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City of Albuquerque

So You Want to Run For Office?

the 2025 candidate and committee guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Part 1: Introduction.....	3
Part 2: How to Become a Declared Candidate.....	4
Part 3: Contributions in Campaign Finance	6
Part 4: In-Kind Contributions	7
Part 5: Expenditures.....	8
Part 6: Financial Disclosures	8
Part 7: Petitions.....	9
Part 8: Public Financing Program Overview.....	10
Part 9: Measure Finance Committees (MFC) and Independent Expenditures Overview.....	13
Part 10: Current Office Holders	13
Part 11: Complaints.....	14
Government Info and Contact	14

Part 1: Introduction

This Guide is Designed to Help Candidates and Measure Finance Committees

This guide is for candidates, committee chairs, treasurers, campaign managers, compliance staff, and others involved in Albuquerque municipal elections. This guide covers running for the offices of Mayor and City Council. This guide covers the Albuquerque Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code and seeks to provide answers to common questions that arise during an election.

This guide is not a substitute for legal advice and cannot cover every aspect of Albuquerque’s Election Code, Open and Ethical Election Code or the Albuquerque City Charter. Candidates and Measure Finance Committees should review the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code, and the Rules of the Board of Ethics and Campaign Practices in full.

The City Clerk is available by appointment to meet with any potential candidate and their representatives, before or after, the individual becomes a candidate. This meeting, which is encouraged but not required, is for the candidate and their committee to ask questions about the process for running for office.

What is an election cycle?

City Contribution limits and required communication disclosures are based on the election cycle for each office. Generally, the election cycle runs from the day after the last election (or run-off election), for each office, until the next election day for the same office. If a candidate raises or spends over \$1,000, they must file campaign disclosure reports biannually until the election year, when reporting becomes more frequent.

When can I begin “campaigning?”

A candidate may begin campaigning for office at any time during the election cycle. Before a candidate begins to campaign, they must understand the filing requirements and how fundraising may impact their opportunity to run as a publicly financed.

Can I accept endorsements and from whom?

The Office of the City Clerk does not regulate endorsements. Whether a candidate chooses to accept an endorsement from any person is a campaign decision. Candidates may begin accepting endorsements at any point in the election cycle.

However, the City regulates the use of its public property and prohibits candidates from using City employees on City time for election purposes.

The graphic features a dark blue background with white and yellow text. At the top, 'ELECTION CYCLE' is written in large white letters. Below it, a light blue box contains 'ELECTION CYCLE DATES (2025 ELECTION)'. Two rows of information are presented in yellow boxes on the left and white boxes on the right: 'START DATE' with 'DECEMBER 8, 2021' and 'END DATE' with 'NOVEMBER 4, 2025'.

ELECTION CYCLE DATES (2025 ELECTION)	
START DATE	DECEMBER 8, 2021
END DATE	NOVEMBER 4, 2025

What is the difference between publicly financed and privately financed candidates?

Privately financed candidates may raise funds any time after an election cycle ends. However, any person who has raised or spent over \$1,000 to run for a covered office must file in the Campaign Finance Reporting System and declare candidacy. **Note:** Funds raised for a previous election cannot be carried over and must be disposed of.

Publicly financed candidates only accepts seed money Contributions during the exploratory and qualifying periods. Once certified as a publicly financed candidate, they cannot accept Contributions or loans from any source except the distribution from the Open and Ethical Elections Fund.

What is the public financing program?

Albuquerque residents voted to approve the Open and Ethical Elections Code in October 2005. That Charter Amendment created the Open and Ethical Elections Fund. The public financing program aims to empower small donors and limit large campaign donors in municipal elections.

Candidates who apply for public financing must follow a lower limit on Contributions and spending. See the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code for more information. To become Publicly financed, candidates must submit a declaration of intent to seek public financing, submit the required number of Qualifying Contributions and petition signatures, and be qualified as a candidate for the ballot by the County Clerk.

