

SOP: Creating a Campaign Committee (a quick-start overview)

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Two quick points for consideration:

You will need to create a campaign committee if you want to be able to say “paid for by the committee to elect . . .” or to use some other fictitious name when it is required that you employ such transparency statements. Without a committee, a candidate would need to say “paid for by (candidate name)” instead.

The candidate is still obligated to submit their own personal campaign finance report (or statement if they spend less than \$250) – more info on this at the end of this document.

Official Resources:

Consider reviewing this FAQ document to answer some of your questions:

<https://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/CandidatesCommittees/CampaignFinance/Documents/FAQ/CampaignFinanceFAQ.pdf>

Interesting highlights: For the purposes of campaign finance rules, you are considered a candidate if you receive or spend any money in pursuit of public office. So, even if you are not ultimately placed on the ballot, you may still be subject to the campaign finance reporting requirements should you receive or spend money on the campaign.

Complete PA Law can be found here - Chapter 176. Registration & Organization of Political Committees: <https://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/004/chapter176/chap176toc.html&d=reduce>

WHO do you need on your committee? You must identify a Chairperson and a Treasurer to serve on the committee; these roles may not be filled by the same person.

- You may also identify a vice-chair for the sake of continuity if the chair were ever to resign their position.
- Treasurers may appoint a number of assistant treasurers authorized to receive & disburse money on behalf of the candidate, but the authorization must be made in writing (you can do this by either submitting a letter or an ‘amended’ DSEB-500)
- BE AWARE: If at any point the position of Chair or Treasurer is not filled, the committee cannot spend or receive money - obviously the primary objective should be to fill the roles for the sake of continuity, but the candidate may continue to accept funds made payable to them by name rather than to the name of the committee (similarly, any expenses would be submitted as the candidate’s expenditure, not the committee’s . . . Until the roles are filled)

WHAT do you need to do to form the committee? You will need to complete two forms - one, DSEB-500, identifies the members of the committee and the bank where funds will be deposited; the other, DESB-501, is the candidate’s official authorization of the committee named in form 500.

- An account in the candidates personal name may be used, but business & partnership accounts may never be used as a campaign account.
- Make sure you’re using the most current version of the form, the links provided below were pulled on Apr 28, 2023:

- DSEB-500 for political committee registration & amendment:
https://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/CandidatesCommittees/CampaignFinance/Documents/o5o_forms_online/dseb_500.pdf
- DSEB-501 for candidate's authorization:
<https://www.dos.pa.gov/VotingElections/CandidatesCommittees/CampaignFinance/Documents/Candidate%20Authorization%20for%20PAC.pdf>

WHERE do you file the forms mentioned above? There is a little bit of ambiguity in the regulations in Chapter 176, but the matter is thoroughly addressed in page 11 of the FAQ about where to file finance reports. You should submit the committee forms wherever you're obligated to submit reports.

A couple of highlights:

- Candidates for Local Office: File with the appropriate county board of elections in the jurisdiction of the race.
- Candidates for Statewide, Legislative, & Judicial Offices (including their authorized political committees): File with both the Dept. of State board of elections & the BOE in the county in which the candidate resides.

Past candidates want you to know . . .

- A political committee does not eliminate the candidate's need to submit their own campaign finance reports. Even if the candidate spends no money, they will still be required to submit the statement relating to candidates and campaigns which spend less than \$250. Consider this information from the FAQ pages 13-14 for more context on the matter:
 - *How would a candidate report a contribution that he/she makes to his/her campaign committee?*
If the candidate gives money to his/her campaign committee, the candidate reports it as an expenditure on his/her own candidate's report. Then the committee reports it as a contribution on the committee report.
 - *If a candidate makes a contribution to his/her committee in the form of a loan, is it an expenditure for the candidate?*
Yes. The candidate reports it as an expenditure on the candidate's own report, and the committee then reports the loan as a contribution. See §§ 1621(b) and (d). Additionally, the committee would report the loan as an unpaid debt.