall not bar any person from holding office in this state or acceding to a state office.
 - d) Persons of unsound mind and persons who, from advanced age or bodily infirmity, are unfit to discharge the duties of the office to which they are chosen or appointed.
 - e) Persons who are not registered and qualified voters entitled to vote.
 - f) Persons who have been convicted of a felony involving moral turpitude, unless that person's civil rights have been restored and at least 10 years have elapsed from the date of the completion of the sentence without a subsequent conviction of another felony involving moral turpitude.
 - g) Persons who have been convicted and sentenced in any court of competent jurisdiction for fraudulent violation of primary or election laws or malfeasance in office unless such person's civil rights have been restored.
 - h) Persons who are constitutionally disqualified for any cause.

GA. Const. Art. 2, § 2, ¶ 3

O.C.G.A. §§ 45-2-1, 21-2-8

Independent and Political Body Candidate Qualifying/Filing Schedule

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| January 15, 2026 | Earliest day to circulate nomination petition. O.C.G.A. § 21-2-170(e) |
| March 2, 2026, 9:00 AM | Earliest day to qualify for the November General Election. O.C.G.A. § 21-2-153(c)(1)(A) |
| March 6, 2026, 12:00 Noon | Last day to qualify for the November General Election. O.C.G.A. § 21-2-153(c)(1)(A) |
| June 22, 2026, 9:00 AM | Earliest day for an Independent of a Political Body Candidate to file their Nomination Petition to have his/her name placed on the General Election Ballot. O.C.G.A. § 21-2-132(e) **Second Qualifying Period Begins** |
| July 14, 2026, 12:00 Noon | Last day for an Independent or a Political Body Candidate to file their Nomination Petition to have his/her name placed on the General Election Ballot. O.C.G.A. § 21-2-132(e) **Second Qualifying Period Ends** |

The Nomination Petition must be signed by five percent of the registered voters eligible to vote in the last election held for such office the candidate is seeking. No nomination petition shall be circulated prior to 180 days before the last day on which such petition may be filed, and no signature shall be counted unless it was signed within 180 days of the last day for filing the same.

QUALIFYING GUIDELINES

Qualifying as a Pauper

Candidates may qualify by filing a pauper's affidavit in lieu of paying the required qualifying fee in accordance with O.C.G.A. §21-2-153 (a.1)(1), 21-2-132(g), at the time of qualifying.

Procedures for Qualifying

1. Provide a valid photo I.D.
2. Complete the Notice of Candidacy & Affidavit. Be sure to select the option to file as a pauper on the Notice of Candidacy & Affidavit. Must be filed at the time of qualifying.
3. Submit a completed Paupers Affidavit. Must be filed at the time of qualifying.
4. Submit at the time of qualifying a Qualifying Petition, signed by one percent of the total number of voters eligible to vote in the last election for filing of the office for which the candidate is qualifying. A qualifying petition must be circulated within 180 days of the last day the qualifying petition may be filed (Noon, March 6, 2026).
5. File a Declaration of Intention to Accept Campaign Contributions (Form DOI) or,
6. File the Affidavit of a Candidate's Intent Not to Exceed \$2,500.00 in Contributions and/or Expenditures.

Number of Signatures Required for Nomination and Qualifying Petitions

| Office | Last Election Held | Registered Voters at Last Election Held for Elected Office | Signatures Required for Independent or Political Body Candidates (5% of Registered Voters) | Signatures Required for a Pauper's Affidavit (1% of Registered Voters) |
|---|-----------------------|--|--|--|
| County Commissioner District 2 | 11/8/2022 General | 100,140 | 5,007 | 1,002 |
| County Commissioner District 3 | 11/5/2024 Special | 114,250 | 5,713 | 1,143 |
| County Commissioner District 7 | 11/5/2024 Special | 258,634 | 12,932 | 2,587 |
| Board of Education District 2 | 5/24/2022 Nonpartisan | 60,929 | N/A | 610 |
| Board of Education District 4 | 5/24/2022 Nonpartisan | 58,325 | N/A | 584 |
| Board of Education District 6 | 5/24/2022 Nonpartisan | 69,179 | N/A | 692 |
| State Court Judge A-1, A-2, A-4 & A-7, B-10 | 5/24/2022 Nonpartisan | 501,756 | N/A | 5,018 |

QUALIFYING GUIDELINES FOR WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

Qualifying as a Write-In Candidate

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-133

No person elected on a write-in vote shall be eligible to hold office unless notice of his or her intention of candidacy was filed and published no earlier than January 1 and no later than the Tuesday after the first Monday in September prior to the election for county, state, and federal elections; no later than seven days after the close of the qualifying period for nonpartisan elections.