Candidate Responsibility for Campaign Staff and Volunteers

- The **candidate** is responsible for the campaign, the campaign staff, and volunteers.
- The candidate must ensure that campaign staff and volunteers are **trained** and **well-informed** about all laws and campaign rules.
- If a candidate or their representative suspects an error by a staff member or volunteer, they must:
 - **Immediately inform** the Office of the City Clerk.
 - The Office of the City Clerk may assist the campaign in fixing any reported errors.

Part 2: How to Become a Declared Candidate

Qualifications and Residency Requirements

Before declaring candidacy, potential candidates for office in the City of Albuquerque must first ensure they meet the eligibility qualifications and residency requirements to run for municipal office.

Requirements to run can be found online.¹ Generally, an individual must be a registered voter in the district they are seeking to represent and cannot have any outstanding fines owed to the Board of Ethics. The Office of the City Clerk will check these requirements before accepting a candidate's registration.

¹ [NMSA 1978 §1-22-10](#); [City Charter, art. II §4](#)

Becoming a Candidate

To become a declared candidate with the Office of the City Clerk the following must be done/completed:

- File a declaration to seek elected office;
- File a bank account confirmation;
- File a designation of representatives form; and
- Register with the Campaign Finance Reporting System.

Contributions and in-kind Contributions received, and Expenditures made prior to becoming a candidate, must be reported on the first campaign disclosure report filed by the candidate.

When registering with the Campaign Finance Reporting System, potential candidates must declare their financing status by selecting, 'privately financed' or 'publicly financed.'

Required Forms

All documents can be found online on the Clerk's website, cabq.gov/vote

Treasurer Appointment

Candidates are required to have a treasurer. The treasurer must be **someone other than the candidate**. The treasurer is the only campaign staff member candidates are required to have when running for office.

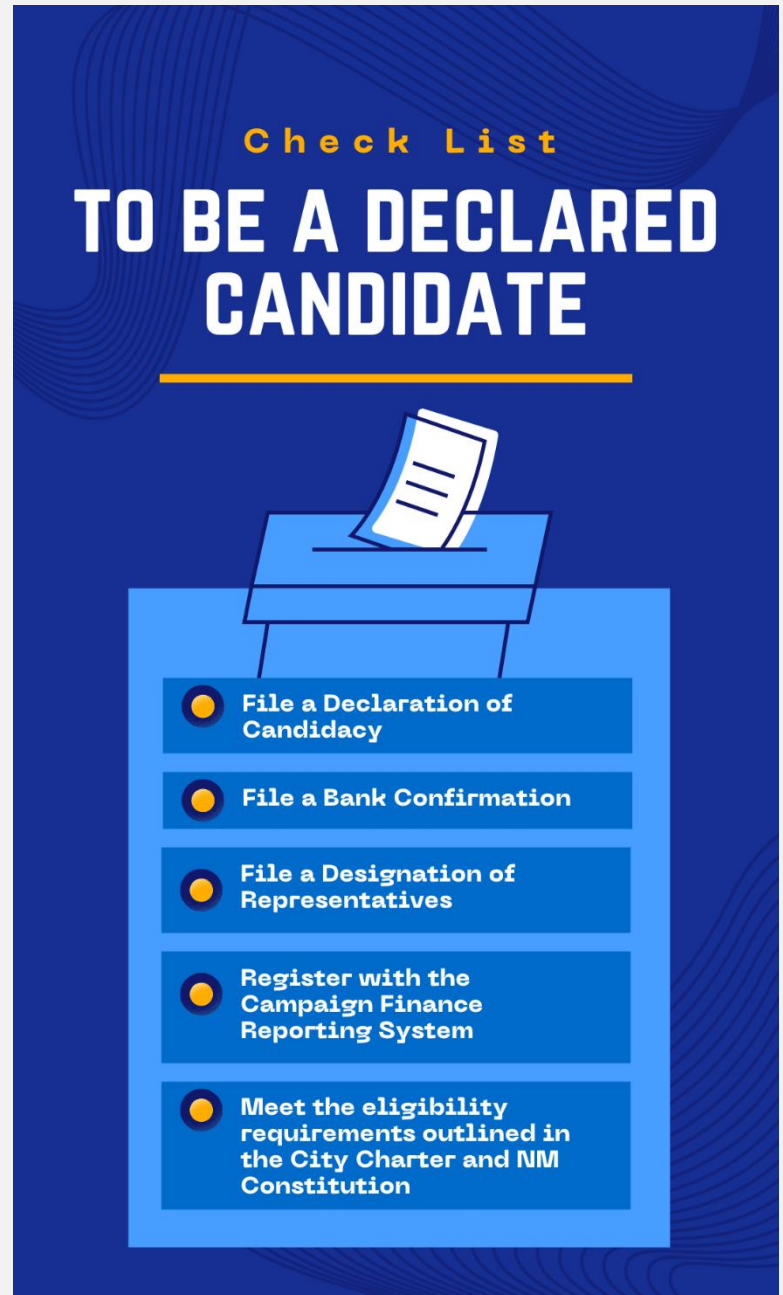
To change its treasurer, a candidate or committee must file a new contact sheet and update the Campaign Finance Reporting System.

