**How to run for Office:**

**Harford County MD candidate resource guide**

*Presented by Gina Kazimir for the NAACP Harford County Branch, January 2022*

**Why are you doing this?**

It’s a simple question, but it’s absolutely critical. Why are you running for office. Start by answering that because your answer will set up everything else.

***The Basics***

***Determine your Why***

Why are you running? You need to be able to answer that question in no more than three sentences. It will be the main message on your website and social media, and will be your easiest way to ask for votes and support.

You ‘why’ will also help you determine what kind of campaign you want to run. Do you want a full one campaign with fundraising and public events? If so, you’ll want to look at having volunteers to help. Or are you running to make a statement and play gadfly to those in office? That ‘why’ may motivate a different structure.

The ‘why’ will also help determine how much time you’re going to spend on things like door knocking, debates and events. It’s important to be honest about your motivation and expectations. Remember, 85% of incumbents nationwide are reelected and only 10% of first time candidates win. But a good loss – meaning a decent showing in the votes – is usually a springboard to a future win.

Your ‘why’ will also be critical in developing the next critical item your campaign needs – a platform.

***Know your limits***

Being a candidate can range from putting your name on the ballot and doing nothing else, to doing so much voter outreach it’s nearly a full time job. It’s up to you to know what you can and want to do.

Don’t ignore the effect on family, also. If you decide to run a major effort, your family WILL be affected, if only because there will be many times when you’ll be campaigning instead of spending time with them. Make sure everyone in the household is prepared and on board.

*Make sure your employment agreement does not prohibit you running for office or campaigning. Some Defense contractors especially have clauses about this. You may need to clarify rules on campaigning, etc, with HR before you start. You don’t want to have to withdraw your candidacy because of a conflict.*

***Consider training***

There are some online resources available:

<https://ncil.org/run-for-office/>

<https://www.onlinecandidate.com/articles/political-candidate-training-courses>

<https://democrats.org/take-action/trainings/activists-organizers-candidates/>

***Pick your Platform***

Your ‘why’ will lead you into your platform. Are you running because you don’t want someone unopposed? Then protecting voter choice is part of your platform! Are you upset about the handling of the pandemic? Public health is part of your platform!

In developing a platform, it’s a good idea to talk with people you trust. Local political organizations, groups you participate in, your faith family, and others are all resources for developing a platform that you truly believe in. And you MUST believe in it, because even if you choose to just be an opposition gadfly, you will be called to defend it at some point.

***Set up a website***

You will want to make sure that you have a campaign website ready to go. You can make this as simple or as complicated as you want:

* For an easy complete package, consider a system like <https://www.onlinecandidate.com/> or <https://www.campaignpartner.com/#plans>
* Use one of the free options: <https://www.wix.com/> , <https://www.yola.com/> , or perhaps one of these - <https://www.business.org/services/website/best-free-website-builder-for-small-business/>

***Get your email and phone***

The easiest thing is to get a dedicated email from Gmail, and then add a Google Voice phone number. This is a no cost option that can quickly be of use.

***Set up social media***

Using your personal social media accounts isn’t the best idea from a professionalism or privacy standpoint. Set up separate social media accounts for your candidacy.

***Plan how to share your message***

When you have the basics above ready to go, you’ll want to plan how to share your message. Get a calendar and schedule when you’ll put up information on your website and social media, and what else you want to do.

Are you raising money for your campaign and want to produce brochures for door knocking? Know how long it will take to go from idea to print. Plan social media posts, especially if you’ll need photos or videos to go with them.

Do you want yard signs? How will you produce them (locally *Big House Signs* in Havre de Grace is a good choice)? Make sure you know the sign regulations in your area: <https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Campaign-Signs.pdf> .

Do you want to have a t-shirt or car magnet? What about a campaign kick off event? Have you considered business cards to hand out? These are all tools you can use to spread the word and recruit voters. You are limited only by campaign rules and available resources.

If you are planning an in depth run, do consider asking someone to serve as your Communications Manager. This person can vet any requests to speak and help be another trusted voice when the campaign gets hectic.

***Talk to People***

No matter what, if you are running for office, you need to talk to people! Even if you’re planning a low key campaign, you’ll want to make sure to let people know you’re running.

