

Complying with the Law

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It is a noble thing to run for public office—society benefits when committed and capable people use their talents to help make government work better. But a run for public office requires a commitment to learn and follow the rules governing candidates. Although the rules can sometimes seem confusing or scary, thousands of people run for office every year without violating them—and you can too!

The Two Tracks of Candidacy Regulations

To run for state or local office in California, you will need to learn and follow two different sets of rules. The first set governs your *candidacy papers*, which are the basic documents that you must file to register as a candidate for office. The second set governs *campaign finance*, which is the raising and spending of money on your candidacy.

■ **TAKE NOTE: Pay careful attention to deadlines.**

Each of the candidacy documents discussed below has a specific deadline for filing. If you fail to file your declaration of candidacy and nomination petitions by the deadline — even if you are only 30 minutes late — the elections official cannot allow your candidacy without a court order. The first thing you should get from your elections official is a calendar of filing deadlines for the office you seek. We cannot stress enough the importance of filing your candidacy papers on time.

Both sets of rules have strict deadlines that require your attention. Below we describe the basic documents for each; but first, a few clarifications are in order:

In the descriptions below, the terms “elections official” and “elections office” refer to the local office where you will receive and file your candidacy papers. It may be called the Elections Department, the Registrar’s Office, or the Clerk’s Office, depending on your locality. We also refer to the “FPPC,” which is the state

Fair Political Practices Commission, the agency charged with implementing and enforcing the campaign finance and conflicts of interest laws. Finally, we refer to the California Secretary

of State.

This chapter was written by Karen Getman, of counsel to Remcho, Johansen & Purcell and former chairman of California’s Fair Political Practices Commission. Although this chapter provides an overview of the relevant law, it is not intended to be legal advice, and it cannot substitute for legal counsel.

of State, which is the office of the elected official charged with statewide implementation and monitoring of California’s election laws. You likely will come in contact with all three of these entities during your candidacy.

Filing Your Candidacy Papers (On Time!)

Before you start, make sure you are currently registered to vote in the jurisdiction where you intend to run for office. That is a requirement of every candidate. If you are running for an office where you will be the nominee of a political party (as opposed to running for a nonpartisan office, like school board) make sure you have been registered with that political party for the required time period.

Everyone who runs for office in California, whether for school board or governor, has to file certain basic candidacy papers. The particulars of which documents you file, when you file them and where can differ depending on the office you are seeking.¹

For each election, there will be a period of time—generally between 88 and 113 days out from the election—known as the *Nomination Period*.² During the Nomination Period, you can go to your local elections office and pick up a set of *Nominating Papers*, which are the basic candidacy documents. These will include at least³ the following:

¹ This chapter does not discuss the steps that must be taken to become a write-in candidate. Not every jurisdiction allows write-in candidates, but many do. The rules and deadlines for write-in candidates can be very different from those for regular candidates. If you are considering becoming a write-in candidate, check with your local elections official.

² Some jurisdictions call this by other names—for example, the city of Los Angeles has a “candidate filing week” during which candidates are required to file their Declaration of Candidacy and other documents.

³ There may be other papers as well, depending on the jurisdiction. For example, San Francisco city candidates will receive a “Declaration of Candidate Name in Chinese Characters” and the “Code of Fair Campaign Practices.” Los Angeles city candidates will receive a “Statement of City-Related Business” and papers relating to the Public Matching Funds Program. *Make sure you go through all the papers you receive with a knowledgeable person at the elections office to be sure you have everything that is required.*

- Declaration of Candidacy & Oath of Office
- Declaration of Filing Under Legal Name
- Statement of Economic Interests (FPPC Form 700)
- Nomination Petition & Appointment of Circulators
- Signature In-Lieu Petitions & Appointment of Circulators

In addition, you may be allowed to submit a ballot statement that will appear in the voter's pamphlet.

