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COPP Candidate Forms Guide

- **Please note:** As of October 2019, and in accordance with [13-37-225](#) and [226 MCA](#), all candidates must file all forms electronically in the [Campaign Electronic Reporting System \(CERS\)](#).
 - To help you file campaign finance forms confidently, reference the [Candidate Guide to Navigating CERS](#).
 - All candidates will follow the same reporting schedule (See the [Reporting Calendars page](#) for report periods and report due dates).

The following is a list of report forms available to candidates from the Office of the Commissioner of Political Practices and a brief description of what each form is and where and when the form must be filed. The last two sections include resources to navigate the campaign finance filing process.

1. File a Statement of Candidate (C-1 or C-1A), Option to File a C-3
2. Reporting Campaign Transactions and Fundraising (C-5, C-7, and C-7E Forms)
3. Post-Election Campaign Finance Forms for Surplus Funds (C-8, C-118, and C-118C Forms)
4. Required Disclosure Forms for Candidates and State Officials
5. Access and Navigate CERS
6. Inspection and Review Process of Campaign Finance Forms

1. File a Statement of Candidate (C-1 or C-1A), Option to File a C-3

Each candidate must file a Statement of Candidate. If any of the information in a Statement of Candidate changes, the candidate must file an amended form providing the new information within five days of the change ([13-37-204, MCA](#), [44.11.303\(2\), ARM](#)). After filing a C-1 or C-1A Statement of Candidate, a candidate has the option to file (or not file) a C-3 Code of Fair Campaign Practices. Reference this [Guide to Register as a Candidate & Banking Requirements](#) for helpful filing and campaign details.

C-1 Statement of Candidate: Form C-1 is the Statement of Candidate form that candidates for statewide or state district offices (House, Senate, Public Service Commission, and District Judges) must file.

- Form C-1 must be filed within five days after any of these events first occur: money is received or spent, a campaign treasurer is appointed, or the candidate files for office.
- Candidates who are required to file a C-1 Statement of Candidate are required to file C-5 campaign finance reports.
- Before filing a Statement of Candidate, make sure to reference the [Candidate Registration Guide](#) webpage for details about filing in CERS, paying your candidate filing fee, and more!

C-1A Statement of Candidate: Form C-1A is the Statement of Candidate for county, municipal, or school candidates.

- All county and municipal candidates must file form C-1A; all candidates campaigning for school trustee offices in first-class districts located in counties with populations of 15,000 and more or in county high school districts having student enrollments of 2,000 or more must file a Form C-1A.
- Form C-1A must be filed within five days after any of these events first occur: money is received or spent, a campaign treasurer is appointed, or the candidate files for office.
- Candidates for these offices must designate themselves either a 'B' box candidate (less than \$500 will be cumulatively raised and spent), or a 'C' box candidate (more than \$500 raised/spent).
- 'C' box candidates are required to file C-5 campaign finance reports.
- Before filing a Statement of Candidate, make sure to reference [this Candidate Registration Guide](#) webpage for details about filing in CERS, paying your candidate filing fee, and more!

C-3 Code of Fair Campaign Practices ([Sample C-3 Form](#)): Candidates may file a C-3 in CERS at any time, but it is a voluntary form and is not required.

2. Reporting Campaign Transactions and Fundraising (C-5, C-7, and C-7E Forms)

C-5 Candidate Campaign Finance Report ([C-5 instructions and sample form](#)): Form C-5 is the candidate campaign finance reporting form and must be filed by all candidates who have filed a C-1 running for statewide or state district office as well as all county, municipal, and school candidates that have designated themselves 'C' box candidates on the C-1A.

- The C-5 reports must detail all contributions received and expenditures made by a campaign during a specific time frame.
- To help you file campaign finance forms confidently, reference the [Candidate Guide to Navigating CERS](#).
- All candidates follow the same C-5 reporting calendar, which is available on the [Reporting Calendars page](#).
- All candidates must file a closing C-5 report when all debts and obligations are satisfied and no further campaign activity is anticipated.
- To help you file campaign finance forms confidently, reference the [Candidate Guide to Navigating CERS](#).
- Each campaign finance report is reviewed by the COPP. Learn about the COPP's inspection and exam process [here](#).

C-7 Notice of Pre-Election Contributions: Form C-7 is the Notice of Pre-Elections Contributions and must be filed by:

- Any candidate who receives \$100 or more from a single source between the 16th day before an election and the date of the election (for both primary and general elections) must file a C-7 disclosing this contribution. The C-7 must be filed within two business days of receiving the contribution.
- Reference the COPP's [Reporting Calendars page](#) for a listing of the C-7 reporting dates relevant to your election(s).

- To help you file campaign finance forms confidently, reference the [Candidate Guide to Navigating CERS](#).

C-7E Notice of Pre-Election Expenditures: Form C-7E is the Notice of Pre-Election Expenditures and must be filed by:

- **As of October 1, 2019**, any candidate who makes a campaign expenditure or incurs a debt of \$100 or more between the 17th day before an election and the day of the election must file a C-7E disclosing that activity ([13-37-226, MCA](#)). This applies for both primary and general elections.
- Each C-7E must be filed within 2 business days of the expenditure being made or the debt being incurred. All C-7E Forms must be filed electronically in CERS.
- Reference the COPP's [Reporting Calendars page](#) for a listing of the C-7E reporting dates relevant to your election(s).
- To help you file campaign finance forms confidently, reference the [Candidate Guide to Navigating CERS](#).

