

CHAPTER 105

NONPARTISAN ELECTIONS FOR JUDICIAL OFFICERS

- 105.011 Definitions.
- 105.031 Qualification; filing fee; candidate's oath; items required to be filed.
- 105.035 Alternative method of qualifying for certain judicial offices.
- 105.041 Form of ballot.
- 105.051 Determination of election to office.
- 105.061 Electors qualified to vote.
- 105.071 Candidates for judicial office; limitations on political activity.
- 105.08 Campaign contribution and expense; reporting.
- 105.09 Political activity in behalf of a candidate for judicial office limited.
- 105.10 Applicability of election code.

105.011 Definitions.—

(1) As used in this chapter, the term "judicial office" includes the office of:

- (a) Justice of the Supreme Court.
- (b) Judge of a district court of appeal.
- (c) Judge of a circuit court.
- (d) County court judge.

(2) A judicial office is a nonpartisan office, and a candidate for election or retention thereto is prohibited from campaigning or qualifying for such an office based on party affiliation.

History.—s. 1, ch. 71-49; s. 1, ch. 72-310; s. 36, ch. 77-175.

105.031 Qualification; filing fee; candidate's oath; items required to be filed.—

(1) TIME OF QUALIFYING.—Candidates for judicial office other than the office of county court judge shall qualify with the Division of Elections of the Department of State, and candidates for the office of county court judge shall qualify with the supervisor of elections of the county, no earlier than noon of the 50th day, and no later than noon of the 46th day, before the first primary election. Filing shall be on forms provided for that purpose by the Division of Elections and furnished by the appropriate qualifying officer. Any person seeking to qualify as a candidate for circuit judge or county court judge by the alternative method, if the person has submitted the necessary petitions by the required deadline and is notified after the fifth day prior to the last day for qualifying that the required number of signatures has been obtained, shall be entitled to subscribe to the candidate's oath and file the qualifying papers at any time within 5 days from the date he or she is notified that the necessary number of signatures has been obtained. Any person other than a write-in candidate who qualifies within the time prescribed in this subsection shall be entitled to have his or her name printed on the ballot.

(2) FILING IN GROUPS.—Candidates shall qualify in groups where multiple judicial offices are to be filled.

(3) QUALIFYING FEE.—Each candidate qualifying for election to judicial office, except write-in judicial candidates, shall, during the time for qualifying, pay to the officer with whom he or she qualifies a qualifying fee, which shall consist of a filing fee and an election assess-

ment, or qualify by the alternative method. The amount of the filing fee is 4.5 percent of the annual salary of the office sought. The amount of the election assessment is 1 percent of the annual salary of the office sought. The qualifying officer shall forward all filing fees to the Department of Revenue for deposit in the General Revenue Fund. One-third of all filing fees deposited into the General Revenue Fund shall be subsequently transferred to the Election Campaign Financing Trust Fund. The election assessment shall be deposited into the Elections Commission Trust Fund. The annual salary of the office for purposes of computing the qualifying fee shall be computed by multiplying 12 times the monthly salary authorized for such office as of July 1 immediately preceding the first day of qualifying. This subsection shall not apply to candidates qualifying for retention to judicial office.

(4) CANDIDATE'S OATH.—All candidates for judicial office shall subscribe to an oath or affirmation in writing to be filed with the appropriate qualifying officer upon qualifying. A printed copy of the oath or affirmation shall be furnished to the candidate by the qualifying officer and shall be in substantially the following form:

State of Florida
County of _____

Before me, an officer authorized to administer oaths, personally appeared (please print name as you wish it to appear on the ballot), to me well known, who, being sworn, says he or she: is a candidate for the judicial office of _____; that his or her legal residence is _____ County, Florida; that he or she is a qualified elector of the state and of the territorial jurisdiction of the court to which he or she seeks election; that he or she is qualified under the constitution and laws of Florida to hold the judicial office to which he or she desires to be elected or in which he or she desires to be retained; that he or she has taken the oath required by ss. 876.05-876.10, Florida Statutes; that he or she has qualified for no other public office in the state, the term of which office or any part thereof runs concurrent to the office he or she seeks; and that he or she has resigned from any office which he or she is required to resign pursuant to s. 99.012, Florida Statutes.