- **Declaration of Candidacy & Oath of Office**

The universal document that all candidates file to announce their intention to run for office is the Declaration of Candidacy & Oath of Office. You must pick up this form personally at the elections office, or designate in writing someone who is authorized to do so on your behalf. You fill out and file this form during the specified time period at the elections office; if you fill out the form outside the office, you will need a notary public to verify your signature. *You will not be allowed to file the Declaration of Candidacy past the deadline, unless you get a court order allowing the late filing—an unlikely and expensive proposition.*

- **Declaration of Filing Under Legal Name**

The way your name appears on the Declaration of Candidacy is the way it will appear on the ballot. You are required to use your legal name, and to file a Declaration of Filing Under Legal Name. You can use a nickname if your given name or initials are shown. You also can use a shortened familiar form, such as Kate instead of Katherine. Listing your middle name is optional. You cannot use a title, such as Mr., Dr., or Rev.

- **Statement of Economic Interests (FPPC Form 700)**

In addition to filing the Declaration of Candidacy, you also must file a candidate Statement of Economic Interests (FPPC Form 700) no later than the last day on which you could file the Declaration of Candidacy. On the Form 700 you will have to disclose certain financial interests and investments as of the date you declare your candidacy, as well as sources of income and gifts during the 12 months before filing the form. Detailed instructions are included with the form; in addition, you can ask for help from the FPPC's toll-free hotline, 1-888-ASK-FPPC.

- **Nomination Petition & Appointment of Circulators**

Once you have completed and turned in the Declaration of Candidacy, you will receive a set of Nomination Petitions. To qualify for the ballot, you must obtain a required number of signatures—the number varies by office—from qualified, registered voters who nominate you to run for office. Generally, only persons currently registered to vote in the jurisdiction in which you are running are qualified to sign the Nomination Petitions, and only registered voters in the jurisdiction can help circulate the Nomination Petitions on your behalf. The circulator (including you, if you collect all the signatures yourself) will sign the Affidavit of Circulator on each petition.

This probably sounds like a very easy requirement. It is not. In fact, even experienced candidates have found themselves without a sufficient number of signatures on their nomination petitions. Many people forget to re-register when they move or change names, making their registration invalid. Sometimes people who registered years ago, but failed to vote in a number of elections, are dropped from the lists of registered voters.

- **Signature In-Lieu Petitions & Appointment of Circulators**

In addition to turning in your Nomination Petitions, you likely will have to pay a candidate filing fee. The amount of the fee varies; for example, it costs \$500 to run for a seat on the Board of Education in San Francisco, and \$990 to run for a state senate or assembly seat. You can reduce or even eliminate the filing fee by turning in Signatures In Lieu of the Filing Fee. Each signature is worth a certain amount toward the filing fee (for example, 50 cents).

To do this, request in-lieu petitions from the elections official and circulate them during the allowable time period (generally starting well in advance of the deadline for Nomination Petitions). As with the signa-

■ **TAKE NOTE: Gather extra signatures and file early.**

It is common for elections officials to disqualify some signatures on the Nomination Petitions because they are from persons not registered to vote in the jurisdiction, or have some other defect. **You cannot file the Nomination Petitions later than the deadline without a court order.** Therefore, it is wise to file early and collect the maximum number of signatures allowed—well above the minimum. That way, if the elections official disqualifies some signatures, you have extras and still have time to collect even more. Some elections officials even let you check the validity of the signatures yourself, before turning in the petitions.

■ **BRIGHT IDEA: Return your nomination papers early and in person.**

That way, elections officials can notify you on the spot if something seems incomplete or incorrect on its face. If you need to redo something, you'll have time before the deadline.

tures on the Nomination Petitions, those who sign your in-lieu petitions must be registered to vote in your jurisdiction, and those who help you circulate the petitions must be registered voters of the jurisdiction. In addition, each signer must not have signed an in-lieu petition for any other candidate running for that same office.

