

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2025 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 2608

By Delegates Hillenbrand, Ridenour, Sheedy, Brooks,
Funkhouser, White, and Mazzocchi

[Introduced February 19, 2025; referred to the
Committee on the Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §3-5-7 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to
2 requiring independent candidates for political office to file for office as an independent in
3 January of an election year.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 5. PRIMARY ELECTIONS AND NOMINATING PROCEDURES.

§3-5-7. Filing certificates of announcements of candidacies; requirements; withdrawal of

candidates	when	section	applicable.
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1	(a) Any person who is eligible and seeks to hold an office or political party position to be		
2	filled by election in any primary or general election held under the provisions of this chapter shall		
3	file a certificate of announcement declaring his or her candidacy for the nomination or election to		
4	the office.		

5	(b) The certificate of announcement shall be filed as follows:		
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6	(1) Candidates for the House of Delegates, the State Senate, circuit judge, family court		
7	judge, and any other office or political position to be filled by the voters of more than one county		
8	shall file a certificate of announcement with the Secretary of State.		

9	(2) Candidates for an office or political position to be filled by the voters of a single county		
10	or a subdivision of a county, except for candidates for the House of Delegates, State Senate,		
11	circuit judge or family court judge, shall file a certificate of announcement with the clerk the county		
12	commission.		

13	(3) Candidates for an office to be filled by the voters of a municipality shall file a certificate		
14	of announcement with the recorder or city clerk.		

15	(c) The certificate of announcement shall be filed with the proper officer not earlier than the		
16	second Monday in January before the primary election day and not later than the last Saturday in		
17	January before the primary election day and must be received before midnight, eastern standard		
18	time, of that day or, if mailed, shall be postmarked by the United States Postal Service before that		
19	hour. <u>This applies to all candidates, whether affiliated with a party or running as an independent.</u>		

20 This includes the offices of Justice of the Supreme Court of Appeals, Judge of the Intermediate
21 Court of Appeals, circuit court judge, family court judge and magistrate, which are to be filled on a
22 nonpartisan and division basis at the primary election: *Provided*, That on the final day of a political
23 filing period, the office of the Secretary of State shall be open from 9:00 a.m. until 11:59 p.m. The
24 offices of the county clerk in all counties of the state shall be open on that final day of a political
25 filing period from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m.

26 (d) The certificate of announcement shall be on a form prescribed by the Secretary of State
27 on which the candidate shall make a sworn statement before a notary public or other officer
28 authorized to administer oaths, containing the following information:

29 (1) The date of the election in which the candidate seeks to appear on the ballot;

30 (2) The name of the office sought; the district, if any; and the division, if any;

31 (3) The legal name of the candidate and the exact name the candidate desires to appear
32 on the ballot, subject to limitations prescribed in §3-5-13 of this code;

33 (4) The county of residence and a statement that the candidate is a legally qualified voter of
34 that county; and the magisterial district of residence for candidates elected from magisterial
35 districts or under magisterial district limitations;

36 (5) The specific address designating the location at which the candidate resides at the time
37 of filing, including number and street or rural route and box number and city, state, and zip code;

38 (6) For partisan elections, the name of the candidate's political party on the date the
39 certificate of announcement is submitted and a statement that the candidate: (A) Is a member of
40 and is affiliated with that political party as evidenced by the candidate's current registration as a
41 voter affiliated with that party; and (B) has not been registered as a voter affiliated with any other
42 political party for a period of 60 days before the date of filing the announcement;

43 (7) For candidates for delegate to national convention, the name of the presidential
44 candidate to be listed on the ballot as the preference of the candidate on the first convention ballot;
45 or a statement that the candidate prefers to remain "uncommitted";

(8) For candidates for county board of education, a statement that the candidate swears and affirms that he or she has not been convicted of an offense under §61-8A-1 *et seq.*, §61-8B-1 *et seq.*, and §61-8C-1 *et seq.* of this code in which the victim was a minor;

(9) A statement that the person filing the certificate of announcement is a candidate for the office in good faith; and

(10) The words "subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____, 20____" and a space for the signature of the officer giving the oath.

(e) The Secretary of State or the board of ballot commissioners, as the case may be, may refuse to certify the candidacy or may remove the certification of the candidacy upon receipt of a certified copy of the voter's registration record of the candidate showing that the candidate was registered as a voter in a party other than the one named in the certificate of announcement during the 60 days immediately preceding the filing of the certificate: *Provided*, That unless a signed formal complaint of violation of this section and the certified copy of the voter's registration record of the candidate are filed with the officer receiving that candidate's certificate of announcement no later than 10 days following the close of the filing period, the candidate may not be refused certification for this reason: *Provided, however*, That prior to accepting a Certificate of Announcement for filing for an office which is elected in a partisan election, the Secretary of State's Office, clerk of the county commission, recorder or city clerk shall electronically verify a candidate's current party affiliation as subscribed and sworn to by the candidate. If a candidate's current party affiliation is not as stated on the Certificate of Announcement, the filing shall be refused.

(f) The certificate of announcement shall be subscribed and sworn to by the candidate before an officer qualified to administer oaths, who shall certify the same. Any person who knowingly provides false information on the certificate is guilty of false swearing and shall be punished in accordance with §3-9-3 of this code.

(g) Any candidate for delegate to a national convention may change his or her statement of

72 presidential preference by notifying the Secretary of State by letter, received by the Secretary of
73 State no later than the third Tuesday following the close of candidate filing. When the rules of the
74 political party allow each presidential candidate to approve or reject candidates for delegate to
75 convention who may appear on the ballot as committed to that presidential candidate, the
76 presidential candidate or the candidate's committee on his or her behalf may file a list of approved
77 or rejected candidates for delegate and the Secretary of State shall list as "uncommitted" any
78 candidate for delegate who is disapproved by the presidential candidate.

79 (h) A person may not be a candidate for more than one office or office division at any
80 election: *Provided*, That a candidate for an office may also be a candidate for President of the
81 United States, for membership on political party executive committees or for delegate to a political
82 party national convention: *Provided, however*, That an unsuccessful candidate for a nonpartisan
83 office in an election held concurrently with the primary election may be appointed under the
84 provisions of §3-5-19 of this code to fill a vacancy on the general ballot.

85 (i) A candidate who files a certificate of announcement for more than one office or division
86 and does not withdraw, as provided by §3-5-11 of this code, from all but one office prior to the close
87 of the filing period may not be certified by the Secretary of State or placed on the ballot for any
88 office by the board of ballot commissioners.

89 (j) The amendments to this section enacted by the Legislature in the 2024 Regular Session
90 are effective January 1, 2025.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to require independent candidates for political office to file for office as an independent in January of an election year.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.