

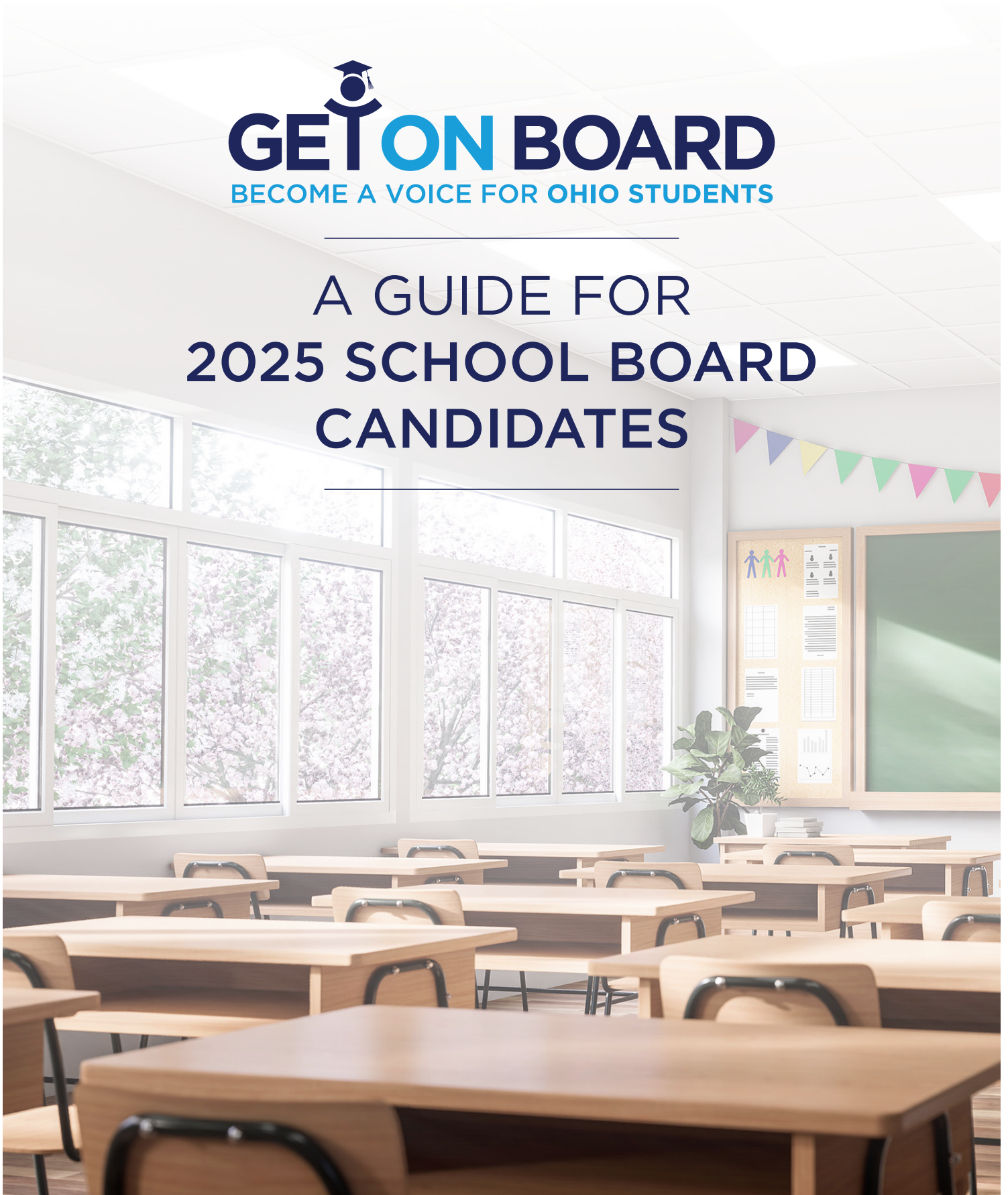


**GET ON BOARD**  
BECOME A VOICE FOR OHIO STUDENTS

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A GUIDE FOR  
**2025 SCHOOL BOARD  
CANDIDATES**

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**OHIO SCHOOL BOARDS  
ASSOCIATION**

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[GETONBOARDOHIO.ORG](http://GETONBOARDOHIO.ORG)

# HOW TO BECOME A SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATE

## To run for a school board seat you must be:

- a U.S. citizen;
- at least 18 years old;
- a resident of the  
school district;
- registered to vote in  
the school district for  
at least 30 days.

## KEY DATES

AUG.

6

Nominating petition must  
be filed with county board  
of elections by 4 p.m.\*

NOV.

4

Election Day

JAN.

1

Newly elected board  
members take office

\*If your district is one of the few with  
a primary election, your nominating  
petition will be due earlier. Check with  
your county board of elections.

Ohio's public school board members, one of the largest groups of elected officials in the state, are charged with significant responsibilities in government — providing the best educational opportunities possible for Ohio's youth and governing the school district.

## Ohio's schools require effective school board members

The role and function of board members often are misinterpreted by the public. The board is a policymaking body, and members are the chief advisers to the superintendent on community attitudes. Board members do not manage the day-to-day operations of a school district; they see to it that the system is managed well by professional administrators.

The broadest definition of a school board's role is that it acts as the governance team for the school district. The board's most important roles are to:

- Employ the superintendent and treasurer.
- Work closely with these administrators to establish and set policy, vision and long-range goals and oversee the district's policy manual.
- Be accountable for the fiscal health and opportunities provided to the district's students and families.

A board member legally cannot act independently of the board. The board as a body directs the district through actions at meetings that are open to the public. Once a board's decision has been made, each board member should support the board. When in the community, board members should be good listeners. However, individual board members don't have the authority to make promises on behalf of the board.