Opening a Campaign Bank Account

- Candidates and committees must have **only** one checking account for campaign use.
- The bank confirmation form must list the account's financial institution.
- Publicly financed applicants must provide their account and routing numbers for fund distribution upon qualification.

Things to Keep in Mind

- Have more than one person with signing authority at the bank account.



- Some banks will require a savings account to be opened at the same time as a checking account. If you are required to open a savings account, notify the Campaign and Election Auditor and **do not make any deposits** into the savings account.
- Do not open a credit card. All purchases must be made using the checking account.
- It is best to open an account in your campaign or committee's name, not a personal account in the candidate's name.

Do I need an EIN to open a bank account?

An EIN Number is not required by the Office of the City Clerk but can make opening a checking account in the name of a committee easier to accomplish. The Office of the City Clerk cannot provide guidance on whether an EIN may be required by state or federal law.

What if I want to terminate my campaign?

A candidate may terminate their campaign at any point. If the candidate has already qualified for the ballot they must notify the City Clerk and the County Clerk. Disclosure reports must be submitted until the candidate or committee files the "Close Campaign" form that states²:

1. There are no outstanding campaign debts;
2. All money has been spent and reported as outlined in Article XIII Section 4; and
3. The bank account has a zero balance.



Disclosure Reports will be required to be submitted until the candidate or committee has submitted the "Close Campaign" form.

Part 3: Contributions in Campaign Finance

Campaign Fundraising and Contribution Limits

Yes, there are limits to Contributions for both private and publicly financed candidates.

There is no aggregate limit for a privately financed candidate but there are limits on the amount of funds a privately financed candidate can collect from any one contributor. The maximum amount any individual may contribute to a **privately financed candidate** is limited to **\$2,000** for City Council candidates and **\$6,000** for Mayoral candidates. The contribution limit from one person can be met in one contribution, or combining all contributions from that one person.

Publicly financed candidates have both an individual Contribution and an aggregate limit. See chart on the next page.

² [Albuquerque City Charter art. III §4\(d\)\(2\)\(F\)](#)

Office	Individual Seed Money Limit	Aggregate Seed Money
Mayor	\$250	\$151,189.20
Council District 1	\$250	\$11,262.25
Council District 3	\$250	\$8,373.00
Council District 5	\$250	\$11,143.75
Council District 7	\$250	\$11,641.00
Council District 9	\$250	\$10,391.50

Contribution Rules and Restrictions

- Privately financed candidates have no limit on total Contributions. However, they must follow the limits of individual Contributions.
- Candidates can accept Contributions from any person (as defined in the Election Code). But, there are limits, such as against collecting Contributions from:
 - Foreign influenced corporations
 - Foreign nationals
 - Companies or organizations with active contracts with the City
 - State PACs
- If a candidate accidentally accepts an over-limit or ineligible Contribution, they must:
 - **Notify** the City Clerk and the Campaign and Election Auditor.
 - **Refund** the Contribution as soon as possible.

