



Petition Manual:

New Political Party Qualification

February 2026

INSTRUCTIONS PROVIDED BY THE MICHIGAN BUREAU OF ELECTIONS
RICHARD H. AUSTIN BUILDING • 1ST FLOOR • 430 W. ALLEGAN • LANSING, MICHIGAN 48933
(800)-292-5973

FDC-FC-MAN-6 (Rev. 1.23.2026)

I. Introduction	4
II. Petition Format and Filing	5
III. Completing a Petition to Form a New Political Party.....	10
IV. Procedure for Evaluating Petitions	11
A. Validation of signatures by random sampling; challenge	11
Procedure	11
B. Petition sheet validity	12
Defects in the petition heading which render an entire sheet invalid.....	12
Defects in the Certificate of Circulator which render an entire sheet invalid	12
Other fatal defects that render an entire petition sheet invalid	12
Acceptable sheet variations.....	13
C. Validity of individual signatures	13
Acceptable signature entries	14
D. Jurisdiction name variations.....	15
E. Signature verification	15
V. Board of State Canvassers petition review	17
A. Requesting copies of the petition	17
B. Submitting the challenge	17
C. Challenge procedure	18
VI. Governing Provisions of Michigan Election Law	19
VII. Questions	20
Appendix A: Signature Verification Examples	21
Appendix B: Circulator best practices	23
A. Circulators	23
B. Crossing county lines	24
C. Quality control	24
D. Facilitating efficient review	24
Appendix C: Signature coding.....	26
Appendix D: Printer’s Affidavit	28
Appendix E: Sample Petition.....	29





I. Introduction

New political parties are required to gather petition signatures to gain ballot access in Michigan. The following political parties are currently qualified to appear on the ballot in the current election cycle:

Democratic Party
Republican Party
Libertarian Party
US Taxpayers Party
Green Party
Working Class Party
Natural Law Party

For a new political party to appear on the next General Election ballot, it must submit the minimal number of valid signatures within the required timeframes and on the required formats, as specified in Michigan Election Law, 1954 PA 116, MCL 168.1 *et se*



II. Petition Format and Filing

A. Petition format

The required format for a new political party petition is governed by [MCL 168.685](#) and includes the following:

- The petition form must be 8½ by 13 inches in size with text arranged horizontally.
- The phrase "Petition to Form New Political Party" and proposed name of the party must be printed in the heading of the petition in 24-point boldface type.
- Once a political party's name is established, the name cannot be changed without circulating petitions with the new political party name.
- The text of the following warning statement must be printed in 12-point boldface type: "**Warning: A person who knowingly signs petitions to organize more than 1 new state political party, signs a petition to organize a new state political party more than once, or signs a name other than his or her own is violating the provisions of Michigan election law.**"

Additionally, petition forms may be circulated on a countywide or city/township basis, meaning signers must be registered to vote within the county or city/township listed in the heading of the petition.

If circulating on a **countywide** form, the heading of the petition must include the following statement in 8-point type:

We, the undersigned, duly registered electors of the county of _____, state of Michigan, residing at the places set opposite our names, respectfully request the secretary of state, in accordance with section 685 of the Michigan election law, 1954 PA 116, MCL 168.685, to place the names of the candidates of the _____ party on the ballot at the _____ election.

If circulating on a **city/township** form, the signature side of the petition must include the following statement in 8-point type:

We, the undersigned, duly registered electors of the
city _____ (Strike one)
township _____,
_____, county of _____,



state of Michigan, residing at the places set opposite our names, respectfully request the secretary of state, in accordance with section 685 of the Michigan election law, 1954 PA 116, MCL 168.685, to place the names of the candidates of the _____ party on the ballot at the _____ election.

B. Identification of petition sponsor

The petition sheet must include the name and address of the person, group or organization paying for the printing of the petition form, in 8-point type, preceded by the words: "Paid for with regulated funds by _____." MCL 169.247.

C. Optional staff review of petition format

The Bureau of Elections (BOE) staff will provide two optional, informal reviews of petition formatting requirements. These reviews do not constitute an approval, but a review of form only, at the staff level, for the benefit of petitioners.

Please note that staff consultations include a thorough review of whether the petition complies with the technical formatting requirements only.

If a new political party petition does not comply with all the requirements of Michigan election law, signatures submitted on the petition will be considered invalid and will not be counted. MCL 168.482a(4). BOE strongly recommends that petition sponsors confer with their own legal counsel for advice regarding these aspects of their proposal prior to submission to the Board of State Canvassers (Board) and prior to circulation.

