

GETTING ON THE DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY BALLOT IN VIRGINIA

On **March 1, 2016**, Virginia voters will have an opportunity to vote for their favorite candidate in either the Democratic or Republican presidential primary. The Democratic Party of Virginia (DPVA) will use those primary results to allocate Virginia's Democratic National Convention Delegates among the presidential candidates. *See* DPVA Delegate Selection Plan. [<http://www.vademocrats.org/dnc-delegate-selection-process>]

To get on that primary ballot, presidential campaigns must obtain the signatures of **5,000 qualified voters**, including **200** from each of Virginia's 11 congressional districts. Although this standard is one of the highest in the country, the requirement has been lowered from prior years' 10,000 signature requirement. Moreover, the primary petition effort offers campaigns an opportunity to build their organization, recruit volunteers, and spread the good word about their candidates. Here are some details on the process:

1. Go to the **Virginia Department of Elections (ELECT) website**, Presidential Primary Information page [<http://elections.virginia.gov/index.php/candidatepac-info/presidential-primary-filing/index.html>] and obtain (1) the Deadlines, Duties and Ballot Access guidance, (2) the consent/declaration of candidacy form, and (3) the petition forms (letter or legal size – both are allowed).
2. The petition signature-collecting window opened on June 23, 2015, so you can start now. The petitions and consent/declaration forms must be submitted to ELECT by Thursday, **December 10, 2015 at 5:00 p.m.** Once the petitions are submitted, there is no opportunity to add new names, so make sure that you have an adequate number of valid signatures. The candidate positions on the primary ballot will be determined by lot (not by the first filing), and the petitions can be submitted at any time between now and December 10th.
3. You can make your own copies of the petition form, but they should be **double-sided**.
4. Each petition form should contain voters only from the **city or county listed** on the form. We recommend different forms for cities/counties in **different congressional districts** – this makes it easier for both you and DPVA to ensure that you have met the CD minimum requirements. ELECT also suggests that petition pages be filed in order by locality (counties followed by cities) to facilitate the processing of the filing.
5. The people who circulate the petitions must: (1) be **legal residents of the United States**, (2) not be minors (i.e. must be at least 18 years old) or persons who have been convicted of a felony and not had their rights restored, and (3) **personally view** the signatures being provided – do not leave the petition form unattended. Circulators need **not** be Virginia residents. A circulator can obtain signatures on petitions in any location in the state, provided that separate sheets are used for signers who live in different counties and cities.

6. When a petition form is completed, the person circulating the petition must (1) print his or her name, address, county/city, and social security number in the blank spaces on the bottom of the back side of the form and (2) sign the form in the space provided **and have the signature notarized**. (Banks, real estate offices and law offices often have notaries that will notarize the forms at no cost.) Once the circulator signs, dates, and has his/her signature notarized, the form may not be used to collect any more signatures. A circulator cannot notarize his or her own signature.

7. Anyone who is a **registered voter** can sign a petition. Signers must both print and sign their name, provide their home street address and city/county, zip code (no P.O. boxes), and write the date they signed the petition. The social security number last 4 digits is optional.

8. Because many people who are not registered to vote will sign a petition or the signatures may have other flaws, campaigns should **check each name/address** against a registered voters list that may be obtained from DPVA or ELECT to make sure that the signers are registered to vote. Note that ELECT recommends that 7,500 - 10,000 signatures be obtained with at least 300 signatures from each congressional district.

9. After the forms are submitted (in sealed containers) to ELECT, they will be provided to DPVA for review. The DPVA will **certify** qualifying candidates by December 15, 2015.

10. Other issues: There is no statutory filing fee. The DPVA will not be electing National Convention delegates directly in the primary, so campaigns need not submit a list of delegate candidates. The DPVA does not intend to require a "loyalty oath" from voters in the Democratic primary.