In addition to the above requirements, the person or persons giving notice of intention of candidacy for a write-in candidate shall also file, with the appropriate official specified, a copy of the notice as published with an affidavit stating that the notice has been published and including the name of the newspaper and the date of publication, not later than the fifth day after the deadline for filing and publishing such notice.

To become a certified write-in candidate the candidate must:

1. File the Notice of Intention for Write-In Candidacy with the county Superintendent.
2. Publish a notice of intent in the legal organ of the county (The Champion).
3. Provide a copy of the notice as published with an affidavit stating that the notice has been published including the name of the newspaper and the date of publication.

No person shall be eligible as a write-in candidate in a special or general primary, a special or general primary runoff, or a special or general election runoff (O.C.G.A. § 21-2-133(c)).

No person shall be eligible as a write-in candidate in a general or special election if such person was a candidate for nomination or election to the same office in the immediately preceding primary (O.C.G.A. § 21-2-133(d)).

QUALIFYING/FILING SCHEDULE FOR NONPARTISAN WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-133(A)(B)

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| <p>January 1, 2026</p> | <p>Earliest day to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File Notice of Intention of Write-In Candidacy with county Election Superintendent. • Publish Notice of Intention of Write-In Candidacy in county legal organ (The Champion). • File with the county election superintendent a copy of the Notice of Intention of Write-In Candidacy as published in the county legal organ (The Champion), with an affidavit stating that the notice has been published and including the name of the newspaper and the date of publication. <p>The affidavit may be made by the person giving notice of intention of candidacy or by the publisher of the newspaper in which the notice was published or by an employee of the newspaper designated by the publisher.</p> |
| <p>March 13, 2026</p> | <p>Last day to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File Notice of Intention of Write-In Candidacy with county Election Superintendent. • Publish Notice of Intention of Write-In Candidacy in county legal organ (The Champion). |
| <p>March 18, 2026</p> | <p>Last day to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File with the county election superintendent a copy of the Notice of Intention of Write-In Candidacy as published in the county legal organ (The Champion), with an affidavit stating that the notice has been published and including the name of the newspaper and the date of publication. <p>The affidavit may be made by the person giving notice of intention of candidacy or by the publisher of the newspaper in which the notice was published or by an employee of the newspaper designated by the publisher.</p> |

QUALIFYING/FILING SCHEDULE FOR PARTISAN WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-133(A)(B)

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| <p>January 1, 2026</p> | <p>Earliest day to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File Notice of Intention of Write-In Candidacy with county Election Superintendent. • Publish Notice of Intention of Write-In Candidacy in county legal organ (The Champion). • File with the county election superintendent a copy of the Notice of Intention of Write-In Candidacy as published in the county legal organ (The Champion), with an affidavit stating that the notice has been published and including the name of the newspaper and the date of publication. <p>The affidavit may be made by the person giving notice of intention of candidacy or by the publisher of the newspaper in which the notice was published or by an employee of the newspaper designated by the publisher.</p> |
| <p>September 8, 2026</p> | <p>Last day to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File Notice of Intention of Write-In Candidacy with county Election Superintendent. • Publish Notice of Intention of Write-In Candidacy in county legal organ (The Champion). |
| <p>September 14, 2026</p> | <p>Last day to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • File with the county election superintendent a copy of the Notice of Intention of Write-In Candidacy as published in the county legal organ (The Champion), with an affidavit stating that the notice has been published and including the name of the newspaper and the date of publication. <p>The affidavit may be made by the person giving notice of intention of candidacy or by the publisher of the newspaper in which the notice was published or by an employee of the newspaper designated by the publisher.</p> |

BALLOT NAME: HOW A CANDIDATE'S NAME SHALL APPEAR ON THE BALLOT

Upon qualifying for candidacy, each candidate must submit a Notice of Candidacy Affidavit or a Declaration of Candidacy and Affidavit. This affidavit requires each candidate to include his or her name as the candidate wishes it to appear on the ballot. Many may ask, "What's in a name?" Not only is it very often the first piece of information offered to someone, but it is also a key component in identifying a person. For some candidates, using a nickname or title on the ballot may improve their recognition among voters or even garner a few extra votes if the nickname or title is catchy. The name chosen to appear on the ballot may reflect how friends and people of the community know a candidate and because name recognition plays a significant role in gaining votes; people are inclined to vote for the candidate in which whose name they know. So, is the use of a nickname or a title permissible on the ballot? This section will give a detailed explanation of how a candidate's name will appear on the ballot in accordance with S.E.B. Rule 183-1-11-.02.

SEB RULE 183-1-11-.02.

