

SUBCHAPTER IV. POLITICAL PARTIES.

Article 9.

Political Parties.

§ 163-96. "Political party" defined; creation of new party.

(a) Definition. – A political party within the meaning of the election laws of this State shall be one of the following:

- (1) Any group of voters which, at the last preceding general State election, polled for its candidate for Governor, or for presidential electors, at least two percent (2%) of the entire vote cast in the State for Governor or for presidential electors.
- (2) Any group of voters which shall have filed with the State Board of Elections petitions for the formulation of a new political party which are signed by registered and qualified voters in this State equal in number to one-quarter of one percent (0.25%) of the total number of voters who voted in the most recent general election for Governor. Also the petition must be signed by at least 200 registered voters from each of three congressional districts in North Carolina. To be effective, the petitioners must file their petitions with the State Board of Elections before 12:00 noon on the first day of June preceding the day on which is to be held the first general State election in which the new political party desires to participate. The State Board of Elections shall forthwith determine the sufficiency of petitions filed with it and shall immediately communicate its determination to the State chair of the proposed new political party.
- (3) Any group of voters which shall have filed with the State Board of Elections documentation that the group of voters had a candidate nominated by that group on the general election ballot of at least seventy percent (70%) of the states in the prior Presidential election. To be effective, the group must file their documentation with the State Board of Elections before 12:00 noon on the first day of June preceding the day on which is to be held the first general State election in which the new political party desires to participate. The State Board of Elections shall forthwith verify the documentation filed with it and shall immediately communicate its determination to the State chair of the proposed new political party.

(b) Petitions for New Political Party. – Petitions for the creation of a new political party shall contain on the heading of each page of the petition in bold print or all in capital letters the words: "THE UNDERSIGNED REGISTERED VOTERS IN ____ COUNTY HEREBY PETITION FOR THE FORMATION OF A NEW POLITICAL PARTY TO BE NAMED ____ AND WHOSE STATE CHAIRMAN IS _____, RESIDING AT _____ AND WHO CAN BE REACHED BY TELEPHONE AT _____."

All printing required to appear on the heading of the petition shall be in type no smaller than 10 point or in all capital letters, double spaced typewriter size. In addition to the form of the petition, the organizers and petition circulators shall inform the signers of the general purpose and intent of the new party.

The petitions must specify the name selected for the proposed political party. The State Board of Elections shall reject petitions for the formation of a new party if the name chosen contains any word that appears in the name of any existing political party recognized in this State or if, in the State Board's opinion, the name is so similar to that of an existing political party recognized in this State as to confuse or mislead the voters at an election.

The petitions must state the name and address of the State chairman of the proposed new political party.

(c) Each petition shall be presented to the chairman of the board of elections of the county in which the signatures were obtained, and it shall be the chairman's duty:

- (1) To examine the signatures on the petition and place a check mark on the petition by the name of each signer who is qualified and registered to vote in his county.
- (2) To attach to the petition his signed certificate
 - a. Stating that the signatures on the petition have been checked against the registration records and
 - b. Indicating the number found qualified and registered to vote in his county.
- (3) To return each petition, together with the certificate required by the preceding subdivision, to the person who presented it to him for checking.

The group of petitioners shall submit the petitions to the chairman of the county board of elections in the county in which the signatures were obtained no later than 5:00 P.M. on the fifteenth day preceding the date the petitions are due to be filed with the State Board of Elections as provided in subsection [subdivision] (a)(2) of this section. Provided the petitions are timely submitted, the chairman of the county board of elections shall proceed to examine and verify the signatures under the provisions of this subsection. Verification shall be completed within two weeks from the date such petitions are presented. (1901, c. 89, s. 85; Rev., s. 4292; 1915, c. 101, s. 31; 1917, c. 218; C.S., ss. 5913, 6052; 1933, c. 165, ss. 1, 17; 1949, c. 671, ss. 1, 2; 1967, c. 775, s. 1; 1975, c. 179; 1979, c. 411, s. 3; 1981, c. 219, ss. 1-3; 1983, c. 576, ss. 1-3; 1997-456, s. 27; 1999-424, s. 5(a); 2004-127, s. 14; 2006-234, s. 1; 2017-6, s. 3; 2017-214, s. 1; 2018-146, s. 3.1(a), (b).)