



# State Senate

## 2020 Candidate Qualification Guide



Colorado Secretary of State  
Elections Division  
1700 Broadway, Suite 200  
Denver, Colorado 80290

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## INTRODUCTION

This document contains an overview of the requirements for accessing the ballot as a State Senate candidate in Colorado.

Use this guide as a reference tool only. Always refer to the United States Constitution, Colorado Constitution, and Colorado Revised Statutes for applicable laws.

## BASIC QUALIFICATIONS

<b>Age</b>	25 years [Article V, Section 4, Colorado Constitution]
<b>State Residence</b>	12 months [Article V, Section 4, Colorado Constitution]
<b>District Residence</b>	12 months [Article V, Section 4, Colorado Constitution]
<b>US Citizen</b>	Yes [Article V, Section 4, Colorado Constitution]
<b>Length of Term</b>	4 years [Article V, Section 3, Colorado Constitution]
<b>Number of Terms</b>	2 terms [Article XVIII, Section 11, Colorado Constitution]

## BECOME A CANDIDATE

### Step 1: Are you qualified?

Candidates must meet the basic [qualifications](#) for office.

### Step 2: Campaign finance laws and rules

Candidates are required to understand and comply with the following provisions:

- [Colorado Campaign and Political Finance rules](#)
- [Colorado Constitution Article XXVIII \(Amendment 27\)](#) and,
- [Title I, Article 45, C.R.S. \(Fair Campaign Practices Act\)](#)

### Step 3: Publicly announce your intent to run for office

### Step 4: Register a candidate committee OR are you a standalone candidate?

If you intend to accept contributions, you must register a candidate committee.

If you will not be accepting contributions (only spending your own money) in support of your candidacy you are not required to register a committee and are therefore a [standalone candidate](#).

### Step 5: Receive or spend money in support of your candidacy

You become a candidate when you publicly announce your intent to run for office **AND THEREAFTER** receive a contribution or make an expenditure in support of your candidacy.

Unless you are a standalone candidate, you must register a candidate committee before receiving any money.

### Step 6: File a candidate affidavit and voluntary spending acceptance, if applicable

#### Within 10 days of becoming a candidate:

1. Complete the [Candidate Affidavit form](#), which must be filed electronically. [Section 2(2), article XXVIII of the Colorado Constitution] [1-45-110(1) C.R.S.] [Campaign Finance Rule 2.3]

The affidavit is an attestation that you are familiar with campaign finance laws and regulations, so be sure to read the laws before submitting.

2. If applicable, complete the Voluntary Spending Acceptance section of the candidate affidavit. [Section 4(3) and 9(1)(c), article XXVIII of the Colorado Constitution]

If you choose to accept voluntary spending limits, you must indicate your acceptance on the candidate affidavit at the SAME time as your initial submission of the affidavit.

### Step 7: File a personal financial disclosure or update

#### Within 10 days of submitting your candidate affidavit:

1. Complete the [Personal Financial Disclosure Statement \(PDF\)](#)

OR

If you have previously submitted a personal financial disclosure statement, complete the [Update Statement \(PDF\)](#).

Updates are due within 30 days of any change. [1-45-110(2)(a) & 24-6-202 C.R.S.]

2. Email, mail or hand deliver to:

Colorado Secretary of State  
Attention: Campaign Finance  
1700 Broadway, Suite 200  
Denver, CO 80290

Email: [cpfhelp@sos.state.co.us](mailto:cpfhelp@sos.state.co.us)

### Step 8: File campaign finance disclosure reports

Campaign finance disclosure reports must be filed timely to avoid penalties.

View the [filing calendars](#)

## BALLOT ACCESS OPTIONS

### ASSEMBLY DESIGNATION – MAJOR PARTY

#### Step 1: Eligibility for nomination

Candidates must meet the basic [qualifications for office](#).

A candidate must be registered as affiliated with that party no later than the first business day in January of the election year, unless otherwise provided in party bylaws. [1-4-601(4)(a), C.R.S.]

Candidates who wish to gain ballot access through the party assembly must receive at least 30% of the votes cast by assembly delegates present and voting for that specific office at the party assembly. [1-4-601(2), C.R.S.]

