

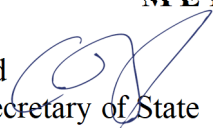


FLORIDA DEPARTMENT *of* STATE

RON DESANTIS
Governor

CORD BYRD
Secretary of State

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Cord Byrd 
Florida Secretary of State

TO: Supervisors of Elections

DATE: January 7, 2026

SUBJECT: Directive 2026-01—Congressional Candidate Qualifying;
Year of Apportionment

On January 7, 2026, Governor DeSantis issued a Proclamation pursuant to Article III, section 3(c)(1), Florida Constitution, calling for a special session to be held beginning on April 20, 2026, and extending no later than April 24, 2026. The Governor's Proclamation convenes the Legislature to redraw the state's congressional districts.

The qualifying period for congressional candidates for the 2026 election cycle is currently set to begin at noon on Monday, April 20, 2026. See § 99.061(1), Fla. Stat. Congressional candidates seeking 2026 ballot placement must know in a sufficiently timely manner from which voters they may obtain petition signatures or how many signatures they must obtain. Therefore, I conclude that the provisions in the Election Code referring to procedures to be followed in a "year of apportionment" apply to congressional candidates for the purpose of qualifying in such races in Florida during the regular 2026 election cycle. See §§ 99.061(9), 99.095, 99.09651, Fla. Stat.

In an apportionment year, the qualification requirements for a congressional candidate change in three significant ways. First, such a candidate may obtain signatures from electors who reside anywhere in the state (rather than from only those who reside within the district). See § 99.09651(3), Fla. Stat. Second, there is a different formula for calculating the minimum number of signatures required to qualify by petition. See § 99.09651(1), (2), Fla. Stat. Third, the qualifying dates for congressional candidates change. See § 99.061(9), Fla. Stat. These different requirements reflect that the timing of redrawing district boundaries conflicts with the ordinary process of identifying which and how many voters within a district would be required to qualify by petition.

Pursuant to my authority under section 97.012(1) and (16), Florida Statutes, I hereby direct the supervisors of elections in Florida to perform the duty of verifying signatures on petitions submitted to them by congressional candidates pursuant to section 99.095(3), Florida Statutes, to determine whether a petition's signature is from a voter registered within the county in which it was circulated. The petitions must state that the candidate is seeking the office of U.S. Representative, but they shall not include a district number, see § 99.09651(4), Fla. Stat.; however, if a petition includes a district number, the district designation may be disregarded as extraneous and unnecessary information for the applicable qualifying period.

Any congressional candidate in Florida seeking ballot placement for the 2026 election who seeks to qualify by the petition process may obtain signatures “from any registered voter in Florida regardless of party affiliation or district boundaries.” See § 99.09651(3), Fla. Stat. Moreover, such a candidate will need to collect 2,564 signatures. See § 99.09651(1), (2), Fla. Stat. (requiring a candidate for Congress in an apportionment year to collect a number of signatures equal to one-third of one percent of the “ideal population,” which is a number calculated by taking the total state population based on the most recent decennial census (21,538,187 in 2020) and dividing by the number of congressional districts apportioned to Florida (28). Finally, the qualifying dates for congressional candidates shall be from noon on June 8, 2026, to noon on June 12, 2026. See § 99.061(9), Fla. Stat.