Board members do not evaluate staff, other than the superintendent and treasurer, nor do they typically become involved in employment interviews, other than those of the superintendent, treasurer and, if the district has one, business manager. Board members may be consulted during the hiring process for other positions, such as assistant superintendent.

### Effective school board members:

- Know that they can legally act as a board member only when the board of education is in session. No single person can act for the board. No board member, unless authorized, should speak on behalf of the board.
- Avoid administrative decisions. The superintendent is the chief administrator, and the board has no administrative function.
- Are well acquainted with school policies.
- Vote at all times in the best interests of the school district.
- Remember that board business often requires confidentiality, especially in processes involving students, personnel, land acquisition, negotiations and security.
- Are interested in obtaining facts but also remember that the administration is responsible for operating the schools and cannot spend all its time making reports to an individual board member.
- Know that the reputation of the entire school district is reflected in their behavior and attitude.

## Running for your board of education or educational service center governing board

### Conflicts of interest

There are conflicts of interest restrictions all board members must comply with to avoid breaking the law or jeopardizing their reputation or that of the school district. Those restrictions are included in Title 33 of the Ohio Revised Code, which governs the operations of schools, and in criminal statutes enforced by the Ohio Ethics Commission (OEC). If you are a public employee or officeholder, a position on a board of education may be incompatible with your current position. Before seeking election, potential candidates should make certain they are eligible to serve. For a review of the applicable laws in this area, please see OEC's conflict of interest document at <https://osba.link/OEC-conflicts>.

### Election

Members are elected on a nonpartisan ballot on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November in odd-numbered years. The term of office is four years, although in certain instances two-year terms must be filled to complete an unexpired term. When elected, your term begins on the first day of January after the election and expires on Dec. 31 in your final year. Most boards of education have five members; however, some larger districts have seven. Two members (or four on a seven-member board) are elected at one general election and three members are elected at a general election two years later.

### Getting started

You can obtain an election packet from your county board of elections office that includes the necessary forms and petitions required to become a candidate. These forms can be downloaded from the Ohio secretary of state's website at [www.ohiosos.gov/elections/ohio-candidates](http://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/ohio-candidates).

### Filing your petition

A candidate must file a petition to run for a seat on a board of education. This nominating petition must be filed with the county board of elections by 4 p.m. on Aug. 6, 2025, the 90th day before the November general election (RC 3513.254, 3513.255). If a school district is in more than one county, the petition is filed with the board of elections in the most populous county of the school district. For candidates for positions on the governing board of an educational service center (ESC) that is located in more than one county, the petition is filed with the board of elections in the county where the ESC's central administrative offices are located. As of April 2025, the filing fees are \$30.

### Campaigning

After filing your petition, it's time to begin gathering support. Candidates for boards of education run their campaigns in a variety of ways. Some campaigns are conducted primarily by word-of-mouth. Others are large-scale campaigns, with many signs, appearances and fundraisers. Each candidate decides how to structure their campaign.

Candidates who want to receive campaign contributions and/or make campaign expenditures are required to form a campaign committee and must track all campaign contributions and expenditures. A candidate's ability to solicit contributions and spend campaign funds is heavily regulated by state law.

## SIGNATURES NEEDED

The number of valid registered voters' signatures needed varies.

### TYPE OF SCHOOL DISTRICT/NUMBER OF VALID SIGNATURES REQUIRED

Local and exempted village

25

City

*School district population under 20,000*

25

City

*School district population 20,000 to 49,999*

75

City

*School district population 50,000 to 99,999*

150

City

*School district population greater than 100,000*

300

Educational service center (ESC)

50

Finally, it's important to note that most candidates for boards of education are required to periodically file an itemized statement of campaign contributions and expenditures with their county board of elections. Candidates for a board of education of a school district or ESC having a total student enrollment of 12,000 or more must also file a financial disclosure statement with OEC.

## Training available for school board candidates

### Free webinars review board member responsibilities and initial steps to launch your campaign

A series of free webinars are available on-demand at [www.getonboardohio.org/free-candidate-webinars](http://www.getonboardohio.org/free-candidate-webinars). Topics cover information to consider before filing to become a school board candidate, including:

- Understanding the governance role of a school board member.
- The responsibility of serving on a board of education.
- First steps to setting up your candidate campaign.
- Legal requirements for campaign committees.

### The Get on Board Candidate Webinar offers insight on running your campaign

OSBA is also offering a free Board Candidate Webinar for those who have been certified to run by their boards of elections. These sessions will review school board governance, campaign finance, reporting requirements and resources for candidates.

There are two options to view this webinar:

- Participate in the live webinar at 9:30 a.m. on Aug. 9. Register at <https://osba.link/2025-Candidate-Webinar>.
- Access the webinar on-demand after Aug. 15 at [www.getonboardohio.org/free-candidate-webinars](http://www.getonboardohio.org/free-candidate-webinars).

## What is the Ohio School Boards Association?

The Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) was founded in 1955 to serve the needs of the state's public school boards of education. The nonpartisan, not-for-profit association's vision is to lead the way as the respected voice of Ohio public education.

OSBA is an association of member boards of education. Members have a wide range of services available to them, including training, advocacy, legal assistance, administrator searches and policy development, among others.

OSBA's website ([www.ohioschoolboards.org](http://www.ohioschoolboards.org)) is an excellent source for board governance information, including the latest in education-related legislation and issues.

# FREE BOARD CANDIDATE WEBINAR

## BOARD CANDIDATE WEBINAR

AUG.

9

9:30 a.m.

Scan the QR code to register for the live webinar.



Access the webinar on-demand after Aug. 15.



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