Proof of registration and affiliation qualifications will be as shown in the statewide voter registration system. [1-4-601(2), C.R.S.]

#### Step 2: Contact your political party

Potential candidates should contact their party to determine the exact date and time of the assembly. The political party will be able to answer questions about party protocol, announcements, party campaign rules, etc. [1-4-601, C.R.S.]

[Political Party Information](#)

**Step 3: Assembly process**

Candidates may be designated for the primary election ballot during their party's district assembly, which must be held no later than 73 days before the primary election. [1-4-601(1), C.R.S.]

A candidate needs at least 30% of the votes cast to be placed on the primary election ballot. [1-4-601(2), C.R.S.]

If no candidate receives at least 30% of the votes cast, a second ballot must be cast. If on the second ballot, no candidate receives at least 30% of the votes cast, the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes will be placed on the primary election ballot. [1-4-601(2), C.R.S.]

**Step 4: Submit certificate of designation form**

Complete the [Certificate of Designation \(PDF\)](#) form. It must be signed by the chairman or secretary of the party and be notarized.

Mail, hand deliver, email, or fax the designation form to:

Colorado Secretary of State  
Attention: Ballot Access  
1700 Broadway, Suite 200  
Denver CO, 80290  
Email: [ballot.access@sos.state.co.us](mailto:ballot.access@sos.state.co.us)  
Fax: 303-869-4861

The original or emailed/faxed copy must be filed with the Secretary of State no later than four days after adjournment of the assembly. If the form is sent electronically, the original must also be filed and postmarked no later than 10 days after adjournment of the assembly. [1-4-604(3), C.R.S.]

**Step 5: Submit candidate acceptance form**

Complete the [Candidate Acceptance of Assembly Designation \(PDF\) form](#) and have it notarized. [1-4-601(3)(a), C.R.S.]

The candidate acceptance form must state the candidate's name the way it will appear on the ballot. Candidate names cannot contain any title or degree designating the business or profession of the candidate. [1-4-601(3)(a) & 1-5-407(4), C.R.S.]

Mail, hand deliver, email, or fax the acceptance form to:

Colorado Secretary of State  
Attention: Ballot Access

1700 Broadway, Suite 200  
Denver CO, 80290  
Email: [ballot.access@sos.state.co.us](mailto:ballot.access@sos.state.co.us)  
Fax: 303-869-4861

The original or emailed/faxed copy must be filed with the Secretary of State no later than four days after adjournment of the assembly. If the form is sent electronically, the original must also be filed and postmarked no later than 10 days after adjournment of the assembly. [1-4-601(3)(a), C.R.S.]

### **Step 6: Submit audio recording**

A candidate audio recording must be submitted to the Secretary of State no later than four days after the adjournment of the assembly. The audio recording must state the candidate's name exactly as it appears on the candidate acceptance form, as this is how the candidate's name will appear on the ballot. [SOS Election Rule 4.6.1]

[Audio Recording Instructions](#)

### **Step 7: Name placed on primary election ballot**

#### ASSEMBLY DESIGNATION – MINOR PARTY

#### **Step 1: Eligibility for nomination**

Candidates must meet the basic [qualifications for office](#).

A candidate must be registered as affiliated with that party no later than the first business day of January of the election year, unless otherwise provided in party bylaws. [1-4-1304(2)(b), C.R.S.]

Candidates who wish to gain ballot access through the party assembly must receive at least 30% of the votes cast by assembly delegates present and voting for that specific office at the party assembly. [1-4-1304(1.5)(b)(II), C.R.S.]

Minor party candidates nominated by assembly are placed on the general election ballot unless there is more than one candidate for that office nominated by assembly and/or petition; then the candidates are placed on the primary ballot. [1-4-1304(1.5)(c) & (d), C.R.S.]

Proof of registration and affiliation qualifications will be as shown in the statewide voter registration system. [1-4-1304(2)(b), C.R.S.]

#### **Step 2: Contact your political party**

Potential candidates should contact their party to determine the exact date and time of the assembly. The political party will be able to answer questions about party protocol, announcements, party campaign rules, etc. [1-4-1304(1.5)(b)(I), C.R.S.]

