

FAQ Candidate Committees

When Do I open a committee?

- ➔ Opening a committee is the VERY FIRST THING a candidate should do when they are running for office. The forms that are required to open a committee will guide the candidate in what they need to keep in mind when they run.
 - Statement of Organization
 - What will your committee name be? Who will be your treasurer (yourself, or another)? Where will you open your committee bank account? Where will you receive your committee information (mailing address, phone number)?
 - Once you know these things, you will need to certify your treasurer's information and your bank account information by completing the CRO-3100 and the CRO-3500.
 - An optional form to complete with your Statement of Organization packet is the CRO-3900, on which you will declare to what entity money left in your committee bank account will be given in the case of your death.
 - If you intend to raise or spend less than \$1,000 in support of your candidacy, you must complete a CRO-3600 to be exempt from reporting your transactions. HOWEVER, keep a record of all transactions in the event that you exceed \$1,000 or an investigation is launched.
 - **All of these forms must be completed within 10 days of any of the following action:**
 - Opening a Bank Account
 - Accepting or Spending Money (including in-kinds) in support of your candidacy
 - Announcing your candidacy publicly
 - Filing for Candidacy at the Board of Elections office

What should I do when I open a bank account?

- ➔ Get a Federal Tax ID number so that in case of an audit or investigation, no personal information can be accessed. Open a business account with your ID number. You can apply online for a Federal Tax ID number here:
 - Get a Federal Tax ID Number
- ➔ Have a separate bank account for campaign committee. Exception: Personnel bank account can be used if candidate only uses their personal funds.

Who should be my treasurer?

- ➔ The candidate may be their own treasurer, but not the candidate's spouse. The treasurer must be AT LEAST 18 years old, and it is recommended that the person have previous experience in finance or campaign finance.
- ➔ The treasurer has to be a NC resident.

Who needs to take the Mandatory Treasurer Training?

- ➔ The treasurer of the committee is required to take the training within 3 months of signing the Statement of Organization paperwork. The certification must be retaken every 4 years.
- ➔ We recommend that the Candidate take the training with their treasurer. The training includes specific information about prohibited transactions and helpful information about what to do when you are conducting fundraisers to remain in compliance.

- An assistant treasurer (if applicable) is also required to take the training. A custodian of books is NOT required to take the training.

Is training available online?

- Yes! Email campaign.reporting@ncsbe.gov with your name, committee name, and that you are interested in receiving the training online and you will be sent a link to the online training page.
- NOTE: There is not a place on the training webpage to ask questions. We recommend that you attend training in person so that you can ask questions of the State Board of Elections as you take the training, or write down your questions and email them afterwards.

What is the Certification of Threshold?

- This certifies to the NC State Board of Elections that you intend to raise and/or spend less than \$1,000 in support of your candidacy and therefore are exempt from the regular reporting schedules.
- This does not exempt you from keeping information about your transactions for your records in the case that you go over \$1,000 or an investigation is launched. In the event of either of these happening, you would need to disclose ALL transactions within your committee since its conception.
- A new CRO-3600 is REQUIRED at the beginning of every election cycle.

Where do I get candidate filing forms?

- The NC State Board of Elections website has all the forms that you will ever need to open and report for your committee.

How do I complete the candidate filing forms?

- Most of the time, next to each form on the reporting forms list, there are instructions AND a sample of a complete and correct form. You can use these as a guide when you complete your forms.

Why do I need the candidate filing forms?

- Every time you make a transaction within your committee, it needs to be reported. The media, opponents, and voters will be paying attention to who is giving you the money and how it is being spent. Each form represents a different type of transaction, where you will give *details* about what you did during a specific time period.
 - Example 1: Did you receive contributions at a fundraiser or from your PayPal account? If yes, you will fill out a contributions sheet. Who gave you that money? A neighbor? Another candidate? A Political Party? You will need a Contributions from Individuals, Contributions from Political Party Committee, or a Contribution from Other Political Committees form.
 - Example 2: Did you spend money on election materials or office supplies for your campaign, such as pens, signs, buttons, paper for fliers, etc? Did you make a contribution to another candidate running for office? You will need two disbursements sheets, one with operating expenses for your pens, signs, and buttons checked at the top of the form, and another disbursements sheet with Contributions to Other Political Committees checked at the top. (NOTE: Do not check more than one disbursement type on the same sheet)

How do I know when a report is due?

- ➔ The current reporting schedule is available on the NC State Board of Elections website in the campaign finance section at the following link: <http://www.ncsbe.gov/content.aspx?id=8> . The schedules may be different depending on the office you are seeking so be sure to check *filer* information on schedule.
- NOTE: Never submit a report in advance of the period end date for that report.

What if I submit my report after the due date?

