



ARIZONA SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE
2021 NEW PARTY FORMATION QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE
(Rev. August 2021)

I. OVERVIEW

A recognized political party is entitled to representation on a partisan primary election ballot and subsequent placement of the prevailing candidate on the general election ballot.¹ Currently there are three statewide recognized political parties in Arizona:²

- Democratic Party (azdem.org)
- Libertarian Party (azlp.org)
- Republican Party (azgop.org)

A political party may obtain first-time or new-party recognition by submitting a sufficient number of valid petition signatures to the appropriate filing officer.³ An existing political party maintains its recognition by either receiving a sufficient number of votes in the last general election or by achieving a sufficient number of registered voters.⁴

This guide serves as a reference for first-time or new-party recognition at the statewide level. More information about the new party process, including information about campaign finance requirements,⁵ is available in [Arizona's Elections Procedures Manual](#). To achieve recognition at the county level, contact the appropriate County Elections Department.⁶

¹ [A.R.S. § 16-801\(A\)](#).

² For more contact information visit: <https://azsos.gov/elections/information-about-recognized-political-parties>.

³ [A.R.S. §§ 16-801\(A\); 16-802](#).

⁴ [A.R.S. §§ 16-801\(B\); 16-804\(A\)-\(B\)](#).

⁵ A committee that is circulating new party petitions may be required to register as a political action committee under Arizona's campaign finance laws. See [A.R.S. § 16-905\(C\)](#); [Election Services Division, Office of the Sec'y of State, Arizona Department of State, ELECTIONS PROCEDURES MANUAL 255 \(2019\)](#).

⁶ For county contact information visit: <https://azsos.gov/county-election-info>

II. IMPORTANT DATES

Date	Description	Authority
November 26, 2021	New Party Petition Filing Deadline	A.R.S. § 16-803(A)
December 7, 2021 Filing + 7 business days; may vary for early filings	Deadline for Secretary of State to remove ineligible signatures and transmit 20% random sample to County Recorders	A.R.S. § 16-803(B)-(D)
December 21, 2021 10 business days after receiving the random sample; may vary for early filings	Deadline for County Recorders to verify petition signatures and provide certified results to the Secretary of State	A.R.S. § 16-803(E)-(G)
December 27, 2021 72 hours (business days only) after receipt of County Recorder certification; date may vary for early filings	Deadline for Secretary of State to determine results of random sample, issue final receipt to new party	A.R.S. § 16-803(H)
January 3, 2022⁷	Citizens Clean Elections Commission (CCEC) participating candidates only: candidate filing period begins; if recognized party status was obtained, candidates may file with the new party designation	A.R.S. § 16-951(B)
March 7, 2022	Candidate filing period opens for all candidates; if recognized party status was obtained, candidates may file with the new party designation	A.R.S. §§ 16-311(A); 16-314(A); 16-341(A)
April 4, 2022, at 5:00 pm	Candidate filing deadline for candidates aspiring to appear on the Primary Election ballot or to run as an independent candidate	A.R.S. §§ 16-311(A); 16-314(A); 16-341(C)
August 2, 2022	Primary Election	A.R.S. § 16-201
November 8, 2022	General Election	A.R.S. § 16-211

⁷ Under Arizona law, the filing period for candidates participating in Clean Elections opens on January 1, 2022, which falls on a holiday, making January 3, 2022, the first business day that a candidate may file.

III. FILING REQUIREMENTS

1. Statewide Recognition

To qualify for statewide recognition, qualified electors must timely submit the following documents to the Secretary of State:

- An affidavit signed by 10 qualified electors, requesting that a new political party be formed;⁸ and
- Petition signatures equal to at least 1⅓ percent of the total votes cast for Governor at the last preceding general election at which a Governor was elected.⁹ The number of votes cast for Governor are determined based upon the applicable statewide canvass, calculated by the Secretary of State and published on the Secretary of State’s website.
 - o Signatures must be collected from qualified electors in a minimum of five different counties;¹⁰ and
 - o At least 10% of signatures must be collected from qualified electors in counties with a population of less than 500,000 persons.¹¹

2. County Recognition

To qualify for county recognition, qualified electors must timely submit petition signatures equal to at least 2% of the total votes cast for County Attorney at the last preceding general election at which the County Attorney was elected. The number of votes cast for County Attorney is determined based upon the applicable county canvass. The petitions must be filed with the officer in charge of elections.¹²

Contact the appropriate County Elections Department for further information on this process.¹³

⁸ [A.R.S. § 16-801\(A\)\(1\).](#)

⁹ [A.R.S. § 16-801\(A\).](#)

¹⁰ [A.R.S. § 16-801\(A\).](#)