[Political Party Information](#)

#### **Step 3: Assembly process**

Candidates may be designated for the ballot during their party’s assembly, which must be held no later than 73 days before the primary election. [1-4-1304(1.5)(b)(I), C.R.S.]

A candidate needs at least 30% of the votes cast to be placed on the primary election ballot. [1-4-1304(1.5)(b)(II), C.R.S.]

If, after the assembly, there are multiple candidates for an office (either because two candidates received at least 30% of the assembly votes, or at least one candidate has been designated for that office by petition), the candidates must be nominated by primary election. [1-4-1304(1.5)(c), C.R.S.]

**Step 4: Submit certificate of designation form**

Complete the [Certificate of Designation \(PDF\)](#) form. It must be signed by the chairman or secretary of the party and be notarized.

Mail, hand deliver, email, or fax the certificate of designation to:

Colorado Secretary of State  
Attention: Ballot Access  
1700 Broadway, Suite 200  
Denver, CO 80290  
Email: [ballot.access@sos.state.co.us](mailto:ballot.access@sos.state.co.us)  
Fax: 303-869-4861

The original or faxed/emailed copy of the designation form must be filed with the Secretary of State no later than four days after the adjournment of the assembly. [1-4-1304(3), C.R.S.]

**Step 5: Submit candidate acceptance form**

Complete the [Candidate Acceptance of Assembly Designation \(PDF\) form](#) and have it notarized. [1-4-1304(4), C.R.S.]

The candidate acceptance form must state the candidate’s name the way it will appear on the ballot. Candidate names cannot contain any title or degree designating the business or profession of the candidate. [1-5-407(4), C.R.S.]

Mail, hand deliver, email, or fax the acceptance form to:

Colorado Secretary of State  
Attention: Ballot Access  
1700 Broadway, Suite 200  
Denver, CO 80290  
Email: [ballot.access@sos.state.co.us](mailto:ballot.access@sos.state.co.us)  
Fax: 303-869-4861

The original or emailed/faxed copy must be filed with the Secretary of State no later than four business days after adjournment of the assembly. If the form is sent electronically, the original must also be filed and postmarked no later than 10 days after adjournment of the assembly. [1-4-1304(4), C.R.S.]



**Step 6: Submit audio recording**

A candidate audio recording must be submitted to the Secretary of State no later than four days after the adjournment of the assembly. The audio recording must state the candidate’s name exactly as it appears on the candidate acceptance form, as this is how the candidate’s name will appear on the ballot. [SOS Election Rule 4.6.1]

[Audio Recording Instructions](#)

**Step 7: Name placed on ballot**

Minor party candidates nominated by assembly are placed on the general election ballot unless multiple candidates are nominated by assembly/petition for that office; then the candidates are placed on the primary ballot. [1-4-1304(1.5)(c) & (d), C.R.S.]

CANDIDATE PETITION – MAJOR PARTY

**Step 1: Eligibility for nomination**

Candidates must meet the basic [qualifications for office](#).

A candidate must be affiliated with the political party no later than the first business day in January of the election year. [1-4-801(3), C.R.S.]

A candidate that attempted and failed to receive 10% of the votes cast for a particular office at the party assembly is not eligible to run by petition on behalf of the same political party and office. [1-4-801(4), C.R.S.]

Proof of registration and affiliation qualifications will be as shown in the statewide voter registration system. [1-4-801(3), C.R.S.]

In order to be eligible to circulate a petition, a person must be a citizen of the United States and at least 18 years of age. [1-4-905(1), C.R.S.]

**Step 2: Petition signature requirements**

Only eligible electors registered as affiliated with the political party for at least 29 days and residing within the district for which the petition is being circulated may sign the petition. An elector may not sign more than one candidate’s petition for the same office. [1-4-904(2)(a), C.R.S.]

Candidates must gather the lesser of 1,000 signatures or signatures equal to 30% of the votes cast in the district at the contested or uncontested primary election for the political party’s candidate for the office for which the petition is being circulated or, if there was no primary election, at the last preceding general election for which there was a candidate for the office. [1-4-801(2)(b), C.R.S.]

**Step 3: Receive petition format approval**

Petition formats must be approved by the Secretary of State prior to circulation. [1-4-903, C.R.S.]

