

Section 1: The Political Party Qualification Standards Act

Section 2: Amendments to South Carolina Code 7-9-10

SECTION 7-9-10.Certification and decertification of political parties.

Political parties desiring to nominate candidates for offices to be voted on in a general or special election shall, before doing so, have applied to the State Election Commission (Commission) for certification as such. Parties shall nominate candidates of that party on a regular basis, as provided in this title, in order to remain certified. Any certified political party that fails to organize on the precinct level as provided by law, hold county conventions as provided by Sections 7-9-70 and 7-9-80, and hold a state convention as provided by Section 7-9-100; that fails to nominate candidates for national, state, multi-county district, countywide, or less than countywide office by convention or party primary as provided by Sections 7-11-20, 7-11-30, and 7-13-40; and that fails to certify the candidates as provided by Section 7-13-350 in at least one of two consecutive general elections held on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November of an even-numbered year, or that fails to nominate and certify candidates in any other election which might be held within the period of time intervening between the two general elections, must be decertified by the State Election Commission. The party must be notified in writing of its decertification at the last address of record. If the notification of decertification is returned as undeliverable, it must be placed on file in the office of the State Election Commission and with the Secretary of State.

Any decertified party or any noncertified party, organization, or association may obtain certification as a political party at any time by filing with the Commission a petition for the certification signed by ~~ten thousand~~ five thousand or more registered electors residing in this State, giving the name of the party, which must be substantially different from the name of any other party previously certified.

No petition for certification may be submitted to the Commission later than six months prior to any election in which the political party seeking certification wishes to nominate candidates for public office.

At the time a petition is submitted to the Commission for certification, the Commission shall issue a receipt to the person submitting the petition which reflects the date the petition was submitted and the total number of signatures contained therein. Once the petition is received by the Commission, the person submitting the petition shall not submit or add additional signatures.

If the Commission determines, after checking the validity of the signatures in the petition, that it does not contain the required signatures of registered electors, the person submitting the petition

must be notified and shall not submit any new petition seeking certification as a political party under the same name for one year from the date the petition was rejected.

Once a petition for certification has been submitted and rejected by the Commission, the same signatures may not be submitted in any subsequent petition to certify a new political party.

Once submitted for verification, a petition for certification may not be returned to the political party, organization, or association seeking certification, but shall become a part of the permanent records of the Commission.

Section 3. If any provision of this act is found to be invalid, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 4. This act shall take effect upon passage.