

What starts the whole process?

Becoming a candidate. According to the disclosure law, you become a candidate when you do one of these things: accept a contribution or spend money for your campaign; reserve space or purchase advertising to promote your candidacy; authorize someone else to do any of these activities for you; state publicly that you are seeking office; or file a declaration of candidacy

Once I become a candidate, then what?

Within two weeks* of the date you become a candidate, you must file a [Personal Financial Affairs Statement](#) and a [Candidate Registration](#) with the PDC, **if required**.

*An incumbent officeholder who has filed an F-1 earlier in the year does not need to file a second F-1 in the same year after becoming a candidate.

When do I have to file reports?

C-3 Contribution Reports: Before June 1 of the election year, candidates fill out a C-3 report for each bank deposit and file these reports with their C-4 reports. Beginning June 1, each deposit must be reported no later than the following Monday. Since contributions must be deposited within 5 business days of receipt, active campaigns will make at least one weekly deposit.

C-4 Summary Reports: This report, along with its attached schedules, summarizes the campaign's financial activity and shows itemized expenditures for a specific period. C-4s are due:

Monthly from the beginning of the campaign through May of the election year. If a campaign has over \$200 in contributions or expenditures during a month, a C-4 report is filed by the 10th of the following month. Starting in June of the election year and continuing through the primary and general elections, C-4 reports are due 21 and 7 days *before* each election and on the 10th of the month *after* the month the election was held with the candidate's name on the ballot, even if there was little or no activity to report.

See the [PDC's online calendar](#) for report due dates and all other important dates candidates should know.

Where do I file PDC reports?

Most candidates will file reports only with the PDC. King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties and the City of Seattle have enacted [local filing requirements](#). Other county and municipal office candidates should check with the auditor or city clerk to determine if there is a local filing requirement.

Where do I get instructions?

Find [brochures](#), [manuals](#), and other filer resources in [Learn](#) section of the PDC's website. Blank forms are found under Learn, but most candidates will [electronically file](#) their campaign reports.

Submit questions to the PDC's [online help desk](#).

The PDC offers free compliance and ORCA training — find dates and classes on the PDC's [online calendar](#). If you can't make to one of our classes, view videos of them [online](#).

Must I have a separate campaign account?

Candidates must open a separate campaign account in a bank, credit union or savings and loan institution if they accept monetary contributions. A candidate who personally funds his/her entire campaign and accepts no contributions does not have to open a bank account. These candidates are required to make campaign books of account, which may include the personal checkbook register, available for public inspection by appointment the week before the election.

Can I be the campaign treasurer?

Yes. However, candidates who select Full Reporting are strongly encouraged to enlist the aid of a treasurer who has the time and energy necessary to keep detailed, accurate records and file frequent reports. Your treasurer does not need to be a professional accountant.

From whom may I accept contributions?

Generally, contributions from individuals, corporations, unions and other organizations are permitted. Candidates subject to contribution limits have special contributor restrictions explained in the PDC's manuals. By federal law, no foreign corporations or citizens (unless they have a Permanent Resident Card, also known as a green card), national banks and corporations organized by authority of Congress and federal government contractors may contribute to or spend funds on behalf of U.S. candidates.

Is there a contribution limit?

Yes, for state office and most local offices. Visit the PDC's [contribution limits webpage](#) for full details.

Is there an expenditure limit?

Candidates who choose Mini Reporting self-impose an expenditure limit of \$5,000. There are no expenditure limits for candidates who choose Full Reporting.

Do I have to file disclosure reports?

One of two things determines what a candidate discloses. For most candidates, it's the number of registered voters in the jurisdiction where the candidate runs for office. How much money a candidate raises or expects to raise determines what reports are filed by someone running for office in a very small jurisdiction (less than 5,000 registered voters).

File a Personal Financial Affairs Statement and campaign disclosure reports if you are:

- a state office candidate
- a county office candidate (or political subdivision that encompasses an entire county)
- a local or judicial office candidate in a jurisdiction with 5,000 or more registered voters
- a candidate who raises or expects to raise \$5,000 or more in the aggregate regardless of the number of registered voters (this includes the candidate's own money)

File just a Personal Financial Affairs Statement if you are:

- a candidate for local or judicial office in a jurisdiction with 2,000 or more but less than 5,000 registered voters and you do not raise or expect to raise \$5,000 or more

A candidate seeking election to an office in a jurisdiction with less than 2,000 registered voters who does not raise or expect to raise \$5,000 or more does not file any reports with the Public Disclosure Commission.

Must I identify all contributors?

Anyone who donates monetary and in-kind contributions totaling more than \$25 over the course of your campaign must be identified by name and full address. Plus, if an individual gives you more than \$100 in the aggregate, you must show this person's occupation and the name, city and state of his or her employer.

Do I have to file electronically?

Yes.

Free E-filing software, [ORCA](#), is available from the PDC. ORCA tutorials are available under its Help menu and the PDC offers training in Olympia.

When using the ORCA software, candidates should keep in mind that campaign data from the start of the campaign must be entered in order for the software to work properly. Like any software, there is a learning curve, so candidates and their treasurers are encouraged to install the software and become familiar with it before the day the first reports are due.

Use the PDC's [online help desk](#) for assistance with electronic filing of campaign finance reports.

Can I be reimbursed for the personal funds I spend on my campaign?

Reimbursements for the candidate's out-of-pocket campaign expenses must be made within three weeks or the reimbursement counts against the candidate's loan repayment limit. A candidate can be repaid up to \$6,000 for primary election loans and \$6,000 for general election loans. A candidate's contributions to his or her own campaign should be reported as loans in order to be eligible for repayment.

Are there laws governing political ads?

Yes. Everything you need to know is explained in the [Political Advertising brochure](#).

I suspect there's more to reporting ... right?

Probably. It depends on how much you're going to raise and spend on your campaign.

If you choose Mini Reporting (limiting what you raise or spend to \$5,000 and no one other than the candidate contributes more than \$500), the C-1 and the F-1 are the only PDC reports you have to file.

If you're going to raise and spend over \$5,000 to get elected (or less than that, but you want to accept more than \$500 from a contributor), you must select the Full Reporting option. You'll be required to file frequent and detailed contribution and expenditure reports (Forms C-3 and C-4, respectively).

The PDC realizes that candidates are not always able to forecast campaign costs accurately, and may need to switch reporting

options. Changing from mini to full reporting must be done by the deadline before the election and approved by the PDC staff. The [Candidate Instructions](#) explain the deadlines and steps required to to change from mini to full reporting.

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