Appearance of Candidate's Name on Ballot

- (1) A candidate's name on the ballot shall include the candidate's last name shown on the candidate's voter registration records and at least one of: (1) the first name shown on the candidate's voter registration records or corresponding initial, (2) the middle name shown on the candidate's voter registration records or corresponding initial, (3) an abbreviated name by which the candidate is commonly known in the community, or (4) a nickname by which the candidate is commonly known in the community. Any nickname is subject to Section (2) of this rule.

- (2) A candidate's name may include a nickname by which the candidate is commonly known in the community but shall not contain any spurious phrases, title or degree designating the business, fraternal, religious, or professional affiliation of the candidate, or political slogan or message. A title or degree includes, but is not limited to, military or professional title or rank, or references such as "Dr.", "Rev.", "Judge", "Mr.", "Mrs.", "Ms.", or "Miss". A determination as to whether a nickname violates this Rule lies within the sound discretion of the Secretary of State or election superintendent, as appropriate.
- (3) The total number of spaces, inclusive of letters, spaces, and punctuation, which may be utilized on the ballot for a candidate's name and, if any, nickname, shall be twenty-five (25). Notwithstanding the listing of the candidate's name on the filing papers, spaces, periods, quotation marks, and commas necessary for the proper punctuation shall be added by the Secretary of State or the election superintendent, as appropriate. No candidate's name shall exceed twenty-five (25) spaces. The Secretary of State or the election superintendent, as appropriate, shall determine the correct listing for any candidate whose name exceeds twenty-five (25) spaces to conform to this requirement.
- (4) A determination as to whether the candidate's requested name on the ballot complies with this Rule shall be within the discretion of the Secretary of the State or election superintendent, as appropriate. Upon a determination that the requested name does not comply with this Rule, the Secretary of State or election superintendent, as appropriate shall modify the candidate's name on the ballot so that it complies with this Rule.

HOW A CANDIDATE'S NAME SHALL APPEAR ON THE BALLOT

The rules regarding how a candidate's name shall appear on the ballot are set out in Georgia State Election Board (SEB) Rule 183-1-11-.02.

The SEB rule specifies that:

1. The candidate's name on the ballot has to contain the last name as it appears on their voter registration record and at least one of the following:
 - a. The first name (or initial with period) as it appears on their voter registration record;
 - i. EXAMPLE: JONATHAN DOE or J. DOE
 - b. The middle name (or initial with period) as it appears on their voter registration record;
 - i. EXAMPLE: WILLIAM DOE or W. DOE
 - c. An abbreviated first name by which the candidate is commonly known; or
 - i. EXAMPLE: JOHN DOE
 - d. A nickname by which the candidate is commonly known.
 - i. EXAMPLE: BUDDY DOE
 - ii. EXAMPLE: JONATHAN "BUDDY" DOE
2. As mentioned above, a candidate's name on the ballot may include a nickname by which the candidate is commonly known, but cannot contain any titles referring to the business, fraternal, religious, or professional affiliation of the candidate, or political slogan or message. A title or degree includes, but is not limited to, military or professional title or rank, or references such as "Dr.", "Rev.", "Judge", "Mr.", "Ms.", "Mrs.", or "Miss."
 - i. EXAMPLES:
 1. Acceptable: BUDDY DOE
 2. Acceptable: JOHN "BUDDY" DOE
 3. In violation: DR. JOHN DOE; MR. JOHN DOE
 4. In violation: JOHN "VOTE FOR ME" DOE
 5. In violation: JONATHAN DOE ESQ.
 6. In violation: CAPT. JONATHAN DOE

3. The candidate's name cannot be longer than 25 characters including spaces and punctuation.

i. EXAMPLES:

1. Acceptable: JONATHAN WILLIAM DOE (20 characters)

2. In violation: JONATHAN "BUDDY" WILLIAM DOE (28 characters)

4. A determination as to whether the candidate's requested name on the ballot complies with all of the rules discussed above is at the discretion of the Secretary of State or election superintendent, as appropriate.

5. The candidate name as it appears on the voter registration record can be checked by using the Secretary of State's "My Voter Page" tool at <https://www.mvp.sos.ga.gov/MVP/mvp.do>

CANDIDATE CHALLENGES

To be qualified for an office, candidates must satisfy certain legal requirements, such as citizenship, residency, and voter registration; just to name a few. One would hope that those who file for candidacy for an elective office meet the qualifications for that office, if they were to be elected. But what if they aren't legally qualified? Instances in which a candidate does not meet the required qualifications, a challenge can be filed by the Superintendent or by an elector who will then bring the challenge before the Superintendent and in some cases through the courts, to disqualify the person from appearing on the ballot. In turn, the elector filing the challenge, or the candidate challenged has the right to appeal the decision of the Superintendent. Georgia Election Code § 21-2-6 outlines procedures for filing and appealing a challenge.