D. Optional Board pre-approval of petition format

Sponsors of new political party petitions are strongly encouraged to submit proof copies of the petition to the Board for pre-approval of the form before gathering signatures. The Board requires sponsors to submit a Printer's Affidavit with 15 proof copies of the petition when seeking pre-approval of the petition format.

Best practice: Although Michigan election law does not require the sponsor of a new political party petition to seek pre-approval of the petition form, such approval greatly reduces the risk that signatures collected on the form will be ruled invalid due to formatting defects.

The Printer's Affidavit and an example Petition to Form New Political Party are provided in Appendix D and E, respectively.



FILING INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRE-APPROVAL:

1. Complete and sign the attached PRINTER'S AFFIDAVIT in the presence of a notary public and attach 15 proof copies of the petition. Materials must be sent to the Board of State Canvassers in care of the Bureau of Elections, Richard H. Austin Building, 430 West Allegan Street, 1st Floor, Lansing, Michigan 48933. This address may be used for hand delivery, overnight delivery, or U.S. mail.
2. Email a PDF of the petition to MDOS-File-Canvass@Michigan.gov. In the subject line of the email message, please indicate, "BSC – Petition Attached."
3. File final proof copies of petition sheets to be circulated, reflecting all necessary changes identified through the staff consultation process, at least 48 hours prior to the Board of State Canvassers meeting at which the petition is scheduled to be considered. If the petition sponsor fails to timely file all the required materials, the petition will not be placed on the meeting agenda.

E. Minimum number of valid signatures required

The number of valid signatures required to place a new political party on the General Election ballot is 44,620 signatures, which equals "not less than 1 percent of the total number of votes cast for all candidates for governor at the last election in which a governor was elected." MCL 168.685(1).

At the Nov. 7, 2022, General Election, 4,461,972 votes were cast for all candidates seeking the office of Governor.

Best practices:

Petition sponsors are strongly encouraged to gather and submit a significant number of signatures over the minimum required due to the likelihood that some petition signatures or whole petition sheets may be found invalid during the verification process.

Sponsors are urged to check petition signers' registration status, address, and city or township of registration against the Qualified Voter File (QVF) prior to filing. To obtain a copy of the QVF, follow the instructions on the [Qualified Voter Data Request Form](#) found on the BOE website.

F. Submitting petitions



To expedite the petition sampling process, petitioners should sort petitions by the number of valid signatures on a sheet. As an example: A box will contain sheets with only one valid signature, another box will contain sheets with two valid signatures, etc. Boxes should have labels indicating the number of valid signatures on the petitions within them.

The petition must also include the signatures of at least 100 registered voters from each of at least half of the congressional districts in the state. MCL 168.685(1).

Petition sheets should not be pre-numbered. The BOE will apply its own sheet numbers in accordance with the Board of State Canvassers approved processes. Petitions may contain unique identifiers placed at the bottom of each petition sheet. Do not place any unique identifier in the top right corner of the petition sheets, and do not cover any mandatory elements.

G. Non-resident petition circulators

Michigan election law authorizes the sponsors of new party petitions to hire petition circulators who are not Michigan residents, provided that the nonresident circulators agree to accept the jurisdiction of the state of Michigan and service of process upon the Secretary of State or her designated agent. A nonresident circulator must make a cross or check mark in the box provided on the petition sheet agreeing to these terms, “otherwise each signature on this petition sheet is invalid and the signatures will not be counted by a filing official.” MCL 168.544c(1).

CERTIFICATE OF CIRCULATOR

The undersigned circulator of the above petition asserts that he or she is 18 years of age or older and a United States citizen; that each signature on the petition was signed in his or her presence; that he or she has neither caused nor permitted a person to sign the petition more than once and has no knowledge of a person signing the petition more than once; and that, to his or her best knowledge and belief, each signature is the genuine signature of the person purporting to sign the petition, the person signing the petition was at the time of signing a registered elector of the city or township indicated preceding the signature, and the elector was qualified to sign the petition.

If the circulator is not a resident of Michigan, the circulator shall make a cross or check mark in the box provided, otherwise each signature on this petition sheet is invalid and the signatures will not be counted by a filing official. By making a cross or check mark in the box provided, the undersigned circulator asserts that he or she is not a resident of Michigan and agrees to accept the jurisdiction of this state for the purpose of any legal proceeding or hearing that concerns a petition sheet executed by the circulator and agrees that legal process served on the Secretary of State or a designated agent of the Secretary of State has the same effect as if personally served on the circulator.



H. Circulation period

Signatures may be gathered for up to 180 days immediately preceding the date of filing. Signatures that are more than 180 days old on the date the petition is filed are not valid and will not be counted.