Can I raise money electronically?

Private and publicly financed candidates may raise Contributions through electronic means. Please see the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code.

Can I offer gifts/prizes to collect contributions?

Candidates and committees may offer gifts or prizes at any fundraising events if all attendees at an event have equal access to the gift or prize, regardless of whether they Contributed to the candidate or not.

Part 4: In-Kind Contributions

For details on what qualifies as an in-kind Contribution and applicable limits, please see the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code.

Is a fundraiser an in-kind contribution?

Fundraising expenses must be reported as either a campaign Expenditure or a contributor's in-kind Contribution, depending on how costs were covered. Report any funds raised in a fundraiser as Contributions through the Campaign Finance Reporting System.

What information do I need to collect for an in-kind contribution?

For in-kind Contributions requirements, please see the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code.

Is a paid advertisement featuring a candidate considered a contribution?

If someone invites the candidate to a paid ad mainly featuring them, it is a campaign Contribution. The candidate must report the value of the ad. The ad counts towards the Contribution limit. To clarify the definition of "Contribution," candidates can request an advisory opinion from the Board of Ethics.

Part 5: Expenditures

For details on Expenditure requirements, limitations, and reporting, please see the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code.

When can I begin to make expenditures?

- A candidate may start making Expenditures at any time, but this decision may impact whether you can run publicly financed. Publicly financed candidates can generally only make expenditures during a specific timeframe.
- Once a candidate or committee raises or spends over **\$1,000**, they must register with the Office of the City Clerk.

Publicly financed candidates have strict financial limits. Publicly financed candidates **cannot exceed the total campaign expenses and debts** by the amount of money distributed to the publicly financed candidate from the fund. Staying within this limit is crucial to maintaining public funding eligibility.

How should I make campaign expenditures?

- Use checks or bank/debit cards to pay from the campaign or committee bank account.
- Avoid reimbursing the candidate or campaign manager for Expenditures, to clarify the identity of the payee. If reimbursing a candidate for campaign Expenditures, include the original payee and items purchased in the reimbursement description.
- Campaigns and committees cannot use credit cards for Expenditures or take out a credit card in their name.

What can and can't I spend campaign funds on?

For examples of Expenditures, please see the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code.

Part 6: Financial Disclosures

What are financial disclosures and how are they audited?

For financial disclosure deadlines, reporting requirements, and audit procedures, please see the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code.

How do I file financial disclosure reports?

- There is a week between the end of a reporting period and the report's due date (until the month before the election). The City Clerk encourages candidates and their treasurers to:
 - **Avoid waiting** until the last minute to file their reports.
 - Seek assistance from the Office of the City Clerk or the Campaign Elections Auditor for filing questions or issues with the Campaign Finance Reporting System.

All fines and fees for late or incomplete filings are set by the Rules of the Board of Ethics and Campaign Practices.

How do I register?

Candidates and committees register on campaignfinance.cabq.gov. The Office of the City Clerk provides training videos on how to use the Campaign Finance Reporting System, visit cabq.gov/vote/training-videos.

What if I don't have anything to report in a reporting period?

Each registered candidate and committee must file a financial disclosure report, even if there are no Contributions or Expenditures to report. You can log into the system and file a "statement of no activity" to fulfill this obligation.

What disclaimers are required for campaign materials?

For disclaimer requirements for campaign materials, please see the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code. Examples can be found on cabq.gov/vote.

How long do I have to keep our records?

The Campaign and Election Auditor can request more information on any financial disclosure for up to a year after an election.

I have additional questions on campaign finance issues. Who do I contact?

The City Clerk's Campaign Elections Auditor and Program Administrator are available to assist candidates and committees from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. The Campaign Elections Auditor and the Program Administrator are unavailable outside business hours and on City holidays. You can reach the staff at elections@cabq.gov. **No legal advice will be provided.**

A graphic with a blue background and white text. At the top, it says "CAMPAIGN AND ELECTIONS AUDITOR" in large, bold, white letters. Below this, there is a table with three rows. Each row has a yellow header cell and a white data cell. The first row is for "NAME" with the value "THAD PORCH". The second row is for "EMAIL" with the value "THAD.PORCH@PORCHCPA.COM". The third row is for "PHONE" with the value "505-934-2452".

