

scVOTES.gov



2026

SOUTH CAROLINA CANDIDATE TOOL KIT

The South Carolina Candidate Toolkit is intended to provide helpful information to individuals who have recently filed as candidates for office. Candidates will find answers and resources in this guide for many of the common questions received by election officials. While this guide is not a fully comprehensive resource for all candidate and election related matters, it does provide basic information and tools for candidates to find needed information.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is a Primary?

A. Primaries are elections that political parties use to select their candidates for a General Election. A primary is necessary when multiple candidates from the same political party file for the same office.

Q. When are the 2026 Statewide Primaries?

A. Election Day is June 9, 2026.

Q. How is the winner determined in a Primary?

A. A candidate must receive a majority of votes cast for that office to win the primary. In offices with one seat to fill (most offices), majority is determined by dividing the total votes cast for the office by two. Any number of votes in excess of that number is a majority. If no candidate has a majority, then the two candidates remaining with the highest number of votes will appear in a runoff two weeks later.

Q. If a Runoff is required, what is the date?

A. Any required runoff will be on June 23, 2026.

Q. How is the winner determined in a runoff?

A. The candidate with the highest number of votes wins.

Q. Does a voter have to be a registered member of a party to participate in the Statewide Primaries?

A. No, S.C. does not have registration by party. The Statewide Primaries are open to all registered S.C. voters. Poll Managers will ask voters, "In which party's primary do you wish to vote today?"

Q. Can a voter vote in both primaries?

A. No. State law prohibits voters from voting in more than one party's primary.

Q. If a voter votes in one party's primary, can they vote in the other party's runoff?

A. No. The runoff is a continuation of the primary. The voter cannot cross over.

Q. If a voter didn't vote in either primary, can they vote in a runoff?

A. Yes. They have the option of voting in either party's runoff.

Q. When is a recount necessary?

A. A recount is mandatory in two situations:

- When the difference between any winning candidate and any other non-winning candidate is 1% or less of the total votes cast for all candidates for that office.
- When the difference between any candidate qualified for the runoff and any other candidate not qualified for the runoff is 1% or less of the total votes cast for all candidates for that office.

Q. What hours will the polls be open on Election Day?

- A. Polling places are open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. for all elections. Anyone in line at 7:00 p.m. will be allowed to vote.

Q. When is the 2026 General Election?

- A. Election Day is November 3, 2026.

Q. What candidates and/or offices are on the ballot?

- A. The candidates and offices on a particular ballot will often differ depending on the county and districts in which a voter resides. For primary elections, ballots will also be different depending on which party's primary the voter chooses to vote.

In advance of Election Day, voters may view their Sample Ballot by visiting [scVotes.gov](https://scvotes.gov) -- clicking on the "Voters" tab -- and selecting "[Get My Sample Ballot](#)"

Sample Ballots provide up-to-date districts, candidates, and contests that will appear on a voter's ballot.

Q. Do voters need Photo ID to vote in South Carolina?

- A. Yes. Photo ID is required (with reasonable impediment exceptions). Voters will be asked to show one of the following Photo IDs when they go vote:
- S.C. Driver's license
 - ID card issued by the S.C. Department of Motor Vehicles
 - SC Concealed Weapons Permit
 - S.C. Voter Registration Card with Photo
 - Federal Military ID
 - US Passport

Q. When is the deadline to register to vote?

- A. The deadline to register to vote in any election in South Carolina is 30 days prior to Election Day. Important dates and deadlines for the 2026 election cycle are included in this document under [Important Election Dates](#). For more information on voter registration qualifications, requirements, and how to register to vote, visit [scVotes.gov](https://scvotes.gov) – click on the "Voters" tab – and select "[Register to Vote.](#)"

Q. What is early voting, and how can I vote early?

- A. Early voting allows registered voters to vote in person in their county prior to Election Day. County boards of voter registration and elections must have at least one but no more than seven early voting centers. Voters may visit any early voting center in their county during the early voting period, present their Photo ID, and vote using the same voting system as their polling place on Election Day.