Signatures that you collect on your in-lieu petitions can also count as signatures for your nomination petitions, if you have

collected at least twenty valid in-lieu signatures. Ask your elections official how to designate those signatures from the in-lieu petitions that you want to have counted for your nomination petitions.

● **Ballot Statement**

Although the documents discussed above are the basic and essential candidacy papers, there may be additional filings related to your candidacy. One of the most common is the candidate qualification statement or ballot statement. Many local jurisdictions publish a statement from each candidate in the voter's pamphlet; these are extremely useful as they may be the only thing some voters read about you! Sometimes the candidate statement is accompanied by a photograph.

State candidates get a ballot statement if they agree to abide by the voluntary expenditure limits. Make sure you find out from your local elections official, or from the Secretary of State if you are running for state office, the deadlines, length and content requirements, etc. for the candidate statement. Here again, complying with the deadline is critical. A late-filed candidate statement will not be printed in the voter's pamphlet without a court order.

Raising and Spending Money

If you are going to raise or spend \$1,000 or more on your campaign, you will qualify as a "campaign committee" under state law. A candidate who will meet the \$1,000 threshold must set up a bank account that will be used solely for campaign receipts and expenditures and must register a

campaign committee to report all the money he or she raises and spends on the campaign. Even candidates who will not meet the \$1,000 threshold have some filing obligations under the campaign finance laws. Below we review the basic steps all candidates must follow to comply with the campaign finance rules. In doing so, we discuss the following forms:

- FPPC Form 501, Candidate Intention Statement
- FPPC Form 470, Short Form Campaign Statement
- FPPC Form 410, Statement of Organization
- FPPC Form 460, Recipient Committee Campaign Statement
- **FPPC Form 501 – Candidate Intention Statement**

The first step for all candidates, regardless of whether they will meet the \$1,000 threshold, is filing the Candidate Intention Statement – FPPC Form 501.

This must be done *before you solicit, raise, or spend any money on your campaign, including your own personal funds*. Form 501 is filed with the same elections official with whom you file your candidacy papers, except candidates for superior court judge file their Form 501 with the Secretary of State. It asks for basic information, such as your name, the office you are seeking, etc. If you are running for state office, Form 501 is where you indicate whether you agree to abide by the voluntary expenditure limits.⁴

■ **TAKE NOTE: Check to see that you haven't missed anything.**

Some candidates will have additional filing requirements—for instance, candidates who run in a jurisdiction with public financing, and candidates for state office who accept the voluntary spending limits. Be sure to check with someone knowledgeable—your local elections official or the FPPC—to see if you have additional requirements. You can get all the forms listed above from your local elections official; from the Secretary of State or the FPPC offices in Sacramento; or online at www.fppc.ca.gov under the “Forms” heading.

⁴ State candidates (for example, candidates for state assembly) who agree to abide by the voluntary expenditure limits are allowed to have a candidate statement published in the state voter's pamphlet. There are laws governing whether, when, and under what circumstances you can change your mind. Get advice *before* you decide whether to accept the voluntary expenditure limits.

Setting up a Campaign Bank Account

Only those candidates who will accept campaign contributions, or who will spend \$1,000 or more on their campaign, must open a *separate campaign bank account*. For those candidates, however, opening the separate bank account is mandatory. The account may be opened at any state or federal bank, savings and loan association, or credit union, so long as the financial institution is located in California. You cannot have more than one bank account for each elective office you hold or seek. Most importantly, *you cannot commingle personal funds and campaign contributions*. Use the campaign bank account for all campaign contributions and expenditures, but not for anything else.

Campaign Cash, Checks, and Credit Cards

All money—including personal funds you use for the campaign—must be deposited in the campaign bank account and withdrawn as needed to pay campaign expenses. This includes “petty cash” funds. The only exception is for personal funds spent on candidate filing fees and the fees for the statement of qualifications in the ballot pamphlet. This is a rigid rule, but it serves a useful purpose in helping ensure candidates fully and accurately report all campaign contributions and expenditures. You can have a campaign credit card paid for out of the campaign bank account. This can be an existing credit card only if it has a zero balance. Again, use that credit card only for campaign expenditures, and never for your personal or business expenses.