WHO MAY CHALLENGE THE QUALIFICATIONS OF ANY SUCH CANDIDATE?

1. The superintendent any time prior to the election
2. Any elector who is eligible to vote for such candidate within 2 weeks after the deadline for qualifying

CHALLENGE PROCESS FOR ELECTORS

1. File written complaint with superintendent providing reasons for challenge
2. The superintendent then notifies the candidate in writing that the candidate is being challenged with the reason(s) provided
3. The superintendent advises the candidate of the hearing (Date/Time/Place)
4. A decision is made by the superintendent
5. Candidate shall have right to appeal the decision within 10 days

If the superintendent determines the candidate is not qualified, the superintendent shall:

1. Withhold the name of the candidate from the ballot or if the ballots have been printed, strike the name from the ballot.
2. If there is insufficient time to strike the candidate's name or reprint the ballots, a prominent notice of the disqualification shall be placed at each affected polling location and inserted in the affected absentee-by-mail precinct ballot envelope (O.C.G.A. § 21-2-384(b))

CANDIDATE WITHDRAWALS

Many factors can play a role as to why a candidate withdraws his or her candidacy from a political race such as health reasons, family constraints or economic hardship. This section will explain what happens in the event a candidate withdraws his or her candidacy, dies or is disqualified before or after the close of the qualifying period.

O.C.G.A. §21-2-134 (a)(1)(2), (e)(g). Withdrawal, death or disqualification of candidate for office and return of qualifying fee.

1. If a candidate wishes to withdraw as a qualified candidate, the candidate must submit a notarized affidavit of withdrawal with the election superintendent.
2. The qualifying fee shall be returned to the candidate in the event the candidate withdraws, dies or is disqualified prior to the close of the qualifying period. After the qualifying period the fee shall not be returned to candidate for any reason including withdrawal, death, or disqualification; provided, however, that, if such disqualification is the result of an error or negligence of the officer with whom such candidate qualified and not the result of any action of the candidate and such error or negligence is verified in writing by the Secretary of State, such fee may be refunded to the candidate.
3. In the event of the death of a candidate on the ballot in a nonpartisan election prior to such nonpartisan election, the candidate's name shall remain on the ballot and all votes cast for such candidate shall be counted.
4. If the deceased candidate receives the required number of votes to be elected, such contest shall be handled as a failure to fill the office under Code § 21-2-504.
5. If the deceased candidate receives enough votes to be in a run-off election, such run-off election shall be conducted. However, the candidates in the runoff shall be determined pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 21-2-501(a)(2).

CONDUCT AT THE POLLING PLACE AS A CANDIDATE

Now that you have achieved candidate status, it is time to embark on an exciting and successful campaign trail. Whether you're running for an open seat, challenging an incumbent, or trying to get re-elected, now is the time to try to gain as many votes as possible. As you get out into the community interacting with potential voters through open candidate forums, candidate meet and greet gatherings, or social media, there is one place where campaigning is strictly prohibited by the candidate and campaign committees. That place is **ANY** facility where voting is currently taking place. Whether the candidate is merely just casting his or her vote, they must adhere to the same rules subjected to all voters when voting.

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-413 (a), (b), (c), (d), AND (e). CONDUCT OF VOTERS, CAMPAIGNERS,.....

(a) No elector shall be allowed to occupy a voting compartment or voting machine booth already occupied by another except when giving assistance as permitted by this chapter.

(b) No elector shall remain in a voting compartment or voting machine booth an unreasonable length of time; and, if such elector shall refuse to leave after such period, he or she shall be removed by the poll officers.

(c) No elector except a poll officer or poll watcher shall reenter the enclosed space after he or she has once left it except to give assistance as provided by this chapter.

(d) No person, when within the polling place, shall electioneer or solicit votes for any political party or body or candidate or question, nor shall any written or printed matter be posted within the room, except as required by this chapter. The prohibitions contained within Code Section § 21-2-414 shall be equally applicable within the polling place and no elector shall violate the provisions of Code Section § 21-2-414.

(e) No person shall use photographic or other electronic monitoring or recording devices, cameras, or cellular telephones while such person is in a polling place while voting is taking place; provided, however, that a poll manager, in his or her discretion, may allow the use of photographic devices in the polling place under such conditions and limitations as the election superintendent finds appropriate, and provided, further, that no photography shall be allowed of a ballot or the face of a voting machine or DRE unit or electronic ballot marker while an elector is voting such ballot or machine or DRE unit or using such electronic ballot marker, and no photography shall be allowed of an electors list, electronic electors list, or the use of an electors list or electronic electors list. This subsection shall not prohibit the use of photographic or other electronic monitoring or recording devices, cameras, or cellular telephones by poll officials for official purposes.