Important dates and deadlines for the 2026 election cycle are included in this document under [Important Election Dates](#). For more information on early voting, visit [scVotes.gov](https://scvotes.gov) –

clicking on the “Voters” tab -- and select [“Early Voting”](#). Voters may visit the early voting page to see a list of early voting locations in their county.

Q. How can a voter apply and receive an absentee by-mail ballot?

- A. State law allows voters with qualifying reasons to vote absentee by-mail. Voters must apply for an absentee ballot by completing and returning an absentee application to their county board of voter registration and elections by the deadline. A ballot will be mailed to the voter after the completed absentee application is received in the office of the county board.

Important dates and deadlines for the 2026 election cycle are included in this document under [Important Election Dates](#). For more information on absentee qualifications, requirements, and the absentee process, visit [scVotes.gov](#) – click on the “Voters” tab – and select [“Absentee Voting”](#).

Q. If a voter did not vote early or absentee by-mail, where can they vote on Election Day?

- A. A voter is assigned to a precinct according to the address where the voter lives. Registered voters must vote in their assigned precinct and polling place on Election Day to receive the correct ballot style. The hours for voting on Election Day are 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Any voter in line at 7:00 p.m. will be allowed to vote.

Voters can find their polling location by visiting [scVotes.gov](#) – clicking on the “Voters” tab – and selecting [“Find My Polling Place”](#) or by calling the office of the county board of voter registration and elections.

A voter’s precinct and polling place are printed on their voter registration card; however, it is possible for polling places to change. The SEC recommends that voters check their polling place at [scVotes.gov](#) before leaving to vote.

Q. How is the winner determined in a General Election?

- A. The candidate with the highest number of votes wins.

Q. When and where will results be reported?

- A. Unofficial results will be reported by the SEC on election night at [scVOTES.gov](#). Results are reported in real time as they are received from each office of the county board of voter registration and elections. Results may also be reported locally by the county board.

On Friday following the election, the county boards of voter registration and elections will convene as a County Board of Canvassers to hear, rule, and determine which provisional ballots to count. Those totals are added to the election night totals and certified. The SEC meets later to certify the results at which time the results become official.

Important Election Dates

Primary Election

- Deadline to register to vote in person for Primary: May 8, 2026
- Deadline to register to vote online or by fax or email for Primary: May 10, 2026
- Deadline to register to vote by mail for Primary (must be postmarked by this date): May 11, 2026
- Early Voting: Weekdays 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM (closed Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays)
 - Week 1: Tuesday, May 26 – Friday, May 29 (closed Memorial Day, May 25th)
 - Week 2: Monday, June 1 – Friday, June 5
- Deadline to apply for absentee ballot for Primary Election: May 29, 2026
- Election Day: June 9, 2026
- County Certification: June 11, 2026
- State Certification: June 12, 2026
- Runoff Early Voting (if needed): Wednesday – Friday 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM (closed Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays)
 - Wednesday, June 17 – Thursday, June 18
- Runoff (if needed): June 23, 2026
- County Certification: June 25, 2026
- State Certification: June 26, 2026

General Election

- Deadline to register to vote in person for General Election: October 2, 2026
- Deadline to register to vote online or by fax or email for General Election: October 4, 2026
- Deadline to register to vote by mail for General Election (must be postmarked by this date): October 5, 2026
- Early Voting: Monday through Saturday 8:30 AM – 6:00 PM (closed Sundays and legal holidays)
 - Week 1: Monday, October 19 – Saturday, October 24
 - Week 2: Monday, October 26 – Saturday, October 31
- Deadline to apply for absentee ballot for General Election: October 23, 2026
- Election Day: November 3, 2026
- County Certification: November 6, 2026
- State Certification: November 11, 2026