■ **TAKE NOTE: Do not mix campaign funds and personal funds.**

Never use your personal bank account to deposit campaign contributions; they can only be deposited in a separate campaign bank account. Never use your personal bank account to make campaign expenditures unless (1) you will not meet the \$1,000 threshold discussed above, or (2) the expenditures are of a type for which there is an exception.

There are rules concerning the use of cash in candidate campaigns. Generally speaking, you cannot accept a cash contribution of \$100 or more; such contributions must be made by check, drawn from the contributor’s account, and with the contributor’s name printed on the check. You can have a petty cash fund for the campaign of no more than \$100, which must come from funds that first were deposited in your campaign bank account, and then withdrawn. Only expenditures below \$100 may be made with cash.

If you intend to raise or spend less than \$1,000 on your campaign, the only other campaign finance document you will file is the *FPPC Form 470 – Short Form Campaign Statement* (required of all candidates who do not set up a campaign committee). If you will be raising or spending \$1,000 or more, you will file the *FPPC Form 410 – Statement of Organization* and *FPPC Form 460 – Recipient Committee Campaign Statement*. All of these forms are discussed in more detail below.

- **FPPC Form 470 – Short Form Campaign Statement**

For those candidates who will not meet the \$1,000 threshold, the basic campaign finance filing is Form 470 – Short Form. In it you will verify, under penalty of perjury, that you do not intend to meet the \$1,000 threshold. Filing deadlines for candidates in an election year depend on whether the election occurs in the first or second six months of the year. If it is in the first six months, then you file Form 470 either at the same time you file your declaration of candidacy, or no later than the filing deadline for the first preelection campaign committee statements (ask your elections official for that date). If your election is in the latter six months of the year, and you have received contributions or made expenditures prior to June 30 (other than expenditures for filing fees or ballot statements) then you file no later than July 31. If you did not receive contributions or make expenditures prior to June 30, then you file either with your declaration of candidacy, or no later than the filing deadline for the first preelection campaign committee statements.

Where do you file the Form 470? Candidates for superior court judge file the original and one copy with the Secretary of State, and two copies with the local elections official. Candidates for multi-county office file the original and one copy with the county elections official in the coun-

■ **TAKE NOTE: Get the FPPC forms you need online.**

Remember, this guide is intended to help you learn only the basic requirements of the campaign finance laws. The FPPC publishes a lengthy and detailed manual for local candidates, and a separate one for state candidates, that discuss these various legal requirements at length and give step by step instructions on how to fill out the forms, where and when to file them, etc. Those manuals are available on the FPPC website, www.fppc.ca.gov, under the “Candidates” or “Publications” sections. Look for the documents entitled “Campaign Disclosure Manual 1” [for state candidates] and “Campaign Disclosure Manual 2” [for local candidates].

ty with the most registered voters in the jurisdiction, and two copies with the elections official in the county where they live. Candidates for single-county office file the original and one copy with their county elections

official, and two copies with the elections official in their home county. City candidates file the original and one copy with their local elections official.

■ TAKE NOTE: If your situation changes . . .

What if you file the Form 470, but subsequently go over the \$1,000 threshold? File a **Form 470 Supplement** (or similar written notice) within 48 hours of receiving or spending \$1,000. You file the Supplement with the Secretary of State; with each candidate running against you; and with your local elections official. File by fax, personal delivery, telegram, or guaranteed overnight delivery. In addition, you'll have to file the Form 410 within 10 days (or within 24 hours, if this is the final 16 days prior to your election) and you'll eventually have to file a Form 460—see below.

■ TAKE NOTE: Unsure of your filing date?