There are lots of ways to get the word out. Door knocking is a time honored technique, and it really can work to raise awareness of your campaign. But also consider reaching out to clubs, organizations, senior facilities and others and offering to do a “listening session” where you hear voters’ concerns and answer questions. Supporters can also host house parties for you where you do the same thing.

Remember, the more people talk with you, the more chances you have to create enthusiasm about your candidacy.

***Be You***

The one thing you can do that will be the biggest factor in your success is to be yourself. Be authentic. Don’t tell people what you think they want to hear; tell them what you believe.

If we’ve seen one thing over the years, it’s that candidates can be flawed humans and still win. So don’t be afraid to show who you are.

If you know some things could be perceived as negatives, get in front of them. “Not being from here” can become a positive story about how you’ve chosen this area and love it maybe more because you did. “Not being connected” can mean you are able to truly represent the people, not any special interest. You can’t make the truth go away, but you probably can make it work for you, not against you.

Yes, you may want to curse a little less, or not emphasize some things. But don’t try to create a candidate persona – it won’t work, and you can’t keep it up. Just be you, maybe the work or church you, but you. You may be surprised at how far it gets you!

***Don’t Take It Personally!***

This one is HARD, but critical. Somewhere along the road to the election, someone WILL say something ranging from unkind to vile about you. IT WILL HAPPEN. And the bigger the impact you have, the worse it will get.

You need to know that although it will be about you, it’s not personal. The attacks will happen because you’re a candidate, not because you’re a bad person. Yes, it will hurt. And of course you’ll want to react, probably angrily. DON’T.

You need to develop the ability to shut down and not show that you are upset. Even, and especially, in the moment. And you need to make sure your family knows this, too. It’s very difficult, but important for you as a person and as a candidate.

***Be Proud & Have Fun!***

No matter what kind of campaign you run, take a moment every day – ok, every week – to let yourself be proud. YOU are stepping up to make a difference. That matters.

Enjoy the experience. Win or lose, you’ll have great stories to tell, and you’ll meet some amazing people along the way. And you just might win the chance to make things better not just for you and your family, but for the County as a whole. That’s worth celebrating.

**General information**

County info: <https://harfordvotes.info/?page_id=2124>

**Filing Deadline: February 22, 2022
Withdraw Deadline: March 4, 2022**

To file for **County Council President** you must be a resident of Harford County for two years as specified in the county charter.

To file for as a **County Council Member** you must be a resident of Harford County for two years in the district you are running as specified in the county charter.

To file for the **Board of Education** you must be a resident of the district in which you are running for three years as specified in the county charter. You may run for the Board of Education regardless of your political affiliation, but must be a registered voter.

Candidates must file **in person** at the Harford County Board of Elections located at 133 Industry Lane, Forest Hill, MD 21050. **Appointments are required** and can be made by calling (410) 638-3565. Office hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM. Information for candidates can be found at <https://harfordvotes.info/?page_id=36>

***For County Council Candidates:***

**REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES**

**Requirements:**

**Candidate Information Sheet**Please complete the [Candidate Information Sheet](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/01_Candidate_Inf_Sheet_v4.pdf) in its entirety.

**Filing Fee – $25**
Feemust be paid by check at the time of filing.  Checks must be made payable to ***Harford County Government***.

**Identification**Official identification is required: a current and valid photo identification – Maryland Drivers’ License or MVA issued Identification Card, Passport, Military ID or government issued photo ID at the time of filing.

**Statement of Organization**This document is required for conducting financial activity and may be filed at either the Harford County or Maryland State Board of Elections. A Statement of Organization may be completed prior to the actual filing of candidacy to permit fundraising, but must be established no later than the date the candidate has filed. The candidate can be his or her own chairperson but not his or her own treasurer. You can complete this [online](https://campaignfinancemd.us/Home/RegisterCommittees) or print a copy [here](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Statement-Of-Organization_2007_Editable.pdf).

**Financial Disclosure Form**Candidates can file a [Financial Disclosure Form](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/harford-county-financial-disclosure-form-pdf.pdf) at our office or directly with the Harford County Board of Ethics at 220 S. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21014 c/o County Law Department.

