

Write-in Candidate Information Manual 2026



Office of the
City Clerk

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City Clerk

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Welcome



This Write-In Candidate Information Manual is intended to help you navigate running for office and direct you to key regulations regarding the election and nomination process for the offices of City Council in the City of San Diego.

Candidates are responsible for familiarizing themselves and adhering to all applicable provisions of the San Diego City Charter, the San Diego Municipal Code, the Municipal Election Code (notably the Election Campaign Control Ordinance and the Ethics Ordinance), the Political Reform Act of 1974 as amended, and the City Clerk Administrative Guidelines. This manual does not contain legal advice and is not meant to serve as a substitute for the actual provisions in State or City law. Candidates must adhere to all requirements of the nomination process to ensure a successful nomination effort.

This manual is intended solely for candidates and their nomination process for the regularly scheduled 2026 election. The Ethics Commission has prepared separate supplemental guides for campaign rules and campaign disclosure reporting to ensure a successful campaign effort. Please visit sandiego.gov/ethics to review their materials.

The Office of the City Clerk is dedicated to delivering exceptional service. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Diana Fuentes".

Diana Fuentes
City Clerk
San Diego, California

Office of the City Clerk

Regular office hours are Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.; excluding holidays
City observed holidays can be found at <https://www.sandiego.gov/city-holidays>

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Key Dates and Deadlines

Date/Deadline	Description of Event
March 30, 2026	Write-in candidate nomination period begins
April 27, 2026	Write-in candidate nomination period ends (5:00 p.m.)
June 2, 2026	Primary Election
July 2, 2026	Registrar must complete final election results
July 27, 2026	Deadline to change ballot designation, photograph and statement of qualifications for General Election
August 5, 2026	Random draw for order of names on the ballot
November 3, 2026	General Election
December 3, 2026	Registrar must complete final election results
December 10, 2026	Inauguration and term of office begins (term length of 4 years)

References for Legal Codes

San Diego Municipal Code: SDMC

City of San Diego Charter: Charter

City Clerk Administrative Guidelines: CCAG

California Government Code: GOV

California Elections Code: ELEC

General Information

Elective Offices on the Ballot

Office	Term Begin	Term End
Councilmember, Council District 2	December 10, 2026	December 10, 2030
Councilmember, Council District 4	December 10, 2026	December 10, 2030
Councilmember, Council District 6	December 10, 2026	December 10, 2030
Councilmember, Council District 8	December 10, 2026	December 10, 2030

- Offices shall be nonpartisan. [State Constitution, Article 2, §6](#)
- Term Limit: No person shall serve more than two four-year terms as a Councilmember. If for any reason a person serves a partial term as Councilmember in excess of two years, that partial term shall be considered a full term for purposes of this term limit provision. [Charter §12\(c\)](#)

Qualifications to Run for Office

- Must be a United States Citizen
- Must be at least 18 years of age

Residency Requirements of Candidates and Write-in Candidates

No individual is eligible to run for or hold office of a Councilmember, unless:

- 1) That individual was a registered voter and resident of the district for which they seek office for at least 30 calendar days immediately before the date the individual files nomination papers as required by the nominations and write-in procedures in the San Diego Elections Code; and
- 2) that individual maintains residency in the district for which they are nominated during nomination and at the time of assuming office. [SDMC §§ 27.0110, 27.0305](#)

Write-in Candidates

Write-in candidate means an individual who is not listed on the municipal primary election ballot. Write-in candidates are permitted in municipal primary elections, but not in general municipal elections or run-offs. Write-in candidates may obtain nominating papers from the City Clerk no earlier than 64 days prior to the election. Nominating papers shall be submitted to the City Clerk for filing no later than 36 calendar days prior to the date of the election. [SDMC §27.0103](#), [SDMC §27.0306](#), [§27.0312](#), [§27.0903](#)

Withdrawal of Candidacy

A candidate may have his or her name withdrawn from nomination within the five (5) day period following the deadline for filing nominating papers. The withdrawal request must be made in writing to the City Clerk. [SDMC §27.0217, §27.0903](#)