Ask your local elections official, or call the FPPC's toll free helpline, 1-866-ASK-FPPC.

● FPPC Form 410 – Statement of Organization

Any candidate who raises or spends \$1,000 or more on his or her campaign must file FPPC Form 410 – Statement of Organization. This document lists the name and address of your committee, and the name of its treasurer. File the original Form 410 with the Secretary of State's office *and* file a copy with your local elections official. It must be filed within 10 days of receiving or spending \$1,000—*but* if you meet the \$1,000 threshold during the last 16 days before the election, you must file the Form 410 within 24 hours! You can file the Form 410 earlier, and amend it afterwards to indicate the date on which you met the \$1,000 threshold.

Amendments are required within 10 days of any change—for example, a change in the committee's name, or in its treasurer—*except* that if the change occurs with-

in the last 16 days before the election, the amendment must be filed within 24 hours.

Every Campaign Committee Must Have a Treasurer

Form 410 asks for the name of your campaign treasurer. Every campaign committee must have a treasurer, and the committee may not accept contributions or make expenditures before a treasurer is appointed

or while the position is vacant. Anyone can serve as treasurer, and the candidate can even be his or her own treasurer. You may, but are not required to, have an assistant treasurer. You and your treasurer will have to sign verifications on most of the major campaign finance forms, and you both are legally responsible for accurate, complete, and timely filings. The treasurer also is responsible for ensuring that the campaign meets the recordkeeping requirements of the law.

Insist that your campaign treasurer know or learn the rules for campaign accounting. Many first-time candidates use volunteers as their campaign treasurers. It's not like balancing your checkbook, however; there are special accounting rules that apply to campaigns. You wouldn't let your Aunt Ida file your business tax returns without prior experience; so don't let her file your campaign reports without becoming familiar with the reporting laws.

It is your responsibility as a candidate to make sure that the person serving as your treasurer reads the FPPC's Campaign Disclosure Manual and if possible attends an FPPC training seminar, or one put on by your local elections office. If your campaign will raise or spend a good deal of money, consider hiring a professional campaign treasurer. This is particularly important if you are a state candidate who will raise or spend \$50,000 or more, because you then have an obligation to file your campaign reports electronically.

Keeping Accurate Records

Recordkeeping is an essential aspect of running a good campaign. All campaign committees are subject to audit by the state Franchise Tax Board, and by the FPPC. State law requires that candidates keep accurate records, including original source documents, for four years from the

■ TAKE NOTE: Form 410 as The Terminator

Form 410 is also used to terminate a committee if you lose the election, or leave office; you simply check the "termination" box at the top. However, it is important not to terminate your committee too soon. Candidates who fail in their run for office often want to close their accounts quickly and put the experience behind them. But a certain percentage of local campaign committees are subject to random audit by the FPPC every year, and the audit results may require amendment of your campaign reports. Even more likely, there may be a bill you forgot to pay, or a refund due you—many cities and counties make a partial refund of the candidate filing fee, for example, but not until weeks after the election. If this happens and you have already closed your campaign bank account, these small items can become a big headache!

date of filing the campaign statement to which the records are tied. (If you receive contributions from “affiliated entities,” the documents must be kept for five years.) The bank statements, cancelled checks, check registers, and credit card statements can serve as a “daily record” of expenditures.

For all expenditures of \$25 or more, you must have a record of the full name and address of the recipient, the date of the expenditure and/or the date the goods were received, and a description of what was bought. All contributions of \$25 or more must be documented with the name and address of the contributor and the date you received the contribution. Make a copy of any contribution check before you deposit it. Once someone has contributed a cumulative total of \$100 or more during a calendar year to your campaign, you must document the contributor’s occupation and employer. *A contribution of \$100 or more must be returned if, within 60 days of receipt, you do not have the contributor’s name, address, occupation and employer.*

- **FPPC Form 460 – Recipient Committee Campaign Statement**

If you raise or spend \$1,000 or more on your campaign, you meet the threshold for becoming a candidate committee. Once you do, you will have to file FPPC Form 460 – Recipient Committee Campaign Statement. This is the basic campaign finance disclosure form filed by most candidate committees in California, from Governor down to school board member.