# ****NON PRINCIPAL POLITICAL PARTY CANDIDATES****

A candidate who is affiliated with a recognized party other than the two principal parties must be nominated by the party as a general election candidate.

As of December 2021, there were six officially recognized political parties in Maryland: the Bread and Roses, [Democratic](https://ballotpedia.org/Democratic), [Green](https://ballotpedia.org/Green_Party), [Libertarian](https://ballotpedia.org/Libertarian_Party), [Republican](https://ballotpedia.org/Republican), and Working Class parties.

**Filing Deadline:**Part I: Declaration of Intent –  **July 5, 2022**
Part II: Certificate of Nomination –    **August 1, 2022**

**Requirements:**

**PART I**

**Candidate Information Sheet**Please complete the [Candidate Information Sheet](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/01_Candidate_Inf_Sheet_v4.pdf) in its entirety.

**Declaration of Intent**
Must be filed in person at the Harford County Board of Elections.  The [Declaration of Intent](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/declaration-on-intent-nomination.pdf) will be generated for the candidate’s signature. No fee required at this time.

**Identification**Official identification is required: a current and valid photo identification – Maryland Drivers’ License or MVA issued Identification Card, Passport, Military ID or government issued photo ID at the time of filing.

**PART II**

**Certificate of Nomination**The [Certificate of Nomination](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/certificate_of_nomination_or_designation.pdf) must be filed in person at the Harford County Board of Elections.

**Filing Fee – $25**
Feemust be paid by check at the time of filing.  Checks must be made payable to ***Harford County Government***.

**Statement of Organization**This document is required for conducting financial activity and may be filed at either the Harford County or Maryland State Board of Elections. A Statement of Organization may be completed prior to the actual filing of candidacy to permit fundraising, but must be established no later than the date the candidate has filed. The candidate can be his or her own chairperson but not his or her own treasurer. You can complete this [online](https://campaignfinancemd.us/Home/RegisterCommittees) or print a copy [here](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Statement-Of-Organization_2007_Editable.pdf).

**Financial Disclosure Form**Candidates can file a [Financial Disclosure Form](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/harford-county-financial-disclosure-form-pdf.pdf) at our office or directly with the Harford County Board of Ethics at 220 S. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21014 c/o County Law Department.

# ****PETITION CANDIDATES****

A candidate who is unaffiliated with a recognized party must be nominated by petition as a general election candidate.

**Filing Deadline:**Part I: Declaration of Intent –  **July 5, 2022**
Part II: Candidacy Petition – **August 1, 2022**

**Qualifications:**

To be nominated by petition an individual must meet the legal qualifications for the public office sought, be registered as unaffiliated or other non-recognized partisan organization and file, with the appropriate election board, petitions signed by not less than 1% of the total number of registered voters in the district for the office of which the nomination is sought.  The petition form prescribed by the State Board of Elections must be used.

**Requirements:**

**PART I**

**Candidate Information Sheet**Please complete the [Candidate Information Sheet](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/01_Candidate_Inf_Sheet_v4.pdf) in its entirety.

**Declaration of Intent**
Must be filed in person at the Harford County Board of Elections.  The [Declaration of Intent](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/declaration-on-intent-nomination.pdf) will be generated for the candidate’s signature.  No fee required at this time.

**Identification**Official identification is required: a current and valid photo identification – Maryland Drivers’ License or MVA issued Identification Card, Passport, Military ID or government issued photo ID at the time of filing.

**PART II**

**Candidacy Petition**
Must be filed in person at the Harford County Board of Elections.

**Filing Fee – $25**
Feemust be paid by check at the time of filing.  Checks must be made payable to ***Harford County Government***.

**Statement of Organization**This document is required for conducting financial activity and may be filed at either the Harford County or Maryland State Board of Elections. A Statement of Organization may be completed prior to the actual filing of candidacy to permit fundraising, but must be established no later than the date the candidate has filed. The candidate can be his or her own chairperson but not his or her own treasurer. You can complete this [online](https://campaignfinancemd.us/Home/RegisterCommittees) or print a copy [here](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Statement-Of-Organization_2007_Editable.pdf).

