

HOW TO BECOME A CANDIDATE

Local school board elections are held at the even-year November election. In 2026, the election will be held on Nov. 3.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible, a person must be a qualified school elector. This means that the candidate must be a registered voter in the school district where they are a candidate.

A candidate must be at least 18 years of age; a citizen of the United States; a resident of the state of Michigan for at least 30 days; and a resident of the school district on or before the 30th day prior to the date of the election. Property ownership is not a requirement for candidacy.

Under the Michigan Constitution, a person is ineligible for election or appointment to any state or local elective office if the person was convicted of a felony involving dishonesty, deceit, fraud or a breach of the public trust within the preceding 20 years, and the conviction was related to the person's official capacity while holding any elective office or position of employment in local, state or federal government.

FILING FEES

Board of education candidates have the option of paying a nonrefundable filing fee of \$100 to the school district filing official instead of filing a nominating petition. If paid by the appropriate due date, the fee has the same effect as filing a nominating petition.

NOMINATING PETITIONS

1. Filing

The Michigan Election Law requires nominating petitions (or the \$100 fee) and the Affidavit of Identity to be filed with the "school district filing official." Upon request, the school district filing official will provide a reasonable number of petition sheets at no charge.

For a school district that the entire territory lies within a single city or township, the city or township clerk will be the school district filing official. For a school district that has territory in more than one city or township, the county clerk of the county in which the largest number of registered school district voters reside will be the school district

filing official. However, a county clerk may delegate this duty to a city or township clerk with the agreement of the city or township clerk. Such arrangements are made at the meeting of the school district's election coordinating committee and are binding for two years. Therefore, candidates should check with their local board of education office for information on who's been designated as the school district filing official in their district.

2. Signatures

In all local school districts, nominating petitions must meet the following signature requirements:

- If the population of the school district is less than 10,000 according to the most recent federal census, a petition must be signed by a minimum of six electors (registered voters) of the school district and a maximum of 20.
- If the population of the school district is 10,000 or more according to the most recent federal census, a petition must be signed by a minimum of 40 electors (registered voters) of the school district and a maximum of 100.
- If nominating petitions contain more than the necessary number of signatures, the excess signatures aren't counted.

Note: An elector may only sign multiple petitions equal to the number of board members who will be elected in the school district. Thus, if two positions are up for election to the board of education, an elector in the school district could sign two petitions.

3. Term of Office

If a candidate is running for a partial term, which resulted from a previous vacancy on the board, the candidate must specify that term and its expiration in the heading of their petition. Likewise, candidates running for a regular term would specify four or six years and the respective expiration date in the heading.

4. Circulator

A petition sheet can't be circulated in or signed by electors residing in more than one township or city. Only those electors residing in the township or city identified in the petition heading are eligible to sign that petition sheet.

All signatures on a petition sheet must be affixed in a face-to-face exchange with the petition circulator. A circulator isn't permitted to leave a petition unattended.

The circulator must complete and date the certificate at the bottom of the petition after gathering the last signature they intend to collect on the petition. Signatures on a petition sheet that are dated after the date on the circulator's certificate are invalid.

Individuals who circulate nominating petitions are no longer required to reside in or be

registered to vote in Michigan. However, petition circulators who are not residents of Michigan must mark the nonresident box in the certificate of circulator and provide their county of registration (if registered to vote in their home state).

FILING DEADLINE

Nominating petitions or filing fees for local school board candidates must be filed no later than 4 p.m. on the 15th Tuesday preceding the date of the election. For the Nov. 3, 2026 election, the filing deadline is July 21, 2026.

AFFIDAVIT OF IDENTITY

A candidate for election to a local school board must file two copies of an Affidavit of Identity. The affidavit is filed together with the candidate's filing fee or nominating petitions at the same office where the fees or nominating petitions are filed. Candidates who fail to file an Affidavit of Identity are ineligible to appear on the ballot.

The affidavit must be a written document, signed and sworn before a person having authority to administer an oath, such as a notary public.

Candidates should ensure that they are filing the most up-to-date Affidavit of Identify form, which will include the date "(4/25)" at the very bottom of the page. The Affidavit of Identity form is available on the Department of State's website at michigan.gov/sos/resources/forms. (Use the Forms and Publications search bar to locate the Affidavit of Identity form. For more election resources, visit michigan.gov/sos/elections.)

The Affidavit of Identity must contain:

1. The candidate's name.
2. The candidate's address.
3. The title and term of office that the candidate is seeking. If it is a partial term, you must indicate when the partial term is expiring.
4. The jurisdiction and any district/ward defining the office the candidate is seeking.
5. Indicate that the candidate is running for a nonpartisan office without party affiliation.
6. The manner in which the candidate wishes to have their name appear on the ballot.
7. If a candidate is using a name that they were not given at birth, the candidate is required to include a full former name on the Affidavit of Identity (please see the exceptions to this requirement below).