Contact the Secretary of State’s Office at 303-894-2200 x6333 to learn about the petition format approval process.

**Step 4: Start circulating petition**

Once your petition format is approved, you can begin circulating the petition on the third Tuesday In January of the general election year. [1-4-801(5), C.R.S.]

**Step 5: Submit petition and candidate acceptance form**

The completed petition must be filed no later than the third Tuesday in March of the general election year. [1-4-801(5), C.R.S.]

1. Complete the [Candidate Acceptance of Petition Nomination \(PDF\) form](#) and have it notarized. [1-4-906, C.R.S.]

The form must state the candidate’s name the way it will appear on the ballot. Candidate names cannot contain any title or degree designating the business or profession of the candidate. [1-4-906 & 1-5-407(4), C.R.S.]

2. Attach the notarized acceptance form to the completed petition. [1-4-906, C.R.S.]
3. Mail or hand deliver to:

Colorado Secretary of State  
Attention: Ballot Access  
1700 Broadway, Suite 200  
Denver CO, 80290

**Step 6: Signature verification, cure, and notice of sufficiency or insufficiency**

Petition signatures will be verified by the Secretary of State. If found to be sufficient, the petition will be deemed valid, unless a protest is made in writing within five days after the statement of sufficiency is issued. [1-4-908 & 1-4-909, C.R.S.]

During the petition review, we will notify candidates of any errors or insufficiencies in the circulator affidavits. Upon receipt of such notification, candidates have five calendar days to cure the errors by submitting a new circulator affidavit that corrects the mistakes. [1-4-912(2), C.R.S.]

During the petition review, we will notify candidates of any signer signatures that do not match the signatures in the voter registration records. Upon receipt of such notification, candidates

have three calendar days to cure the mismatched signatures by submitting a form provided by our office that is completed by the signer and a copy of the signer’s identification. [1-4-908, C.R.S.]

We will notify you of your petition’s sufficiency or insufficiency in writing. For a faster response, please provide an email address where we can send the statement of sufficiency/insufficiency.

If found to be sufficient, the petition will be deemed valid, unless a protest is made in writing within five days after the statement of sufficiency is issued. [1-4-909, C.R.S.]

**Step 7: Submit audio recording**

Candidate audio recordings must be submitted to the Secretary of State no later than the third Tuesday in March. The audio recording must state the candidate’s name exactly as it appears on the candidate acceptance form, as this is how the candidate’s name will appear on the ballot. [SOS Election Rule 4.6.1]

[Audio Recording Instructions](#)

**Step 8: Name placed on primary election ballot**

CANDIDATE PETITION – MINOR PARTY

**Step 1: Eligibility for nomination**

Candidates must meet the basic [qualifications for office](#).

A candidate must be affiliated with the political party no later than the first business day in January of the election year. [1-4-802(1)(g)(II), C.R.S.]

Proof of registration and affiliation qualifications will be as shown in the statewide voter registration system. [1-4-802(1)(g)(II), C.R.S.]

In order to be eligible to circulate a petition, a person must be a citizen of the United States and at least 18 years of age. [1-4-905(1), C.R.S.]

**Step 2: Petition signature requirements**

Only eligible electors within the district or political subdivision may sign the petition. An elector may not sign more than one candidate’s petition for the same office. [1-4-802(1)(c) & 1-4-904(1), (2)(b), C.R.S.]

The petition must contain the lesser of 1,000 signatures or signatures equal to 3.33% of the votes cast for that office at the most recent general election. [1-4-802(1)(c)(II), C.R.S.]

**Step 3: Receive petition format approval**

Petition formats must be approved by the Secretary of State prior to circulation. [1-4-903, C.R.S.]

Contact the Secretary of State’s Office at 303-894-2200 x6333 to learn about the petition format approval process.

**Step 4: Start circulating petition**

Once your petition format is approved, you can begin circulating the petition on the first Monday in February of the general election year. [1-4-802(1)(d)(II), C.R.S.]

**Step 5: Submit petition and candidate acceptance form**

The completed petition must be filed no later than 85 days before the primary election. [1-4-802(1)(f)(II), C.R.S.]