- ➔ Committees will be assessed civil penalties for reports that are not received or postmarked by the due date. The penalty fees will have to be paid to the NC Civil Penalty and Forfeiture Fund from the committee's bank account.
- ➔ Contact the State Board of Elections with rates of penalties.

What forms are due for each report?

- ➔ Two forms that are on EVERY report are the CRO-1000 and the CRO-1100, even if no transactions were made during that period.
- ➔ As for what forms are due, that depends on what transactions you've made.
 - A "Best Practice" for figuring out what forms you need to submit is to "have a seat with" your bank statements (or your online history) and receipts. Print a Detailed Summary sheet, and begin to categorize each transaction as it fits under each of the Detailed Summary categories.
 - Example 1: You have contributions from when you went door to door to raise money. That would be a Contribution from Individuals. You need a CRO-1210 to detail all of your receipts.
 - Example 2: You spend money on postage to mail campaign messages to potential voters. That would be a Disbursement. You will need a Disbursement sheet.

What is the Period Start and End Dates for each report?

- ➔ The Reporting schedule has all the coverage dates for each report that will be due for candidates during a given election year.
- ➔ The Organizational Report is due within 10 days of any action within the committee as defined above. The next report's start date would be the day after the end date of the organizational report.
 - Example: The committee filed for office on 7/5/2013. The Organizational Report dates are 7/5/2013 – 7/15/2013. The next report due according to the reporting schedule is the 2013 Thirty-Five Day Report. The start date would be 7/16/2013 and the end date would be 8/27/2013.

What is an Election Cycle?

- ➔ An Election Cycle is related to the term of the seat for which you are running. Ex. The Office of Commissioner term is four years; therefore, the election cycle duration is 4 years. The START of the election cycle is January 1 of the year your term begins. The END of the election cycle is December 31, the year the term ends.
 - Example: The Commissioner Election cycle begins on January 1st 2015 and will end on December 31, 2018.

What is an In-Kind Contribution?

- ➔ A contribution that was made on behalf of the committee in the form of goods or services rather than monetary.
 - Example: If a supporter wanted to host an event and provide refreshments for a fundraiser as a donation to the committee and the committee did not pay for any of the supplies, food, or venue, etc., that would be considered an In-Kind Contribution.
- ➔ Contributions received in this manner still need to be reported but will not affect the bank balance on your campaign finance reports. It should be shown as an In-Kind receipt on the CRO-1210 form, but so as not to inflate the account balance, (since it is not money deposited in the account) it is also reported on a CRO-1510 to offset that receipt.
 - Examples: (Reminder, these are things that were donated and NOT paid for with committee funds) Baked goods, gas expenses for transportation, election materials, catering expenses for a fundraiser, web domain creation and maintenance, etc.

What is an Account Code?

- ➔ Account code is a series of letters or numbers that the candidate designates as an indicator of what account the transactions occurred in. Candidates often use their initials, favorite number, or something that signifies to the auditor which account is being used for their reported transactions. Most common used is 01.

What is my Candidate ID Number?

- ➔ This is a number given to the committee by the NC State Board of Elections office when a notice of candidacy is filed. Until you receive that number, please leave that section **blank**.

What are the different forms of payment?

- ➔ Cash (with limits), draft, credit card, check, or in-kind.

What is the difference between a CRO-1205 and a CRO-1210?

- ➔ A CRO-1210 is the standard form that can be used to report all contributions. Personal information for all contributors is required on this form.
- ➔ “Aggregates” refer to contributions of \$50 or less. You are not required to disclose the personal information of those who give \$50 or less to your committee. HOWEVER, if a person gives the committee over \$50 *cumulatively* during an election cycle, their information must be disclosed on a CRO-1210.

What are the rules for disclosing employment information?

- ➔ Employer’s information and job title are required fields on the CRO-1210. “Best efforts to procure the information” does qualify as an acceptable entry.
- ➔ Retired is not an acceptable entry. Retired – School Teacher or Craven County Public Schools is acceptable.
- ➔ The only exemptions are for homemakers and the unemployed. This description can be entered for both the employer information and job title fields.

Are there limits to the \$ dollar amount that can be contributed?

- ➔ Yes! \$5000 limit per election from a contributor (only if running in that election).
- ➔ Only exception is self and spouse of candidate are allowed to contribute over \$5000 limit.

Can cash be accepted as a contribution?

- ➔ Only if \$50 or less per day.

How can I file my reports electronically?

