

# First Steps for Candidates Running for a County, Precinct, or District Office

This quick-start guide for non-judicial candidates is not intended to provide comprehensive information. Different filing requirements apply to certain judicial offices. For more details, including information for judicial candidates, see the Texas Ethics Commission's (TEC) website at [www.ethics.state.tx.us](http://www.ethics.state.tx.us).

## 1. All candidates must file a Campaign Treasurer Appointment (Form CTA)

All candidates must file [Form CTA](#) even if you do not intend to raise or spend any money. [Form CTA](#) is required to be filed before you file an application for a place on the ballot, raise or spend any money for your campaign, or announce your candidacy. Candidates for a county office (except for multi-county district offices) will file [Form CTA](#) with the county clerk, elections administrator, or tax assessor, as applicable.

## 2. Opposed Candidates: Will you accept or spend more than \$500 for the election?

- YES:
  - You do not qualify to file on the modified reporting schedule.
  - You are **required** to file pre-election campaign finance reports using [Form C/OH](#) if you have an opponent on the ballot. Find [Form C/OH](#) and its instructions on our "[Local Filers Non-Judicial Candidate/Officeholder](#)" webpage.
  - Pre-election reports are due 30 days and 8 days prior to each election. To be timely filed, pre-election reports must be received by the county clerk, elections administrator, or tax assessor no later than the due date.
- NO:
  - You can elect to file on the modified reporting schedule by completing the *Modified Reporting Declaration* on page two of [Form CTA](#). File [Form CTA](#) with the county clerk, elections administrator, or tax assessor.
  - If you elect to file on the modified reporting schedule, you do not have to file pre-election campaign finance reports due 30 days and 8 days prior to the election.
- Exceed \$500: If you elect to file on the modified reporting schedule but later exceed \$500 in either contributions or expenditures, what reports you will be required to file depends upon when you exceed \$500.
  - If you exceed \$500 prior to the 30th day before the election, you are **required** to file pre-election campaign finance reports due 30 days and 8 days prior to an election using [Form C/OH](#). To be timely filed, pre-election reports must be received by the county clerk, elections administrator, or tax assessor no later than the due date. Find [Form C/OH](#) and its instructions on our "[Local Filers Non-Judicial Candidate/Officeholder](#)" webpage.
  - If you exceed \$500 after the 30th day before the election, you are **required** to file an Exceeded \$500 Limit report using [Form C/OH](#). To be timely filed, this report must be filed with the county clerk, elections administrator, or tax assessor within 48 hours of exceeding \$500. Find [Form C/OH](#) and its instructions on our "[Local Filers Non-Judicial Candidate/Officeholder](#)" webpage.

- If you exceed \$500 prior to the 8th day before the election, you are **required** to file a pre-election campaign finance report due 8 days prior to an election using [Form C/OH](#). To be timely filed, the pre-election report must be received by the county clerk, elections administrator, or tax assessor no later than the due date. Find [Form C/OH](#) and its instructions on our “[Local Filers Non-Judicial Candidate/Officeholder](#)” webpage.

### 3. Unopposed Candidates

If you do not have an opponent whose name will appear on the ballot in the election, you are an unopposed candidate and are not required to file pre-election campaign finance reports prior to that election.

### 4. All candidates must file semiannual campaign finance reports ([Form C/OH](#))

All candidates are **required** to file semiannual reports using [Form C/OH](#) even if you have no campaign activity or were unsuccessful in the election. Semiannual reports are due on January 15th and July 15th and must be filed with the county clerk, elections administrator, or tax assessor. To end your filing obligations, you must cease campaign activity and file a Final report using [Form C/OH](#) and attaching Form C/OH-FR (Designation of Final Report). Form C/OH-FR is found on the last page of [Form C/OH](#). Find [Form C/OH](#) and its instructions on our “[Local Filers Non-Judicial Candidate/Officeholder](#)” webpage. For more information, see “[Ending Your Campaign](#)” for local filers.

### 5. All candidates can use the TEC’s Filing Application to prepare campaign finance reports ([Form C/OH](#))

You can use the TEC’s [Filing Application](#) to prepare a PDF version of your campaign finance reports ([Form C/OH](#)). Select “Local Authority” and follow the steps to set up an account and login to the application. The filing application will walk you through each reporting schedule. Once you have completed your report, print out a copy, add your treasurer information, get it notarized, and file it with the county clerk, elections administrator, or tax assessor by the appropriate deadline.

### 6. Need More Information?

See the [Campaign Finance Guide for Candidates and Officeholders Who File With Local Filing Authorities](#), forms, instructions, examples on how to disclose contributions and expenditures, political advertising and fundraising guides, and other information you may find useful on our website at [www.ethics.state.tx.us](http://www.ethics.state.tx.us) under the “Resources” and “Forms/Instructions” main menu items.