RESTRICTIONS ON CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

O.C.G.A. § 21-2-414

- (a) No person shall solicit votes in any manner or by any means or method, nor shall any person distribute or display any campaign material, nor shall any person give, offer to give, or participate in the giving of any money or gifts, including, but not limited to, food and drink, to an elector, nor shall any person solicit signatures for any petition, nor shall any person, other than election officials discharging their duties, establish or set up any tables or booths on any day in which ballots are being cast:
- (1) Within 150 feet of the outer edge of any building within which a polling place is established;
 - (2) Within any polling place; or
 - (3) Within 25 feet of any voter standing in line to vote at any polling place. These restrictions shall not apply to conduct occurring in private offices or areas which cannot be seen or heard by such electors.
- (b) Rooms under the control or supervision of the board of registrars or absentee ballot clerk in which absentee ballots are being cast shall be considered polling places.
- (c)(1) No person shall conduct any exit poll or public opinion poll with voters within 25 feet of the exit of any building in which a polling place is established on any day in which ballots are being cast.
- (2) Except for credentialed poll watchers, poll workers, and law enforcement officers, poll managers may manage the number of persons allowed in the polling place to prevent confusion, congestion, and inconvenience to voters.
- (d) No person whose name appears as a candidate on the ballot being voted upon at a primary, election, special primary, or special election shall physically enter any polling place other than the polling place at which that person is authorized to cast his or her ballot for that primary, election, special primary, or special election and, after casting his or her ballot, the candidate shall not return to such polling place until after the poll has closed and voting has ceased or other than to transact business with the board of registrars, so long as the person does not violate any other provision of this Code section.
- (e) This shall not be construed to prohibit a poll officer from distributing materials, as required by law, which are necessary for the purpose of instructing electors or from distributing materials prepared by the Secretary of State which are designed solely for the purpose of encouraging voter participation in the election being conducted or from making available self-service water from an unattended receptacle to an elector waiting in line to vote.

CAMPAIGN SIGNS

Many voters express their support for a candidate by placing yard signs in their yard. In addition, many campaigns and supporters often place signs along the roadways to increase their candidate's name recognition among voters, but it's important to follow election sign rules or signs can become more of a liability than a benefit to your campaign. State and local governments restrict when and where campaigns can place yard signs for aesthetic reasons, to limit distractions to drivers and in the case of campaigning regulations at polling places, to create an even playing field for candidates and promote open and honest political campaigns. It is important for political campaigns to learn what to expect with sign laws and regulations.

the polling place at which that person is authorized to cast his or her ballot for that primary, election, special primary, or special election and, after casting his or her ballot, the candidate shall not return to such polling place until after the poll has closed and voting has ceased or other than to transact business with the board of registrars, so long as the person does not violate any other provision of this Code section.

§16-7-58. PROHIBITED PLACEMENTS OF POSTERS, SIGNS, AND ADVERTISEMENTS

(a) It shall be unlawful for any person to place posters, signs, or advertisements:

(1) On any public property or building, unless the owner thereof or the occupier as authorized by such owner has given permission to place such posters, signs, or advertisements on such property; provided, however, that signs within the rights of way of public roads shall be governed by § 32-6-51.

(2) On any private property unless the owner thereof or the occupier as authorized by such owner has given permission to place such posters, signs, or advertisements on such property; and, provided, further that no municipal, county, or consolidated government may restrict by regulation or other means the length of time a political campaign sign may be displayed or the number of signs which may be displayed on private property for which permission has been granted; or

(3) On any property zoned for commercial or industrial uses if the placement of such posters, signs, or advertisements conflicts with any zoning laws or ordinances.

(b) Any poster, sign, or advertisement placed in violation of paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of this Code section is declared to be a public nuisance, and the officials having jurisdiction of the public property or building, including without limitation law enforcement officers, may remove or direct the removal of the same.

The Board of Commissioners of DeKalb County further finds that signs provide an important medium through which persons may convey a variety of noncommercial and commercial messages. However, if left completely unregulated, the number, size, design characteristics, and locations of signs in the county can become a threat to public safety as a traffic hazard and a detriment to property values and to the county's general public welfare, as well as create an aesthetic nuisance. The county, further, finds that signs have become excessive. Many signs are distracting and dangerous to motorists and pedestrians, are confusing to the public and substantially detract from the beauty and appearance of the county. The county finds that there is a substantial need directly related to the public health, safety and welfare to comprehensively address these concerns through the adoption of regulations. To learn more about these regulations as it relates to signs, please become familiar with DeKalb County's Code of Ordinances, Chapter 21 by visiting:

POLL WATCHER TRAINING

DEFINITION

A poll watcher is a person designated by an independent candidate, nonpartisan candidate, a political party, or political body to observe at a polling place on election day or during advance voting. Poll Watchers may be permitted behind the enclosed space for the purpose of observing the conduct of the election and the counting and recording of votes. Candidates listed on the ballot are ineligible to serve as a poll watcher in such primary, election, or runoff.

