



State Elections Enforcement Commission

2021 Municipal Election Campaign Overview

This overview has been prepared by staff of the State Elections Enforcement Commission (the "Commission") and provides candidates, treasurers and committees with general information about the various campaign finance rules and requirements for the 2021 municipal elections. This document is not a substitute for the law, which can be found on the Commission's website, <https://portal.ct.gov/seec>.

Filing Repository

All candidates register with the town clerk. Town committees file their disclosure statements with the State Elections Enforcement Commission. Exploratory, candidate and political slate committees for municipal candidates file their disclosure statements with the town clerk.

In 2017, the Commission completed the Municipal Campaign Finance Filing Pilot Program under which twenty towns had their filings duties transferred to the Commission for the 2017 election cycle. Candidates and committees in those towns resumed filing with the town clerks in 2019 after the Pilot Program ended and will continue to do so for this election cycle. The Commission prepared a report on the Pilot Program for the legislature and we will see whether the legislature makes any permanent changes for future election cycles.

Becoming a Candidate

It is important to keep in mind that certain activities may mean that you have officially become a candidate, even if you:

- have not been endorsed,
- have not obtained ballot access,
- have not officially announced your candidacy, or
- have not filed any candidate paperwork.

For example, if you **solicit or receive a contribution**, you have become a candidate. If you **spend money** to further your candidacy, even if it is your own money, you have become a candidate. If **another individual**, with your consent, solicits or receives a contribution or spends money on your behalf, you have become a candidate. You also become a candidate if you receive a **political party's endorsement** or otherwise become **qualified for a position on the primary or election ballot**, even if you have not spent or received any funds. Finally, if you **register** as a candidate, you become a candidate at that time if you haven't already become one through another means.

Please note that an individual may solicit or receive contributions **on behalf of a party without becoming a candidate**. **An individual may also now give consent to a party committee to** (1) make expenditures with the intent to bring about the individual's nomination for election or election to office, or (2) solicit or receive contributions for the party committee that the party committee intends to use to support that individual's nomination for election or election to office, and neither triggers the need to register as a candidate. This activity **alone** (*without any of the other activity outlined in the paragraph above*) does not make an individual a candidate or trigger the necessity to register as a candidate.

All questions related to party endorsements and ballot access should be directed to the Secretary of the State's Office, Legislation and Election Administration Division, at 860-509-6100, lead@ct.gov, or <https://portal.ct.gov/sots>.

Registering as a Candidate

To register, each candidate is required to file [SEEC Form 1](#), "Registration by Candidate," with the town clerk of their respective municipality **within ten days** of becoming a candidate.

Important Note: For individuals who become candidates by being endorsed by a party, it is the delivery of the endorsement paperwork to the proper authority (i.e. the town clerk) that marks the beginning of the ten day time period in which the candidate must file his or her registration.

When completing [SEEC Form 1](#), each candidate must indicate how their campaign will be funded by also completing either **SEEC Form 1A**, if he or she is registering a candidate committee, or by completing **SEEC Form 1B**, if he or she is filing an exemption from forming a candidate committee.

Important Note: An individual who wishes to raise or spend campaign-related funds to "test the waters," and who has not yet decided which particular municipal office to seek should contact the Candidate Services Unit at 860-256-2985 or review the Commission's [Understanding the Connecticut Campaign Finance Laws: A Guide for Municipal Candidates](#) for special rules that apply to exploratory committees. If a candidate forms an exploratory committee and decides to seek a particular office, the candidate must dissolve the exploratory committee and form a candidate committee. A candidate who has formed an exploratory committee is **not** eligible for any of the exemptions from forming a candidate committee.

There are several ways in which a candidate may qualify for the exemption from forming a candidate committee.

1. The candidate designates a town committee or political slate committee as his or her sole funding source;
2. The candidate is funding his or her campaign entirely from personal funds;
3. The candidate does not intend to receive or spend any funds (including personal funds); or
4. The candidate does not intend to receive or spend funds in excess of \$1,000 for the campaign.