**Financial Disclosure Form**Candidates can file a [Financial Disclosure Form](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/harford-county-financial-disclosure-form-pdf.pdf) at our office or directly with the Harford County Board of Ethics at 220 S. Main Street, Bel Air, MD 21014 c/o County Law Department.

***For Board of Education Candidates: NOTE this is a nonpartisan office***

To file for the **Board of Education** you must be a resident of the district in which you are running for three years as specified in the county charter. You may run for the Board of Education regardless of your political affiliation, but must be a registered voter. One member shall be elected from each of the six Councilmanic Districts only by the voters of that Councilmanic District.

**Filing is:  February 23, 2021 – February 22, 2022**

**Withdraw Deadline: March 4, 2022**

**Requirements:**

**Candidate Information Sheet**Please complete the [Candidate Information Sheet](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/01_Candidate_Inf_Sheet_v4.pdf) in its entirety.

**Filing Fee – $25**
Feemust be paid by check at the time of filing.  Checks must be made payable to ***Harford County Government***.

**Identification**Official identification is required: a current and valid photo identification – Maryland Drivers’ License or MVA issued Identification Card, Passport, Military ID or government issued photo ID at the time of filing.

**Statement of Organization**This document is required for conducting financial activity and may be filed at either the Harford County or Maryland State Board of Elections. A Statement of Organization may be completed prior to the actual filing of candidacy to permit fundraising, but must be established no later than the date the candidate has filed. The candidate can be his or her own chairperson but not his or her own treasurer. Complete [online](https://campaignfinancemd.us/Home/RegisterCommittees) or print a copy [here](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Statement-Of-Organization_2007_Editable.pdf).

**Financial Disclosure Form**Candidates can file a [Financial Disclosure Form](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/harford-county-bd-of-ed-financial-disclosure-form.pdf) at our office or directly with the Harford County Public Schools c/o General Counsel at 102 S. Hickory Avenue, Bel Air, MD 21014.  **Please note: The Financial Disclosure Form must be notarized. This can be done at our office.**

***For Central Committee Candidates:***

**REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES**

**Filing is:  February 23, 2021 – February 22, 2022

Withdraw Deadline: March 4, 2022**

**Requirements:**

**Candidate Information Sheet**Please complete the [Candidate Information Sheet](https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Candidate_Inf_Sheet_06_29_2021-DCC.pdf) in its entirety.

**Filing Fee – $10**
Feemust be paid by check at the time of filing.  Checks must be made payable to ***Harford County Government***.

**Identification**Official identification is required: a current and valid photo identification – Maryland Drivers’ License or MVA issued Identification Card, Passport, Military ID or government issued photo ID at the time of filing.

Upon completion of all requirements, a personalized Certificate of Candidacy will be generated for the candidate’s signature.

\*If you raise more than $1,000 you must set up a Statement of Organization.

**FOR ALL CANDIDATES:**

Upon completion of all requirements, a personalized Certificate of Candidacy for candidates of any affiliation will be generated for the candidate’s signature.

***Funding Your Campaign:***

To fund your campaign, you will most likely need a Candidate Organization. This is how you raise funds, and to do so candidates need to set up a committee or friends group that will register with the Maryland State Board of Elections and file financial updates as required. To register online, go to <https://campaignfinance.maryland.gov/Home/RegisterCommittees> and register a **Candidate Committee**.

Candidates who don’t plan to have campaign finance activity greater than $1,000 may file an **Affidavit of Limited Contributions and Expenditures** instead of a detailed campaign finance report. The Affidavit must be filed for every reporting period. Only when the Affidavit is marked final will the filing obligations end.

In order to complete the registration online, you will need one of the following to enter in the system:

1.    Your Driver’s license number;

2.    The last 4 numbers of your Social Security Number; or

3.    Your Voter Registration ID number.

This is a requirement because all responsible officers must be registered voters in Maryland.  The system will verify the information only for those purposes.  If you do not have access to the above referenced information, you must mail in the form in order to be processed and become active.

Before the political committee can raise or spend campaign funds, the State Board of Elections (SBE) must approve and authorize the filing.  Furthermore, both responsible officers and the candidate must have electronically signed the submission before SBE will review it.

