



RESTORING CONFIDENCE *in* PA ELECTIONS

Judge of Election and Inspector of Election Introduction

The most critical contribution you can make to free, fair and lawful elections is to become a Judge of Election or Election Inspector in your community. You will be on the front-line, making sure your neighbors can exercise their rights freely and fairly. It is an important job with a modest time commitment of two days each year (primary and general election) and time for training and becoming familiar with the election materials.

Now is the time to consider accepting this role, as you will need to take steps to get on the ballot starting this February. The next opportunity will not occur until 2029. Serving in one of these positions is an excellent way to gain political experience, learn about the election system and to protect the voting process.

This guide provides an overview but please sign up to be notified of upcoming JOE and Inspector candidate training. We'll cover the roles, how to get on the ballot and how to get elected.

Please join us in protecting our elections.

<https://www.restoreconfidence.org/>

About the Precinct Election Board

Each county in Pennsylvania is divided into election districts which are more commonly referred to as precincts.ⁱ There are approximately 9,000 precincts across the Commonwealth. On Election Day, when you go to your precinct polling location to vote, there are several people who administer the election and three of them are elected positions. In November, voters will elect a Judge of Election and a Minority Election Inspector and a Majority Election Inspector in each precinct. They will become members of the Precinct Election Board.

- **Judge of Election** has the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of a polling place and the poll workers working there. The Judge must take an oath to prevent fraud, deceit or abuse, and to make sure the precinct results are accurately reported. The Judge is also responsible for opening and closing the polls on Election Day.ⁱⁱ



- **Majority and Minority Inspectors** are responsible for checking in voters, confirming their registration status and verifying that voters' signatures match the poll book signatures. The Inspectors must also confirm the results when the polls close on Election Night. ⁱⁱⁱ All candidates run for Inspector of Election but in the November Election, the Inspector of Election candidate who gets the most votes becomes the Majority Inspector and the candidate with the second highest number of votes becomes the Minority Inspector.

All members of the Election Board have a duty to administer fair and impartial elections and make sure that everyone who is registered to vote is able to do so. The Judge of Election and Election Inspectors must be in the polling location all day on Election Day. They must arrive before the polls open at 7:00 AM to set up the voting machines and prepare the polling location. The Election Board must remain at the polling location until the last person votes and the polls close at 8PM.

Judges of Election, Majority Inspectors and Minority Inspectors are elected every four years. They were last elected in 2021 and will not be on the ballot again until 2029.

Candidate Qualifications and Requirements

Candidates for Judge of Election or Election Inspector must

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Be a qualified elector and registered voter in the election district in which they are seeking election.
- Not hold any office, appointment or employment in government within 2 months of the election.
- Not be a candidate for any office to be voted for at a primary or general election at which they are serving (except for as a member of an Election Board).^{iv}

If people do not run for the office of Judge of Election, Majority Inspector or Minority Inspector, no person can be elected to the office. All positions that are vacant are filled by appointment by the county. There is no requirement in PA law for political party parity on Election Boards; therefore, appointments can be made from the same political party. We must have candidates run for these important positions so that the voters can select their election officials instead of leaving the positions open for appointments.

All Judges of Election, Majority Inspectors, Minority Inspectors and Machine Inspectors are required to attend training by the County Board of Elections on the use of the voting machines and the roles and responsibilities on Election Day.^v District Election Board members are paid to work on Election Day and paid to attend training.^{vi} The payments made to members of the District Election Board are not categorized as income and do not have to be reported as income for tax purposes. ^{vii}



Getting on the Ballot

REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT PARTY CANDIDATES

The most common way to become the Judge or Inspector is to run as a major party candidate in the primary and get your name on the Primary Election ballot. The 2025 Primary is May 20, 2025. If you submit the required nomination petition with the required number of signatures, your name will appear on the Republican Primary ballot or the Democrat Primary ballot.

Only voters registered with the same political party as the candidate, and residing in the same election district, are permitted to sign nomination petitions.^{viii} When you pick up the nomination petitions at the County Election Office, be sure to request your free copy of the “Street List” for your precinct which lists every registered voter in your election district by address and party affiliation. Use the street list to ensure that the signatories are in your precinct and are of the same political party.

A voter may only sign one nomination petition or nomination paper for each office. When collecting signatures, be sure to ask the voter if they have signed a nomination petition or nomination paper for anyone else seeking the same office.^{ix} The number of signatures required for these offices is quite low, so candidates should endeavor to get more signatures than the required minimum.