I. Filing deadline

To appear on the Nov. 3, 2026, General Election ballot, petitions must be submitted by July 16, 2026, at 4 p.m.

J. Filing location

The filing location is: Michigan Secretary of State, Bureau of Elections, Richard H. Austin Building, 430 West Allegan Street, 1st Floor, Lansing, Michigan 48933. Sponsors must contact BOE at (800)-292-5973 or email at MDOS-File-Canvass@Michigan.gov to plan for the submission of the petition well in advance of the date of filing.

At the time of filing, the sponsor must submit a certificate signed by the chairperson and secretary of the party's state central committee indicating the party's name.

Once signed petition forms are submitted, additional signatures cannot be added to the filing. MCL 168.685(2). In addition, sponsors will be asked to provide the estimated number of petition sheets and signatures submitted. Please refer to the Petition Signature Guidance section of Appendix B for additional information.



III. Completing a Petition to Form a New Political Party

Form use: All mandatory elements on the petition sheet must be visible and undamaged, otherwise the petition sheet will be rejected.

Petition heading: A petition sheet must include the name of the county where it was circulated; each sheet must list only a single county. (Example: Wayne)

Party name: The party name must be clearly presented. This name will remain the party name and cannot be changed without circulating new petitions.

Signer's signature: Signature should match QVF entry. An individual signature entry is invalid if the QVF indicates that on the date of signing, the signer was: 1. Not registered to vote in Michigan, or 2. Registered to vote in this state but not in the city or township indicated, or 3. Registered to vote in the city or township indicated but that jurisdiction is not within the county listed in the heading of the petition sheet.

Signer's name: Signer should clearly write their first and last name.

Street address or rural route: Signer must include the house number and name of their street.

City or township: Signer must write the name of the city or township in which their residence is located. Do not write both the county and the city/township.

ZIP code: Signer should write the five-digit ZIP code associated with their residential address.

Date: Signer must write the day, month, and year that they signed the circulated petition sheet.

Circulator block: A valid circulator section includes the circulator's signature; the date on which the circulator signed the petition; the circulator's complete residence address (street address or rural route number, city or township and state); and for a circulator who is not a Michigan resident, the name of the county where the circulator is registered to vote (if applicable) and the circulator's mark (cross or check mark) in the nonresident box in the Certificate of Circulator.



IV. Procedure for Evaluating Petitions

A. Validation of signatures by random sampling; challenge

Procedure

In 1980, the Board of State Canvassers adopted a petition sampling procedure to evaluate the validity of ballot signatures. That process was reaffirmed in 1990. In 2022, the Bureau of Elections (BOE) hired an outside firm to review the 1980 procedure, including the statistical methods and processes. That review found that the sampling process continues to be sound, but several changes could be made to improve efficiency and accuracy. The improvements recommended in the report are included in this manual, as well as the document: [Sampling Procedure for Canvassing Petitions](#). The random sampling process has also been implemented for statewide constitutional amendments, initiatives, nominating petitions and qualifying candidate petitions.

Sampling

To canvass a petition, BOE staff use a single-step random sampling process. The selection of random signatures is completed using specially designed software. The sample list is distributed for challenges pursuant to legal deadlines. The sample is made available in paper and electronically for Freedom of Information Act requests.

The sampled sheets are face reviewed to determine if a circulator error or problem with the sheet invalidates the entire sheet of signatures. Sample signatures on invalid sheets are considered invalid signatures.

Each sampled signature on valid sheets is then examined to confirm that the signatory is a person registered to vote in Michigan, that the signature on the petition sheet matches the signature contained in the Qualified Voter File (QVF), and that the entry does not contain a fatal defect.

Signatures found to be invalid are reviewed a second time by another BOE staff member. Signatures challenged during the challenge period are reviewed by BOE staff.

Staff tally the number of valid/invalid sheets and valid/invalid signatures in the sample. A staff report is drafted for the Board of State Canvassers with statistical analysis and makes a recommendation whether to approve or deny the petition for placement on the ballot.



B. Petition sheet validity

Imperfections in the petition sheet heading, Certificate of Circulator, or body of the petition sheet may jeopardize the validity of signatures appearing on the sheet.

Defects in the petition heading which render an entire sheet invalid

A petition sheet is invalid if it contains one or more of the following defects in the heading:

- The county of circulation is omitted.
- Two or more counties or a county not located in Michigan are listed.
- Required information concerning the name of the political party and date of election is omitted or incorrect.