**Conducting campaign finance activity prior to the filing of the statement of organization is prohibited.** Once you have completed this form in its entirety, including all required signatures and filed it with the State Board of Elections, the entity can open a bank account and begin raising and spending money.

To serve as a chairman or treasurer an individual must be:
• A registered voter of the State of Maryland and
• In good standing with the Candidacy and Campaign Finance Division.

It is permissible for an officer to serve on more than one committee. A candidate may not serve as a treasurer for a committee.

The treasurer is responsible for all receipts and expenditures of the political committee. All assets received by or on behalf of the campaign finance entity must pass through the hands of the treasurer. Additionally, only the treasurer can disburse campaign funds. Maryland law requires that the treasurer keep a detailed and accurate account book on behalf of the
campaign finance entity.

A treasurer may not serve “in name only” and may not delegate any statutory responsibility to another person, including the candidate.

The responsible officers are jointly and severally responsible for filing all campaign finance reports. Late fees assessed against the committee may not be paid with campaign funds.

All committees are continuing accounts and must file their reports electronically with State Board of Elections. Non-continuing accounts no longer exist.

***Campaign Finance Reporting****:*

<https://www.elections.maryland.gov/campaign_finance/index.html>

It is critical for ALL candidates to follow the rules for campaign financing!

A political committee may file an **Affidavit of Limited Contributions and Expenditures, or ALCE,** (form and instructions can be found at <https://www.elections.maryland.gov/campaign_finance/eaffidavit.html> ) instead of a detailed campaign finance report if the political committee did not receive contributions or make expenditures in the cumulative amount of $1,000 or more (exclusive of the candidate's filing fee) since either the establishment of the political committee, or the filing of the last campaign finance report.

If your campaign does raise or spend more than $1000, you will need to file reports per the schedule outlined at <https://www.elections.maryland.gov/campaign_finance/reporting_schedule.html> . Reporting dates will vary depending on when your campaign organization began fundraising, but April, June, August, October & November reports will be required for almost every candidate organization.

Campaign finance information is public and can be found at <https://campaignfinance.maryland.gov/Public/ViewCommiteesMain>

***FORMS & INFO:***

Candidate Information Sheet - Required: <https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/01_Candidate_Inf_Sheet_v4.pdf>

Financial Disclosure Form (fillable PDF) – Required: <https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/harford-county-financial-disclosure-form-pdf.pdf>

Statement of Organization (fillable PDF) – file this if you DO NOT file online with the MD State Board of Elections only: <https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Statement-Of-Organization_2007_Editable.pdf>

MD State Board of Elections forms – you can find all the forms you need here: <https://www.elections.maryland.gov/forms/petitions.html#candidacy>

Info for candidates and voters – this is the site for everything about voting, candidates and more: <https://www.elections.maryland.gov/index.html>

Signage rules: <https://harfordvotes.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Campaign-Signs.pdf>

General Information on how to use the public websites to view and track campaign finances for any race: <https://baltimorebrew.com/2020/05/28/how-to-track-baltimores-campaign-cash-flow-yourself/>

**Harford County Candidate Requirements:**



Maryland Political Parties:

* Ballot access info: <https://ballotpedia.org/Ballot_access_requirements_for_political_parties_in_Maryland>
* Maryland law separates political parties into two separate categories: principal and non-principal parties. Principal parties include the majority party, which is the party whose candidate for governor received the largest number of votes of any party candidate at the most recent general election, and the principal minority party, which is the party whose candidate for governor received the second highest number of votes of any party candidate at the most recent general election. All other parties are considered non-principal political parties. Principal parties are required to nominate candidates for office via primary elections. Non-principal parties may select candidates according to their respective constitutions and bylaws, but cannot participate in primaries.
* As of December 2021, there were six officially recognized political parties in Maryland: the Bread and Roses, [Democratic](https://ballotpedia.org/Democratic), [Green](https://ballotpedia.org/Green_Party), [Libertarian](https://ballotpedia.org/Libertarian_Party), [Republican](https://ballotpedia.org/Republican), and Working Class parties.