Polling Place Guidelines:

Candidate and Candidate Representatives

 Candidates May:	 Candidates May Not:
<p>Campaign verbally within 500-feet of the entrance to the polling place as long as it does not interfere with the election process</p> <hr/>	<p>Display or distribute campaign materials within the 500-foot area</p> <hr/>
<p>Wear a badge no larger than 4 1/4" X 4 1/4". This badge may contain only the candidate's name and office sought</p> <hr/>	<p>Interfere with the orderly election process</p> <hr/>
<p>Enter the polling place (Candidate badge must be removed before entering to vote or observe.)</p>	<p>Wear a candidate badge inside the polling place</p> <hr/>
	<p>Actively campaign inside the polling place</p> <hr/>
	<p>Intimidate voters</p>

 Candidate Representatives May:	 Candidate Representatives May Not:
<p>Campaign verbally within 500-feet of the entrance to the polling place as long as it does not interfere with the election process</p> <hr/>	<p>Display or distribute campaign materials within the 500-foot area</p> <hr/>
	<p>Interfere with the orderly election process</p> <hr/>
	<p>Wear any type of campaign badge</p> <hr/>
	<p>Campaign inside the polling place</p> <hr/>
	<p>Intimidate voters</p>

Campaign Material at Polling Places

Campaign material is any written or visual material that has the intention or effect of supporting or opposing any candidate or ballot item in the current election.

During Early Voting and on Election Day, it is unlawful for any person to distribute or display any type of campaign literature or place any political posters within 500 feet of any entrance used by the voters to enter a polling place. It is the duty of Poll Managers to keep this prohibited area clear of political literature and displays (S.C. Code §7-25-180 (a)).

This prohibition does not apply to materials distributed or displayed within the 500-foot boundary on private property, not under the control of the county board of voter registration and elections.

Anyone displaying campaign material within 500 feet of the polling place must be asked to remove the material, cover the material, or otherwise cause the material not to be visible.

Campaign material on shirts may be addressed by wearing a jacket, coat, or sweater over the shirt, or turning the shirt inside out. The material must not be visible while in the polling place nor within 500 feet of the polling place.

Campaign Signs

There are several state laws addressing political signs on roadways. See S.C. Code §57-25-10, §57-25-140. It is the responsibility of the entity that maintains the road (state, county, or municipality) to enforce applicable sign laws. County and municipal ordinances may vary. Contact the appropriate county or municipal government for more information regarding local sign ordinances.

S.C. Code §7-25-210

(A) It is unlawful to deface, vandalize, tamper with, or remove a lawfully placed political campaign sign prior to the election without the permission of the candidate or party.

(B) This section does not apply to a governmental entity when a political campaign sign is removed because of noncompliance with applicable law, or because an employee of the governmental entity removing the sign is working within the course and scope of his employment.

Polling Place Guidelines: Observers & Poll Watchers

An Observer is any member of the public who is not working as a Poll Clerk or Poll Manager. They are also not designated by a political party or a candidate but are permitted to observe election activities inside a polling place. Observers must present a valid photo ID upon arrival.

A Poll Watcher is appointed by a candidate or a political party to observe the Election Day procedures in a polling place. Each polling place will designate an area where Poll Watchers can remain throughout Election Day. Conversations between watchers and voters are not permitted within the polling place. Watchers will not be permitted to interfere with the orderly conduct of the election or influence any voter in casting their ballot.

- In a primary, each candidate may appoint one watcher for any polling place where his/her name is on the ballot.
- For the General Election, all candidates of the same party are jointly represented at a polling place by no more than two watchers for each 1000 registered voters. Each non-partisan, petition or announced write-in candidate may appoint one watcher for any polling place where his/her name is on the ballot.
- Watchers must be qualified voters in the county.
- When arriving at the polling place, watchers must present a letter signed by the candidate or by an appropriate party official stating that they are certified to act as a Watcher for that location.
- Watchers must present a valid photo ID upon arrival and wear a badge.