CAMPAIGN AND ELECTIONS AUDITOR	
NAME	THAD PORCH
EMAIL	THAD.PORCH@PORCHCPA.COM
PHONE	505-934-2452

Part 7: Petitions

For information on petition signature requirements, submission procedures, and verification, please see the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code.

Gaining and Accessing the Official Petition Form

The petition form is a document candidates use to collect Petition signatures to qualify for the ballot. This form must be approved by the **County Clerk** and the **Secretary of State** to comply with state law.

Here's how the process works:

1. **The Office of the City Clerk** will create the official petition form with the candidate's information and give it to the candidate **on the day before** the petition period begins.
2. **Candidates must use** this official form or the City Clerk's online system to collect signatures. **They cannot create or download** their own forms.

3. **Before getting the form**, candidates must register with the Office of the City Clerk and turn in all required paperwork.

When can I begin collecting petition signatures?³

Candidates can collect petition signatures only during a specific timeframe⁴. Signatures collected outside this timeframe will not count.

The 2025 Election petition period is as follows:

- **Mayoral candidates:** April 19, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. through June 21, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.
- **City Council candidates:** June 2, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. through July 7, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.

Who can sign my petition?

- Only **registered voters** in the district for City Council candidates or registered voters within the City of Albuquerque for Mayoral candidates can sign petitions.
- A voter may only sign **one petition** for a candidate running for the same office.
 - If a voter signs multiple petitions, those signatures may be contested in **District Court**.
 - As a candidate, it is important to ensure your volunteers and representatives are well trained **before collecting** signatures on your behalf.

How do I rehabilitate a rejected petition signature?

For petition signature rehabilitation procedures, please see the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code.

Part 8: Public Financing Program Overview

All candidates are strongly encouraged to comply with and read the full set of rules applicable to elections which can be found online and at the **Office of the City Clerk**.

Available Funds for Publicly Financed Candidates

Qualifying candidates will receive funds based on:

The number of voters in their district. Mayoral candidates receive **\$2.00** per registered voter and City Council candidates receive **\$1.25** per registered vote, minus any seed money collected during the exploratory and qualifying period.

Applicant Candidate vs. Publicly Financed Candidate

- **Applicant candidate:** A candidate seeking public financing and in the process of qualifying.
- **Publicly financed candidate:** A candidate certified by the City Clerk and approved for public financing.

The Exploratory Period

The exploratory period is when candidates can:

- Raise seed money;

³ If the beginning of the Qualifying Period is on a weekend, the Office of the City will be available

⁴ [Albuquerque City Charter O-2-4-10](#)

- Engage and train volunteers; and
- Set up infrastructure for gathering petitions and Qualifying Contributions.

The start and end of the exploratory period varies by office⁵. The Office of the City Clerk encourages candidates to ask questions during this time. **The 2025 Election exploratory period is as follows:**

- **Mayoral candidates:** March 3, 2025, through April 18, 2025
- **City Council candidates:** April 27, 2025, through June 1, 2025

What to Know About Runoffs

- Runoffs are separate elections.
- For Publicly financed candidates, a second fund distribution occurs, and in-kind limits reset.
- Candidates may switch to private financing, for the runoff, if they choose but must notify the Office of the City Clerk within 3 days of the general election.
- Any unspent public funds from the general election must be returned to the City Clerk.

Understanding Seed Money

Seed money is a Contribution to a candidate during the exploratory or qualifying period. It supports basic campaign functions before certification. Here are some **key points** about seed money:

- Seed money can only come from individuals who reside in Albuquerque.
- A seed money Contribution from an individual cannot exceed **\$250**, except, the candidate may contribute up to **\$2,500** to their own campaign.
- The total amount of seed money collected will be deducted from the candidate's distribution once they are certified.
- If the candidate withdraws from public financing before certification and runs as a privately financed candidate, any seed money counts as a Contribution to the private campaign.
- If the candidate withdraws entirely, they must dispose of any unspent seed money Contributions⁶.

