



House Oversight and Reform Committee

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State Board of Elections

July 23, 2024

2024 Party Petition Overview

1

Petitioner submits a petition request form to the SBE. SBE provides a standardized signature sheet.

2

Party completes the headings on the signature sheets & gathers signatures in compliance with NC law.

3

Petitioner provides completed signature sheets to the CBEs by 5/17/24.

4

CBE verifies signatures with registration records & determines the number of approved signatures.

5

CBE provides a certification and returns the original signature sheets to the petitioner.

2024 Party Petition Overview

6

Petitioner files verified signature sheets and certifications with the SBE by 6/1/2024.

7

SBE staff review and audit the signature sheets and certifications.

8

SBE staff prepare findings and report to the State Board.

9

State Board makes a final determination as to the sufficiency of the petition.

10

New party holds a party convention and submits candidates to SBE by 7/1/2024.



County Signature Verification

All signatures on a petition must be researched by the CBE.

CBE staff verify the signatures using the Petition Checking Module developed by the State Board. This module is connected to VoterView.

CBE staff compare the signature listed on the petition with the signer's voter registration record, including the signatures on file in the SEIMS database. Signatures may be signed, printed, or initialed, and the signature review is what determines whether the petition signer's signature reasonably resembles a registered voter's signature.

Verification must be completed within two weeks from the date petitions are presented to the county board of elections. G.S. 163-96(c). Counties have finite resources and certain tasks must be completed to support an ongoing election, which included two statewide primary elections this year. Where the two-week turnaround was impossible to meet, county boards were advised to work to process petitions as soon as possible.

County Signature Verification

A signature is counted if:

- The signer's information was matched to a voter's registration, and
- The signature on the petition sheet bears a reasonable resemblance to the voter's signature on file.

Any reports and evidence of fraudulent activity or forgery is referred to State Board investigators.

G.S. § 163-221. Persons may not sign name of another to petition.

(a) No person may sign the name of another person to any of the following:

...

(2) Any petition under G.S. 163-96 for the formulation of a new political party.

...

(b) Any name signed on a petition, in violation of this section, shall be void.

(c) Any person who willfully violates this section is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor.

2024 State Board Process

13,865* valid signatures were required for party recognition in 2024.

- The petition must be signed by at least 200 registered voters in three different congressional districts in North Carolina.

G.S. 163-96 also requires that organizers and petition circulators inform the signers of the general purpose and intent of the new party.

**0.25% of the total number of voters who voted in the most recent general election for Governor.*

2024 State Board Process

NCSBE Staff:

- Verified the total numbers reflected in petition database and online tracker were correct before starting the auditing process.
- Worked with data team to provide a report showing the number of validated signers per congressional district.
- Cross-referenced the total number of checked and validated signatures listed in the database with the total number of signatures reflected on the petition status letter or petition certificate letter to make sure the totals matched.
- Cross-referenced number of validated signatures listed in the database with number of approved signatures indicated on the physical signature sheets to confirm the total numbers matched by counting them.
- Reviewed any notes provided by the county directors about the verified signatures.
- Verified the signed petition status or certificate letter was signed by either the chairman or director. If signed by a director, confirm that the county board delegated the county director the responsibility of signing the petition status or certificate letter.
- If any discrepancies were found, staff contacted the county director to resolve the issues, and then asked the county director to provide an updated petition status or certificate letter.

2024 State Board Process

An objection letter was sent from Clear Choice Action (CCA) regarding the We The People and Justice for All petitions. The letter alleged that 76 counties were not comparing signatures as required.

The allegation was based on the lack of petition signers coded as “Signature Rejected” in the petition module software. In response, State Board staff completed an analysis of how counties coded the signatures for all three parties in the petition module. A similar coding pattern was found for the Constitution Party’s petition. As a result, and because the counties were checking Constitution Party signatures at the same time they were tasked with checking signatures for the other prospective parties, the counties were surveyed to confirm whether they checked the signatures for all three petitions according to past guidance.



2024 State Board Process

The results of the county survey, which was sent to the counties on June 11th with responses received by June 13th, showed that a small number of counties did not check signatures for the petitions.

These counties were then instructed on June 14th to complete their signature verification by June 19th.