¹¹ [A.R.S. § 16-801\(A\).](#)

¹² [A.R.S. § 16-802.](#)

¹³ For county contact information visit: <https://azsos.gov/county-election-info>

IV. STATEWIDE SIGNATURE REQUIREMENT CALCULATION

1. Votes Cast for Governor in 2018

In the 2018 General Election, the following number of votes were cast for Governor:

Party	Type	Candidate Name	Total Votes
REP	Nomination	Ducey, Doug	1,330,863
DEM	Nomination	Garcia, David	994,341
GRN	Write-in	Dolego, Cary D.	13
GRN	Nomination	Torres, Angel	50,962
RTO	Write-in	Arvizu, Arthur Ray "RT"	12
HUM	Write-in	Gibson II, James "MarvelMan"	7
NONE	Write-in	Komor, Christian	66
NONE	Write-in	Masoya, Patrick	177
			2,376,441

2. 2019 & 2021 Signature Calculation Formulas and Signatures Required

Calculations resulting in a decimal have been rounded up to the nearest whole number.

Formula	Signature Requirement	Authority
1 1/3% of votes cast for Governor ($0.01\overline{33} * 2,376,441$)	31,686	A.R.S. § 16-801(A)

V. AFFIDAVIT OF TEN QUALIFIED ELECTORS REVIEW

A new party filing must include an affidavit of ten qualified electors in addition to the petition signatures. A new party affidavit form is located at Appendix A that committees should use. Upon filing with the Secretary of State, the affidavit will be transmitted to the relevant County Recorders for verification. The status of each qualified elector on the affidavit must be certified by the County Recorder of the county in which the elector resides.¹⁴ The SOS may deny new party status if the County Recorders determine there are less than ten qualified electors who signed the affidavit.

¹⁴ [A.R.S. § 16-801\(A\)\(1\)](#).

VI. SECRETARY OF STATE PETITION REVIEW & STATUTORY REJECT REASONS

Filing Reject Reasons	Action	Authority
Missing Affidavit of Electors	Reject filing	A.R.S. § 16-801(A)(1)
Purported # of signatures lower than requirement	Reject filing	A.R.S. § 16-801(A)

Signature Reject Reasons	Action	Source
Row missing signature	Strike Line	A.R.S. § 16-803(B)(2)(a)
Row missing residence address/ description of residence location	Strike Line	A.R.S. § 16-803(B)(2)(b)
Row missing date	Strike Line	A.R.S. § 16-803(B)(2)(c)
Remove all signatures not in county of majority of the petition sheet	Strike lines not in county of majority	A.R.S. § 16-803(B)(1)(b)

VII. PREPARING SIGNATURES FOR COUNTY RECORDER VERIFICATION

1. Determining Whether Petition Qualifies for County Recorder Verification

After the Secretary of State’s Office completes its initial review pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-803(A)-(B), the Secretary of State’s Office performs the following steps to determine whether signatures may be transmitted for County Recorder verification:

1. The Secretary of State’s Office counts the number of signature lines on each valid petition sheet that have not been stricken and ensures that the total is placed in the upper right-hand corner of the front side of each petition sheet.¹⁵
2. The Secretary of State’s Office counts the total number of valid petition sheets and signatures eligible for County Recorder verification.¹⁶
3. The Secretary of State’s Office determines whether the signatures eligible for verification exceed the minimum required.
 - If the minimum is met, the Secretary of State’s Office extracts a 20% random sample¹⁷ and issues a receipt to the aspiring new party that includes the following information:¹⁸

¹⁵ [A.R.S. § 16-803\(B\)\(3\)](#).

¹⁶ [A.R.S. § 16-803\(B\)\(4\)](#).

¹⁷ [A.R.S. § 16-803\(C\)](#).

¹⁸ [Election Services Division, Office of the Sec’y of State, Arizona Department of State, ELECTIONS PROCEDURES MANUAL 259-60 \(2019\)](#).

- The total number of signatures invalidated by the Secretary of State’s Office;
 - The total number of signatures that remain eligible for County Recorder verification;
 - The total number of signatures that have been randomly sampled and transmitted to each County Recorder;
 - A projection of how many randomly sampled signatures must be verified by the County Recorders in order for the party to qualify for statewide recognition; and
 - The deadline for County Recorder review.
- If the minimum number of signatures is not met, the Secretary of State’s Office will issue a receipt to the aspiring new party stating that they have not qualified to become a recognized political party.¹⁹

The Secretary of State’s Office must complete this process within 7 business days of when the new party petition was filed with the Secretary of State’s Office.²⁰

2. Conducting a Random Sample of Signatures Eligible for Verification

If the constitutional minimum has been met, the Secretary of State’s Office will conduct a 20% random sample of signatures for further verification by the respective County Recorders.²¹

- The sample will be randomly selected from eligible signatures across all valid petition sheets.
- The Secretary of State’s Office transmits the front side of any petition sheet containing a randomly sampled signature to the respective county.²²

The Secretary of State’s Office will make the reviewed petition sheets available for public records requests after transmitting the random sample to the County Recorders.

