

Massachusetts Office of Campaign and Political Finance

A GUIDE FOR WRITE-IN CANDIDATES FOR MUNICIPAL OFFICE WHO FILE LOCALLY*

A candidate who does not appear on a ballot, but actively runs for office as a write-in candidate, is required to file campaign finance reports.

What does “actively runs” mean?

If a candidate makes public statements that he or she is running for office as a write-in, or raises and/or spends money, then that individual will file campaign finance reports.

Does a write-in candidate need to organize a committee?

OCPF highly recommends organizing a committee by filing the [M101 form](#) with the municipal election official. If a write-in candidate decides not to organize a committee, and run as a “candidate only,” the M101 can still be filed, but without the treasurer information completed, and with “candidate only” written at the top of the form. A public employee who is also a candidate must form committee, if the campaign plans to raise money.

What form does a write-in candidate file locally to disclose campaign finance activity?

Write-in candidates file the [M102 form](#), the same form used by candidates who appear on the ballot. The write-in candidate will disclose money raised and spent, as well as any in-kind contributions and liabilities.

When is the M102 form filed?

In a town election, the M102 form is filed eight days before a preliminary election, eight days before a general election, and 30 days afterward. If the write-in candidate is successful, or he or she has a balance or liabilities, the year-end report is also filed.

If a candidate in a city election files locally, the report is due eight days before a preliminary, eight days before the general election, and at year-end in January.

Does the local election official (municipal clerk) have a responsibility for ensuring a write-in candidate files?

If a municipal clerk or local election official learns about a write-in candidate, OCPF highly recommends reaching out to the candidate to inform him or her of their filing responsibilities. If a write-in candidate fails to file, the local election official should contact OCPF.

What are some examples of goods or services used by write-in candidates?

The types of typical expenditures made by write-in candidates include lawn signs, mailings and stickers used to attach to ballots. If a write-in candidate uses his or her personal funds for the campaign, they are considered “out-of-pocket” expenditures. Please see [this tutorial](#) on out-of-pocket expenditures.

**All city and town candidates file locally, except city council candidates in cities with populations of 65,000 or more, as well as all mayoral candidates*