How to Proceed to the General Election

The two candidates who receive the most votes at the Primary Election will move forward to the General Election. [SDMC §27.0108 \(b\)](#)

If only one candidate is on the ballot in the Primary Election in any race and is the only candidate receiving votes in that election, that candidate will be elected to the office after Primary Election results are certified. [SMDC §27.0108 \(c\)](#)

Salary

Compensation is [75% of the salary paid to Superior Court judges](#)
[https://docs.sandiego.gov/citycharter/Article III.pdf](https://docs.sandiego.gov/citycharter/Article%20III.pdf) for the State of California salary [Charter §12.1](#)

Elective Officer	Salary effective 7/1/2024
Councilmember	\$183,545

City Council Meetings

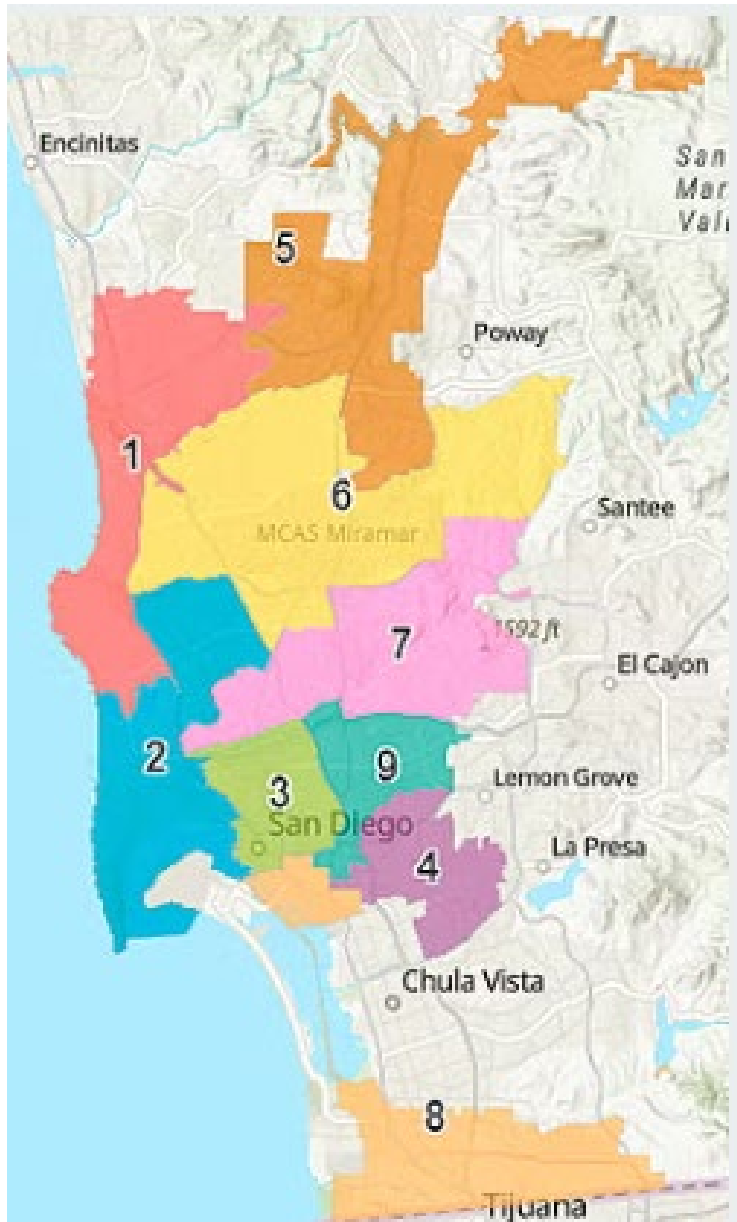
The Legislative Calendar is available at: <https://www.sandiego.gov/city-clerk/officialdocs/meetings-calendar>.

