

How to be a political candidate in Wise County

By D. A. Sharpe, 2018

Many citizens don't know exactly **how to become a political candidate** in Wise County. This article is intended to help citizens decide if they should make that commitment for public service. The article is written from a bi-partisan perspective, so it's of use for candidates either in the Republican Party or the Democratic Party.

The primary elections in Texas for the Democratic and the Republican parties of Texas are the second Tuesday in the even numbered years. On the horizon, the next dates are March 9, 2020, March 14, 2022 & March 11, 2024. Yet preparing to run often begins more than a year earlier. You may have already seen several public announcements from incumbents and intended challengers.

Any qualified citizen (registered voter residing in Wise County) who aspires to an elected office probably should begin planning at least a year in advance of the Primary date in which you want to run. This article can serve as a road map for becoming a candidate.

Of course, the Primary Elections merely are elections in which each political party determines who will represent each party as its single candidate in the General Elections, which are held in those same years on the first Tuesday that follows the first Monday of November.

First, you should be interested in the compensation paid to the office holder for which you want to run. Realize that elective service is partially a contribution, income-wise, as most office holders are qualified to earn more income in the private sector. Determine if you have enough financial resources or other income to supplement

the Wise County compensation to support your living and that of whatever family you may have.

List of Elected Officials Salaries for FY2018

Elective Office	Official	Annual Salary	Annual Allowance	Longevity	State Supplement	Annual Telephone	Increase Over FY17
County Judge*	J.D. Clark	\$77,250.00	\$14,000.00			\$1,200.00	
County Clerk	Sherry Lemon	\$70,600.00	\$11,500.00	\$2,800.00		\$1,200.00	\$100.00
County Court at Law Judge	Melton D. Cude	\$84,500.00		\$3,000.00	\$84,000.00	\$1,200.00	\$100.00
County Court at Law Judge #2*	Stephen Wren	\$84,500.00			\$84,000.00	\$1,200.00	
District Court Judge		\$18,000.00					
District Clerk	Brenda Rowe	\$69,100.00	\$12,000.00	\$2,500.00		\$1,200.00	\$100.00
Justice of the Peace Prec #1	Jan Morrow	\$61,800.00	\$14,000.00	\$3,100.00		\$1,200.00	\$100.00
Justice of the Peace Prec #2	Callie Manning	\$61,800.00	\$14,000.00			\$1,200.00	
Justice of the Peace Prec #3	Mandy Hays	\$61,800.00	\$14,000.00	\$600.00		\$1,200.00	\$100.00
Justice of the Peace Prec #4	Clay Poynor	\$61,800.00	\$14,000.00	\$1,000.00		\$1,200.00	\$100.00
District Attorney	Greg Lowery	\$18,600.00		\$1,600.00	\$3,640.00		\$100.00
County Attorney*	James Stainton	\$84,500.00	\$13,000.00	\$800.00	\$35,000.00	\$1,200.00	\$100.00
County Treasurer	Katherine Hudson	\$74,700.00	\$14,000.00	\$3,200.00		\$1,200.00	\$100.00
County Tax Assessor-Collector	Monte Shaw	\$72,700.00	\$15,000.00	\$1,200.00		\$1,200.00	\$100.00
Constable, Precinct #1 ***/****	Dennis Hudson	\$37,600.00				\$1,200.00	
Constable, Precinct #2 ***/****	Larry Short	\$37,600.00				\$1,200.00	
Constable, Precinct #3 ***/****		\$37,600.00				\$1,200.00	
Constable, Precinct #4 ***/****	Kevin Huffman	\$37,600.00		\$1,200.00		\$1,200.00	\$100.00
County Sheriff ***	Lane Akin	\$88,600.00				\$1,200.00	
Commissioner, Precinct #1	Danny White	\$77,250.00	\$16,000.00	\$1,200.00		\$1,200.00	\$100.00
Commissioner, Precinct #2*	Kevin Burns	\$77,250.00	\$16,000.00	\$1,400.00		\$1,200.00	\$100.00
Commissioner, Precinct #3	Harry Lamance	\$77,250.00	\$16,000.00	\$600.00		\$1,200.00	\$100.00
Commissioner, Precinct #4*	Gaylord Kennedy	\$77,250.00	\$16,000.00	\$900.00		\$1,200.00	\$100.00

* Will be donating cell phone allowance back to County

*** Vehicle provided by County

**** Uniforms provided by County

Wise County matches benefits on all state supplements except District Attorney's.

The longevity increase begins after five years of service and increases \$100/year thereafter.