- ➔ Electronic Filing is offered by the NC State Board of Elections as an alternative to filing your reports manually. It requires using the Campaign Reporting Software that is available for download on the www.ncsbe.gov website; however, currently it is available only for Windows® operating systems. Macintosh is not supported.
- ➔ For all questions regarding electronic filing, please email the NC State Board of Elections at campaign.reporting@ncsbe.gov.
- ➔ NOTE: When you file your report electronically, please CC craven.boe@ncsbe.gov in your email so that our office will know that you submitted your report timely.
- ➔ IMPORTANT: You MUST submit an original signed copy of the Disclosure Report Cover to our office once you have submitted your report electronically. You can mail it or hand-deliver it.

May I use a personal credit card?

- ➔ A personal credit card may be used to make committee payments AS LONG AS you report them on your campaign finance reports as in-kind receipts.
 - Example: You used a personal credit card to pay for office supplies totaling \$55.67. In this case, you would fill out a contribution from individuals form, giving your personal information, the form of payment would be an in-kind and the amount would be \$55.67. In the comments field, note that supplies were bought with personal credit card. Also put the same on your CRO-1510 form.

Campaign Reporting Software

The NC State Board of Elections has developed and is constantly maintaining and improving free software that enables the storing of all campaign information required by the state. There are also several third-party products that create files that meet the file format requirements.

Important Software Notes

The Reporting software is a stand-alone application built for the Windows operating system; there is no support for setting up the application to run over a network. Only the following Windows operating platforms are supported:

- Windows XP SP3
- Windows 7 32bit

For Vista/7 users:

Once you have completed your installation of our software, Vista and Windows 7 users must run the software as an administrator in order for it to work correctly with your operating system. To change your software so that you permanently run as an administrator, right click on the CF Remote icon on your desktop and select Properties. Go to the Compatibility tab and, under privilege level, check the box that says Run this Program as an Administrator. Select Apply and then OK. When you open your software you will get a message asking you to allow the program to run.

To electronically file a report:

Send the export file via CD or email in the proper file format as specified by the NC SBE; otherwise it cannot be accepted.

Campaign Reporting Software Downloads

Download the software and accompanying files listed below in order to use the Campaign Finance Filing Software.

READ the instruction guide as it contains information on how to use the software and the appendix has the steps you should follow for important procedures, such as filing a report electronically.

Install Note:

The Installation for the CF Remote software has been redesigned due to installation issues. As a result, a new installation has been created. Any user running a version of the CF Remote software that is version 4.2.41 or older will need to:

- Backup their database (see "Back up your database" under Campaign Finance Remote Software Help Topics)
- Uninstall the CF Remote software (read the detailed instructions)

These steps above MUST be followed before installing the newest version.

Description	File Name	Version	Size	Last Updated
CF Remote Software * This is the entire installation of the remote software in one single file.	Download Now	4.3.3	10.4 MB	10-23-2013
CF Remote Software - Instruction Guide * This is the remote software instruction guide to help you get started using the software.	Download Now	1.0.7	7.32 MB	06-09-2008

List of previous versions and their release dates over the past year:

<u>Version</u>	<u>Last Updated</u>
4.3.0	08-23-2013
4.2.41	02-01-2013
4.2.38	12-20-2012
4.2.34	10-24-2012
4.2.32	05-04-2012
4.2.30	03-14-2012

Electronic Filing Format Downloads

If you use some other means to keep track of campaign finances other than the software provided by NC State Board of Elections, then these are the viable layouts of an import file. The file then gets imported into the central database. If you create a file in this format, then the central system can read your file, which can be submitted in electronic format. The example that is

Statement of Organization - Candidate Committee

Amendment	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Use this form to create a new or update an existing candidate committee.

This form must be accompanied by forms CRO-3100 and CRO-3500 (when amending, only re-submit if applicable).

1. Committee Information					
a. Full Name			c. ID Number		
b. Mailing Address (include City, State and Zip Code)			d. Date Organized		
			e. Phone Number		
2. Candidate Information <input type="checkbox"/> Candidate's Primary Committee					
a. Full Name		e. Candidate ID Number		f. Party Affiliation	
				(Indicate Non-partisan if applicable)	
b. Mailing Address (include City, State, and Zip Code)			g. Office Sought		
c. Phone Number	d. Email Address		h. Next Election Year	i. Jurisdiction	
<input type="checkbox"/> Email copy of notices					
3. Treasurer Information			4. Custodian of Books Information		
a. Full Name			a. Full Name		
b. Mailing Address (include City, State, and Zip Code)			b. Mailing Address (include City, State, and Zip Code)		
c. Phone Number	d. Email Address		c. Phone Number	d. Email Address	
I prefer to receive notices by email <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			<input type="checkbox"/> Email copy of notices		
5. Assistant Treasurer Information		<input type="checkbox"/> Add <input type="checkbox"/> Remove	6. Account Information (incl. CRO-3500)		<input type="checkbox"/> Add <input type="checkbox"/> Remove
a. Full Name			a. Financial Institution Full Name		
b. Mailing Address (include City, State, and Zip Code)			b. Purpose		
c. Phone Number	d. Email Address		c. Account Code	d. Type	
<input type="checkbox"/> Email copy of notices					
CERTIFICATION					
I certify that the Committee or Fund is in compliance with all applicable provisions of Article 22A, 22B & 22D-22M of Chapter 163 of the NC General Statutes and that no funds are commingled with prohibited or other non-disclosed funds. I further certify that this report is complete, true and correct.					
_____		_____		_____	
Printed Name of Signer		Signature of Appointed Treasurer		Date	