Qualifying Contributions: Requirements and Collection Process

A Qualifying Contribution is a **\$5 donation** made in a candidate's name to the Open and Ethical Election Fund. These Contributions are non-refundable. To qualify for public financing, a candidate must collect and properly document a specific number of Qualifying Contributions from registered voters in their district.

Collection periods:

- **Mayoral candidates:** April 19, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. through June 21, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.
- **City Council candidates:** June 2, 2025, at 8:00 a.m. through July 7, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.

Campaigns can collect Qualifying Contributions using:

- Receipt books issued by the City Clerk; or
- The website cleancampaign.cabq.gov.

⁵ [Albuquerque City Charter art. XVI §3\(l\)](#)

⁶ [Albuquerque City Charter art. XIII §4\(i\)](#)

Campaigns can choose how to collect Qualifying Contributions, such as going door to door or hosting events.

Are qualifying contributions verified?

- The **Office of the City Clerk verifies** Qualifying Contributions each week during the qualifying period.
- Contributions **collected outside the allowed timeframe** will be rejected.
- Violations may be referred to the Board of Ethics.

Are qualifying contributions audited door to door?

Yes. The Office of Internal Audit (OIA) examines **Qualifying Contributions** during the qualifying period. Once the Office of the City Clerk verifies the Qualifying Contributions, OIA begins their audit. The audit process includes the following steps:

1. **Sample Selection:** Each week during the qualifying period, OIA selects a designated percentage of paper Qualifying Contributions from that week's submissions for each applicant candidate. This percentage does not exceed 5% of the minimum Qualifying Contributions required.
2. **Verification Process:** Teams of two auditors will visit the residence listed on the Qualifying Contribution receipt to verify the following:
 - The contributor's name as listed on the receipt.
 - The contributor's residence at the provided address.
 - The authenticity of the signature on the Qualifying Contribution.
 - That the contributor personally provided the \$5 Qualifying Contribution.
3. **Attempts to Verify:**
 - Auditors will make **three attempts** to verify each selected Qualifying Contribution.
 - If verification fails (for example, auditors cannot access gated communities), they will select replacement samples using the same criteria.
 - Custom doorknob hangers with callback instructions will be left at the residence. These will allow contributors to confirm their Qualifying Contribution by phone.

If OIA is unable to verify the Qualifying Contribution the City Clerk will reject the contribution and notify the candidate of its decision.

How do I rehabilitate a qualifying contribution?

For Qualifying Contributions rehabilitation procedures, please see the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code.

When does a participating candidate receive the distribution?

Candidates must first provide an account confirmation on bank letterhead. Three business days after certification, the Treasury Department initiates the distribution, minus seed money and swipe fees from the online collection website.

Part 9: Measure Finance Committees (MFC) and Independent Expenditures Overview

For information on Measure Finance Committees (MFC) registration thresholds, reporting guidelines, disclaimer requirements, and please see the 2025 Rules for the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Election Code.

Important Details to Know:

- **Automatic Classification:** Once a person or group reaches the \$250 threshold, they are considered an MFC—even if they haven't officially registered. The Office of the City Clerk may contact them to complete registration.
- An MFC must appoint a **chairperson** and a **treasurer**. These roles must be held by two different people. Additional roles can be added if the MFC chooses.
- MFCs have no Contribution or spending limits but must report all financial activity in detail, just like candidates.
- **End of Election Cycle Requirements:** At the end of an election cycle, MFCs must inform the Office of the City Clerk about any remaining funds and confirm that the bank has been zeroed out. Otherwise MFCs will be subject to biannual reporting.

Electioneering Communication Exemptions for Organizations

- Registered Measure Finance Committees **cannot** claim an exemption for election-related communications.
- If an organization wants to share information **without** supporting or opposing a candidate or ballot measure, they should use a **separate bank account not linked** to their registered MFC.
- Organizations creating an MFC must open a **dedicated bank account** that is **separate** from their general funds.