- **Judge of Election needs 10 signatures on Nomination Petitions**
- **Inspector of Election needs 5 signatures on Nomination Petitions**

MINOR PARTY OR INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

If you chose to run as a minor party candidate or an independent candidate, you would not appear on a primary ballot. This is only an option for you if you are not registered as a Republican or Democrat or if you withdraw your political party registration at least 30 days before the election.^x

If you choose this option, you must get signatures on different forms called Nomination Papers. Registered voters in any political party who reside in your precinct are permitted to sign nomination papers.^{xi} The number of signatures required for nomination papers is at least two percent of the largest vote cast for any candidate elected from the same election district for any office and not less than the number of signatures required for nomination petitions.^{xii}

WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

As a last resort, you can also be a write-in candidate. If you choose this option, your name will not appear on the ballot, but a voter can write your name in the space for write-in or type your name in counties with ballot marking devices (BMDs). If you decide to run as a write-in candidate, be sure that people have the proper spelling of your name.



Write-in candidates in the Primary must receive more votes than all opponents and at least as many votes as signatures required on the nomination petition in order to succeed and appear on the November ballot.^{xiii}

Important Deadlines

There are strict deadlines for nomination petitions or nomination papers. It is best to get your signatures and file as early as possible. The table below shows important dates for the 2025 elections.

Republican & Democrat Candidates	
18-Feb	First day to circulate petitions for Major Party candidates
11-Mar	Last day to file nomination petitions
18-Mar	Last day to file objections to nomination petitions
5-May	Last day to register to vote in the Primary
13-May	Last day to request a mail ballot for the Primary
20-May	2025 MUNICIPAL PRIMARY

Minor Party Candidates & Independent Candidates	
12-Mar	First day to circulate papers for Minor Party candidates
1-Aug	Last day to circulate and file nomination papers
8-Aug	Last day to file objections to nomination papers
20-Oct	Last day to register to vote for the November election
28-Oct	Last day to request a mail ballot
4-Nov	ELECTION DAY

Nomination petitions and nomination papers for candidates for Judge of Election or Inspectors of Election must be filed with the County Board of Elections. There are no filing fees for these offices. The dates above are strict deadlines so be sure to get your petitions or papers filed as soon as possible.



Objections

Challengers may review nomination petitions or nomination papers after they are filed. Opponents may look for defects in your signatures and documents and file objections to your petitions or papers. Any registered voter or candidate in the precinct has until seven days after the filing deadline to submit objections to another candidate's nomination petitions or nomination papers.^{xiv}

Objections are generally made alleging that petition signers were not from the appropriate precinct or are not registered in the same party as the candidate. Objections can be made if it appears that the signer did not personally sign and date the documents. Be sure to adhere to all of the petition requirements and get more than the minimum signatures to avoid these issues.

Campaigning

Make a plan to encourage voters in your election precinct to vote in the Primary. Turnout is typically quite low for municipal elections, so it is important for you to talk to your neighbors and remind them of the important races on the ballot – especially yours!

If you choose to print any cards, letters, signs or other materials used to influence voters to vote for you, you must state clearly who paid for them. Candidates who spend less than \$250 on their campaign materials are not required to file any campaign finance documents. If you choose to spend more, be sure to review the reporting requirements on the Department of State website.

Supplemental Training

Restore Confidence is a project of the Election Research Institute. The Institute hosts candidate interest and training calls and participates in Candidate Academies to provide additional information about the District Election Boards and the duties of poll workers. Sign up for Judge and Inspector training at RestoreConfidence.org.

PA Fair Elections conducts in-depth training regarding the duties of Judges and Inspectors of Election and general poll worker training. Sign up for PA Fair Elections weekly Zoom meetings at PAFairElections.com.



ⁱ 25 P. S. § 2702 “...Except for good cause shown, election districts so formed shall not contain more than one thousand two hundred (1,200) registered electors. No election district shall be formed that shall contain less than one hundred (100) registered electors. When a school district crosses county lines, the regions of the school district shall be composed of contiguous election districts.”

