

By Senator Arrington

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A bill to be entitled

An act relating to candidate qualification; amending s. 99.021, F.S.; specifying that a person seeking to qualify for office as a candidate must be a registered member of a political party, or registered without any party affiliation, for 365 consecutive days preceding the beginning of qualifying for an election; providing that compliance with specified requirements is mandatory; providing construction; authorizing qualified candidates or certain political parties to challenge compliance with specified provisions by filing suit in a specified circuit court; prohibiting a person from being qualified as a candidate for nomination or election and appearing on the ballot under specified circumstances; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Paragraphs (b) and (c) of subsection (1) of section 99.021, Florida Statutes, are amended, and paragraph (f) is added to that subsection, to read:

99.021 Form of candidate oath.—

(1)

(b) In addition, any person seeking to qualify for nomination as a candidate of any political party shall, at the time of subscribing to the oath or affirmation, state in writing:

1. The party of which the person is a member.

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2. That the person has been a registered member of the political party for which he or she is seeking nomination as a candidate for at least 365 consecutive days preceding ~~before~~ the beginning of qualifying before ~~preceding~~ the general election for which the person seeks to qualify.

3. That the person has paid the assessment levied against him or her, if any, as a candidate for said office by the executive committee of the party of which he or she is a member.

(c) In addition, any person seeking to qualify for office as a candidate with no party affiliation shall, at the time of subscribing to the oath or affirmation, state in writing that he or she is registered without any party affiliation and that he or she has not been a registered member of any political party for at least 365 consecutive days preceding ~~before~~ the beginning of qualifying before ~~preceding~~ the general election for which the person seeks to qualify.

(f) The statements in subparagraph (b)2. and paragraph (c) constitute substantive requirements for the person completing the statement, and compliance with those requirements is mandatory. The sole method to enforce compliance with such requirements is contained in this paragraph. Compliance with subparagraph (b)2. and paragraph (c) may be challenged by a qualified candidate or a political party with qualified candidates in the same race by filing an action in the circuit court for the county in which the qualifying officer is headquartered. A person may not be qualified as a candidate for nomination or election and his or her name may not appear on the ballot if in an order that has become final, the court determines that:

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59 1. The person seeking to qualify for nomination as a
60 candidate of any political party has not been a registered
61 member of that party for the 365-day period preceding the
62 beginning of qualifying; or

63 2. The person seeking to qualify for office as a candidate
64 with no party affiliation has not been registered without party
65 affiliation for, or has been a registered member of any
66 political party during, the 365-day period preceding the
67 beginning of qualifying.

68 Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.