

# School Board 101

## *Election Overview & Important Dates*

### Election Overview

- Forms for nominating petitions, statements of financial interest, campaign finance reports, and other information about these requirements can be obtained online from the PA Department of State's Bureau of Elections, as well as from the county board of elections and other municipal offices;
- School board elections occur in municipal election years (odd-numbered years);
- Primary election in municipal election years is held on the third Tuesday in May;
- Municipal election is held on the first Tuesday in November;
- Nominating procedures start in February of election years;
- Term of office is four years, beginning and ending on the first Monday in December after the November municipal election;
- If a seat with more than two years of the regular term remaining becomes vacant more than sixty (60) days prior to the nearest municipal election and is filled by appointment, an election is needed to fill the remaining two years of the term;
- No candidate is permitted to run for an office they already hold, the term of which is not expiring in the year of the election. If, in the first two years of a four-year seat, one cannot run for another four-year seat up for election that year;
- Each election year, the PA Department of State's Bureau of Elections provides county election offices with an election calendar, which is also published online.

### Important Dates

- The 2023 municipal primary election window to collect petition signatures is as follows:

**February 14 to March 7, 2023**

- Candidate packages will be available on January 30, 2023. Packages will contain petitions needed to gather signatures during the designated petition window.
- See the [Lebanon County Voter Registration page](#) for more information
- May 16, 2023 - Municipal primary election
- November 7, 2023 - Municipal election



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## Eligibility and Term

### Eligibility:

- You must be a U.S. citizen at least eighteen (18) years of age as of the date of the November municipal election;
- Good moral character;
- U.S. citizen domiciled in Pennsylvania;
- A resident of the school district for at least one (1) year prior to the date of the November municipal election (or before the appointment, if appointed);
- Must have no record of conviction for any felony offense or any misdemeanor offense involving dishonesty or other "moral turpitude." A federal law known as the Hatch Act prohibits all federal employees and employees of state or local governments whose positions are funded entirely from federal sources from being candidates in partisan political elections for public office, including school boards;
- The Hatch Act does not prohibit holding elective office if appointed to fill a vacancy;
- Active-duty military, including reservists serving on extended active duty (orders for more than 270 days), are prohibited by federal laws and Department of Defense regulations from running or holding partisan political office;
- School directors cannot be employed by their school district during the term for which they are elected; and
- The office of school director is designated as incompatible with most other local governmental elective offices; incompatible offices cannot be held simultaneously.

### Term:

- In Pennsylvania, school board directors or school directors are unpaid elected public officials;
- For each school district, nine school directors are elected, each fulfilling a four-year term;
- Board appointments occur when a vacancy arises caused by unforeseen circumstances. These seats are filled by an appointment process conducted by the remaining school board directors, which would result in a briefer term in the role.



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## Role of the School Board

### School Board Responsibilities

- A school board's authority is exercised through the collective decisions of the entire board acting as a governing body. The law does not convey any power or authority upon individual school board directors acting on their own merely by virtue of their office.
- School boards are subject to the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, which requires school boards to deliberate and make decisions at meetings open to the public and advertised in advance. The Sunshine Act also mandates that in those meetings, school boards must allow citizens a reasonable opportunity to speak to the board about the matters the board is deciding.
- Although the law does not give individual powers to school directors beyond their voices and votes at school board meetings, they have several important individual responsibilities to effectively contribute to the board's collective functions. Board members must be prepared to devote the time necessary to carry these out and commit to ongoing learning about issues and requirements involved. These responsibilities are reflected in the [Principles for Governance and Leadership](#) (below).

**LEAD RESPONSIBLY**

- Prepare for, attend and actively participate in board meetings
- Work together with civility and cooperation, respecting that individuals hold differing opinions and ideas
- Participate in professional development, training and board retreats
- Collaborate with the superintendent, acknowledging their role as the 10th member of the board and commissioned officer of the commonwealth

**ACT ETHICALLY**

- Never use the position for improper benefit to self or others
- Avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest
- Recognize school directors do not possess any authority outside of the collective board
- Accept that when a board has made a decision, it is time to move forward collectively and constructively

**PLAN THOUGHTFULLY**

- Implement a collaborative strategic planning process
- Set annual goals that are aligned with comprehensive plans, recognizing the need to adapt as situations change
- Develop a comprehensive financial plan and master facilities plan that anticipates short- and long-term needs
- Allocate resources to effectively impact student success

**EVALUATE CONTINUOUSLY**

- Make data-informed decisions
- Evaluate the superintendent annually
- Conduct a board self-assessment on a recurring basis
- Focus on student growth and achievement
- Review effectiveness of all comprehensive and strategic plans

**COMMUNICATE CLEARLY**

- Promote open, honest and respectful dialogue among the board, staff and community
- Acknowledge and listen to varied input from all stakeholders
- Promote transparency while protecting necessary confidential matters
- Set expectations and guidelines for individual board member communication

**ADVOCATE EARNESTLY**

- Promote public education as a keystone of our commonwealth
- Engage the community by seeking input, building support networks and generating action
- Champion public education by engaging local, state and federal officials

**GOVERN EFFECTIVELY**

- Establish and adhere to rules and procedures for board operations
- Develop, adopt, revise and review policy routinely
- Align board decisions to policy, ensuring compliance with the PA School Code and other local, state and federal laws
- Remain focused on the role of governance, effectively delegating management tasks to the administration



### How to become a Candidate

- To become a school board candidate, you must file nominating petitions signed by at least ten (10) registered political party members for which nomination is sought. A petition signature is valid only if the signer is eligible to vote for that candidate in the primary based on residence and party for which they registered.
- Only registered members of the political party for which nomination of that party is sought may circulate nominating petitions. Signers may sign the petitions of more than one candidate for the office of school director for up to the total number of seats available. Any and all documents must be notarized.
- The Election Code allows candidates to cross-file for nomination to seek the nomination of more than one major political party. To cross-file, you must fulfill the petition requirements noted above.
- Under Pennsylvania's Public Official and Employee Ethics Act, each candidate for the office of school director must file a statement of financial interest for the preceding calendar year with the school board secretary of the school district. A copy of the statement must also be attached to the nomination petition filed with the county board of elections.
- Pennsylvania's Campaign Expense Reporting Law also requires candidates to file campaign finance reports listing campaign expenditures and contributions received.
- Before each election year, the Commonwealth's Department of State Bureau of Elections distributes a complete election calendar with specific dates and other legal requirements to all county offices. Forms for nominating petitions, statements of financial interest, campaign finance reports, and additional information about these requirements can be obtained from the county board of elections and other municipal offices.