(Signature of candidate)

(Address)

Sworn to and subscribed before me this _____ day of _____, 19____, at _____ County, Florida.

(Signature and title of officer administering oath)

(5) ITEMS REQUIRED TO BE FILED.—

(a) In order for a candidate for judicial office to be qualified, the following items must be received by the filing officer by the end of the qualifying period:

1. For each candidate qualifying for the office of circuit judge or county court judge, a properly executed check drawn upon the candidate's campaign account in an amount not less than the fee required by subsection (3) or, in lieu thereof, the copy of the notice of obtaining ballot position pursuant to s. 105.035. If a candi-

date's check is returned by the bank for any reason, the filing officer shall immediately notify the candidate and the candidate shall, the end of qualifying notwithstanding, have 48 hours from the time such notification is received, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays, to pay the fee with a cashier's check purchased from funds of the campaign account. Failure to pay the fee as provided in this subparagraph shall disqualify the candidate.

2. The candidate's oath required by subsection (4), which must contain the name of the candidate as it is to appear on the ballot; the office sought, including the district or group number if applicable; and the signature of the candidate, duly acknowledged.

3. The loyalty oath required by s. 876.05, signed by the candidate and duly acknowledged.

4. The completed form for the appointment of campaign treasurer and designation of campaign depository, as required by s. 106.021.

5. The full and public disclosure of financial interests required by s. 8, Art. II of the State Constitution.

(b) If the filing officer receives qualifying papers that do not include all items as required by paragraph (a) prior to the last day of qualifying, the filing officer shall make a reasonable effort to notify the candidate of the missing or incomplete items and shall inform the candidate that all required items must be received by the close of qualifying. A candidate's name as it is to appear on the ballot may not be changed after the end of qualifying.

History.—s. 3, ch. 71-49; s. 36, ch. 77-175; s. 1, ch. 78-260; s. 5, ch. 79-365; s. 54, ch. 79-400; s. 17, ch. 81-105; s. 10, ch. 83-251; s. 1, ch. 89-152; s. 34, ch. 89-338; s. 5, ch. 91-107; s. 630, ch. 95-147; s. 2, ch. 95-156.

105.035 Alternative method of qualifying for certain judicial offices.—

(1) A person seeking to qualify for election to the office of circuit judge or county court judge who is unable to pay the qualifying fee without imposing an undue burden on his or her personal resources or on resources otherwise available to him or her may qualify for election to such office by means of the petitioning process prescribed in this section. A person using this petitioning process shall file an oath with the officer before whom the candidate would qualify for the office stating that he or she intends to qualify for the office sought and stating that he or she is unable to pay the qualifying fee for the office without imposing an undue burden on his or her resources or on resources otherwise available to him or her. Such oath shall be filed at any time after the first Tuesday after the first Monday in January of the year in which the election is held, but prior to the 21st day preceding the first day of the qualifying period for the office sought. The form of such oath shall be prescribed by the Division of Elections. No signatures shall be obtained until the person has filed the oath prescribed in this subsection.

(2) Upon receipt of a written oath from a candidate, the qualifying officer shall provide the candidate with petition forms in sufficient numbers to facilitate the gathering of signatures pursuant to this section. No signature shall be counted toward the number of signatures required unless it is on a petition form prescribed pursuant to this subsection. Such forms shall be prescribed

by the Division of Elections. If the candidate is running for an office which will be grouped on the ballot with two or more similar offices to be filled at the same election, the candidate's petition must indicate, prior to the obtaining of registered electors' signatures, for which group the candidate is running.

(3) A candidate for the office of circuit judge shall obtain the signature of a number of qualified electors equal to at least 3 percent of the total number of registered electors of the judicial circuit as shown by the compilation by the Department of State for the last preceding general election. A candidate for the office of county court judge shall obtain the signatures of a number of qualified electors equal to at least 3 percent of the total number of registered electors of the county, as shown by the compilation by the Department of State for the last preceding general election. A separate petition shall be circulated for each candidate availing himself or herself of the provisions of this section.

