



# Democracy Voucher Program

## 2021 Candidate Toolkit



**Seattle**  
Ethics & Elections  
Commission



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# 1. GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

*Note: The following pages provide candidates and campaigns an introduction to the City of Seattle's Democracy Voucher Program. The Ethics and Elections Commission's "Candidate and Political Committee Guide" contains more detailed information on the laws governing candidates for City office.*

## About the Program

The Democracy Voucher program is a voluntary program for Seattle candidates who are interested in qualifying for public funding to help finance their campaigns. In 2015, Seattle voters passed the "Honest Elections Seattle" initiative, which established a \$3 million property tax levy for 10 years to fund the program.

The Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) distributes four vouchers valued at \$25 each to eligible Seattle residents every municipal election year. Residents may support candidates of their choice by assigning their vouchers to participating candidates. Candidates who have completed the qualifying process may receive campaign funds from the SEEC.

## Becoming a Candidate

Before starting a campaign, interested candidates should contact the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission to set up an introductory training.

Individuals become a candidate once:

- 1) They spend funds to support or explore their candidacy.
- 2) They solicit or receive contributions.
- 3) They solicit pledges contingent on their decision to seek office.
- 4) They purchase commercial advertising space or broadcast time to promote their candidacy.
- 5) They give consent to anyone to do any of the above things.
- 6) They publicly announce their candidacy.

## Candidate Introductions

All City of Seattle candidates are invited to submit a 200-word Candidate Introduction and photo. The SEEC will translate the introduction into 15 additional languages and will publish the translated text to its website. Campaigns are free to use the introduction and translated text for campaign purposes. Submissions for Candidate Introductions will be accepted beginning in January 2021.

## What Democracy Voucher Candidates Agree To

Democracy Voucher Program candidates agree to several activities and rules.

1. Sign the *Democracy Voucher Program pledge* agreeing to abide by program rules.
2. Agree to abide by the maximum campaign valuation (MCV).
3. Agree to attend at least three debates ahead of both the primary election and the general election.
4. Program candidates who face oppositional spending may apply for release from the MCV.
5. Voucher proceeds may not be used to pay an immediate family member.
6. Candidates in the program are subject to contribution limits of \$300 from individual donors when running for City Attorney or City Council. Democracy Vouchers are not included in the \$300 contribution limit. Participating candidates for Mayor are subject to contribution limits of \$550, which includes the value of any assigned vouchers.

## Limits on Contributions

Candidates may not solicit money for or on behalf of any political action committee, political party, or any organization that makes an independent expenditure for or against any City of Seattle candidate within the same election cycle.

## Campaign Status

The SEEC will publish a participating candidate's status on the Democracy Voucher Program website using terms such as:

**Signed Pledge** — The candidate may collect qualifying contributions, qualifying signatures, and Democracy Vouchers.

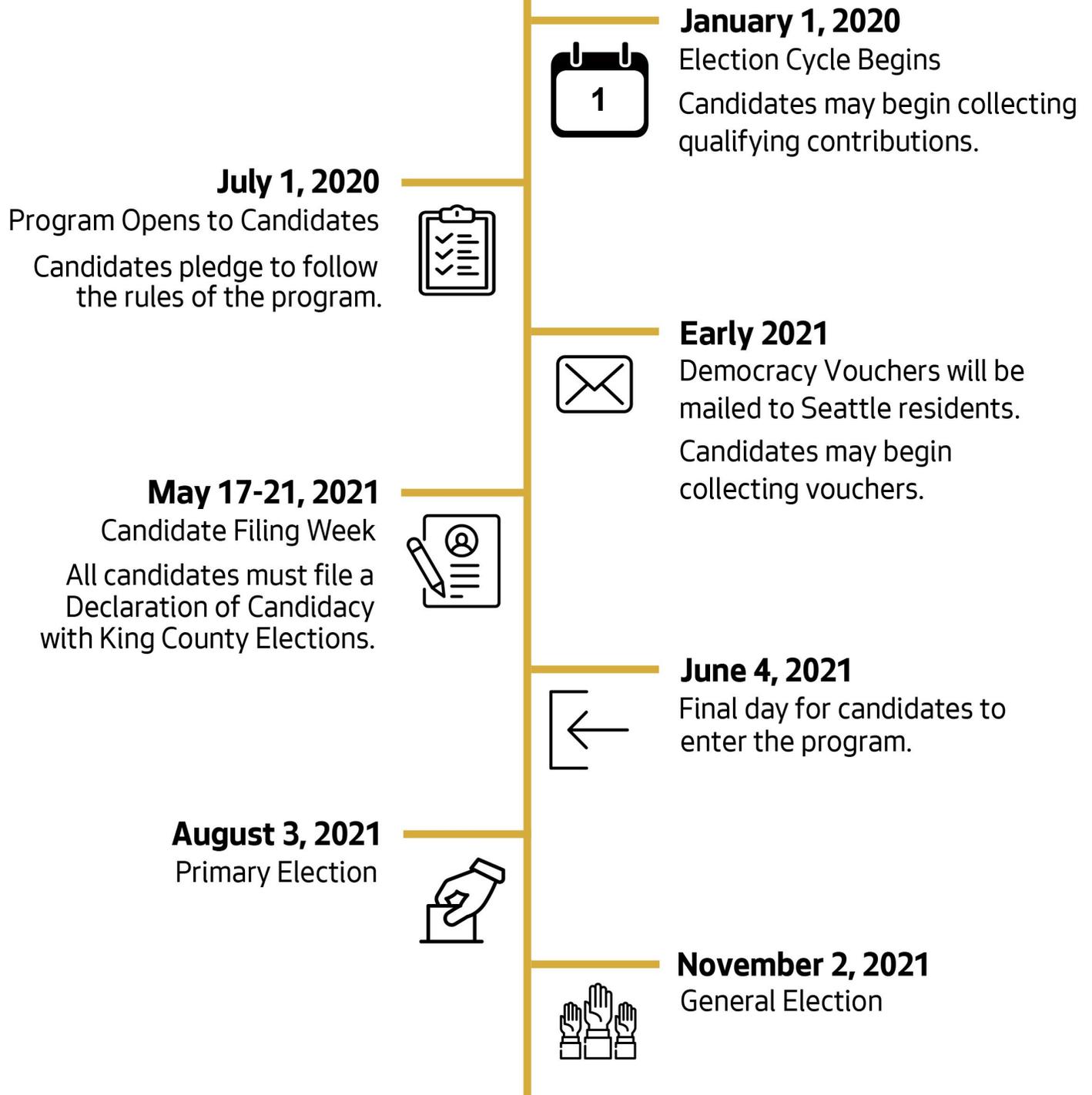
**Completed Qualifying Process** — The candidate may receive funds from Democracy Vouchers.

**Reached maximum voucher distribution for the entire election year** — The candidate cannot receive additional funding from the Democracy Voucher program because the candidate has reached the maximum voucher distribution for the entire year. Residents can still assign a candidate their vouchers as a sign of support.

**Withdrawn**

## 2. VOUCHER CANDIDATE TIMELINE

### Timeline



### 3. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The table below describes some of the roles and responsibilities of different agencies campaigns will interact with during the campaign process.

#### Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC)

- SEEC provides candidate training
- Campaign returns completed Qualifying Contributions Packet; campaign files qualifying documents
- Campaign returns Democracy Vouchers and Campaign Replacement Forms
- Candidate may provide 200-word introductory statement and photo
- Campaign may file voter pamphlet statement
- Campaign must file disclosure reports
  - SEEC Form C-1 – Campaign Registration Form; filed with the SEEC
  - SEEC Form F-1 – the City Personal Financial Affairs Statement; filed with the Seattle City Clerk
- Sign and submit a Democracy Voucher Program Candidate Pledge to the SEEC between July 1, 2020 and May 30, 2021

**SEEC:** [www.seattle.gov/elections](http://www.seattle.gov/elections)

**Democracy Voucher Program:** [www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher](http://www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher)

**SEEC Phone:** (206) 684-8500

**Democracy Voucher Program Phone:** (206) 727-8855

#### King County Elections (KCE)

- KCE verifies signatures on qualifying contribution documents and vouchers
- Campaign files Declaration of Candidacy
- KCE provides training

**KCE:** [www.kingcounty.gov/depts/elections.aspx](http://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/elections.aspx)

**KCE Phone:** (206) 296-8683

#### Washington Public Disclosure Commission (PDC)

- PDC provides Online Filing Software for Candidates (ORCA) and training
- Campaign files disclosure reports
- Campaign files the PDC Form F-1 – the State Personal Financial Affairs Statement
- Campaign files the PDC Form C-1 - Campaign Registration Form

**PDC:** [www.pdc.wa.gov](http://www.pdc.wa.gov)

**PDC Phone:** (360) 753-1111

## 4. ABOUT DEMOCRACY VOUCHERS

### What are Democracy Vouchers?

Seattle residents receive four \$25 Democracy Vouchers they may donate to candidates running for city office. Residents may assign one or more vouchers to any candidate who has pledged to be in the program.

### Who can use vouchers?

An individuals who is:

- At least 18 years of age;
- Either a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or lawful permanent resident ("green card holder"); and
- A resident of Seattle for at least 30 days.

### How do residents get vouchers?

Vouchers will be mailed in early 2021 (exact date TBD) to every eligible resident who is either a registered voter in Seattle or who has applied for Democracy Vouchers.

Residents will also be able to access their vouchers online through a secure portal.

### How are vouchers collected?

Vouchers may be collected in several ways.

1. Residents may mail their vouchers directly to the SEEC using the provided postage-paid envelope.
2. Residents may use their vouchers through an online portal.
3. Candidates and their campaign representatives may collect vouchers directly from residents.

In addition, candidates and their campaign representatives may use the *Campaign Replacement Form* to collect vouchers directly from residents who might have lost their vouchers. See detailed information on the *Campaign Replacement Form* on page 13.

### When can campaigns begin collecting Democracy Vouchers?

Campaigns can collect Democracy Vouchers once the signed Democracy Voucher Program pledge has been signed and returned to the SEEC, even before completing the qualifying process.

### What should campaigns do with collected Democracy Vouchers?

Keep vouchers in a secure place and return them to the SEEC in a timely manner. Campaigns may return vouchers in person, via a courier, or by mail using postage-paid envelopes provided by the SEEC.

Vouchers are reported as contributions only after the campaign receives a check from the SEEC.

### How will the SEEC ensure that only four vouchers per resident are counted?

The SEEC's secure voucher system is designed to track uniquely numbered vouchers for each resident. Only the first four vouchers received will be counted.

## How does the SEEC process vouchers?

These steps outline the time from when a voucher is received by the SEEC to the point the SEEC issues checks to campaigns. As vouchers are processed the voucher user name, candidate assigned to, and status will be made public. <http://www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher/program-data>

1. For each individual voucher received, the SEEC records the date the voucher was received and which candidate it is assigned to.
2. Vouchers assigned to program candidates are then delivered to KCE for signature verification.
3. KCE indicates for each voucher whether the signature matched or not.
  - The SEEC sends letters to residents with unmatched signatures. Residents have an opportunity to sign the letter and submit that signature for verification. A postage-paid envelope is provided.
4. For vouchers with verified signatures, the SEEC updates the voucher status to “accepted”.
  - \*Portal vouchers move to the status of accepted when the online assignment is complete.
5. The SEEC mails the campaign a check an amount equaling the total of all the newly accepted vouchers approximately twice a month. Once the check is issued, the voucher status will show as “redeemed”.