1. Complete the [Candidate Acceptance of Petition Nomination \(PDF\) form](#) and have it notarized. [1-4-906, C.R.S.]

The form must state the candidate’s name the way it will appear on the ballot. Candidate names cannot contain any title or degree designating the business or profession of the candidate. [1-4-906 & 1-5-407(4), C.R.S.]

2. Attach the notarized acceptance form to the completed petition. [1-4-906, C.R.S.]
3. Mail or hand deliver the petition and candidate acceptance form to:

Colorado Secretary of State  
Attention: Ballot Access  
1700 Broadway, Suite 200  
Denver CO, 80290

**Step 6: Signature verification, cure, and notice of sufficiency or insufficiency**

Petition signatures will be verified by the Secretary of State. If found to be sufficient, the petition will be deemed valid, unless a protest is made in writing within five days after the statement of sufficiency is issued. [1-4-908 & 1-4-909, C.R.S.]

During the petition review, we will notify candidates of any errors or insufficiencies in the circulator affidavits. Upon receipt of such notification, candidates have five calendar days to cure the errors by submitting a new circulator affidavit that corrects the mistakes. [1-4-912(2), C.R.S.]

During the petition review, we will notify candidates of any signer signatures that do not match the signatures in the voter registration records. Upon receipt of such notification, candidates have three calendar days to cure the mismatched signatures by submitting a form provided by our office that is completed by the signer and a copy of the signer’s identification. [1-4-908, C.R.S.]

We will notify you of your petition’s sufficiency or insufficiency in writing. For a faster response, please provide an email address where we can send the statement of sufficiency/insufficiency.

If found to be sufficient, the petition will be deemed valid, unless a protest is made in writing within five days after the statement of sufficiency is issued. [1-4-909, C.R.S.]

### **Step 7: Submit audio recording**

A candidate audio recording must be submitted to the Secretary of State no later than 85 days before the primary election. The audio recording must state the candidate's name exactly as it appears on the candidate acceptance form, as this is how the candidate's name will appear on the ballot. [SOS Election Rule 4.6.1]

[Audio Recording Instructions](#)

### **Step 8: Name placed on ballot**

Minor party candidates nominated by petition are placed on the general election ballot unless there is more than one candidate for that office nominated by assembly and/or petition; then the candidates are placed on the primary ballot. [1-4-1304(1.5)(c) & (d), C.R.S.]

## CANDIDATE PETITION - UNAFFILIATED

### **Step 1: Eligibility for nomination**

Candidates must meet the basic [qualifications for office](#).

A candidate must be registered as unaffiliated no later than the first business day in January of the election year. [1-4-802(1)(g)(II), C.R.S.]

Proof of registration and affiliation qualifications will be as shown in the statewide voter registration system. [1-4-802(1)(g)(II), C.R.S.]

In order to be eligible to circulate a petition, a person must be a resident of the state, a citizen of the United States, and at least 18 years of age. [1-4-905(1), C.R.S.]

### **Step 2: Petition signature requirements**

Only eligible electors within the district or political subdivision may sign the petition. An elector may not sign more than one candidate's petition for the same office. [1-4-802(1)(c) & 1-4-904(1), 2(b), C.R.S.]

The petition must contain the lesser of 1,000 signatures or signatures equal to 3.33% of the votes cast for that office at the most recent general election. [1-4-802(1)(c)(II), C.R.S.]

### **Step 3: Receive petition format approval**

Petition formats must be approved by the Secretary of State prior to circulation. [1-4-903, C.R.S.]

Contact the Secretary of State's Office at 303-894-2200 x6333 to learn about the petition format approval process.

**Step 4: Start circulating petition**

Once your petition format is approved, you can begin circulating the petition on the 173rd day before the general election. [1-4-802(1)(d)(I), C.R.S.]

**Step 5: Submit petition and candidate acceptance form**

The completed petition must be filed no later than 3 p.m. on the 117th day before the general election. [1-4-802(1)(f)(I), C.R.S.]

1. Complete the [Candidate Acceptance of Petition Nomination \(PDF\) form](#) and have it notarized. [1-4-906, C.R.S.]

The form must state the candidate’s name the way it will appear on the ballot. Candidate names cannot contain any title or degree designating the business or profession of the candidate. [1-4-906 & 1-5-407(4), C.R.S.]