The first official act to register as a candidate is to file a Campaign Treasurer Declaration with Wise County Elections Administrator, Ms. Sabra Srader, Office at 940-626-4453, E-mail: elections@co.wise.tx.us

Texas Election Law requires a form that declares your candidacy and names a person who will be your campaign treasurer. You absolutely may not receive or expend any campaign funds **before** filing this document, naming a treasurer. The form, "Appointment of a Campaign Treasurer by a Candidate," is available from the Texas Ethics Commission at P.O. Box 12070, Austin, TX 78711-2070 or on the Web at:

<https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/forms/cta.pdf>

The Wise County Elections Office (200 South Trinity Street, P. O. Box 1597, Decatur, TX 76234-0200) also has the forms.

By filing this form early, a candidate does not name the position for which he or she is running, nor is the Party identified yet.

There are no requirements in the Election Code to be a candidate's treasurer. In fact, a candidate can be his or her own treasurer, although, typically, it is someone else. Incidentally, spouses are permitted to serve in this role. Even though treasurers do the periodic financial filings with the Elections Administrator, it is the candidate ultimately who is responsible that the filings be done on a timely basis. It is the candidate who is penalized (pays the fines) in the event of late filings or errors.

The campaign treasurer filing usually occurs close to the same time that you provide a public news release to the media that you are a candidate. The news release is written by the local party or may be issued directly by the candidate. If the release is issued by the local

political party, the County Chairman will notify the state party headquarters as well at a prescribed time. If the candidate issues the news release, the Party Chairman should take notice and notify the state party headquarters.

The Texas Ethics Commission has a form entitled “Code of Fair Campaign Practices,” which is an optional form to file with the Wise Election Administrator at any time.

<https://www.ethics.state.tx.us/forms/cfcp.pdf>

It basically pledges that the candidate will run a clean campaign and will deal directly only with the issues. There are no teeth in the law to warrant against any perceived abuses of that promise. It’s just a public relations asset that you have stated the value in a clean campaign. Here’s an article written for the 2018 Party Primary season:

<http://www.dasharpe.com/Politics/Civility/Civility.pdf>

The next official act is to file the form “Application for a Place on the (Democratic or Republican) Party General Primary Ballot” with the County Party Chairman. It is available from the Texas Secretary of State’s Office from the Web site, <http://www.sos.state.tx.us>.

<https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/candidates/guide/2016/demorrep2016.shtml>

There’s a narrow range of dates for filing that form. Typically, those dates are early December till early January. The website above will indicate for whatever is the current Primary Election term.

http://www.co.wise.tx.us/contact_us-ElecEn.htm

When you file this form, and pay the fee to the Party Chairman, you also should submit copies of your voter registration card (make sure

it's signed) and your driver's license, to confirm your residency and registered voter status. You should submit a copy of your Treasurer's appointment form. The check for the fee should be drawn from your campaign checking account, payable to the Wise County (Democratic or Republican) Party. It should not be paid with a personal check. It may be paid in Cash.

You may not have received enough political donations yet to pay your filing fee. You may contribute any amount yourself to your campaign checking account, or make it a loan from you to your campaign checking account, which may be repaid to you as contributions come. To be realistic, most local political campaigns at the county level are paid primarily by the candidate.

The fees paid are to underwrite the cost of the Primary Election and the General Election expenses of that year, which are paying for poll workers, county elections officers' expenses, etc.

Party County Chairmen are supposed to be available at the courthouse up to the 6:00 PM deadline on the January deadline, the last day for filing, or have a notice posted on the official Wise County Courthouse bulletin board to indicate where he or she is available in the County. That board is on the first floor on the east side of the Wise County Courthouse. Usually, the Party chairman is contacted at his or her home or office, and the candidate calls for an appointment to insure the chairman is home or in the office.

What are the requirements to be a candidate? All Wise County offices require that the candidate be at least 18 years old, be a United States citizen, have been a Texas resident at least a year before the date of the November general election of your race, and a resident of the county or the district precinct the office serves for at least six months from the date of the general election. County court-at-law and district judges, county attorneys and district attorneys must be licensed attorneys. Justices of the peace and the county judge do not need to be licensed attorneys.

Here are the requirements for being a [Precinct Constable](#):

Local Government Code 86.0021 (Qualifications)

- (a) A person is not eligible to serve as constable unless:
 - (1) the person is eligible to be licensed under Sections 1701.309 and 1701.312, Occupations Code, and:
 - (A) has at least an Associate's Degree conferred by an institution of higher education accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board;
 - (B) is a special investigator under Article 2.122(a), Code of Criminal Procedure; or
 - (C) is an honorably retired peace officer or honorably retired federal criminal investigator who holds a certificate of proficiency issued under Section 1701.357, Occupations Code; or
 - (2) the person is an active or inactive licensed peace officer under Chapter 1701, Occupations Code.

What are the terms of office? All local county offices are four-year terms. The winners in the 2018 November General Election will take the oath of office Jan. 1, 2019. They will serve through Dec. 31, 2022, and may file for re-election in 2022. There are no term limits by Texas state law.