North Carolina
State Board of Elections

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Certification of Threshold

This Certification is used to declare or withdraw a committee's intent to raise or spend \$1,000 or less in the current election cycle.

This Certification is only valid for political party committees and candidates for a county office, municipal office, local school board office, soil & water conservation district board of supervisors, or sanitary district board.

FILED BY:

Committee Name: _____

Treasurer Name: _____

Treasurer Address: _____

(include city, state, & zip) _____

Treasurer Phone: _____

Check One:

____ I certify that this committee intends to neither receive nor expend more than \$1,000 during the current election cycle under the procedures set forth in G.S. 163-278.10A. This certification will remain in effect until the end of the election cycle for this committee. If this committee exceeds \$1,000 in contributions or expenditures during this election cycle, I understand that I must immediately notify the appropriate board of elections and file required campaign finance reports.

THIS DECLARATION CAN ONLY BE MADE AT THE BEGINNING OF AN ELECTION CYCLE.

____ I am withdrawing my Certification to remain at or under the \$1,000 threshold. I will now be required to file the next scheduled report for all contributions and expenditures that have not been previously reported from the beginning of the current election cycle. I further agree to file all future reports required.

Date Signed

Signature

Note: This Certification is to be filed at the Election Board where the committee's campaign reports are filed.



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Confidential

Certification of Financial Account Information

This Certification is used to report confidential bank account information for all financial accounts established by the committee and must accompany the Statement of Organization Form

FILED BY:

Committee Name: _____
 Treasurer Name: _____
 Treasurer Address: _____
 (include city, state, & zip) _____
 Treasurer Phone: _____

I certify that the information provided below is true and accurate. I am providing all account information for the above named Committee. These account numbers include all bank accounts utilized, credit card accounts, money market or savings accounts, or any other financial account used for any purpose by the Committee.

The information provided on this form is considered confidential and is not subject to public disclosure. The information provided is only used for the purposes of an audit or investigation or as required by a court of competent jurisdiction. **Each treasurer (or candidate) must designate below an account code (any number or letter or combination of numbers and letters) by which to refer to the account number on reports.** If an account number is used as the "account code," confidentiality of the account number is presumed to have been waived.

The treasurer shall maintain all moneys of the political committee in a bank account or bank accounts used exclusively by the political committee and shall not commingle those funds with any other moneys.

Type of account	Financial Institution	Address	Account Number	Account Code

By signing this statement, I authorize agents of the State Board of Elections to inspect all accounts provided.

 Date Signed

 Signature of Candidate or Treasurer

For Candidate Committees Only

- In lieu of providing account information, I certify that this committee will not raise any money nor spend any money except that which is the candidate's personal funds. I furthermore understand that an audit or investigation could warrant the probe of any personal bank account that is being used for campaign expenditures.

By signing this statement, I authorize agents of the State Board of Elections to inspect applicable accounts.

 Date Signed

 Signature of Candidate or Treasurer



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Candidate Designation of Committee Funds

This form is used by candidate committees only and allows the candidate to designate in the event of their death, how the committee's funds are to be disbursed using the eight allowable methods outlined in 163-278.16B(a).

Candidate Name: _____

Committee Name: _____

Treasurer Name: _____

If Candidate is own treasurer, designate an agent to carry out designations: _____

Committee ID #: _____

Level Registered: [State] [County] If county, specify: _____

I, _____, hereby direct that in the event of my death or incapacity all
(Name of Candidate)
 funds remaining in my Campaign Committee account(s) (after payment of permitted outstanding debts or reasonable expenses for winding up the Committee or closing office) be paid in the following manner as permitted by N.C. Gen. Stat. 163-278.16B(a).

<u>Name of Entity</u> <small>(Select from §163-278.16B(a))</small>	<u>Plan for Disbursement (eg. Amount or %)</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

By signing this form, I certify that the foregoing entities are eligible beneficiaries under N.C. Gen. Statute 163-278.16B(a). A copy of this form should be maintained with the Committee records.

Signature of Candidate: _____

Date: _____

Note: This Designation is to be filed with the Election Board where the committee's campaign reports are filed.