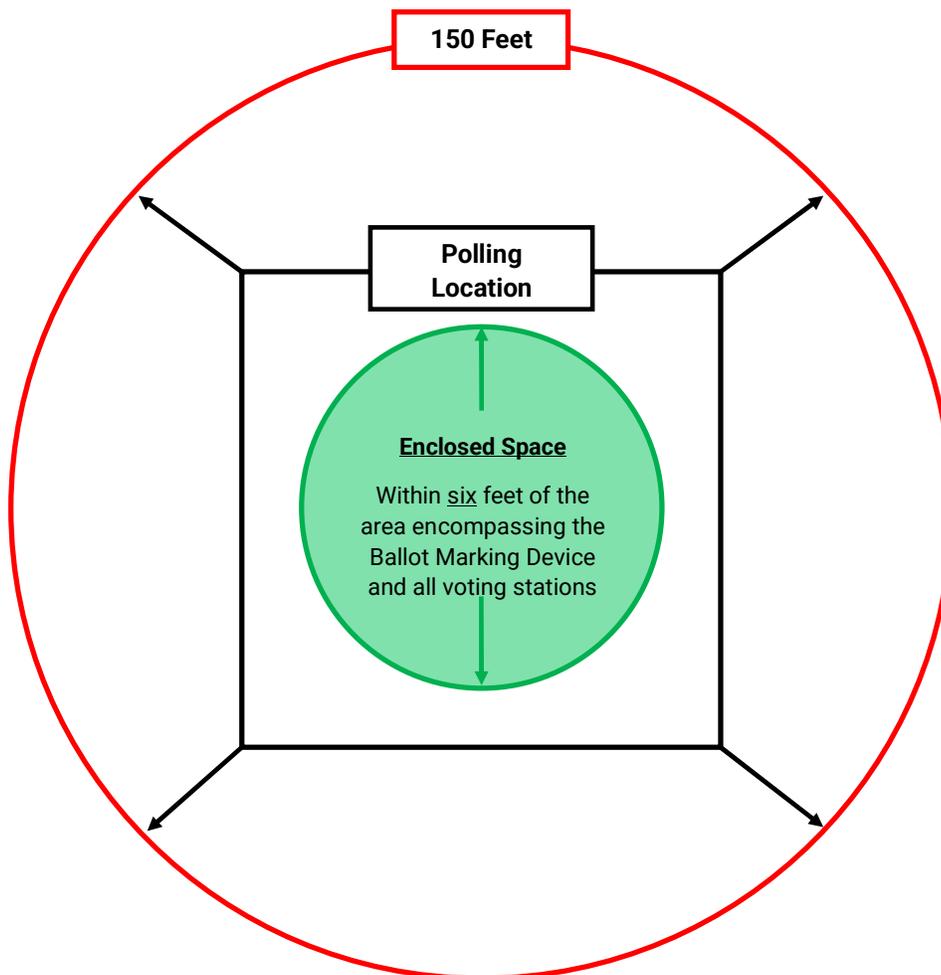
No person shall be appointed or be eligible to serve as a poll watcher in any primary or election in which such person is a candidate. Poll watcher training must be provided by the political party, political body, or candidate designating the poll watcher.

POLL WATCHER CONDUCT & PROHIBITIONS

- Poll watchers must complete training provided by the political party, political body, or candidate designating them.
 - Upon request, the Secretary of State shall make available material to each political party, political body, or candidate that can be utilized in such training but it shall be the responsibility of the political party, political body, or candidate designating the poll watcher to instruct poll watchers in their duties and in applicable laws and rules and regulations.
- Each political party, political body, or candidate shall, in their written designation of poll watchers, certify under oath that the named poll watchers have completed the required training.
- Poll watchers are official observers only whose primary concern is the integrity and fairness of the election.
 - They may observe the conduct of the election before, during and after the polls close.
 - A designated/credentialed poll watcher may be permitted behind the enclosed space for the purpose of observing the conduct of the election and the counting and recording of votes.