Defects in the Certificate of Circulator which render an entire sheet invalid

A petition sheet is invalid if it contains one or more of the following defects in the circulator's certificate:

- The petition sheet is not signed by the circulator or is signed by more than one circulator.
- The circulator's date of signing is omitted, incomplete or earlier than the date entered by every petition signer.

Note: The petition sheet is invalid if the circulator merely prints his or her name and fails to sign the petition.

- The circulator's residence address is omitted, incomplete or includes a P.O. Box in place of a street address or rural route.
- Attention nonresident petition circulators: A petition sheet is invalid if the circulator is not a Michigan resident and fails to mark the nonresident box in the Certificate of Circulator.

Note: The circulator's failure to include the correct ZIP code, by itself, is **not** a fatal defect.

Other fatal defects that render an entire petition sheet invalid



- Damaged, mutilated, or torn petition sheets where any of the mandatory elements (heading, warning statements, circulator certificate, signer entries) are illegible or omitted.
- Sheets where any of the mandatory elements (heading, warning statements, circulator certificate, signer entries) are obscured or covered by white-out, permanent marker, stickers or other opaque material.

Acceptable sheet variations

The following variations will **not** cause an entire petition sheet to be rejected:

- The circulator’s signature is illegible.
- The circulator prints their name in the space provided for the signature and signs in the space for printed name.
- The circulator omits their printed name.
- The circulator enters their cursive signature in space provided for printed name.
- The circulator omits their ZIP code or enters an incorrect ZIP code.
- An out-of-state circulator omits the county of registration.
- The circulator is a resident of Michigan and inadvertently checks the out-of-state circulator checkbox and/or writes the name of the Michigan county where he or she is registered to vote.

C. Validity of individual signatures

A valid signature entry must contain the voter’s signature, and printed street address or rural route, city or township where registered to vote, and date of signing. (The signer’s omission of their printed name or ZIP code is an acceptable variation.) Filing officials use the code “R” (registered) for valid entries. A signature is invalid if it contains one or more defects or omissions. The codes used to mark defects and omissions on petition sheets are shown in Appendix C.



Acceptable signature entries

The following variations are acceptable and will not result in the rejection of an individual signature:

- The signature includes one or more of the signer's initials plus his or her last name. Acceptable entries include but are not limited to: J. Smith; J.B. Smith; Mrs. J. Jones; A. John Doe.
- The signature is illegible.¹
- All of the following variations are acceptable: The signer prints his or her name in space provided for the signature and signs in the space for printed name; signer omits his or her printed name; signer enters his or her cursive signature in space provided for printed name.

Note: A signature is invalid if the signer merely prints his or her name in the space provided for printed name yet fails to sign the petition, and the signature on file is a cursive signature.

- The signer is unable to sign his or her name and uses a signature stamp (instead of a pen-and-ink signature).
- The signer enters ditto marks in the space(s) provided for address, city or township, ZIP code or date of signing.
- On the date of signing, the signer was registered to vote in the city or township indicated but at a different street address within the same city or township.
- The signer writes the community's name appearing in his or her "postal address"² in the space for city or township of registration.
- The signer omits his or her ZIP code or enters an incorrect ZIP code.
- The signer writes the name of a village or unincorporated place in the space for city or township of registration.

¹ Note, however, that if *all* of the personally identifiable information in the petition entry is illegible and cannot be validated (signature, printed name, address, city or township), the signature may be coded as invalid.

² The term "postal address" refers to the name of the local post office. In some instances, the post office name will correspond to the name of the person's city or township, but in other cases, the post office name differs. As a result, the jurisdiction written on the petition may not always correspond to the name of the city or township where the signer is registered to vote. See [usps.com](https://www.usps.com) for a list of local post offices by state.



Example 1: Individuals who are registered to vote in Genesee Township, Richfield Township, and Vienna Township have a Mt. Morris postal address. When signing a countywide petition, these voters may write the name of the township where they are registered to vote or Mt. Morris in the “City or Township” column of the petition sheet, and either entry is valid.

Example 2: Parts of Texas Township are served by the Kalamazoo post office (ZIP code 49001) while other parts of the township are served by the Mattawan post office (ZIP code 49071). If a Texas Township registrant writes “Kalamazoo” in the city or township column but his or her postal address is Mattawan, the entry is invalid.

Example 3: A signature is valid if the signer provides the name of an unincorporated place in the place for city or township of registration, and the signer is registered to vote in the township containing that unincorporated place. Examples of unincorporated places include but are not limited to: Hemlock (Saginaw County), Kincheloe (Chippewa County), Lambertville (Monroe County), Okemos (Ingham County), Union Lake (Oakland County), and Walloon Lake (Charlevoix County).

