

Nomination Paper FAQs

Q: Are signatures on nomination papers verified?

A: Yes. Every signer is reviewed by the Board of Canvassers to ensure they are an eligible voter within the appropriate district. If they are eligible, their signature is compared to the signature on file in their voter record. If the signature matches, it is qualified. If the signature does not reasonably match, the signature will be invalidated by the Board of Canvassers and will not count towards achieving placement on the ballot.

Q: I'm required to obtain 100 signatures, but does this mean I should only obtain 100?

A: It's common for some signatures to be disqualified due to the person not being registered to vote or not living in the district, etc. Therefore, it's good practice to obtain at least twice as many signatures as required to better ensure you have enough valid signatures to qualify to appear on the ballot.

Q: Who may sign a candidate's nomination papers?

A: Any eligible voter from within the district in which the candidate is seeking election may sign the candidate's nomination papers. Eligible voters are those persons who are eligible to vote at the time of signing nomination papers. Eligible voters are those persons who have been registered to vote at least 30 days prior to signing a candidate's nomination papers.

Q: Who may obtain signatures on a candidate's nomination papers?

A: Any person 18 years of age or older may obtain signatures. The person does not need to be a registered voter or a resident of Rhode Island.

Q: Is it a crime to sign someone else's name on nomination papers?

A: Yes. Any nomination papers with patterns of potential fraud such as an unusually high amount of similar signatures, mismatched signatures, or deceased voters will be referred to law enforcement for investigation for possible prosecution by the Attorney General.

Q: I'm at a voter's front door. Can they take the papers into the house out of my view and have relatives sign them?

A: No. The law requires that the person signs in the signature collector's physical presence. You should always be able to view the individual signing their name.

Q: Who is required to complete the affidavit, which appears on the back page of the candidate's nomination papers?

A: The person who obtains the signatures of voters on the nomination papers must complete and sign the affidavit that states:

"I _____ (name of person obtaining signatures), of the City or Town of _____ (name of city or town of person obtaining signatures), under oath make affidavit and say that the signers of the within nomination paper(s) did so sign the paper(s) in my presence."

The affidavit must be subscribed and sworn before a notary public.

Q: If a candidate has other individuals collect signatures for them, can the candidate complete the affidavit, which appears on the back page of the candidate's nomination papers?

A: No. The person who directly collected the signatures must complete the affidavit.



Q: Can a candidate or someone else “supervise” collection of signatures, and complete the affidavit, which appears on the back page of the candidate’s nomination paper? (i.e. being on the same residential street while the “supervised” individuals go door-to-door on that street.)

A: The person completing the affidavit must be physically in the presence of every person signing the nomination papers. Therefore, the person going door-to door with the nomination papers would need to complete the affidavit.

Q: Can a set of the candidate’s nomination papers be circulated by more than one individual?

A: No, because the affidavit which appears on the back page of the candidate’s nomination papers can only be completed by the one person who collected all the signatures contained on it. If a candidate has multiple individuals collecting signatures for them, they should create duplicate sets for each person (see question on duplicates in this document).

Q: Can a voter sign more than one candidate’s nomination papers?

A: Yes. A voter may sign the nomination papers of more than one candidate.

Q: Must a voter signing a candidate’s nomination papers be eligible to vote in the candidate’s primary?

A: Any eligible voter from within the district in which the candidate is seeking election may sign the nomination papers regardless of their party affiliation.

Q: Does signing a candidate’s nomination papers make that voter a member of the candidate’s party?

A: No. The person’s party affiliation is not affected.

Q: If a voter signs the nomination papers of a candidate who is seeking election to an office in a district other than that of the voter’s, will that signature be “counted” as valid?

A: No. Only those signatures obtained from eligible voters within the district in which the candidate is seeking election will be “counted” as valid.

Q: If an eligible voter from Town A signs a candidate’s nomination papers which are ultimately submitted to the Board of Canvassers in Town B, will that voter’s signature be “counted” as valid in either Town A or Town B?

A: No. Only those signatures of eligible voters in the city or town in which the nomination papers submitted will be valid (i.e. If an eligible voter from Johnston signs a candidate’s nomination papers which are ultimately submitted to Cranston; the Board of Canvassers in Cranston will not “count” that signature and it will be ruled invalid.)

Q: Is it possible to have eligible voters from more than one community sign a single nomination paper and have all the signatures ruled as valid?

A: No. Only those signatures of eligible voters in the city or town in which the nomination paper is submitted will be valid. There is no validating or cross-checking of signatures among communities or with the Office of the Secretary of State

Q: Is it permissible to make copies of blank nomination papers and gather signatures on them?

A: Yes. Candidates for the legislature and local office may, at their own expense, have nomination papers duplicated. However, the signatures obtained on the duplicated nomination papers shall be considered **valid if, and only if**, the duplicated nomination papers are an **exact duplicate (color, paper size, etc.)** of the nomination papers provided by the office that issued the original nomination papers: the Office of the Secretary of State or local Board of Canvassers.