3. Post-Election Campaign Finance Forms for Surplus Funds (C-8, C-118, and C-118C Forms)

For more candidate information on post-election (primary or general) options for campaign accounts, reference the [post-election candidate finance guide](#). The guide includes information on how to settle outstanding campaign debts and loans, and how to navigate surplus candidate funds after a primary and general election. The information below on forms covers form options for surplus campaign funds.

C-8 Constituent Services Reporting Form: Form C-8 is the Constituent Services Reporting form, which discloses any expenses made from an established constituent services account (learn more about constituent services accounts [here](#)).

- C-8 reports are to be filed quarterly with the COPP and are filed after a candidate has established a constituent services account filing form C-118C.
- [C-8 forms](#) must be filed by sending a digital or hard copy [C-8 form](#) either via email (cppcompliance@mt.gov), fax (406-444-1643), mail (PO Box 202401, Helena, MT, 59620-2401), or hand delivered (1209 8th Avenue, Helena, Montana).

C-118 Disposition of Surplus Campaign Funds: Form C-118 is the Disposition of Surplus Campaign Funds and discloses how candidates who filed C-5 campaign finance reports disposed of any and all surplus campaign funds.

- Within 120 days of filing a closing C-5 campaign finance report, a candidate must dispose of surplus campaign funds.
- Form C-118 must be filed by a candidate within 135 days after the closing C-5 is filed.
- [Form C-118](#) must be filed either via email (cppcompliance@mt.gov), fax (406-444-1643), mail (PO Box 202401, Helena, MT, 59620-2401), or hand delivered (1209 8th Avenue, Helena, Montana).

C-118C Establish a Constituent Services Account: Form C-118C is the form that allows an official who has been elected to public office to create a constituent services account (For more information, reference this [constituent services guide](#)).

- After filing a closing C-5 report, all candidates with surplus campaign funds are required to file either a Form C-118 or C-118C, pursuant to [13-37-240, MCA](#).

- A candidate that has been elected and has chosen to open a constituent services account must file a Form C-118C either via email (cppcompliance@mt.gov), fax (406-444-1643), mail (PO Box 202401, Helena, MT, 59620-2401), or hand delivered (1209 8th Avenue, Helena, Montana).

4. Required Disclosure Forms for Candidates and State Officials

D-1 Business Disclosure Statement ([D-1 form and guide](#)): Form D-1 is the Business Disclosure Statement and must be filed by:

- Statewide or state district elected officials;
- Candidates for statewide or state district offices;
- Department directors; and
- Any individual appointed to fill any of these positions.

The dates by which form D-1 must be filed, according to candidate type, are:

- Statewide or state district elected officials or department directors: prior to December 15 of each even-numbered year;
- Candidates for statewide or state district offices: within five days of the time the candidate files for office (with the Secretary of State); and
- Individual appointed to any of the above offices: at the earlier of the time of submission of the person's name for confirmation or the assumption of office.

5. Access and Navigate CERS

The Campaign Electronic Reporting System (CERS) is a publicly accessible database where candidates and committees report the money they receive and spend to promote and oppose candidates and other ballot issues. Access CERS via [this link](#). If you forget your ePass login information or cannot access CERS, reference [this guide](#) to regain access to CERS.

To add in campaign finance information and file reports, familiarize yourself with the [Candidate Guide to Navigating CERS](#). The guide details:

- Part 1: Create an Account and File a Statement of Candidate
- Part 2: Create a Campaign Finance Report
- Part 3: Add Contributions in CERS ([Add in a candidate loan](#))
- Part 4: Add Expenditures in CERS
- Part 5: Add Debts in CERS
- Part 6: Add Payments (on Debts and Loans) in CERS
- Part 7: Understand the Summary Tab
- Part 8: File a Campaign Finance Report
- Part 9: Campaign Finance Report and Review Process

6. Inspection and Review Process of Campaign Finance Forms

Montana campaign finance laws protect the public's right to know who is paying to finance elections and how money is spent by campaigns. Candidates ensure transparency in Montana's democratic processes by periodically filing legally-required campaign finance information as campaign finance reports.

The COPP is mandated to review all candidate and committee financial reports (13-37-121[1], Montana Code Annotated). Once a campaign finance report is filed, the COPP inspects each report and sends the candidate or committee an **Inspection Report**.

- The **Inspection Report** identifies any issues that the candidate or committee must address in their campaign finance reports in order to comply with Montana law. For example, an **Inspection Report** will alert candidates to items that require additional detail or information, items that may not be reported in the correct place or manner, or other potential issues. [Click here](#) to see a sample Inspection Report.
- It is the responsibility of each candidate and committee to amend financial reports to ensure their compliance with Montana's campaign finance laws.

To learn more about the inspection and review process, reference this [Inspection and Exam Process guide](#).

The guide covers:

1. What is a CFR Inspection Report and why am I receiving one?
2. What is the difference between an Inspection Report and the "Exam?"
3. I have received a CFR Compliance Inspection or Exam from the COPP. What do I need to do?
4. I have received my CFR Compliance Inspection or Exam and I still have questions about what exactly I need to correct. Who should I contact?