



Frequently Asked Questions for Town Clerks and Registrar of Voters

1. How do you “force” a primary in a state election year?

That depends. For a statewide or district office you can force a primary by either (1) obtaining 15% of the delegates voting at a convention or (2) by circulating primary petitions. For a municipal office you can force a primary only by circulating primary petitions.

2. How are delegates chosen for the various state and district conventions?

Delegates to conventions can be selected in two ways (1) by caucus or (2) by town committee. The party rules of the party will determine which method is used.

3. When an elector changes their party or leaves a party can they be appointed to a local board?

That depends. Any elector whose name has been transferred from one enrollment list to another or who has applied for erasure or transfer of his name from an enrollment list shall not be entitled to (1) participate or vote in a caucus or primary of any party, (2) participate in the appointment of members to any board or commission that is political in nature, (3) be appointed as a member of any board or commission that is political in nature or (4) be entitled to the privileges accompanying enrollment in any party for a period of three months from the date of the filing of his application for transfer or for erasure.

4. Can our office render an opinion regarding a referendum or town meeting?

Generally, no. The Office of the Secretary of the State has extremely limited jurisdiction in regard to referenda, as they are a local, rather than a state issue. We can say that referenda should be held in a manner that resembles that of an election as closely as possible. Particularly, in the way voters are checked in at the polls. Further, we can note that there is a law, Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 9-369c, which forbids Town Clerks from mailing absentee ballots for a referendum to voters, if the referendum is to be held with less than three weeks' notice. We may offer a certain level of assistance if the referendum is specifically for a Charter revision. Finally, if the referendum is to be held in conjunction with an election, any questions must be submitted to this to determine whether the question begins with the word “Shall” and ends with a question mark. Other referendum questions should not be referred to this office.

5. Can you tell me how to start an exploratory committee, campaign committee, or other questions surrounding the issue of campaign finance? How do I participate in the Citizens' Election Program?

Neither the subject of campaign finance, nor any committees founded to report campaign finance, fall under the jurisdiction of this office. Such questions should be discussed with the State Election Enforcement Commission. See CGS 9-600 et seq.

6. My registrar just moved out of town. Does she have to resign?

If she registers to vote in another town, then she is no longer an elector and could not continue to hold office. But if she is temporarily away and intends to return (for example, a fire in her home renders the structure inhabitable), she could continue to hold office.

7. I just received my party's endorsement; can I also appear on the ballot as a nominating petition candidate?

The nomination of a candidate by a major party shall disqualify such candidate from appearing on the ballot by nominating petition unless (1) the petition is circulated by an existing minor party and (2) the minor party is otherwise qualified to nominate candidates on the same ballot, and (3) a candidate of the existing minor party received at least 15,000 votes for the office of Governor, Secretary of the State, State Treasurer, State Comptroller, or Attorney General in the previous state election for any such office.

8. As a petitioning candidate, how many signatures must I collect?

Each petition shall be signed by a number of qualified electors equal to the lesser of (1) One percent of the votes cast for the same office(s) at the last preceding election, or (2) seven thousand five hundred. In regards to newly-created offices, the number of qualified electors is prescribed in §9-380.

9. I have been convicted of a felony, can I register to vote?

In Connecticut, individuals only forfeit their voting rights if they are convicted of a felony and sentenced to incarceration. They lose the right to vote for the period of incarceration. Upon their release, they are eligible to restore their voting rights as long as they are not released on parole. If they are on parole they must complete the entire period of parole before being eligible to restore their right to vote. Upon completion they can either register in person at the town hall; by mail, by completing a mail-in voter registration application and sending it to their local Registrars of Voters office located in their town hall; or online at www.sots.ct.gov (with either a valid State of Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicle driver's license, permit, or identification card number).

Anyone that is convicted of a felony and sentenced to probation will not lose their voting rights unless the conviction was for a violation of Title 9 of the Connecticut General Statutes (Election laws). If convicted of an election law violation, the individual must complete the entire sentence imposed—including probation before being eligible to restore their voting rights.

10. I am disabled and unable to physically go to the polls—how can I vote?

Contact the Town Clerk in your municipality as you may vote by absentee ballot. A note from your physician, may qualify you for a "Permanent Absentee Ballot" for all elections during the year.

11. Does a Head Moderator need to be a certified moderator?

The head moderator's duty is to declare the results of the election at the end of the night. The head moderator does not need to be a certified moderator, as long as he or she is not also working at the polls on Election Day. However the Head Moderator should be an elector of the town. §9-169

12. In an emergency, what is the process for changing the location of a polling place?

If the registrars of voters, in consultation with the town clerk find the polling place unusable, they shall find another location and provide notification to the voters of the changed polling place. §9-169

13. Are alternates considered part of the board for minority representation purposes?

No, the alternates are considered to be a separate board for the purpose of minority representation.

14. Do I need an original signature for a resignation?

Yes. When in doubt contact your town attorney for guidance.