(4)(a) Each candidate seeking to qualify for election to the office of circuit judge pursuant to this section shall file a separate petition from each county from which signatures are sought. Each petition shall be submitted, prior to noon of the 21st day preceding the first day of the qualifying period for the office sought, to the supervisor of elections of the county for which such petition was circulated. Each supervisor of elections to whom a petition is submitted shall check the signatures on the petition to verify their status as electors of that county within the judicial circuit. Prior to the first date for qualifying, the supervisor shall certify the number shown as registered electors of that county within the circuit and submit such certification to the Division of Elections. The division shall determine whether the required number of signatures has been obtained for the name of the candidate to be placed on the ballot and shall notify the candidate. If the required number of signatures has been obtained, the candidate shall, during the time prescribed for qualifying for office, submit a copy of such notice and file his or her qualifying papers and oath prescribed in s. 105.031 with the Division of Elections. Upon receipt of the copy of such notice and qualifying papers, the division shall certify the name of the candidate to the appropriate supervisor or supervisors of elections as having qualified for the office sought.

(b) Each candidate seeking to qualify for election to the office of county court judge pursuant to this section shall submit his or her petition, prior to noon of the 21st day preceding the first day of the qualifying period for the office sought, to the supervisor of elections of the county for which such petition was circulated. The supervisor shall check the signatures on the petition to verify their status as electors of the county. Prior to the first date for qualifying, the supervisor shall determine whether the required number of signatures has been obtained for the name of the candidate to be placed on the ballot and shall notify the candidate. If the required number of signatures has been obtained, the candidate shall, during the time prescribed for qualifying for office, submit a copy of such notice and file his or her qualifying papers and oath prescribed in s. 105.031 with the supervisor of elections. Upon receipt of the copy of such notice and qualifying papers by the supervisor of elec-

tions, such candidate shall be entitled to have his or her name printed on the ballot.

History.—s. 37, ch. 77-175; s. 2, ch. 89-152; s. 35, ch. 89-338; s. 23, ch. 90-315; s. 631, ch. 95-147.

105.041 Form of ballot.—

(1) **BALLOTS.**—The names of candidates for judicial office which appear on the ballot at the first primary election shall either be grouped together on a separate portion of the ballot or on a separate ballot. The names of candidates for judicial office which appear on the ballot at the general election and the names of justices and judges seeking retention to office shall be grouped together on a separate portion of the general election ballot.

(2) **LISTING OF CANDIDATES.**—The names of all candidates for the office of circuit judge or the office of county court judge shall be listed in alphabetical order. With respect to justices and judges of district courts of appeal, the question "Shall Justice (or Judge) (name of justice or judge) of the (name of the court) be retained in office?" shall appear on the ballot and thereafter the words "Yes" and "No."

(3) **REFERENCE TO PARTY AFFILIATION PROHIBITED.**—No reference to political party affiliation shall appear on any ballot with respect to any nonpartisan judicial office or candidate.

(4) **WRITE-IN CANDIDATES.**—Space shall be made available on the general election ballot for an elector to write in the name of a write-in candidate for judge of a circuit court or county court if a candidate has qualified as a write-in candidate for such office pursuant to s. 105.031.

History.—s. 4, ch. 71-49; s. 38, ch. 77-175; s. 55, ch. 79-400; s. 1, ch. 80-305; s. 18, ch. 81-105.

105.051 Determination of election to office.—

(1)(a) The name of an unopposed candidate for the office of circuit judge or county court judge shall not appear on any ballot, and such candidate shall be deemed to have voted for himself or herself at the general election.

(b) If two or more candidates, neither of whom is a write-in candidate, qualify for such an office, the names of those candidates shall be placed on the ballot at the first primary election. If any candidate for such office receives a majority of the votes cast for such office in the first primary election, the name of the candidate who receives such majority shall not appear on any other ballot unless a write-in candidate has qualified for such office. An unopposed candidate shall be deemed to have voted for himself or herself at the general election. If no candidate for such office receives a majority of the votes cast for such office in the first primary election, the names of the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes for such office shall be placed on the general election ballot. If more than two candidates receive an equal and highest number of votes, the name of each candidate receiving an equal and highest number of votes shall be placed on the general election ballot. In any contest in which there is a tie for second place and the candidate placing first did not receive a majority of the votes cast for such office, the name of the candidate placing first and the name of each candidate tying for second shall be placed on the general election ballot.