After their review, the counties then reported the correct total and provided a new certification letter and summary report for our records. The State Board's petition tracker website was updated to reflect the corrected signature count.



2024 State Board Process

During or soon after the county board verification process, several directors contacted the State Board Office about potential fraudulent signatures submitted by the Justice For All Party that were identified during their county's review. These signatures were not validated by the counties and not included in the certified totals. Upon receipt, complaints were forwarded to the Investigations Division for further inquiry. The investigation of these allegations is ongoing.



2024 State Board Process

After the verification process was complete, the Chair added consideration of the petitions to the agenda for the State Board meeting held on June 26, 2024. Consideration of the party petitions was also added to the agenda by the Chair for meetings held on July 9, 2024, and July 16, 2024.



Constitution Party of North Carolina

The Constitution Party began its petition efforts after being decertified in 2021.

The Constitution Party submitted 159 validated and reviewed signatures over the requirement and had more than 3 congressional districts with greater than 200 signatures.

The Constitution Party of North Carolina was recognized on July 9, 2024.



We The People Party

We The People Party (“WTP”) officially began its petition process when it submitted a petition request form in January of 2024. The party submitted most of its signature sheets to the county boards at the end of April and beginning of May, at the end of the process.

When turning in the signature sheets to the State Board, WTP organizers submitted documentation demonstrating their instructions for the petition process, including what circulators were to say to petition signers, and the party’s bylaws that show the party’s stated purposes.

WTP submitted 4,444 validated and reviewed signatures over the requirement and had more than 3 congressional districts with greater than 200 signatures.



We The People Party

At the direction of the majority of State Board members:

- Additional correspondence and administrative subpoenas were issued to request further information and documentation about what was communicated to petition signers about the general purpose and intent of the new party.
- Staff attempted to contact 26 individuals who indicated in written statements that they wished to withdraw their signature. NCSBE staff interviewed 9 signers. Responses to the interview questions were posted with State Board meeting materials for July 16, 2024.

The We The People Party was recognized on July 16, 2024.



Justice For All Party

Justice For All (“JFA”) officially began its petition process when it submitted a petition request form in February of 2024. The party submitted most of its signature sheets to the county boards at the end of April and beginning of May, at the end of the process.

When turning in the signature sheets to the State Board, JFA organizers submitted a letter stating that the circulators trained by the party were instructed to tell the signers of the purpose and intent of the party, including that its near-term purpose is to nominate Cornel West for president, and that its long-term purpose is to create an enduring political organization based on the values of the Cornel West campaign. A flyer accompanied the letter.

JFA submitted 3,276 validated and reviewed signatures over the requirement and had more than 3 congressional districts with greater than 200 signatures.

Justice For All Party

At the direction of the majority of State Board members:

- Additional correspondence and administrative subpoenas were issued to request further information and documentation about what was communicated to petition signers about the general purpose and intent of the new party.
- Staff attempted to contact 66 individuals who indicated in written statements that they wished to withdraw their signature. 12 individuals represented that they did not sign or did not recall signing the petition. NCSBE staff interviewed 10 signers. Responses to the interview questions were posted with State Board meeting materials for July 16, 2024.
- Staff attempted to contact 250 additional petition signers. 49 were reached. Of the 49, 3 stated that they did not recall signing and 18 stated that they did not sign. An additional 28 were interviewed. Responses to the interview questions were posted with State Board meeting materials for the July 16, 2024.

The Board voted to not recognize the Justice For All Party on July 16, 2024.



Third-Party Objections

The State Board received “objection letters” regarding the WTP and JFA petitions from several third-party groups including CCA and the NC Democratic Party.

There is no process under G.S. 163-96 for a third-party group to formally challenge or object to the recognition of a political party. However, the State Board does review and consider all evidence of potential violations.

Copies of the objection letters were posted to the State Board website.



New Parties

Recognition means that voters currently registered with a different political party or as unaffiliated may switch their affiliation to the Constitution Party or We The People Party if they wish.

The State Board has updated voter registration applications to include the new political party option. Voters may also register with the new party by checking the “Other” box and writing “We The People” or “Constitution Party” on the line in the “Political Party Affiliation” section of the voter registration form.

Staff are presently making the necessary updates in SEIMS so that registration with one of these parties can be processed.