- All poll watchers must be approved and listed.
 - Poll watchers must wear their name badge at all times and bring their designation letter.
 - A poll watcher should show their letter designating him or her a poll watcher to the poll manager of the precinct when entering the polling location.
- The Election Superintendent and the poll officers are the sole authority in the polling place. No other person may handle or touch election supplies and materials.
 - A poll watcher shall not interfere with or impede the conduct of any election, and the poll manager may make reasonable regulations to avoid such interference.
 - If a poll watcher persists in interfering with the conduct of the election or in violating any of the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 21-2-408(d) after being duly warned by the poll manager or superintendent, he or she may be removed by such official.
- Any infraction or irregularities observed by poll watchers shall be reported directly to the superintendent, not to the poll manager. O.C.G.A. § 21-2-408(d)
- Poll Watchers are prohibited from:
 - Talking to voters
 - Checking electors lists
 - Using photographic or other electronic monitoring or recording devices
 - Using cellular telephones
 - Wearing anything advertising a candidacy or advocating for or against an issue.
 - Electioneering or any kind of campaigning in the polling place or within 150 feet of the entrance of the polling place during voting hours. O.C.G.A. § 21-2-414(a)

WHO IS ALLOWED WHERE AT THE POLL?



Allowed in the Enclosed Space

1. Poll Officials
2. Voters
3. Person legally assisting a voter
4. Members of the Board of Elections and Elections Office Staff
5. Technicians authorized by the Board of Elections
6. Authorized Poll Watchers
7. Persons authorized by the Secretary of State's Office or the State Elections Board
8. Peace Officers
9. Children under the age of 18 who are in the care of an adult so long as they do not cause a disturbance or in any manner handle the Ballot Marking Device or the Voter Access Card

Outside the Polling Location, but within 150 Feet

1. Special Interest Groups that are not campaigning (i.e., Voter Assistance Groups)
2. If a voter allows a member of a Voter Assistance Group to assist them with the voting process, they may accompany the voter within the enclosed space
3. Exit Polling: May be conducted inside of the 150-foot boundary so long as the pollster is at least 25 feet away from the polling location

Beyond 150 Feet

1. Campaigners
2. Includes but is not limited to any of the following in support or against a particular candidate, group, party, or question that is to be voted on in this election:
 - a. Wearing of clothing/hats
 - b. Buttons
 - c. Stickers/bumper stickers
 - d. Posters
 - e. Pamphlets
3. Campaigners must also be at least 25 feet away from anyone in line waiting to vote

- Name of official poll watcher
- Address of the poll watcher
- The precinct in which he or she shall serve.
- Name and date of primary

o Same rules for advance voting in a primary apply.

• Primary Runoff

o Candidate may submit 1 name per precinct in which his or her name appears on the ballot to the Party Executive Committee 14 days prior to the primary runoff.

o Party Executive Committee shall designate, at least 7 days prior to the primary runoff, no more than 2 poll watchers for each precinct.

o At least three days prior to the primary, the Party Executive Committee shall deliver an official poll watcher letter to the elections superintendent of the county or municipality in which the poll watcher is to serve. The letter should include:

- Name of official poll watcher
- Address of the poll watcher
- The precinct in which he or she shall serve.
- Name and date of primary

o Same rules for advance voting in a primary runoff apply.

• General Election or General Runoff

• Each Political Party or Political Body may designate, at least 7 days prior to the election or runoff, no more than 2 poll watchers in each precinct.

• Each Independent candidate may designate 1 poll watcher in each precinct.

• Candidates in a Nonpartisan election may designate 1 poll watcher in each precinct.

• At least three days prior to the primary, the Party Executive Committee, Independent candidate, or Nonpartisan candidate shall deliver an official poll watcher letter to the elections superintendent of the county or municipality in which the poll watcher is to serve. The letter must include:

- Name of official poll watcher
- Address of the poll watcher
- The precinct in which he or she shall serve.
- Name and date of election or runoff

• Same rules for advance voting in a general election or general runoff.

STATEWIDE POLL WATCHERS

- Each Political Party or Political Body, which body is registered and has nominated a candidate for statewide office may designate, at least 14 days prior to election or runoff, no more than 25 statewide poll watchers.
- Each Independent candidate may designate no more than 25 statewide poll watchers.
- Each Nonpartisan candidate running in a statewide election may designate no more than 25 statewide poll watchers.
- No more than 2 statewide poll watchers of a political party or body, of an independent candidate, or of a nonpartisan candidate shall be in the same polling place simultaneously.
- Each state-wide poll watcher shall be given a letter signed by the chairperson of the State Election Board.

The letter must include:

- o Name of official statewide poll watcher
- o Address of the poll watcher
- o A statement that such poll watcher is a statewide poll watcher.
- o Name and date of election or runoff
- At least three days prior to the primary, a copy of the letter must be delivered to the superintendent of each county in which the poll watcher might serve.
- Same rules for advance voting in an election or runoff.