On this form you will record all campaign contributions, including the name, address, occupation and employer, and cumulative contributions of the contributor; all campaign expenditures, including the name and address of the vendor and any subvendors associated with the expenditure; accrued expenses, that is, money that you know you owe but have not yet paid; outstanding loans made or received; and any other miscellaneous increases or decreases to your campaign account.

The Form 460 is filed in the same places as the Form 470, described in detail above. When to file the Form 460 is a more complicated question, however. The filing deadlines are keyed to the dates of the particular election and the office for which you are running. Ask your elections official for a calendar of filing dates. You also can find a calendar on the FPPC website, under the “When to File” section of the Candidate listings.

Detailed instructions on how to fill out Form 460 and its many schedules, are provided with the form and in the FPPC Campaign Disclosure Manual.

Form 460 is a little like the IRS income tax forms—it has its own terminology and ways of recording information that are not always intuitive. Even the most knowledgeable and experienced professional treasurers have to ask the FPPC for help in filling out the Form 460 correctly.

Part of the difficulty stems from the complex and detailed nature of the state campaign finance rules. When you are filling out Form 460, you will be accounting for every dollar that is associated with your campaign, and there is a rule governing how each of those dollars must be accounted for. This chapter cannot possibly teach you all the rules. What we will try to do instead is alert you to some of the commonly misunderstood or misapplied rules. That is no substitute, however, for acquiring a basic understanding of the campaign finance reporting rules. *If you intend to raise or spend any significant sum*

of money on your campaign, read through the FPPC Campaign Disclosure Manual and, if possible, attend a new candidate training seminar.

The time you spend doing these things up front can save you thousands of dollars in fines later on!

■ TIP FROM THE PROS

You or your treasurer must read the Form 460 instructions and the FPPC Campaign Disclosure Manual; don't think you can fill out the form correctly without doing so! There is no substitute for acquiring a basic understanding of the campaign finance reporting rules. If possible, attend a new candidate training seminar.

Basic Rules to Follow

There are certain basic rules that everyone in your campaign, including you, should memorize:

- No cash contributions or expenditures of \$100 or more.
- No anonymous contributions of \$100 or more; no money orders or cashier's checks; no contributions from non-U.S. citizens.
- Keep track of the name, address, occupation, and employer of all donors who

contribute \$25 or more. (You'll have to return contributions of \$100 or more for which you don't have the required information.)

- Keep copies of all contribution checks and all expenditure receipts and checks.
- Don't use campaign funds for personal expenses.
- Always disclose the true source of a campaign contribution and any intermediary to the transaction.

If you are subject to contribution limits, you must make sure that the cumulative contributions of each donor do not exceed the limit for that election. And remember that your local jurisdiction may have different, even stricter rules, than the state.

Events that Trigger Special, More Complicated Requirements

In addition to knowing the basic rules, make sure you and your campaign treasurer understand what types of events trigger more complicated rules. If one of those events seems likely to occur, get help from legal counsel or someone else familiar with campaign law.

The most common events that trigger special rules are:

- Mailing more than 200 pieces of campaign literature.
- Sending a written solicitation for campaign contributions.
- Having a fundraiser at someone's home.
- Receiving \$5,000 or more from a single contributor.
- Receiving \$1,000 or more from a single contributor in the last sixteen days prior to the election.
- In-kind contributions (for example, volunteer personal services, free printing, etc.). How to value these can be tricky.
- Payments made by someone to vendors on your behalf.
- Using campaign money for tickets, automobile expenses, or clothing.
- Getting a loan for your campaign; making a loan to your campaign.
- Getting a discount on goods or services.