VIII. COUNTY RECORDER PROCESSING

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-803(E), the County Recorders must invalidate any randomly sampled signature for the following reasons:

¹⁹ [Election Services Division, Office of the Sec’y of State, Arizona Department of State, ELECTIONS PROCEDURES MANUAL 260 \(2019\).](#)

²⁰ [A.R.S. § 16-803\(B\).](#)

²¹ [A.R.S. § 16-803\(C\).](#)

²² [A.R.S. § 16-803\(C\)-\(D\).](#)

- No residence address or description of residence location is provided.
- No date of signing is provided.
- The signature is illegible, and the signer is otherwise unidentifiable.
- The address provided is illegible or nonexistent.
- The individual was not a qualified elector on the date of signing the petition.
- The individual was a registered voter but was not at least eighteen years of age on the date of signing the petition or affidavit.
- The signature was disqualified after comparison with the signature on the affidavit of registration.
- If a petitioner signed more than once, all but one otherwise valid signature shall be disqualified.
- For the same reasons any signatures could have been removed by the secretary of state pursuant to this section.

The County Recorder must issue a certification and transmit this certification to the Secretary of State and aspiring new party within 10 business days.²³ The County Recorder's certification must include (1) the total number of signatures that were transmitted to the County Recorder for verification, (2) the total number of signatures that were disqualified by the County Recorder, and (3) the name of any individual whose petition signature was invalidated, including the petition page number (bates number) and signature line number.²⁴

The Secretary of State's Office will make the County Recorder certifications electronically available to the filing committee and in response to public records requests.

IX. QUALIFICATION FOR RECOGNITION

Pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-803(H), within 72 hours²⁵ of receiving all county certifications, the Secretary of State's Office must determine whether there are sufficient valid signatures for the new party to receive statewide recognition.²⁶

- The Secretary of State's Office calculates the total number of petition signatures invalidated by County Recorders as a percent of sampled signatures, then applies this to the total signatures validated by the Secretary of State's review to determine if the aspiring new party has met the minimum.²⁷

²³ [A.R.S. § 16-803\(F\).](#)

²⁴ [A.R.S. §§ 16-803\(F\)-\(G\).](#)

²⁵ This is calculated using only business days.

²⁶ [A.R.S. § 16-803\(H\).](#)

²⁷ [A.R.S. § 16-803\(H\).](#)

- For example, if 45,000 signatures are found eligible for County Recorder verification by the Secretary of State’s Office, then 9,000 signatures will be sampled.
- Subsequently, if the County Recorders collectively disqualify 1,550 signatures – which results in an overall disqualification rate of 17.22% – and that is applied to the overall eligible signatures, then a total of 37,250 signatures are presumed valid and that would satisfy the statutory minimum.

If the calculated number of presumed valid signatures meets or exceeds the minimum required, the new party will receive statewide recognition.²⁸

If the aspiring new party does not have sufficient valid signatures for statewide recognition, the Secretary of State’s Office shall:

- Issue a certification and receipt to the aspiring new party explaining why they did not qualify for statewide recognition;²⁹ and
- Not recognize the aspiring new party.³⁰

X. DURATION OF NEW PARTY RECOGNITION

A new political party that receives statewide recognition is entitled to recognition through the next two General Elections for federal office immediately following recognition of the party.³¹ For example, if a new political party achieves statewide recognition in November 2021, the party is entitled to recognition through the 2024 General Election.

Following the expiration of recognized party status, the party may maintain recognition by:

- Qualifying for continued representation based upon votes cast at the election preceding the expiration of new party status or a requisite number of active registered voters; or
- Timely filing a new petition for party recognition.³²

If a political party does not re-qualify for recognition, statewide party status expires on December 1 of the appropriate year.³³

²⁸ [A.R.S. § 16-803\(D\).](#)

²⁹ [Election Services Division, Office of the Sec’y of State, Arizona Department of State, ELECTIONS PROCEDURES MANUAL 262 \(2019\).](#)

³⁰ [A.R.S. § 16-803\(D\).](#)

³¹ [A.R.S. § 16-801\(B\).](#)

³² [A.R.S. §§ 16-801\(B\); 16-804.](#)

³³ [A.R.S. § 16-804\(C\).](#)