D. Jurisdiction name variations

Abbreviations for jurisdiction names are acceptable if the abbreviation reasonably corresponds to the name of the appropriate city, township, local post office, unincorporated place, or village.

E. Signature verification

Circulators should encourage voters to sign petitions in a way that reasonably resembles the signature given for driver’s license/state ID or voter registration purposes, but it is not necessary for the voter’s signature to perfectly match the signature on file. Filing officials must perform their signature verification duties carefully , as there are numerous legitimate reasons that may explain an apparent mismatch:

- Petition signatures are often written on a clipboard, which may cause the signature to appear more slanted or less precise than the signature on file, or cause breaks or pauses in a cursive signature.
- Petition signatures (or voter registration or signature pad signatures collected during the driver’s license/state ID application process) could have been written in haste.



- A medical condition or advancing age may cause the signature to be different.
- The electronic signature on file may be smaller or larger than the signature given on a petition sheet.
- The signature may have been written using a pen with a finer tip or one with fading ink as compared to the signature on file.

None of these differences will result in the invalidation of the petition signature. If there are redeeming qualities in the petition signature as compared to the signature on file, the filing official should treat the signature as valid. Redeeming qualities may include but are not limited to similar distinctive flourishes, more matching features than nonmatching features, and Examples 1-5 below.

A voter's signature should be considered questionable only if it significantly and obviously differs from the signature on file; see Examples 6-8 below. Slight dissimilarities should be resolved in favor of the voter whenever possible.



V. Board of State Canvassers petition review

New Political Party petitions must be filed with the Secretary of State timely. Petitions are canvassed by BOE staff, under the authority of the Board of State Canvassers.

A. Requesting copies of the petition

Copies of a petition may be requested under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), MCL 15.231 *et seq.* In 2023, the BSC approved an electronic scanning and numbering plan that makes the sampling process more efficient and facilitates the fulfillment of FOIA requests quickly and at lower expense for the requestor.

A request should be submitted through the Department's FOIA portal at <https://www.michigan.gov/sos/resources/transparency>. Payment can be made through the portal. Petitions requested will be provided through the portal or via thumb drive.

B. Submitting the challenge

Under the current practice of the Board of State Canvassers, challenges are due 7 days after the release of the sample. Rebuttals are due as soon as possible after challenges are received. To be considered at a Board meeting, the Board must receive materials at least 48 hours before the meeting. A sworn complaint (challenge) alleging that the petition contains an insufficient number of valid signatures or is otherwise defective may be submitted to the appropriate filing official within 7 days of the filing deadline. Challenges are resolved by the Board of State Canvassers.

Signature challenges must be presented in a **notarized document** and submitted to the Bureau of Elections. **It is strongly encouraged** that challenges be submitted by sending a scanned notarized document by email to MDOS-Canvassers@Michigan.gov.

The challenge **must be received no later than 5 p.m. on the date of the deadline, irrespective of postmark**. Therefore, the Bureau strongly recommends that challenges submitted close to the deadline be submitted by email or overnight or hand delivery rather than mail.



Best Practice: Challengers should serve a copy of any challenge upon the party being challenged at the same time the challenge is submitted to the Board of State Canvassers.

C. Challenge procedure

The challenge must specify each signature being challenged and the reason why the validity of the signature is being questioned. To specify a signature, indicate the sheet number (stamped or written on each sheet) and the line number bearing the signature. To expedite processing, the Bureau of Elections asks that challenges be organized in **sheet number order** as opposed to an alphabetical listing of the signers' names or any other organizational format and be contained in an excel or CSV file.

Best Practice: The challenge submission should contain rows and columns that refer to the codes used by the Board of State Canvassers, contained in Appendix C, as well as a column to track the total number of signatures challenged. The submission should be submitted as an excel spreadsheet to facilitate review. For example:

# of Signatures challenged	Sheet Number	Line Number	Challenge Reason	Explanation
1	1	4	NR	Voter not registered
2	56	9	IA	Invalid address listed
3	72	1	Date	Voter signed with date of birth

To challenge anything other than specific signatures, a full written description of what is being challenged must be submitted. A challenge must specify the sheet numbers appearing on the petition sheets involved.



VI. Governing Provisions of Michigan Election Law

The provisions of Michigan election law governing ballot access by new political parties follow below:

[MCL 168.532](#)

[MCL 168.534](#)

[MCL 168.544c](#)

[MCL 168.560a](#)

[MCL 168.685](#)

[MCL 168.686](#)

[MCL 168.686a](#)

[MCL 168.686b](#)

[MCL 168.687](#)

[MCL 168.692a](#)

The compiled Michigan Election Law can also be accessed through the Michigan Legislature website, legislature.mi.gov.