ⁱⁱ 25 P.S. § 2677: The following shall be the oath of each judge of election: "I (John Doe) do swear (or affirm) that I will as judge duly attend the ensuing election (or primary) during the continuance thereof, and in cooperation with the inspectors, faithfully carry on the same; that I will not give my consent to the admission of any person to vote, except such as I firmly believe to be registered and entitled to vote at such election (or primary), according to the provisions of the Constitution and laws of this Commonwealth, and that I will use my best endeavors to prevent any fraud, deceit or abuse in carrying on the same, and that I will make a true and perfect return of the said election (or primary), and will at all times impartially and faithfully perform my duty respecting the same, to the best of my judgment and ability; and that I am not directly or indirectly interested in any bet or wager on the result of this election (or primary)."

ⁱⁱⁱ 25 P.S. § 2678: 2678 - The following shall be the form of the oath to be taken by each inspector:
"I (John Doe) do swear (or affirm) that I will as an inspector duly attend the ensuing election (or primary) during the continuance thereof, and that I will not admit any person to vote, except such as I shall firmly believe to be registered and entitled to vote at such election (or primary), according to the provisions of the Constitution and laws of this Commonwealth, that I will not vexatiously delay or refuse to permit any person to vote whom I shall believe to be entitled to vote as aforesaid, that I will make a true and perfect return of the said election (or primary), and that I will in all things truly, impartially and faithfully perform my duties therein, to the best of my judgment and ability; and that I am not directly or indirectly interested in any bet or wager on the result of this election (or primary)."

^{iv} 25 P.S. § 2672: “(a) Except as provided in subsection (b), election officers shall be qualified registered electors of the district in which they are elected or appointed. No person shall be qualified to serve as an election officer who shall hold, or shall within two months have held, any office, appointment or employment in or under the Government of the United States or of this State or of any city or county or poor district, of any municipal board, commission or trust in any city, save only district justices, notaries public and persons in the militia service of the State; nor shall any election officer be eligible to any civil office to be voted for at a primary or election at which he shall serve, except that of an election officer.”

^v 25 P.S. 2684 – “Instruction of election officers in voting machine districts; unqualified officers not to serve
In districts in which voting machines are to be used, the county board of elections, or the custodians appointed by them, shall instruct in the use of the machines, and in their duties in connection therewith, all judges and inspectors of election and machine inspectors who are to serve at the primary or election, and who have not been previously instructed and found qualified, and they shall give to each judge, inspector and machine inspector, who has received such instruction and is found qualified to conduct such primary or election with the voting machine, a certificate to that effect.”

^{vi} 25 P.S. 2682.2: Compensation of district election officers-“(a) In all counties regardless of class, judges of election, inspectors of election, clerks and machine operators shall be paid compensation as fixed by the county board of elections for each election, Which amount shall be at least \$75 and not more than \$200.”

^{vii} 25 P.S. § 2682.2(i): “Compensation and other payments received by election officials under this section shall not be deemed income classified and categorized under section 303 of the act of March 4, 1971 (P.L. 6, No. 2), 1 known as the “Tax Reform Code of 1971.””

^{viii} 25 P.S. § 2868: Manner of signing nomination petitions; time of circulating



“Each signer of a nomination petition shall sign but one such petition for each office to be filled, and shall declare therein that he is a registered and enrolled member of the party designated in such petition: Provided, however, That where there are to be elected two or more persons to the same office, each signer may sign petitions for as many candidates for such office as, and no more than, he could vote for at the succeeding election. He shall also declare therein that he is a qualified elector of the county therein named, and in case the nomination is not to be made or candidates are not to be elected by the electors of the State at large, of the political district therein named, in which the nomination is to be made or the election is to be held. He shall add his address where he is duly registered and enrolled, giving city, borough or township, with street and number, if any, and shall legibly print his name and add the date of signing, expressed in words or numbers: Provided, however, That if the said political district named in the petition lies wholly within any city, borough or township, or is coextensive with same, it shall not be necessary for any signer of a nomination petition to state therein the city, borough or township of his residence. No nomination petition shall be circulated prior to the thirteenth Tuesday before the primary, and no signature shall be counted unless it bears a date affixed not earlier than the thirteenth Tuesday nor later than the tenth Tuesday prior to the primary.”

^{ix} 25 P.S. § 2868: Manner of signing nomination petitions; time of circulating

^x 25 P.S. § 2911.1: Limitations on eligibility of candidates “Any person who is a registered and enrolled member of a party during any period of time beginning with thirty (30) days before the primary and extending through the general or municipal election of that same year shall be ineligible to be the candidate of a political body in a general or municipal election held in that same year nor shall any person who is a registered and enrolled member of a party be eligible to be the candidate of a political body for a special election.”

