



## Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

William Francis Galvin

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### Elections

## How to Run as a Write-in Candidate

Write-in candidates run for office without filing nomination papers. Your name won't appear on the ballot. For each office on the ballot, there is a write-in space below the list of candidates. Voters can write your name and address in the space for the office you're seeking. You can also distribute stickers for voters to place in the write-in space. Handwritten votes will count even if you have distributed stickers.

The first step is contacting your local election office. They can explain the process and show you where voters can write-in your name and address.

It is recommended that you let local election officials know if you plan to run a write-in campaign, so they can prepare the election workers who will be counting the votes. If you are running on a state ballot, you can also let the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Elections Division know about your campaign.

You will also need to tell the public about your write-in or sticker campaign. Make sure you tell voters everything they need to do to vote for a write-in or sticker candidate so that their vote can be counted.

## General Requirements

Voters will need to write your name and address in the blank "write-in" space on their ballot. If you're giving voters a sticker, make sure the sticker has your full name and address.

Voters will need to know how to write your name correctly, and where to write it on the ballot. If a voter misspells your name or address, the vote can still be counted, as long as the election worker can figure out the voter's intent. If they write-in or stick on your information but don't fill in the vote indicator, their vote can still be counted.

Make sure voters know what office you're running for. If they write your name in for a different office, their vote will count for that office, instead of the one you're running for.

You can't hand out campaign materials within 150 feet of a polling location. This includes stickers. The polling place, the building that the polling place is in, the walls of the building, the building grounds, and 150 feet from the building's entrance are all off limits.

## General Election

To be elected in a general election, a write-in or sticker candidate must receive more votes than any other candidate for that office. There is no minimum number of votes required.

# Scanner

Voting for a write-in candidate with a scanner system is fairly simple. There is a space provided below the list of candidates printed on the ballot. The voter writes in only the name and address of the candidate. They don't write in a political party or other designation.

The voter can fill in the oval next to the write-in space or join together the arrow pointing to the write-in space. When the voter completes the oval or the arrow, most tabulators will segregate that ballot into a separate compartment to be hand-counted at the close of the polls. It is not necessary, however, for the vote indicator to be completed for the vote to be valid. Poll workers are required to review all ballots for write-in and sticker votes.

## **If you wish to run a sticker campaign where a scanner system is used, you should comply with the following requirements:**

- The sticker for an individual candidate should be 2 ¼" long by ¼" high to fit the space on the ballot. You may ask your local election official for a sample ballot to make sure you prepare your stickers the correct size.
- The name of the candidate shall be printed in black ink exactly as it appears on the voting list, in capital letters 1/8" to 1/4" in height. The number and street (if any) and the city or the town where the candidate resides should be added after the name in smaller type size than the name. No political or other designation (such as Republican, veteran, present representative, etc.) shall appear. If running on a municipal office ballot, you do not need to include the name of the city or town.
- Voters should be instructed how to affix the sticker, depending on whether it is self-adhering or the type that must be moistened. Sticker directions, including exactly where to place the sticker, may be attached to a card, which may also contain information about the candidate.
- Voters should be instructed to place the sticker in one of the spaces provided beneath the list of candidates for that office and to complete the voter indicator (fill in the oval or connect the arrow). Although the voter is not required to join together the arrow pointing to the candidate or fill in the oval next to the candidate, if they do, most tabulators will segregate the ballot for hand-counting after the polls close.
- Stickers may not be distributed inside the polling place or within the building in which the polling place is located, or less than 150 feet from the entrance to the polling place.

## Additional Resources

### Office of Campaign and Political Finance

One Ashburton Place, Room 411

Boston, MA 02108

[617-979-8300](tel:617-979-8300) or [800-462-OCPE](tel:800-462-OCPE)

[www.ocpf.us](http://www.ocpf.us) 

### State Ethics Commission

One Ashburton Place, Room 619

Boston, MA 02108

[617-371-9500](tel:617-371-9500)

[www.mass.gov/orgs/state-ethics-commission](http://www.mass.gov/orgs/state-ethics-commission) 

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