(c) The candidate who receives the highest number of votes cast for the office in the general election shall be elected to such office. If the vote at the general election results in a tie, the outcome shall be determined by lot.

(2) With respect to any justice of the Supreme Court or judge of a district court of appeal who qualifies to run for retention in office, the question prescribed in s. 105.041(2) shall be placed on the ballot at the general election. If a majority of the qualified electors voting on such question within the territorial jurisdiction of the court vote for retention, the justice or judge shall be retained for a term of 6 years commencing on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in January following the general election. If less than a majority of the qualified electors voting on such question within the territorial jurisdiction of the court vote for retention, a vacancy shall exist in such office upon the expiration of the term being served by the justice or judge.

History.—s. 5, ch. 71-49; s. 38, ch. 77-175; s. 19, ch. 81-105; s. 632, ch. 95-147.

105.061 Electors qualified to vote.—Each qualified elector of the territorial jurisdiction of a court shall be eligible to vote for a candidate for each judicial office of such court or, in the case of a justice of the Supreme Court or a judge of a district court of appeal, for or against retention of such justice or judge.

History.—s. 6, ch. 71-49; s. 38, ch. 77-175.

105.071 Candidates for judicial office; limitations on political activity.—A candidate for judicial office shall not:

- (1) Participate in any partisan political party activities, except that such candidate may register to vote as a member of any political party and may vote in any party primary for candidates for nomination of the party in which she or he is registered to vote.
- (2) Campaign as a member of any political party.
- (3) Publicly represent or advertise herself or himself as a member of any political party.
- (4) Endorse any candidate.
- (5) Make political speeches other than in the candidate's own behalf.
- (6) Make contributions to political party funds.
- (7) Accept contributions from any political party.
- (8) Solicit contributions for any political party.
- (9) Accept or retain a place on any political party committee.
- (10) Make any contribution to any person, group, or organization for its endorsement to judicial office.
- (11) Agree to pay all or any part of any advertisement sponsored by any person, group, or organization wherein the candidate may be endorsed for judicial office by any such person, group, or organization.

A candidate for judicial office or retention therein who violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

History.—s. 7, ch. 71-49; s. 2, ch. 72-310; s. 38, ch. 77-175; s. 633, ch. 95-147.

105.08 Campaign contribution and expense; reporting.—

(1) A candidate for judicial office may accept contributions and may incur only such expenses as are authorized by law. Each such candidate shall keep an accurate record of his or her contributions and expenses, and shall file reports thereof on the same basis as is required of a candidate for a nonjudicial state office.

(2) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter or chapter 106, a candidate for retention as a justice of the Supreme Court or a judge of a district court of appeal who has not received any contribution or made any expenditure may file a sworn statement at the time of qualifying that he or she does not anticipate receiving contributions or making expenditures in connection with the candidacy for retention to office. Such candidate shall file a final report pursuant to s. 106.141, within 90 days following the general election for which the candidate's name appeared on the ballot for retention. Any such candidate for retention to judicial office who, after filing a statement pursuant to this subsection, receives any contribution or makes any expenditure in connec-

tion with the candidacy for retention shall immediately file a statement to that effect with the qualifying officer and shall begin filing reports as an opposed candidate pursuant to s. 106.07.

History.—s. 8, ch. 71-49; s. 38, ch. 77-175; s. 3, ch. 89-152; s. 634, ch. 95-147.

105.09 Political activity in behalf of a candidate for judicial office limited.—

(1) No political party or partisan political organization shall endorse, support, or assist any candidate in a campaign for election to judicial office.

(2) Any person who knowingly, in an individual capacity or as an officer of an organization, violates the provisions of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or s. 775.083.

History.—s. 9, ch. 71-49; s. 38, ch. 77-175; s. 635, ch. 95-147.

105.10 Applicability of election code.—If any provision of this chapter is in conflict with any other provision of this code, the provision of this chapter shall prevail.

History.—s. 10, ch. 71-49; s. 38, ch. 77-175.