^{xi} 25 P.S. § 2911(a): “In addition to the party nominations made at primaries, nomination of candidates for any public office may also be made by nomination papers signed by qualified electors of the State, or of the electoral district for which the nomination is made, and filed in the manner herein provided. Such nomination papers shall be in form prescribed by the Secretary of the Commonwealth, and no other forms than the ones so prescribed shall be used for such purposes.”

^{xii} 25 P.S. § 2911(b): “Where the nomination is for any office to be filled by the electors of the State at large, the number of qualified electors of the State signing such nomination paper shall be at least equal to two per centum of the largest entire vote cast for any elected candidate in the State at large at the last preceding election at which State-wide candidates were voted for. In the case of all other nominations, the number of qualified electors of the electoral district signing such nomination papers shall be at least equal to two per centum of the largest entire vote cast for any officer, except a judge of a court of record, elected at the last preceding election in said electoral district for which said nomination papers are to be filed, and shall be not less than the number of signers required for nomination petitions for party candidates for the same office. In cases where a new electoral district shall have been created, the number of qualified electors signing such nomination papers, for candidates to be elected at the first election held after the creation of such district, shall be at least equal to two per centum of the largest vote cast in the several election districts, which are included in the district newly created, for any officer elected in the last preceding election.”

^{xiii} 25 P.S. § 3155: “The county board, in computing the votes cast at any primary or election, shall compute and certify votes cast on irregular ballots exactly as such names were written, stamped or deposited in or on receptacles for that purpose, and as they have been so returned by the election officers. In districts in which paper ballots or ballot cards are electronically tabulated, stickers or labels may not be used to mark ballots. A vote cast by means of a sticker or label affixed to a ballot or ballot card shall be void and may not be counted. In the primary the Secretary of the Commonwealth shall not certify the votes cast on irregular ballots for any person for a National office including that of the President of the United States, United States Senator and Representative in Congress; or for any State office including that of Governor and Lieutenant



Governor, Auditor General, State Treasurer, Senator and Representative in the General Assembly, justices and judges of courts of record or for any party office including that of delegate or alternate delegate to National conventions and member of State committee unless the total number of votes cast for said person is equal to or greater than the number of signatures required on a nomination petition for the particular office. In the primary the county board shall not certify the votes cast on irregular ballots for any person for a justice of the peace, 1 constable, National, State, county, city, borough, town, township, ward, school district, election or local party office unless the total number of votes cast for said person is equal to or greater than the number of signatures required on a nomination petition for the particular office.”

^{xiv} 25 P.S. § 2937: “All nomination petitions and papers received and filed within the periods limited by this act shall be deemed to be valid, unless, within seven days after the last day for filing said nomination petition or paper, a petition is presented to the court specifically setting forth the objections thereto, and praying that the said petition or paper be set aside. A copy of said petition shall, within said period, be served on the officer or board with whom said nomination petition or paper was filed. Upon the presentation of such a petition, the court shall make an order fixing a time for hearing which shall not be later than ten days after the last day for filing said nomination petition or paper, and specifying the time and manner of notice that shall be given to the candidate or candidates named in the nomination petition or paper sought to be set aside. On the day fixed for said hearing, the court shall proceed without delay to hear said objections, and shall give such hearing precedence over other business before it, and shall finally determine said matter not later than fifteen (15) days after the last day for filing said nomination petitions or papers. If the court shall find that said nomination petition or paper is defective under the provisions of section 976, 1 or does not contain a sufficient number of genuine signatures of electors entitled to sign the same under the provisions of this act, or was not filed by persons entitled to file the same, it shall be set aside. If the objections relate to material errors or defects apparent on the face of the nomination petition or paper, the court, after hearing, may, in its discretion, permit amendments within such time and upon such terms as to payment of costs, as the said court may specify. In case any such petition is dismissed, the court shall make such order as to the payment of the costs of the proceedings, including witness fees, as it shall deem just. If a person shall sign any nomination petitions or papers for a greater number of candidates than he is permitted under the provisions of this act, if said signatures bear the same date, they shall, upon objections filed thereto, not be counted on any petition or paper and if they bear different dates, they shall be counted in the order of their priority of date, for only so many persons as there are candidates to be nominated or elected. The office of the Prothonotary of the Commonwealth Court and the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the various offices of prothonotary of the court of common pleas shall be open between the hours of eight-thirty o'clock A.M. and five o'clock P.M. on the last day to withdraw after filing nomination petitions and on the last day to file objections to nomination petitions.”