DIFFERENT LAWS FOR DIFFERENT ELECTIONS

- Primary
 - o Candidate may submit 1 name per precinct in which his or her name appears on the ballot to the Party Executive Committee 21 days prior to the primary.
 - o The Appropriate Party Executive Committee shall designate, at least 7 days prior to the primary, no more than 2 poll watchers for each precinct.
 - o At least three days prior to the primary, the Party Executive Committee shall deliver an official poll watcher letter to the elections superintendent of the county or municipality in which the poll watcher is to serve. The letter should include:

OBSERVERS FOR EARLY PROCESSING AND TABULATION

In counties or municipalities using voting systems or optical scanning voting systems, Poll Watchers can serve in the locations designated by the superintendent within the tabulating center. Designated locations shall include the check-in area, the computer room, the duplication area, and such other areas as the superintendent may deem necessary to the assurance of fair and honest procedures in the tabulating center.

- Each Political Party may appoint 2 poll watchers in each primary or election.
- Each Political Body may appoint 2 poll watchers in each election.
- Each Independent may appoint 1 poll watcher in each election.
- Each Nonpartisan may appoint 1 poll watcher in each nonpartisan election.

GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS TO HOLD PUBLIC OFFICE

GA. CONST. ARTICLE II SECTION II PARAGRAPH II

No person who is not a registered voter; who has been convicted of a felony involving moral turpitude, unless that person's civil rights have been restored and at least ten years have elapsed from the date of the completion of the sentence without a subsequent conviction of another felony involving moral turpitude; who is a defaulter for any federal, state, county, municipal, or school system taxes required of such officeholder or candidate if such person has been finally adjudicated by a court of competent jurisdiction to owe those taxes, but such ineligibility may be removed at any time by full payment thereof, or by making payments to the tax authority pursuant to a payment plan, or under such other conditions as the General Assembly may provide by general law; or who is the holder of public funds illegally shall be eligible to hold any office or appointment of honor or trust in this state. Additional conditions of eligibility to hold office for persons elected on a write-in vote and for persons holding offices or appointments of honor or trust other than elected offices created by the Constitution or provided by law.

Various offices have different requirements for those who wish to run. It is the applicant's responsibility to determine what the qualifications are and that they are met.

For Qualifications and Disqualifications for Holding State or County Elective Office in Georgia, visit https://sos.ga.gov/sites/default/files/2022-01/qualifications_and_disqualifications_2013.pdf

County offices may have additional requirements. If so, these requirements can be found in the DeKalb County Code at https://library.municode.com/ga/dekalb_county.

WEB RESOURCES

| TOPICS | WEB OR EMAIL LINKS |
|--|--|
| Absentee Ballot Applications | www.sos.ga.gov also: www.dekalbvotes.com |
| DeKalb County GIS Department (Precinct Boundary Maps) | www.dekalbcountyga.gov/gis/gis-department |
| DeKalb County Voter Registration and Elections Home Page | www.dekalbvotes.com |
| Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission (Ethics Commission) | www.ethics.ga.gov |
| Official Code of Georgia | www.sos.ga.gov |
| Candidate Qualifying Information | www.sos.ga.gov/candidate-qualifying-elected-office |
| Online Poll Worker Application | www.dekalbvotes.com |
| Poll Locator | www.dekalbvotes.com |
| Sample Ballots | www.dekalbvotes.com |
| Secretary of State | www.sos.ga.gov |
| State Election Board Rules | www.sos.ga.gov |
| Verify Voter Registration Status and Precinct Location, Register to Vote, Make Change of Address, etc. | www.mvp.sos.ga.gov |
| Voter List Requests (must be submitted by email) | www.sos.ga.gov |

KEY ELECTION DATES

| Election | Election Date | Advance Voting Dates | Registration Deadline |
|--|------------------|---|-----------------------|
| General Primary/ Nonpartisan Election | May 19, 2026 | April 27 - May 15 | April 20, 2026 |
| General Primary/ Nonpartisan Runoff | June 16, 2026 | As soon as possible, but no later than June 8 - June 12 | April 20, 2026 |
| General Election | November 3, 2026 | October 13 - October 30 | October 5, 2026 |
| General Runoff | December 1, 2026 | As soon as possible, but no later than November 23 - November 25 | October 5, 2026 |

CAMPAIGN FINANCE FILING SCHEDULE

CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION DISCLOSURE REPORTS (CCDR) 2026 SCHEDULE FOR ALL FILERS

| Reporting Period | Due Date | End of Grace Period |
|------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| January 1, 2026 - January 31, 2026 | January 31, 2026 | February 9, 2026 |
| February 1, 2026 - April 30, 2026 | April 30, 2026 | May 7, 2026 |
| May 1, 2026 - July 31, 2026 | July 31, 2026 | August 7, 2026 |
| August 1, 2026 - October 20, 2026 | October 20, 2026 | October 27, 2026 |



Voter Registration & Elections
4380 Memorial Drive, Suite 300 | Decatur, GA 30032
www.dekalbvotes.com