Why are elections in March and again in November? The Political Parties conduct the March primary elections. By state law, the Party Primary Elections are held the same day, which is the first Tuesday in March of the even numbered years. It is the way for

parties to determine which candidates will represent the party on the November General Election ballot. The party primary election is the first place where incumbents may be challenged. That also is where multiple candidates may vie for the Party's nomination headed for the November General Election. If the Party's Primary Election has three or more candidates, the winner must be someone who gains over 50% of the total vote for that office. If no candidate received over 50%, then the top two vote getters will have a run-off in May to make the Party's nomination decision.

Usually on the Tuesday following the last day designated for filing as a candidate is the time when a **drawing takes place** in each county to determine the order of presentation of the candidates on the Primary Election ballots. These are random drawings by the candidates themselves, or by the candidates' representatives. The drawings take place at a location determined by the Chairman of the political party in that county. Quite often, it is in the office of the Chairman, but can be located otherwise. Voters see on the ballot only the candidate names, with no indication of whether any are incumbents.

On Primary Election Night, the Party Precincts hold **Precinct Conventions**, usually in the same physical area of the voting poll for that day. The meeting begins shortly after the polls close and the voting clerks complete the loading up of the voting machines and materials. Typically, that will be about 7:30 PM. The Precinct Chair convenes the meeting in the role as the Temporary Precinct Chair of that convention, at which any person who voted in that Party's Primary Election is eligible to attend and to vote. If a Precinct Chair is not present, any person present may take the initiative to convene the convention, proceeding to elect the Convention officers. [Here is a structure of proceedings](#). You as a candidate in the Primary Election should attend your own Precinct Convention if feasible. In addition, whether you attend the Precinct Convention or not, you should have the Precinct Chair know in advance to nominate you to

be a Precinct Delegate to the County Convention to be on a Saturday, usually about 2 or 3 weeks off.

The County Convention is where Delegates to the Party's State Convention are elected, and any propositions are adopted to send to the State Party's Convention for consideration. Delegates (and Alternate Delegates) are responsible for their own expenses to represent the County at a State Convention. In Texas, the Party State Conventions generally meet in Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston or San Antonio. It's good for candidates to be a Delegate to the State Convention, if feasible for you and you are elected. Even if you were a candidate who did not win in the Primary Election, it is good to be a Delegate. It bears on your experience and future outlook.

Remember, the Party Primary Elections are where various of the party faithful candidates vie for election. It is hoped and expected that at the General Election in November, you will support whomever is your party's candidate. So, conduct your primary election campaign in a way that you can support another winning candidate, if you lose. If you expect any losers in your primary to support you in November, you want to have conducted your competing campaign with them in a way that does not alienate them from you.

[Here is an article about civility](#) in conducting your campaign that I wrote in the context of the 2018 Party Primary elections' preparations.

Texas Party State Conventions generally are held in June. It is there that Party Platforms are adopted. Delegates and Alternate Delegates to the Party's National Convention are elected. Those usually are in August.

In November, you always have only one choice from each political party for each office. That election is conducted by Wise County, under the management of the Elections Administrator. Any number

of Independent Candidates may be on the ballot, but often they have no presence on the ballot. The General Election held in November is on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November.

How does a candidate run a campaign? There are lots of resources to help candidates. Both the Republican and the Democratic parties offer candidate and campaign schools. Each candidate should create a campaign committee of friends and supporters. You would want people who will bring together particular segments of the voters. Candidates need to seek every opportunity to appear and speak to organizations and voters in the County. Here are the state party websites for the Democratic and the Republican Parties of Texas to find these recourses:

<https://www.txdemocrats.org>

<https://www.texasgop.org>

Your campaign committee should have people on it whose positive reputations in the community are assets for your efforts. However there also needs to be people, lesser known publicly in the community, who will help perform physical labor – stuffing and mailing campaign literature, phoning voters to allow political signs to be posted in their yards, and then posting those signs.

Remember in the printing orders for all your candidate literature, cards, mail you distribute and political signs, the political party in whose Primary Election you are running should be identified. That may be the name of the Party or an easily recognized logo or symbol for that party. All readers of these items should be able to know whether you are a Democratic or a Republican Party candidate.

Here are the [State of Texas rules](#) on campaign signs. Signs may be posted no sooner than 90 days prior to an election day.

All political signs are supposed to be taken down within ten days after the election, another task for the candidate and supporters. It's easiest if you should ask each person who allows a sign posted on their property to be responsible to remove it themselves after the election, on a timely basis. That is much simpler than organizing groups to go around the County after the election to remove signs. You also will need people who can help you ask for financial political gifts. You will need help in presenting a strong presence in conducting fund-raising events.