Choosing a Funding Vehicle

Following are some characteristics of the different funding vehicles available to candidates for municipal office:

Candidate Committees

- A candidate committee is a committee established by a single candidate to promote **only** that single candidate's nomination or election to a specific office.
- A candidate may provide unlimited personal funds to his or her candidate committee.
- The state contractor and lobbyist campaign contribution and solicitation provisions do **not** apply to candidate committees formed by municipal candidates, but committee treasurers must still disclose lobbyist status when itemizing contributions in Section B of SEEC Form 20.
- A candidate in a candidate committee may benefit from organization expenditures made by party committees. (See, [Understanding the Connecticut Campaign Finance Laws: A Guide for Municipal Candidates](#) for more information about organization expenditures.)
- Once a candidate forms a candidate committee, the candidate may not later change his mind and form or join a political slate committee or town committee slate.

Political Slate Committees

- A political slate committee is a type of durational (single election cycle) political committee formed by **two or more candidates** within the same municipality, who seek election in the same primary or election, and who authorize such committee as their **SOLE** funding source.

Important Note: The law does not provide for a political slate committee to serve as the sole funding source for a slate of **one** candidate. The only exception is when the candidates on the slate are in a primary and only one candidate on the slate wins the primary, in which case that single candidate may continue with the political slate committee through the general election.

- The treasurer of a political slate committee must disclose all contributions received and expenditures made to promote the candidates on the committee on its financial disclosure statements filed with the town clerk.
- A candidate in a political slate committee may only contribute up to \$1,000 per calendar year to the committee, which is the individual contribution limit to a political slate committee.
- A candidate in a political slate committee may not receive the benefit of organization expenditures from a party committee. The political slate committee is permitted to receive contributions (including in-kind contributions) of up to \$1,500 per calendar year from a town committee and up to \$2,500 per calendar year from a state central committee.
- The state contractor and lobbyist campaign contribution and solicitation provisions do **not** apply to political slate committees, but committee treasurers must still disclose lobbyist status when itemizing contributions in Section B of SEEC Form 20.

Town Committees

- The candidate may designate a town committee as the **SOLE** funding source for the campaign as long as the town committee will be serving as the funding source for at least one other candidate. Unlike candidate and political slate committees, town committees are *ongoing* committees established by a political party and affiliated at the municipal or town level.

Important Note: The law does not provide for a town committee to serve as the sole funding source for a slate of **one** candidate. The only exception is when the candidates on the slate are in a primary and only one candidate on the slate wins the primary, in which case that single candidate may continue with the town committee through the general election. Before designating a town committee as the sole funding source, a candidate should contact the town committee treasurer to confirm that the town committee will be funding a "slate" of **two or more** candidates.

- The town committee treasurer will oversee raising and spending funds to promote the municipal candidates that are financed by the town committee.
- The town committee treasurer must disclose all contributions received and expenditures made to promote the municipal candidates being funded by the committee on its financial disclosure statements filed with the Commission.
- The town committee treasurer must authorize *all* expenditures made or incurred by the committee – even if they are being made to benefit the candidate's campaign.
- The candidate may only contribute up to \$2,000 per calendar year to the town committee that is financing his or her campaign, which is the individual contribution limit to a town committee.
- The state contractor and lobbyist campaign contribution and solicitation provisions apply to town committees.

Self-Financed Candidates

- The candidate may provide unlimited personal funds but may not receive contributions or the benefit of any other spending (including organization expenditures and in-kind contributions) from any other source under this exemption.
- There is no requirement to appoint a treasurer or depository institution.
- There is no requirement to file financial disclosure statements **unless** the personal funds spent **exceed \$1,000** in which case the candidate must file disclosure statements in the same manner and according to the same schedule as candidate committees.

Candidates Intending to Spend or Receive Less than \$1,000

- There is no requirement to appoint a treasurer or depository institution or to file financial disclosure statements.
- The candidate may receive the benefit of organization expenditures from party committees so long as the organization expenditures do not cause the candidate to exceed the \$1,000 threshold when aggregated with all other funds received by or spent on behalf of the candidate.
- A candidate may provide personal funds up to the \$1,000 limit (unless, when aggregated with other funds received, it would put him over the \$1,000 threshold).

Candidates Intending Not to Spend or Receive any Funds

- A candidate who does not intend to spend or receive any funds is required to amend her registration if she does ever receive or spend any funds, including coordinated expenditures or any other type of in-kind contributions from any individual or committee.