Number of Poll Watchers Allowed

Watchers – Primary Election			
Election Type	Who Appoints	Number Allowed	
Party Primary	Candidate*	1 per Polling Place	
Watchers – General Election			
Candidate Type	Who Appoints	Number Allowed	Documentation
Party Candidates**	Party	2 per 1,000 voters	Party letter + badge
Nonpartisan Candidates	Candidate	1 per polling place	Candidate letter + badge

*Each candidate who is not unopposed in a primary may appoint a watcher for a polling place where their name appears on the ballot.

**In a General Election, all candidates who are certified by a political party must be jointly represented at each polling place by not more than two watchers from the party for each one thousand registered voters or fraction thereof registered at the polling place.



Observers and Poll Watchers May:

- Observe the election processes, including the opening and closing processes at the polling place.
- Observe the election processes during the Early Voting period at an EVC.
- Obtain information from the Clerk, or designated Poll Manager, about how many people have voted and who has voted if the EPB station is not currently being used to check in voters. Lists will not be provided to Poll Watchers or Observers at the polling place.
- Make handwritten notes while observing the election processes.
- Ask questions of the Clerk, or designated Poll Manager, at the polls if they do not interfere with the conduct of any part of the voting process. If a Poll Watcher or an Observer disagrees with the designated Poll Manager or Clerk, or needs more information, they should step outside and contact the county office.
- Address the Clerk if they wish to challenge a voter. The Poll Manager should then follow the procedure outlined in the section entitled "Voter Qualification Challenge Procedure."



Observers and Poll Watchers May Not:

- Interfere with the conduct of the election.
- Use cell phones or electronic devices inside the polling place.
- Take pictures or video inside the polling place, except for the zero tape and totals tape once posted.
- Physically handle or touch any voting materials or equipment.
- Move or rearrange tables, chairs, or voting booths at the polling place or EVC.
- Sit at or hover around official worktables or view confidential voter information on any computer terminal, EPB, or document.
- Interact with voters inside of a polling place or an Early Voting Center.
- Display any political material, including slogans, or wear campaign badges, buttons, or apparel.
- Wear any uniform resembling that of law enforcement officers or the military personnel.
- Have a firearm, knife, or other weapon within a polling place or Early Voting Center (§23-31-215(M)).
- Talk to any election worker who is not the Clerk or designated Poll Manager.
- Tell a Clerk or Poll Manager how to conduct their duties.
- Argue with any poll workers or voters.
- Make physical contact with poll workers or voters.
- Verbally harass or intimidate election workers, voters, or other persons in the polling place or EVC.
- Assist in operations at any polling place or EVC.
- Prevent other Poll Watchers and Observers from observing materials or a process.

Protest Schedule

Candidates who wish to file an election protest must do so by filing the protest with the appropriate authority prior to applicable deadlines. Protests must be filed in writing, with a copy for each candidate in the race, and must contain each ground concisely stated separately (S.C. Code §§7-17-30, 7-17-260).

Protests that are not filed with appropriate authorities by applicable deadlines may not be valid. Refer to the S.C. Code of Laws for detailed information on protests and appeals.

Primary Election

Type of Office	Deadline to File Protest	Where to File	Who Hears Protest	When Protests are Heard	SC Code of Laws
Federal, Statewide, Multi-County, State Senate, and State House	Noon, Monday following certification	State Party Executive Committee Chairperson or State Law Enforcement Division Chief	State Party Executive Committee	Not earlier than the 5 th or later than the 25 th day following receipt of protest	§7-17-560 §7-17-570
Countywide and Less than Countywide	Noon, Monday following certification	County Party Chairperson or County Sherriff	County Party Executive Committee	Thursday following the deadline to file protest	§7-17-520 §7-17-530
Municipal	Within 48 hours of closing of polls	Municipal Party Chairperson.	Municipal Party Executive Committee	Within five days after filing protest	§5-15-80