You need to have someone of writing prowess who can edit your material before it goes public. You need someone who knows grammar and the differences about splitting infinitives and ending sentences with prepositions. Don't say, "On these issues, here's where I'm at." Say, "On these issues, here is where I am." Or "where I stand." Here's a document to help, "Speaking & Writing with Effectiveness:"

<http://www.dasharpe.com/Politics/Politicalspeakingtips.html>

The electronic age in which we live is important in how you communicate digitally. The following ideas are my recommendations, but are not requirements.

You should purchase your own internet domain name. That costs some money, but the professional appearance of it is a good reflection of your value. Some thought should be given to the name chosen so that it can be used in the future, especially after you've won office. Don't say "Jones4Judge." That's good while you're running, but not later. Use your own name is a good suggestion. My web site is www.dasharpe.com. That form can be used anytime for multiple purposes in the future. In fact, I've used mine since about 1998.

Chose a provider to give good graphic web design and service to represent your web presence on the internet. It's worth the investment. If you chose a "free" internet presence, such as on Facebook, this presents a cheap approach to expenses. Not everyone on the internet has chosen to have access to Facebook, for example. Though office holders should have a character of being careful with government expenditures when in office, cutting corners, expense-wise, as a candidate often does not pay dividends.

Create E-mail addresses using your domain name. Avoid using personal E-mails, such as google.com, yahoo.com, gmail.com. They signal to the public that you are cheap in choosing the free addresses. Also, these services sometimes do things you don't want them to do. For example, in the striving to divert spam emails, some services will not deliver messages you send that are blank in the subject line. Additionally, you may not be informed that your messages were not delivered.

How much money will you need? A countywide race typically costs between \$7,000 and \$20,000. A precinct level race may take \$2,000 to \$5,000. There are strict reporting requirements that your treasurer must file periodically with the [Texas Election Commission](#) and the [Wise County Elections Administrator](#). That is public information. So, the people who contribute to your campaign may see their name in the newspaper or in some public venue as a contributor. You should to be clear to your donors that political gifts are not tax deductible on their income tax returns.

The filing fees that you pay to your local political party primary fund are listed on the Texas Secretary of State's Web site.

<https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/candidates/guide/2016/demorrp2016.shtml>

Filing fees are used to help pay the expenses of conducting the primary election in the 25 voting precinct locations in Wise County, as well as in the November General Election. Most of the funds go to pay the election judges and election clerks.

You can file as a candidate without paying a fee by filing a petition. You must secure a "[Petition In Lieu Of A Filing Fee](#)" from the [Secretary of State's office or Web site](#). The petition requires a specific minimum number of signatures of registered voters to endorse your candidacy. It must be the lesser of 500 signatures or 2% of the number of votes cast for your party's gubernatorial candidate in its most recent General Election race for that precinct or district. There are strict requirements for those who sign the petition – the voter registration number must be included (correctly – it will be verified). You should collect substantially more signatures than you think you need.

Usually, after the petitions are turned in, some signatures are disqualified for one reason or another (inaccurate voter registration number, etc.). Also, these petition signers need to know that they may not sign for any other candidate in that race, nor may they vote in the other party's primary election. The signer on a petition for a Republican candidate may not vote in the Democratic Party Primary Election, and *vice versa*. There are many negatives associated with trying to file without paying money. The efforts are many and very time-consuming. In my opinion, it's hardly ever worth it. Pay the filing fee. It helps pay for the election in which you hope the people will like you.

What role does the party county chairman play? The law requires only that the Chairman receive the fees and filing applications. The Chair receives the money, which is turned over to the Treasurer. The Treasurer is not to receive directly from the candidate. In addition to receiving the filing forms and fees for candidacy, the Chairman should to be a source of information and help for the

candidates – help in knowing how to organize, and how to learn what is needed to conduct a campaign.

The chairman should be available to all candidates as a mentor and encourager. That is why you do not see Party County Chairmen endorsing one candidate over another in the primary election.

However, the law does not restrain the Party County Chairman from primary election endorsing. The Party may have its own rule not to do such endorsements. It's just not wise to do so. If it is done, it should reflect very unusual circumstances.

The Party Chairman also is responsible to manage the budget and finances of the primary election. They are cited on the Wise County Election Administrator's web page:

http://www.co.wise.tx.us/contact_us-ElecEn.htm

A political campaign includes use of many outdoor signs, the positioning of which is governed by the Texas Ethics Commission. [Here is what you need to know about that.](#)

You are now equipped to become a candidate for local political office. Give it your serious consideration, and avoid procrastination.

Some reading this document who function in other counties are given freedom to download this material and to revise it with your own county's specifics. I encourage you to do that. It is not necessary to credit me for the composition. My benefit is merely to know that others may profit in use of these ideas and compilations.

If you'd like a Word version of this document, for easier editing, [click here](#). It will be downloaded into your computer.

Best wishes and happy campaigning.



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