VII. Questions

If you have any questions, please contact the Michigan Department of State, Bureau of Elections at:

Mailing address: P.O. Box 20126, Lansing, MI 48901-0726

Address for overnight or hand delivery:



Richard H. Austin Bldg.
430 W. Allegan, 1st Floor
Lansing, MI 48933

Phone: (800) 292-5973

Email: MDOS-File-Canvass@Michigan.gov



Appendix A: Signature Verification Examples

#	Petition Signature Verification Examples	Recommended Result
1.	Signature appears as if voter's hand is trembling or shaking, possibly due to a health condition or advancing age: <i>Catherine Metzger</i> versus 	Valid signature
2.	Only part of the signature matches the signature on file such as only the first letters of the first and last name match, but rest of signature does not match: <i>J. D.</i> versus <i>Jane Doe</i> <i>J. Doe</i> versus <i>Jane Doe</i>	Valid signature
3.	Signature is partially printed but at the same time, partially matches the signature on file: <i>Alice Robinson</i> versus <i>Alice Robinson</i>	Valid signature
4.	Signature is a recognized diminutive of the voter's full legal name: <i>Bill Smith</i> versus <i>William Smith</i>	Valid signature
5.	Signature style has changed slightly over time: <i>Lucinda Jones</i> versus <i>Lucinda Jones</i>	Valid signature
6.	Signature is entirely printed but signature on file is entirely written in cursive: JAMES DAVIS versus <i>James Davis</i>	Questionable signature
7.	Signature differs in multiple, significant and obvious respects: <i>John Hancock</i> vs 	Questionable signature
8.	 vs. 	Questionable signature





Appendix B: Circulator best practices

A. Circulators

Train your petition circulators, whether they are paid or volunteer circulators. Informing petition circulators of the requirements described in this publication can minimize the likelihood that whole petition sheets and individual signatures are rejected. Errors may be averted if circulators take the following actions:

- Write the name of the county of circulation in the heading of the petition and verify the signers are registered to vote in the county listed.
- Ask potential signers whether they are registered to vote.
- Instruct signers to provide their street address or rural route where indicated; a P.O. Box is invalid.
- Remind signers to write the date of signing, not their date of birth.
- Review each signer's entry for completeness. If information is omitted, ask the signer to fill in the blank(s).
- Encourage signers to sign in a way that reasonably resembles the signature given for driver's license or voter registration purposes. **It is not necessary for the signer's petition signature to be a perfect match with the signature on file.** Refer to Appendix A: Signature Verification Examples.
- Once circulation of a petition sheet is complete, ensure that the circulator signs and dates the certificate of circulator and provides the required information. If the circulator is not a Michigan resident, they must also check the nonresident box in the bottom left corner of the petition sheet and write the name of the county where registered to vote, if any.

If hiring paid circulators, petition sponsors should research circulator companies and check their work. Petition sponsors should be sure they are hiring reputable companies or circulators that will collect and submit valid signatures as required by law. Petition sponsors and circulators should review petition sheets collected by circulators periodically during the collection period to ensure valid signatures are being collected and all required components are accurately completed to maintain signature and petition sheet validity.



B. Crossing county lines

Exercise care when circulating in or near cities and villages that cross county lines.

Several cities and villages in Michigan overlap county boundary lines. When obtaining a signature from a voter who is registered in a city or village that crosses county boundaries, make sure the voter signs the petition sheet that aligns with the signer's county of registration.

C. Quality control

Implement a quality control process before filing the petition. Petition sponsors are strongly encouraged to obtain a copy of the Qualified Voter File (QVF) for pre-filing verification purposes. Any petition signatures found to be invalid during the quality control process (i.e., because the street address or date is omitted) can be crossed out prior to filing; crossed out signatures are excluded when determining the maximum number of signatures filed.

Review all petition sheets prior to filing for completeness, especially the name of the county of circulation and the certificate of circulator.

File enough signatures. Petition sponsors are strongly encouraged to gather and file substantially more signatures than the minimum number required. The number of excess signatures needed will vary depending on the rigorousness of the sponsor's quality control process. Even if the petition has been verified by a professional signature gathering firm prior to filing, note that (1) A challenge may be filed against the sufficiency of the petition, and (2) There is a likelihood that some signatures or whole petition sheets may be found to be invalid during the canvass process.

Note: This information is offered as a summary of the provisions governing the validity of petition signatures; it is **not** a complete description or interpretation of all pertinent laws. Questions may be addressed to: File-canvass@Michigan.gov.