General Election

Type of Office	Deadline to File Protest	Where to File	Who Hears Protest	When Protests are Heard	SC Code of Laws
Federal, Statewide, Multi-County, State Senate, and State House	Noon, 5 days following certification	State Election Commission (SEC) Chairperson or State Law Enforcement Division Chief	SEC	Not earlier than the 5 th or later than the 25 th day following receipt of protest	§7-17-260 §7-17-270
Countywide and Less than Countywide	Noon, Wednesday following certification	County Board Chairperson or County Sherriff	County Board	Monday following the deadline to file protest	§7-17-30 §7-17-50
Municipal	Within 48 hours of closing of polls	Municipal Election Commission (MEC) Chairperson. If municipality has transferred duty to county, then the County Board of Voter Registration and Elections.	MEC If municipality has transferred duty to county, then County Board.	Within 48 hours of filing of protest.	§5-15-130

Vote Types

Absentee By-Mail

State law allows registered voters with qualifying reasons to vote absentee by mail prior to Election Day. Absentee ballots must be received no later than 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. (limited exceptions for Military/Overseas ballots may apply)

Absentee results are reported on election night and included in the unofficial results.

Early Voting

Early voting allows registered voters to vote in person in their county prior to Election Day. County boards of voter registration and elections must have at least one early voting location but may have up to seven.

Early Voting results for all locations are reported on election night and included in the unofficial results.

Election Day

Registered voters, who did not vote early or absentee by mail, must vote in their assigned precinct and polling place on Election Day. The hours for voting on Election Day are 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The number of precincts reporting will vary by county. Reporting times may be affected by county size, number of precincts, geography (travel time) and other factors.

Election Day results for all precincts are reported on election night and included in the unofficial results.

Failsafe

Failsafe voting is designed to allow voters who have moved from one precinct to another and failed to update their address to update the address on election day and vote. (S.C. Code §7-5-440) Voters who go to the office of the county board of voter registration and elections on Election Day, will complete a change of address, and vote a full ballot.

Failsafe results are reported on election night and included in the unofficial results.

Failsafe Provisional

Failsafe voting is designed to allow voters who have moved from one precinct to another and failed to update their address to update the address on Election Day and vote. (S.C. Code §7-5-440) Voters who go to their polling place on Election Day and provide a change of address form, will vote a limited failsafe ballot. Failsafe Provisional ballots contain federal, statewide, and countywide offices. (municipal wide may be included)

Failsafe Provisional results are NOT reported on election night.

Failsafe Provisional ballots will be presented at the County Board of Canvassers meeting. Provided that proper failsafe procedures have been followed, the ballots will be counted. Failsafe Provisional ballots are reported as a separate vote type and added to the totals from election night as part of the “official totals”.

Provisional

Provisional voting is a process where a voter’s eligibility to vote is in question and cannot be immediately determined. The voter is allowed to vote a “challenged ballot” which is sealed inside an envelope. The county board of voter registration and elections will research the voter’s information and circumstances of the challenge to determine eligibility. The County Board of Canvassers will hear the challenge and rule on whether the ballot should or should not be counted.

Provisional ballots are reported as a separate vote type and added to the totals from election night as part of the “official totals”.

Election Results

On election night, each polling place will display precinct results after the official closing of the polls. Result tapes will be posted near the entrance of the polling place for public viewing. The public, candidates, and media may record and photograph the unofficial results.

As precincts report into election central, results will be published on www.scvotes.gov/elections-statistics/election-results on election night.

Absentee, Early Voting, Election Day, and Failsafe results are included in the totals on election night. Election results on election night are considered unofficial results.

Failsafe Provisional and Provisional ballots will be presented at the County Board of Canvassers meeting. The County Board will hear and rule on any provisional ballots and determine which ballots will be counted. All counted ballots will be added to the election night totals.