8. A statement that, as of the date of the affidavit, all statements, reports, late filing fees and fines required of the candidate or any candidate committee organized to support the candidate's election under the Michigan Campaign Finance Act have been filed or paid. (Note: This statement doesn't apply to candidates who are exempt from the filing requirements of Michigan's Campaign Finance Act.)
9. A statement that the candidate acknowledges that making a false statement in the affidavit is perjury, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 or imprisonment for up to five years, or both.
10. A statement that the candidate is a United States citizen and meets the statutory and constitutional requirements for the office sought.

The requirement to indicate a name change on the Affidavit of Identity doesn't apply to name changes that occurred under the following circumstances:

- Changing your name because of marriage.
- Changing your name as a result of divorce, but only if to a legal name by which the candidate was previously known.
- The change occurred at least 10 years before filing as a candidate.
- A name that was changed in a certificate of naturalization issued by a federal district court at the time the individual became a naturalized citizen at least 10 years before filing as candidate.
- A nickname that you have been known as for at least six months.

WITHDRAWAL OF NOMINATION

Withdrawal of a nomination must be done in writing, signed by the candidate and served on the school district filing official no later than 4 p.m. of the third day after the last day for filing, unless the third day falls on Saturday, Sunday or a legal holiday, in which case it must be filed by 4 p.m. on the next secular day.

For the 2026 election, candidates who wish to be removed from the ballot must file a written withdrawal by 4 p.m. on July 24.

WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

Votes cast for a write-in candidate can't be counted unless the candidate has filed a Declaration of Intent form no later than 4 p.m. on the second Friday immediately before the election, which is Oct. 23 for the November 2026 election.

CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES

The major laws regulating political campaigns in Michigan are the Election Law and Campaign Finance Act.

Public Act 225 of 1996 requires that printed campaign material (other than small items like campaign buttons) and media advertisements must identify the person paying for the ad. This requirement doesn't apply to an individual who's not a candidate and who isn't acting as an agent of a candidate or committee. Details are available from the county clerk.

CERTIFICATION OF THE ELECTION

A board of canvassers is responsible for examining the votes cast for each candidate and then certifying the election to the secretary of the school board, the county clerk and, if other than the county clerk, the school district election coordinator. Within five days after the certification of the election, the election coordinator is required to issue a Certificate of Election to each elected candidate.

ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Within 10 days after the issuance of the Certificate of Election, a school board member-elect must file an Acceptance of Office with the secretary of the board. A copy of the Acceptance of Office must then be forwarded to the school district election coordinator. A school board member-elect who fails to file an Acceptance of Office before the 10-day deadline expires may lose their position on the board.

The Acceptance of Office/Oath-School Board form is available on the Department of State's website at michigan.gov/sos/resources/forms. (Use the Forms and Publications search bar to locate the Acceptance of Office/Oath form.)

POST-ELECTION CAMPAIGN STATEMENT

For any elected candidate subject to the filing requirements of Michigan's Campaign Finance Act (see page 19), Public Act 119 of 2003 requires the candidate to file a Post-Election Statement prior to assuming office that certifies that, as of the date of the statement, all statements, reports, late filing fees and fines required of the candidate or any candidate committee organized to support the candidate's election under the act have been filed or paid. An elected candidate who's required to file the statement and fails to submit the form is guilty of a misdemeanor.

The affidavit isn't required of an elected candidate who 1) is exempt from the filing requirements of Michigan's Campaign Finance Act or 2) didn't receive or expend more than \$1,000 during the election cycle.

Elected school board candidates who are subject to this requirement must submit the required post-election sworn statement to the same official with whom the candidate's

committee campaign statements were filed. For board members, this official would generally be the clerk of their county of residence. However, if the school district extends into more than one county, the Post-Election Statement would be filed with the clerk of the county in which the greatest number of registered voters of the school district resides.

The most recent version of the Post-Election Campaign Finance Statement form can be accessed through the Department of State's website at michigan.gov/sos/elections. (On the "Elections" page, click on "Campaign Finance Disclosure.")

OATH OF OFFICE

Each person elected to the school board must also take the prescribed Oath of Office (see page 29). The oath may be given at any time after the Certification of Election. Because a school board member-elect must file an Acceptance of Office with the secretary of the board within 10 days after receiving a Certificate of Election, many school districts administer the official oath at the board's administrative office when the Acceptance of Office is filed. A second "ceremonial oath" can then be reenacted at the organizational meeting.

The Oath of Office for a newly elected or re-elected member of a local school board must be administered by a notary public, judge, clerk of a court or member of the state Legislature. In the case of an intermediate board member-elect, the oath may be administered by any of these officers or a member of the intermediate school board. The oath is filed with the secretary of the school board.

TERM OF OFFICE

Board of education members for a local school district are elected for terms of either four or six years, as provided by the school district's bylaws. A school board member's term of office begins on Jan. 1 immediately following the election. Thus, incumbent members serve until Dec. 31 and the current board may conduct business during the "lame-duck" period.