Attendance at Council meetings: It is the duty of the Councilmembers to attend all Council meetings. The Council shall vacate the seat of any Councilmember who is absent from eight (8) consecutive meetings or fifty percent (50%) of any scheduled meetings within a month unless the absence thereof is excused by resolution of the Council. [Charter §12\(e\)](#)

Council Districts

On November 8, 1988 City of San Diego voters approved Proposition E, establishing that Councilmembers shall be nominated and elected by individual districts.

Individuals running for City Council shall be an actual resident and elector of the district from which the Councilmember is nominated. [Charter §7](#)



Nomination Process

All candidates and write-in candidates are required to complete the nomination process. The City Clerk will not issue a candidate nomination papers until the City Clerk verifies the candidate's voter registration and residency. [SDMC §27.0110](#)

Time to Obtain and Submit Write-in Nomination Papers

Candidates seeking nomination shall appear personally before the City Clerk to obtain and submit papers for filing, unless service with the United States Armed Forces or a disability prevents such an appearance. [SDMC §27.0204](#)

March 30, 2026 – April 27, 2026

Nomination Papers Submittal

The Office of the City Clerk strongly recommends making an appointment with elections staff to file write-in nomination papers. Contact the Deputy Director of Elections to make an appointment. Those without a scheduled appointment will be assisted between scheduled appointments in the order in which they arrive.

Make Your Appointment Today

sandiego.gov/2026appointments



Cristina Hernandez

Deputy Director of Elections and City Connections



hernandezch@sandiego.gov



(619) 533 - 4024

Checklist of Nomination Papers to be Filed

The following documents are required to be filed at the same time with the City Clerk by **5:00 p.m., Monday, April 27, 2026.**

- Candidate Materials Acknowledgement (*submitted when obtaining nomination papers*)
- Nomination Petition (*candidates will be issued 20 petition pages upon obtaining nomination papers. Candidate must obtain signatures of at least 120 registered voters residing **within** the candidate's district*)
- Nomination Fee (*paid by cash or check to the "City Treasurer" in the amount of \$574*)
- FPPC Form 700, Statement of Economic Interests (*online filing is required at <https://form700.fppc.ca.gov/>*)
- Declaration of Candidacy (*signed when filing nomination papers*)
- Code of Fair Campaign Practices (*optional*)
- Request to Count Signature in Lieu of Nominating Fee (*optional*)
- Opt-Out/Request Confidential Status (*optional*)

Signatures in Lieu of Nomination Fee

Every three (3) valid signatures in excess of the number required for nomination shall be valued at one dollar (\$1.00) toward offsetting the filing fee. **This is done via a refund.** The filing fee must still be paid at time of submission. Any refund due will be paid after the petition signatures have been verified and can take 3-4 months to process.

To completely offset the nominating fee for any candidate, the valid signatures of an additional 1,722 voters are required. When the candidate submits their nomination papers for filing, the candidate must notify the Clerk that they wish those signatures on the nominating petition above the number required for nomination to be applied toward refunding the nominating fee.

Nomination Petition

Each petition page must conform to the content and form requirements which include, but are not limited to, the nominating statement, the voter signature portion of the page, and the circulator's affidavit of authenticity, an example of the nominating statement and circulator's affidavit of authenticity can be found in [CCAG §201](#).

The Office of the City Clerk prepares your nomination petition and provides you with 20 copies when you appear to obtain your nomination papers. You may make additional copies, but it is recommended that you make them double sided to ensure all required content is accounted for. No supplemental petitions are permitted. [SDMC §27.0214](#), [§27.0903](#)

Signature Requirements

Signatures on the voter signature portion of a nominating petition shall be executed by voters in their own handwriting, and each signer shall also affix their printed name, date of their signature, and place of residence, including street and house number, or other designation from which the location of the place of residence may be readily ascertained. [SDMC §27.0209](#)

Gathering Petition Signatures

For any signature on a nominating petition to be valid, the following requirements must be met:

- The signer must be 18 and a registered voter in the appropriate district for a candidate for City Council.
- No voter may sign more than one petition for the same office.
- A signature will only count on the first petition for which it is used to qualify a candidate for the ballot.
- Each petition page submitted must have the affidavit of the circulator completed