D. Facilitating efficient review

The Michigan Board of State Canvassers is responsible for canvassing petitions to determine whether a petition has sufficient valid signatures for placement on the ballot. BOE supports the Board in this responsibility by reviewing petition signatures and producing a staff report for the Board's review. The thorough review of petition signatures is a labor intensive and time-consuming process requiring as many as 1,900 personnel hours to sort, review, number, count and review the sample for a single petition.



The guidance below is offered to aid petition filers in submitting petition signatures to streamline the review process for placement before the Board for determination.

- All petition sheets should be unfolded, flattened, and neatly organized.
- If petition sheets contain tear-off sections, tear-off sections must be completely removed prior to submission.
- All petition sheets should be sorted by number of valid signatures per sheet.
- All petition sheets should be sorted into bundles, with consistent numbers of sheets per bundle easily combined into a bundle of 100; for example, 25 or 50 per bundle.
- For statewide drives, filers should separate out 100 signatures from at least half (7) of the congressional districts.
- All bundles should be sorted into boxes, with a consistent number of bundles per box.
- Each box should include cover sheets containing estimates of the number of signatures and sheets per box.
- Petition filers should cross out signatures (using a single strikethrough line with a ballpoint pen) and remove wholly invalid signature sheets it has identified prior to submission.

Note: The BOE cannot provide a specific estimate on how long it will take complete each canvass. These timelines are also affected by staff availability and other responsibilities. However, a timely filed petition must be declared sufficient or insufficient by the Board at least 60 days before the general November election for which the political party would be placed on the ballot.



Appendix C: Signature coding

ENTRY CODE	CODE NAME	EXPLANATION										
SIGNATURE ERRORS												
CO	Crossed off	Signature was crossed out prior to filing.										
DUP	Duplicate	Voter signed petition multiple times, or signed nominating petitions for more candidates than there are persons to be elected to the office (e.g. 3 judicial candidates when there are 2 vacant positions).										
IS	Invalid Signature	The petition signature is omitted or does not sufficiently agree with the signature on file.										
NR	Not Registered	On the date of signing, the signer was not registered to vote anywhere in the city or township indicated. Note: If a signer is registered to vote at a different address within the same city or township as written on the petition, the signature is valid. See examples below: <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"><u>Petition Address</u></td> <td style="width: 50%;"><u>Registration Address</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td>456 Maple St., Flint</td> <td>456 Maple St., Mt. Morris</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Invalid [NR]</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>123 Main St., Mason</td> <td>987 Maple St., Mason</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Valid [R]</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	<u>Petition Address</u>	<u>Registration Address</u>	456 Maple St., Flint	456 Maple St., Mt. Morris	Invalid [NR]		123 Main St., Mason	987 Maple St., Mason	Valid [R]	
<u>Petition Address</u>	<u>Registration Address</u>											
456 Maple St., Flint	456 Maple St., Mt. Morris											
Invalid [NR]												
123 Main St., Mason	987 Maple St., Mason											
Valid [R]												
ADDRESS AND JURISDICTIONAL ISSUES												
IA	Invalid Address	Address is blank, missing house number or street name, or PO Box listed.										
IC	Invalid City or Township	There is no city or township by that name located within the county listed at the top or the city or township field was left blank.										
NC	Nonexistent County	County listed does not exist (misspelled county is not "NC").										
OD	Outside District	The address given is located within the city or township listed, but outside of the electoral district for the office sought.										
R	Registered/Registered at Other Address in Jurisdiction	Registered at address provided on petition or registered at another address within city/township listed on the petition.										
DATE ERRORS												



DATE	Invalid Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signature is dated before the first date signatures may be circulated. For example, the signor provides the date of birth. Note: For partisan petitions only, signatures may be gathered beginning the day following the last election where the office appeared on the ballot. • Signer's signature is dated after the circulator dated their signature. • Date is incomplete, illegible or missing.
HEAD	Invalid Heading Entries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to include candidate name, address, name of office, party affiliation (if applicable), and date of primary. • Failure to include whether incumbent, non-incumbent, or new position, or incorrect designation as such. • Font size deviates from requirements (Certain items are 24-point or 12-point font; everything else is 8-point font.)
FORM ISSUES		
DMG	Damaged	Damaged, mutilated or torn petitions sheets that are damaged in a way that interferes with the presence of any of the mandatory elements (heading, warning statements, circulator certificate, signer entries).
FORM	Form Error	Incorrect form used or incorrect petition submitted with filing.
MRE	Missing Required Element	Missing a required element, e.g., warning cut off when printed, illegible words (crossed out with marker).
CIRCULATOR ISSUES		
CIRC	Circulator Information Missing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to include the circulator name, complete residential address (street or rural route number (PO Box is invalid), city or township and state). • Not signed by circulator. • Circulator date is omitted or illegible.
OS	Out-of-State Box Blank	Out-of-state circulator failed to check non-residency box in the Certificate of Circulator.
PV	Paid/Volunteer Box Blank	Circulator did not mark paid/volunteer box.
MISCELLANEOUS ERRORS		
IL	Illegible	Unable to read enough information provided by the signer(s) to identify the signer.
MC	Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous errors identified not provided above.