Be aware that if one of these common events occurs, you will have to know and comply with the particular rule governing it.

Other Prohibitions and Forms

This chapter does not discuss every prohibition concerning campaign contributions and expenditures that may apply to your candidacy. The prohibitions are set out in the FPPC's information manuals. Become aware of these prohibitions before you start fundraising for your campaign!

Also, the forms discussed above are not the only forms that may apply to your campaign. Here are a few others of which you should be aware:

- **FPPC Form 495 – Supplemental Preelection Campaign Statement**—used in certain circumstances if your committee makes contributions totaling \$10,000 or more to other candidates or ballot measures.
- **FPPC Form 511 – Paid Spokesperson Report**—used when a committee spends \$5,000 or more for an individual's appearance in an advertisement or telephone message to support or oppose a ballot measure.
- **Special Odd-Year Report**—A Form 460 that is filed on a special timeline during odd-numbered years if the committee makes contributions of \$10,000 or more to state candidates or to committees primarily formed to support or oppose state candidates.
- **FPPC Form E-530**—Filed only by committees that are required to file electronically with the Secretary of State, and used to disclose expenditures of

■ TAKE NOTE: Be especially vigilant with late contribution reports.

Because late contributions can help turn the tide in an election, the public must be notified of them immediately. During the last 16 days before an election, you must file a special report **within 24 hours** of receiving \$1,000 or more from a single source. The report should be filed on **FPPC Form 497 – Late Contribution Report**, available from your local elections official or from the websites of the FPPC and the Secretary of State. The FPPC reacts very harshly to candidates, even first-time candidates, who fail to file late contribution reports on time.

\$50,000 or more for a communication made within forty-five days of an election that clearly identifies a state candidate.

Getting More Help

It is daunting to realize what it takes to ensure your campaign complies with its legal filing requirements. If you plan to raise or spend a significant sum of money, or face strong opposition, you should think about hiring a professional campaign manager, who can help you decide whether you also need a professional treasurer and/or a campaign lawyer. *There are a few situations when getting good legal help is essential:*

1. If you miss a deadline for filing one of your candidacy papers.
2. If your campaign has committed a violation of the campaign reporting laws, or you suspect that it might have done so, even inadvertently.

No matter what the situation, however, the most important thing you can do is *ask for help before you take action*. A few words of cautionary advice can make all the difference to your campaign.

Conclusion: Five Things to Know about Complying with the Law

1. Follow both sets of rules.

Two sets of rules govern elections for state and local office in California. One set regulates your candidacy papers, the other set regulates your campaign finance. Become familiar with both sets of rules along with the forms and filing deadlines associated with them.

2. File your candidacy papers on time.

Don't risk being precluded from running for office because you did not file your candidacy papers on time. Deadlines may vary by locality and the office you are seeking. Ask your elections officer for a calendar of filing deadlines. Gather the maximum (rather than minimum) number

of signatures required for your Nominating Petitions to ensure that you will have enough valid signatures to qualify for the ballot. Turn those signatures in early.

3. Make sure everyone who works on your campaign knows and complies with the law.

Campaign laws govern not only the candidate, but everyone who works on a candidate's campaign. Make sure that your staff and volunteers are aware of and follow the basic rules that govern raising and spending campaign money. Don't risk you or a member of your staff making a mistake that will sink your candidacy.

4. Seek out more information.

This chapter provides only a basic overview of the rules governing state and local elections. Depending upon your locality and the type of office you are seeking, there may be other forms and prohibitions that are not covered in the pages above. Seek out more information from the links provided in this chapter to ensure that you are fully versed in the rules governing your election.

5. Ask for help.

Many of these laws are complicated and difficult to comprehend. Ask a knowledgeable person at your local elections office to walk you through the required paperwork. Get legal help if you miss a deadline for filing one of your candidacy papers or if you think your campaign may have committed a violation of the campaign reporting laws.