Part 10: Current Public Office Holders

Regulations regarding the use of public employee staff are determined by the candidate's current public office or public organization. This is not based on the Albuquerque City Charter.

Current office holders in Albuquerque should be familiar with the following:

- [AI 4-5](#)
- [Article XII §7](#)
- [Merit System Ordinance, §3-1-21 Political Activity](#)
- [Personnel Rules and Regulations, 311.3 Political Activities](#)
- [Administrative Instruction, AI NO 7-8 City Employees Holding Elective Office](#)
- [Administrative Instruction, AI NO 7-19 Political Activities of City Employees](#)

Current office holders in Bernalillo County should be familiar with the [County Code of Conduct](#).

Current State office holders in New Mexico should be familiar with [NMSA Chapter 10, Article 16](#): Governmental Conduct.

Can a candidate take photos with an organization/entity?

- Rules are set by the organization or entity.
- Ensure compliance with any organization or entity before using logos or uniforms⁷. This applies to staff or volunteers in print or TV ads. (e.g. Police and Fire)

Can I use my official public employee headshot or other photos taken while doing official work on my campaign?

- **Candidates should not use public employee official headshots.** If the public entity that paid for the photo donates it to your campaign, you can report it as an in-kind Contribution. This is not regulated by the Office of the City Clerk.
 - **In-kind Contributions should include:**
 - Estimated value of the photo; and
 - Cost of photography services.

Part 11: Complaints

For information on filing complaints, complaint procedures, and potential penalties, please see the Rules of the Board of Ethics and Campaign Practices.

Government Info and Contact

About the Office of the Albuquerque City Clerk

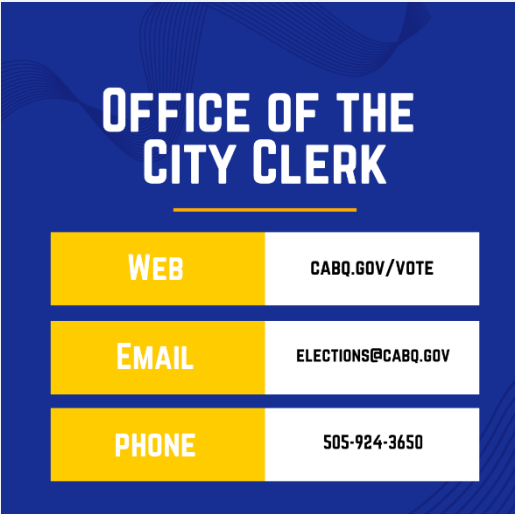
The Office of the City Clerk oversees the administration of municipal elections, ensuring compliance with the Election Code and the Open and Ethical Elections Code. The office manages candidate filings, petition verification, and campaign finance reporting while also administering the City’s public financing program. In addition, the Clerk enforces campaign finance regulations, including contribution limits, expenditure disclosures, and compliance for privately and publicly financed candidates. The office also supports the Board of Ethics and Campaign Practices,

About the Board of Ethics and Campaign Practices

The Albuquerque City Charter, Article XII, the Code of Ethics, created the Board of Ethics and Campaign Practices. The Board of Ethics is a board of limited jurisdiction for election-related matters and violations of the Code of Ethics in municipal elections in the City of Albuquerque. The Board may investigate possible violations of the Election Code, the Open and Ethical Elections Code, and the Code of Ethics.

About the Bernalillo County Clerk’s Office

The Bernalillo County Clerk's office administers elections and certifies a candidates' ballot eligibility for municipal elections in the City of Albuquerque.



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

WEB	CABQ.GOV/VOTE
EMAIL	ELECTIONS@CABQ.GOV
PHONE	505-924-3650



BERNALILLO COUNTY CLERK

WEB	BERNCOCLERK.GOV
EMAIL	CLERK@BERNCO.GOV
PHONE	505-243-8683

⁷ [Albuquerque Administrative Instructions 7-19 §2\(7\)\(c\)](#)