Circulator Qualifications

A person circulating petitions must be a United States Citizen and at least 18 years old. [SDMC §27.0101](#)

Checking Petitions

The City Clerk shall be allowed a period of thirty (30) calendar days after a nominating petition has been accepted as filed to verify the validity or invalidity of signatures. [SDMC §27.0212, §27.0903](#)

Notice of Sufficiency or Insufficiency of Petition

When it is determined whether a petition is sufficient or insufficient, the City Clerk shall notify the candidate. [SDMC §27.0213, §27.0214, §27.0903](#)

Code of Fair Campaign Practices (*Optional*)

The Provisions of the Code of Fair Campaign Practices as found in Chapter 5 of Division [20 of the California Elections Code](#) may be signed, and filed by the candidate and will be kept on file in the Office of the City Clerk.

Opt-Out/Request Confidential Status (*Optional*)

Assembly Bill (AB) 1392 (Ch. 300, Stats. of 2025) added Elections Code section 2166.9, which makes the residence address, telephone number, and email address listed on the affidavit of voter registration for an elected official or candidate confidential. A candidate who does not wish to have “confidential voter status” may opt out when filing their Declaration of Candidacy.

Declaration of Candidacy

Candidates shall complete and sign under California perjury laws a Declaration of Candidacy and Oath at the time of submitting nomination papers to the City Clerk. Each candidate must complete and sign the form in the presence of the City Clerk or their authorized deputy. [SDMC §27.0205](#)

The Declaration of Candidacy shall state the name of the candidate, their current residence at which they are registered to vote for, the elective office for which they seek nomination, a written acceptance of the nomination and acceptance of the office if they are elected, and the manner in which the candidate wishes their name to appear on the ballot and, if applicable, their designation of title.

Candidate Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700)

Candidates shall complete and electronically file a Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700) no later than the final filing date of the declaration of candidacy. [GOV §87201](#); [SDMC §27.0903, §27.3510](#)

Candidates for City offices must file their Form 700 electronically directly with the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) at <https://form700.fppc.ca.gov>. The City Clerk must create the account for you using your email address. Please ensure access to your account and **submit your filing on the same day of your appointment to submit nomination papers.**

The FPPC is the filing offer for candidates and elected officials. For more information and to access the Form 700 reference pamphlet and fact sheets, visit their website at <https://www.fppc.ca.gov/Form700.html>.

Note: Pursuant to GOV §87201, a candidate for an office specified in GOV §87200 is not required to file a statement of economic interests for that office if the candidate has filed, within 60 days prior to the filing of their declaration of candidacy, an “assuming office” or “annual” statement for the same jurisdiction.

Campaign Disclosures Important Information

- The Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) creates user friendly manuals prepared to assist candidates, committees, and treasurers. [We recommend reviewing Manual 2.](#)
- All statements are public documents.
- Except for deadlines that fall on a Saturday, Sunday, or an official state holiday, there is no provision in the law for extending a filing deadline. Late statements are subject to a \$10 per day late fine.
- The City of San Diego imposes contribution limits. The current campaign contribution limits can be found here: https://www.sandiego.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/notice_campaigncontributionlimits_2025_english.pdf. Please refer to the Ethics Commission manuals or contact the Ethics Commission for more information.
- Campaign statements may be amended at any time. There is no specific time frame on when amendments must be filed. The amendment should be filed as soon as you become aware of the error.
- Committees and candidates do not automatically terminate or cease to have filing obligations unless they file termination statements with the Office of the City Clerk.

Pay-to-Play Limits and Prohibitions

The below information is reproduced from the FPPC website at <https://www.fppc.ca.gov/learn/pay-to-play-limits-and-prohibitions.html>. For questions about 84308 (SB 1439), contact the FPPC or the Ethics Commission.