Important Note: A candidate who registers under one of these “1B exemptions,” and whose circumstances change such that the candidate no longer qualifies for the exemption, must amend his or her registration within **three days** of the change in circumstances, and either designate a different exemption or form a candidate committee. Please call our Candidate Services Unit at 860-256-2985 if your circumstances change and our staff can help guide you through your options.

Municipal Contract Disclosure

Any individual who contributes **more than \$400** (in the aggregate) to the campaign of a candidate for **mayor or first selectperson** must provide the treasurer with a statement indicating whether the contributor, or any business with which the contributor is associated, has a contract with the town which is valued at more than \$5,000. This requirement applies to all mayor and first selectperson candidates, regardless of the candidate's funding source. A "business with which he is associated" refers to any business in which the contributor is a director, officer, owner, limited or general partner, or stockholder of 5% or more of the total stock of the business. **There is an obligation on the treasurer to make due inquiry for this information.** This is only a disclosure requirement and does not restrict the contribution.

Filing Calendars

All committees (as well as self-financed candidates who spend in excess of \$1,000) are required to file periodic disclosure statements. It is important to note that the filing dates vary based on your committee type and whether your election is in May or November.

The Commission has posted calendars on its [website](#) for each type of committee based on the election dates. Please refer to our website to review your particular calendar or contact the Candidate Services Unit at 860-256-2985.

Disclosure Statements

Candidate committees and political slate committees file the [SEEC Form 20](#) (Itemized Campaign Finance Disclosure Statement) with the town clerk of the municipality conducting the primary or election. Party committees file the [SEEC Form 20](#) with the State Elections Enforcement Commission only. For certain filings, committee treasurers may use [SEEC Form 21](#) (Short Form Campaign Finance Disclosure Statement) if their committee has not had monetary or non-monetary receipts or made expenditures in excess of \$1,000 from the time of its creation (or from the beginning of the calendar year in the case of a town committee) to the close of the relevant reporting period and has not previously filed a [SEEC Form 20](#).

Self-financed candidates who have spent over \$1,000 in the aggregate file the [SEEC Form 23](#) (Self-Funded Candidate's Expenditure Statement) with their town clerk.

Important Note: It is critical that each candidate register with the town clerk within **ten days** of becoming a candidate and that each committee treasurer file the campaign finance disclosure statements by the applicable deadline. Failure to file on time results in a mandatory \$100 late filing fee imposed by the committee's filing repository. Additional penalties may also apply.

Contribution Limits

Recipient Committee	Contributor Sources			
	Individual	State Central Committee	Town Committee	Ongoing Political Committee <i>(Business Entity, Organization, Two or More Individuals)</i>
Candidate Committee for Chief Executive Officer of the Municipality (e.g. Mayor, First Selectman)*	\$1,000/primary \$1,000/general election <i>(candidate's personal funds unlimited)</i>	\$10,000/primary \$10,000/general election	\$3,000/primary \$3,000/general election	\$1,500/primary \$1,500/general election
Candidate Committee for Other Municipal Office*	\$250/primary \$250/general election <i>(candidate's personal funds unlimited)</i>	\$5,000/primary \$5,000/general election	\$1,500/primary \$1,500/general election	\$375/primary \$375/general election
Political Slate Committee	\$1,000/year	\$2,500/year	\$1,500/year	\$2,000/year
Town Committee	\$2,000/year <i>(lobbyist and state contractor provisions apply)</i>	Unlimited	Unlimited	\$1,500/year <i>(lobbyist and state contractor provisions apply)</i>

* Candidates who have filed the 1B exemption indicating that they do not intend to spend or receive over \$1,000 are subject to the same contribution limits as candidate committees of candidates seeking the same office. For example, a candidate for alderman who has filed the 1B exemption indicating he does not intend to spend or receive over \$1,000 may only receive \$250 from an individual for the general election. Candidates who have filed a 1B exemption indicating that they are self-financing or do not intend to spend or receive **any** funds cannot receive **any** funds from **any** source (other than from the candidate himself if self-financing) unless they amend their funding source on their registration statement.