

# RULES FOR POLITICAL PARTIES IN ALBERTA PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

## WHAT IS A POLITICAL PARTY?

A political party is an organization whose primary objective is to elect candidates to the Legislative Assembly. The party can establish constituency associations in each of the 87 electoral divisions in the province.

## HOW DO PARTIES CHOOSE THEIR LEADERS?

When registered political parties select a new leader they will usually hold a leadership contest. Leadership contestants must be registered and must file a campaign return with the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO). Political parties are required to advise the CEO of the results of each leadership contest they conduct.

## HOW DO PARTIES CHOOSE THEIR CANDIDATES?

Registered political parties, or their registered constituency associations, usually select their candidates by holding a nomination contest. The rules for how the contest is run are left up to each political party. Nomination contestants are required to be registered with the CEO and must file a campaign return following the contest. Political parties, or their respective constituency associations, must inform the CEO of the results of each nomination contest held.

## HOW DOES A POLITICAL PARTY GAIN 'OFFICIAL' STATUS?

To be able to raise funds, incur expenses or transfer funds to or from the candidates it endorses, a political party must be registered with the CEO. One of three different public support criteria must be met before registration can be considered. In addition, certain details, required positions (e.g. Chief Financial Officer), associated names/signatures and specific financial institution and related account information must be provided when the application is made.

## WHAT ENTITLEMENTS DO REGISTERED POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE?

- Permitted to use voters list information for communicating with voters and soliciting contributions
- Provided authority to issue Alberta tax credit receipts to their contributors
- Supplied detailed polling division maps of electoral divisions whenever electoral boundaries are modified
- Authorized to obtain copies of voting poll books used in any electoral division, following each election

## SPENDING LIMITS

- Provincial election period spending limit per political party is set at \$2M
- Each political party is required to retain receipts for every expense over \$25 for a minimum period of 3 years following financial return reporting
- Advertisements sponsored by a political party must comply with CEO guidelines and indicate who is paying for the ad, include an authorization statement, etc.

## WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

See the [Political Party, Constituency Association and Candidate Guide to the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act](#) published by Elections Alberta. *The guide and referenced Act*, as well as the *Election Act*, are all available online at: [www.elections.ab.ca](http://www.elections.ab.ca)

## CONTRIBUTION RULES

- A political party cannot accept contributions unless it is registered
- Only persons who ordinarily reside in Alberta can make contributions to political parties – no corporate or union contributions are permitted
- Contributions from a single contributor cannot exceed \$4K in a calendar year, and this maximum includes a person's combined contributions to any political entity
- Political parties must record the name and address of every contributor, the amount of the contribution and the date on which it was made
- Official contribution receipts must be issued to each person who contributes to a political party
- Political party constituency associations are not permitted to accept contributions during an election campaign period
- Anonymous contributions to a political party of more than \$50 cannot be used
- Contributions must be deposited to a financial institution account on record with Elections Alberta
- Non-monetary contributions must be properly valued and recorded

## FINANCIAL FILING REQUIREMENTS

- Every registered political party is required to file a 'campaign return' of financial records within 6 months of election day
- Parties are also required to file quarterly contribution reports within 15 days of each quarter, and annual financial statements by March 31 of the following year – each financial filing is published on Elections Alberta's website
- Contributors who donate more than \$250 must be reported with name/address; total contributions received in amounts less than \$250 per person must be reported
- Names of persons who have contributed more than \$250 to a party are published on Elections Alberta's website, including the exact amounts contributed annually or during an election campaign period
- Failure by a political party to file a financial statement or campaign return by deadline results in an automatic late filing fee of \$500

## PENALTIES FOR RULE VIOLATION

- A political party's registration status is cancelled by the CEO if they do not submit required financial filings – cancellation of a party's registration results in automatic cancellation of the registration of all the party's constituency associations
- Any political party that colludes with a third party advertiser, or another political party, to circumvent contribution or spending limits is liable to a fine of up to \$100K
- Contravention of the \$2M spending limit can result in a political party, or their CFO, being liable to a fine of up to \$10K
- Failure to follow campaign filing requirements makes both a political party and their CFO liable to separate fines of up to \$5K
- Non-compliance with direction from the Chief Electoral Officer or the Election Commissioner makes a political party liable to a \$1K fine