In order to promote transparency and fairness in the governmental decision-making process there are rules in place to prevent public officials from being unfairly influenced by contributors to their campaign. The type of activity these laws were enacted to limit is often referred to as “pay-to-play”. A law aimed at preventing pay-to-play politics, Section 84308 generally prohibits a party seeking a contract (other than competitively bid), license, permit, or other entitlement for use from making a contribution of more than \$500 to an official of the agency. Section 84308 also prohibits certain officials, including local elected officials, from taking part in an entitlement for use proceeding if the official has received a contribution exceeding \$500 from a party or participant in the proceeding within the preceding 12 months. An official is also prohibited from accepting, soliciting, or directing a contribution exceeding \$500 from a party or participant in the proceeding for 12 months after a final decision is rendered in such a proceeding.

2026 Campaign Filing Schedule

June 2, 2026 Primary Election - Filing Deadline Schedule

Filing Deadline	Type of Statement	Period Covered by Statement	Method of Delivery
February 2, 2026	Semi-Annual Form 460	7/1/25 – 12/31/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efile.sandiego.gov
April 23, 2026	1 st Pre-Election Form 460	1/1/26 – 4/18/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efile.sandiego.gov
May 21, 2026	2 nd Pre-Election Form 460	4/19/26 – 5/16/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efile.sandiego.gov
May 29, 2026	3 rd Pre-Election Form 497¹	5/17/26 – 5/27/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efile.sandiego.gov • Personal Delivery • Guaranteed Service
July 31, 2026	Semi-Annual Form 460 or Form 470*	5/17/26 – 6/30/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efile.sandiego.gov
Within 24 Hours	Late Contributions ² and Independent Expenditures ³ of \$1,000 or More Form 497	3/4/26 – 6/2/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efile.sandiego.gov • Personal Delivery • Guaranteed Service

Every candidate that has received or made expenditures of \$10,000 or more in connection with a city election shall electronically file. Those candidates under \$10,000 are encouraged to e-file, but may submit by personal delivery, or first-class mail.

After the election: Regardless of winning or losing, a candidate must continue to file semi-annual statements until the committee has been terminated by filing a terminating FPPC form 410 and 460.

¹ Report all previously undisclosed contributions of \$100 or more.

² The recipient of a late in-kind contribution must file a late contribution report within 48 hours from the time the in-kind contribution is received.

³ During the 90 days prior to the election, candidates must also file contribution reports within 24 hours of receiving contributions of \$1,000 or more (due to contribution limits this filing requirement only applies to Mayor/City Attorney candidates)

November 3, 2026 General Election - Filing Deadline Schedule

Filing Deadline	Type of Statement	Period Covered by Statement	Method of Delivery
July 31, 2026	Semi-Annual Form 460	5/17/26 – 6/30/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efile.sandiego.gov
Sept. 24, 2026	1 st Pre-Election Form 460	7/1/26 – 9/19/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efile.sandiego.gov
October 22, 2026	2 nd Pre-Election Form 460	9/20/26 – 10/17/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efile.sandiego.gov
October 30, 2026	3 rd Pre-Election Form 497⁴	10/18/26 – 10/28/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efile.sandiego.gov • Personal Delivery • Guaranteed Service
February 1, 2027	Semi-Annual Form 460	10/18/26 – 12/31/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efile.sandiego.gov
Within 24 Hours	Late Contributions ⁵ and Independent Expenditures ⁶ of \$1,000 or More Form 497	8/5/26 – 11/3/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efile.sandiego.gov • Personal Delivery • Guaranteed Service

Every candidate that has received or made expenditures of \$10,000 or more in connection with a city election shall electronically file. Those candidates under \$10,000 are encouraged to e-file, but may submit by personal delivery, or first-class mail.

After the election: Regardless of winning or losing, a candidate must continue to file semi-annual statements until the committee has been terminated by filing a terminating FPPC form 410 and 460.

⁴ Report all previously undisclosed contributions of \$100 or more.

⁵ The recipient of a late in-kind contribution must file a late contribution report within 48 hours from the time the in-kind contribution is received.