2. Attach the notarized acceptance form to the completed petition. [1-4-906, C.R.S.]
3. Mail or hand deliver together the petition and candidate acceptance form to:

Colorado Secretary of State  
Attention: Ballot Access  
1700 Broadway, Suite 200  
Denver CO, 80290

**Step 6: Signature verification and notice of sufficiency or insufficiency**

Petition signatures will be verified by the Secretary of State and a declaration of sufficiency or insufficiency will be made no later than 96 days before the general election. [1-4-908(3), C.R.S.]

During the petition review, we will notify candidates of any errors or insufficiencies in the circulator affidavits. Upon receipt of such notification, candidates have five calendar days to cure the errors by submitting a new circulator affidavit that corrects the mistakes. [1-4-912(2), C.R.S.]

During the petition review, we will notify candidates of any signer signatures that do not match the signatures in the voter registration records. Upon receipt of such notification, candidates have three calendar days to cure the mismatched signatures by submitting a form provided by our office that is completed by the signer and a copy of the signer’s identification. [1-4-908, C.R.S.]

We will notify you of your petition’s sufficiency or insufficiency in writing. For a faster response, please provide an email address where we can send the statement of sufficiency/insufficiency.

If found to be sufficient, the petition will be deemed valid, unless a protest is made in writing within five days after the statement of sufficiency is issued. [1-4-909, C.R.S.]

### Step 7: Submit audio recording

A candidate audio recording must be submitted to the Secretary of State no later than 117 days before the primary election. The audio recording must state the candidate’s name exactly as it appears on the candidate acceptance form, as this is how the candidate’s name will appear on the ballot. [SOS Election Rule 4.6.1]

[Audio Recording Instructions](#)

### Step 8: Name placed on general election ballot

#### WRITE-IN

#### Step 1: Eligibility for write-in

Candidates must meet the basic [qualifications for office](#).

Proof of registration and affiliation qualifications will be as shown on the candidate’s voter registration record. [1-4-501(1), C.R.S.]

#### Step 2: Submit affidavit of intent

File a [Write-in Affidavit](#) form with the Secretary of State. [1-4-1101(1), C.R.S.]

The form must be filed no later than the close of business on the 67th day before the primary election or by the close of business 110 days before the general election. [1-4-1102(1), C.R.S.]

Mail, hand deliver, email, or fax write-in affidavits to:

Colorado Secretary of State  
Attention: Ballot Access  
1700 Broadway, Suite 200  
Denver, CO 80290  
Email: [ballot.access@sos.state.co.us](mailto:ballot.access@sos.state.co.us)  
Fax: 303-869-4861

#### Step 3: Name placed on eligible write-in list for the primary or general election

#### AUDIO RECORDING INSTRUCTIONS

##### Why do I need to submit an audio recording?

In order to meet the required standards for accessible voting equipment, all county clerks in the state of Colorado must produce an audio ballot. The audio recording must contain the correct pronunciation of each candidate’s name.

##### How do I submit my audio recording?

Our office has set up a voicemail box specifically for this purpose.

- Dial 303-894-2200
- Dial extension 6314
- After the voice prompt, clearly state your:
  - Name (as it will appear on the ballot; it must match the name you provided on your candidate acceptance form)
  - Office and Jurisdiction if applicable (for example, State House District 5)
  - Party Affiliation (Not required for nonpartisan offices such as RTD or judgeships)
- Press “#” when your message is complete
- Follow the prompts to review/edit or complete/send your recording

#### USEFUL LINKS

[Check your voter registration information](#)

[Political party contact information](#)

[Candidate information packets by office](#)

[Ballot access forms](#)

[Campaign finance information and TRACER](#)

[Cybersecurity for political campaigns—Belfer Center](#)

[Cybersecurity for political campaigns—Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency](#)

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions about accessing the ballot: 303-894-2200 x6333  
[ballot.access@sos.state.co.us](mailto:ballot.access@sos.state.co.us)

Questions about campaign finance: 303-894-2200 (dial 3 then 1)  
[cpfhelp@sos.state.co.us](mailto:cpfhelp@sos.state.co.us)

Colorado Secretary of State’s website: [www.sos.state.co.us](http://www.sos.state.co.us)