Election results are not made official until the County and State Board of Canvassers canvass all votes and certify the results. The County Board of Canvassers will certify local contests, and the state election commission certifies for multicounty and statewide offices.

Sale of Voter Registration Lists

Who Can Purchase a List

You must be a registered South Carolina voter to purchase a list (S.C. Code §7-3-20(D)(13)).

Criteria

Lists can be created based on any combination of:

- County
- Voting District (house, senate, congressional, county council, city council, school district, etc.)
- Age
- Sex
- Race
- Household
- Participation in a particular election
- Date of registration

Data Formats & Production

Electronic File

- Includes: Name, Address, Race, Gender, Date of Birth, Voter Registration Number and Date Registered, County, Precinct, Voting Districts, and Voter Participation History (past two statewide primaries and General Elections).
- Format: Comma separated .txt file
- Delivery: Electronic download (online) or flash drive or DVD (pickup or mail)

Mailing Labels

- Includes: Voter's name and address
- Delivery: Pickup or mail

Printed Report

- Includes: Name, Address, Race, Gender, Date of Birth, Voter Registration Number and Date Registered, County, Precinct, and Voting districts.

Costs of Voter Registration Lists

Electronic File

Per-Record:

1,000 – 5,000	\$25
5,001 – 50,000	\$25 + \$1 for each additional 200 records or fraction thereof
50,001 – 75,000	\$275
75,001 +	\$275 + \$75 for each additional 25,000 records or fraction thereof (up to \$2,500 max)

Flat Fees:

State House District	\$160
State Senate District	\$300
US House District	\$1,200

Mailing Labels and Printed Reports

Per-Record:

1,000 – 5,000	\$75
Additional 1,000 or fraction thereof	\$15

*NOTICE TO ALL REQUESTORS OF RECORDS

Obtaining or using public records for commercial solicitation directed to any person in this State is prohibited (S.C. Code §30-2-50).

In addition, a person or private entity shall not knowingly obtain or use any "personal information" obtained from a public body for commercial solicitation directed to any person in the State (S.C. Code §30-2-50(A)). "Personal information" is defined as follows: Information that identifies or describes an individual including, but not limited to, an individual's photograph or digitized image, social security number, date of birth, driver's identification number, name, home address, home telephone number, medical or disability information, education level, financial status, bank account(s) number(s), account or identification number issued by and/or used by any federal or state governmental agency or private financial institution, employment history, height, weight, race, other physical details, signature, biometric identifiers, and any credit records or reports (S.C. Code §30-2-30(1)).

PENALTY: A person knowingly violating the provisions of S.C. Code §30-2-50(A) is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, must be fined an amount not to exceed five hundred dollars or imprisoned for a term not to exceed one year, or both (S.C. Code §30-2-50(D)).

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Tools for Candidates

Candidate Tracking

Candidate Tracking Instructions for General Election, November 3, 2026

Visit: www.scvotes.gov

Select: "Candidates", then "Candidate Tracking System"

Election Type: Statewide Primaries and General Elections

Election Year: 2026

Election Name: 6/9/2026 Statewide Primary

11/3/2026 Statewide General Election

2026 Candidate Filing Information Webpage

View the most up-to-date candidate filing information, including requirements, deadlines, and any changes, at www.scvotes.gov.

Resources

Poll Manager Handbook

View and download at www.scvotes.gov/poll-managers/south-carolina-poll-managers-handbook by clicking the red box entitled *Poll Manager Handbook*.

South Carolina Election Integrity Brochure

Download at www.scvotes.gov/resources by clicking *Election Integrity in South Carolina*.

South Carolina Election Commission

Website: www.scvotes.gov

Address:

1122 Lady Street, Suite 500
Columbia, SC 29201

Telephone: 803-734-9060

Email: elections@elections.sc.gov

Office Hours: Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., excluding state holidays



PREP  **POLLS**