⁶ During the 90 days prior to the election, candidates must also file contribution reports within 24 hours of receiving contributions of \$1,000 or more (due to contribution limits this filing requirement only applies to Mayor/City Attorney candidates)

Ethics Commission Information

All candidates for City office are subject to the jurisdiction of the Ethics Commission ([SDMC §26.0413](#)). The Ethics Commission is charged with enforcing the City's Election Campaign Control Ordinance ([SDMC §27.2901](#) et seq.) and the City's Ethics Ordinance ([SDMC §27.3501](#) et seq.). These ordinances can be viewed at the [Ethics Commission](#) website. In addition, the Ethics Commission's website includes "[Frequently Asked Questions](#)," formal and informal advice letters issued by the Commission, and the latest versions of the Fact Sheets contained in this Manual. The Ethics Commission's [Candidate Manual](#) focuses on campaign finance issues, including recordkeeping, contributions, and communications. This year they have also prepared a [manual for candidates raising less than \\$2,000](#).

If a candidate has any additional questions concerning any matters within the Commission's jurisdiction, the candidate may contact the Commission directly:

City of San Diego Ethics Commission
451 A Street, Suite 1410
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 533-3476
E-mail: ethicscommission@sandiego.gov
Website: sandiego.gov/ethics

Complaints concerning violations of the Election Campaign Control Ordinance and the Ethics Ordinance may be filed with the Ethics Commission. The Commission's Investigative and Enforcement Procedures provide that the Commission may assess a fine of up to \$5,000 per violation ([SDMC §26.0440](#)). These fines may be assessed in addition to those fines imposed by the Office of the City Clerk for late filing of campaign statements and Statements of Economic Interests.

Political Sign Regulations

The Office of the City Clerk does not enforce the usage of political signs. The placement of political signs is subject to City regulations.

[SDMC General Regulations, Chapter 14, Article 2, Division 12](#) regulates the size, number, and location of commercial/industrial signs, including those for political purposes. Any display is covered by the sign provisions of the zone in which the property is located and may be located only on private property. Political signs may be displayed instead of those authorized by the zone, not in addition. **The display of political signs within the public-right-of-way on public property is prohibited.**

Please familiarize yourself with existing regulations regarding the placement of political signs and the prohibitions, see [SDMC Chapter 14: General Regulations](#) for further information.

Additional Information:

1. [§62.0606 Attaching Rope, Wire, etc. – Detrimental Substance – Prohibited](#)
2. [§121.0202 General Enforcement Authority Regarding Land Development Code](#)
3. [§121.0501 Purpose of Sign Violation and Enforcement Procedures](#)
4. [§121.0502 Presumption of Responsible Party](#)

For information on permitted signage in specific zone or location, call Development Services Department at (619) 446-5000 or visit their website at <https://www.sandiego.gov/development-services>.

To report violations, call the Building and Land Use Enforcement Division, Development Services Department at (619) 236-5500 or visit their website at <https://www.sandiego.gov/development-services/building-land-use-enforcement>.

Contact Information for Agencies

Office of the City Clerk

202 C Street, MS 2A
San Diego, CA 92101

(619) 533-4000

cityclerk@sandiego.gov

www.sandiego.gov/city-clerk



⊕ Ethics Commission

450 A Street, Suite 1410
San Diego, CA 92101

(619) 533-3476

ethicscommission@sandiego.gov

www.sandiego.gov/ethics

⊕ County of San Diego Registrar of Voters

5600 Overland Avenue
San Diego, CA 92123

Mailing address:

P. O. Box 85656

San Diego, CA 92186-5656

(858) 565-5800

rovmail@sdcounty.ca.gov

www.sdvote.com

⊕ Fair Political Practices Commission

1102 Q Street, Suite 3050
Sacramento, CA 95811

(866) 275-3772 (advice line)

advice@fppc.ca.gov

(916) 322-5660 (general)

(916) 322-3711 – fax

www.fppc.ca.gov/

FPPC Electronic Filing System Help:

Form700@fppc.ca.gov

⊕ California Secretary of State

1500 11th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

(916) 653-6814 (Main line)

www.sos.ca.gov

Political Reform Division:

(916) 653-6224

Elections Division:

(916) 657-2166