Appendix D: Printer's Affidavit

The sponsors of new political party petitions are urged to submit a proof copy of their petition to the Board of State Canvassers for approval as to form prior to the circulation of the petition. When submitting a petition form for approval, the Board requires that this affidavit be attached.

PRINTER'S AFFIDAVIT

I, _____, being duly sworn, depose and say:

1. That I prepared the attached petition proof.
2. That the size of the petition is 8.5 inches by 13 inches.
3. That the words, "PETITION TO FORM A NEW POLITICAL PARTY" and the name of the proposed party are printed in 24-point boldface type.
4. That the words, "We, the undersigned, duly registered electors . . ." are printed in 8-point type.
5. That the two warning statements and language contained therein are printed in 12-point boldface type.
6. That the words, "CIRCULATOR – Do not sign or date . . ." are printed in 12-point boldface type.
7. That the balance of the petition is printed in 8-point type.
8. That the font used in the petition is _____.
9. That to the best of my knowledge and belief, the petition conforms to the petition form standards prescribed by Michigan election law.

Printer's signature

Name of proposed political party

Notary Public, State of Michigan, County of _____.
Acting in the County of _____ (where required).
My commission expires _____.

Subscribed and sworn to (or affirmed) before me on this ____ day of _____, 20____,
by _____.
Name of affiant

Signature of notary public

Name of notary public



Appendix E: Sample Petition

PETITION TO FORM NEW POLITICAL PARTY

We, the undersigned, duly registered electors of the county of _____ state of Michigan, residing at the places set opposite our names, respectfully request the secretary of state, in accordance with

section 685 of the Michigan election law, 1954 PA 115, MCL 168.685, to place the names of the candidates of the _____ party on the ballot at the _____ election.

Warning: A person who knowingly signs petitions to organize more than 1 new state political party, signs a petition to organize a new state political party more than once, or signs a name other than his or her own is violating the provisions of the Michigan election law.

	SIGNATURE	PRINTED NAME	STREET ADDRESS OR RURAL ROUTE	CITY OR TOWNSHIP	ZIP CODE	DATE OF SIGNING		
						MONTH	DAY	YEAR
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								
11.								
12.								

SAMPLE

Circulator – Do not sign or date certificate until after circulating petition.

CERTIFICATE OF CIRCULATOR

The undersigned circulator of the above petition asserts that he or she is 18 years of age or older and a United States citizen; that each signature on the petition was signed in his or her presence; that he or she has neither caused nor permitted a person to sign the petition more than once and has no knowledge of a person signing the petition more than once, and that, to his or her best knowledge and belief, each signature is the genuine signature of the person purporting to sign the petition, the person signing the petition was at the time of signing a registered elector of the city or township listed in the heading of the petition, and the elector was qualified to sign the petition.

If the circulator is not a resident of Michigan, the circulator shall make a cross or check mark in the box provided, otherwise each signature on this petition sheet is invalid and the signatures will not be counted by a filing official. By making a cross or check mark in the box provided, the undersigned circulator asserts that he or she is not a resident of Michigan and agrees to accept the jurisdiction of this state for the purpose of any legal proceeding or hearing that concerns a petition sheet executed by the circulator and agrees that legal process served on the secretary of state or a designated agent of the secretary of state has the same effect as if personally served on the circulator.

Warning – A circulator knowingly making a false statement in the above certificate, a person not a circulator who signs as a circulator, or a person who signs a name other than his or her own as circulator is guilty of a misdemeanor.

"Paid for with funds by The Party Party – 1234 S. 25th St. City, MI 44444."

(Signature of Circulator) _____ / / Date

(Printed Name of Circulator) _____

(Complete Residence Address – (Street and Number or Rural Route)) Do not enter a post office box _____

(City or Township, State, Zip Code) _____

(County of Registration, if Registered to Vote, of a Circulator who is not a Resident of Michigan) _____

"Not authorized by any candidate or candidate committee."