## How long does it take to process vouchers assigned to a candidate?

Vouchers take an average of two weeks to be received, processed, and for the SEEC to issue a check.

Factors that can impact this timeline include fluctuating voucher return rates and King County Elections’ processing timeline which may be impacted by events such as an election, or an influx of petitions to verify.

## How can campaigns find out how many vouchers have been assigned to them?

Campaigns may see the received vouchers by viewing the program data page here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher/program-data>

## Can residents change their voucher assignments?

No. Voucher assignments are considered final once they are received by the SEEC. If a candidate is considering withdrawing from the race or the program, it is critical to let the SEEC know as soon as possible so that the SEEC can update the program website and answer any incoming questions from residents.

## 5. QUALIFYING PROCESS

Candidates running for city office are required to collect qualifying contributions and qualifying signatures from Seattle residents.

### What are qualifying contributions?

Qualifying contributions are donations from Seattle residents. Candidates must collect a minimum number in order to receive public funding through the Democracy Voucher Program.

City Attorney and City Council candidates collect monetary contributions between \$10 and \$300 from Seattle residents. Mayoral candidates collect monetary contributions between \$10 and \$550 from Seattle residents. Qualifying contributions must come from the contributor's own funds. Democracy Vouchers do not count as qualifying contributions.

### Who is eligible to give a qualifying contribution?

An individual who is:

- At least 18 years of age;
- Either a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or lawful permanent resident ("green card holder"); and
- A resident of Seattle for at least 30 days.

### What are qualifying signatures?

Qualifying signatures do not require an associated donation, they can come from Seattle residents who want to support your participation in the Democracy Voucher Program.

### How many qualifying contributions and signatures are needed to qualify?

- Mayor - 600 qualifying contributions and 600 qualifying signatures
- City Attorney - 400 qualifying contributions and 400 qualifying signatures
- City Council positions Nos. 8 and 9 - 400 qualifying contributions and 400 qualifying signatures

### What is the process for collecting qualifying contributions?

Campaigns must use the *Candidate Qualifying Form* or the *SEEC remit envelope* when collecting in-person qualifying contributions. If campaigns are collecting online qualifying contributions, campaigns must ensure the software meets the SEEC requirements located on page 12 of this toolkit.

- *Candidate Qualifying Forms* may be used to collect a qualifying signature only or may be used to collect both a qualifying contribution and accompanying signature.
- *SEEC remit envelopes* are available free of charge from the SEEC for campaigns to use while collecting qualifying contributions.

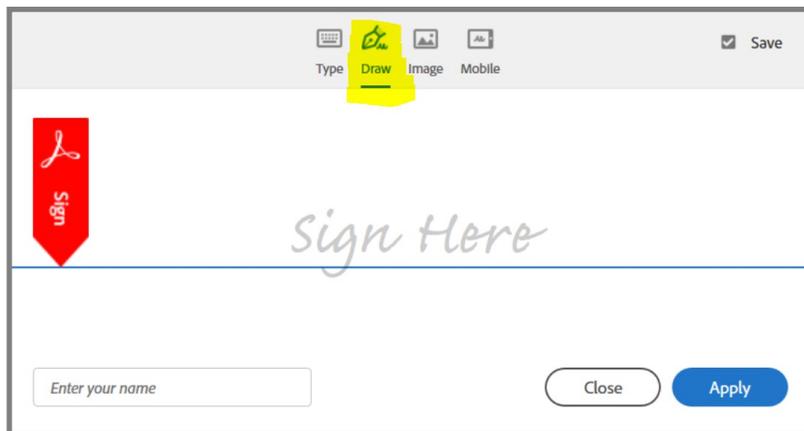
## Collecting Qualifying Contributions

Deposit all contributions within five business days of receipt and file C3s online with the PDC and SEEC to report the contributions.

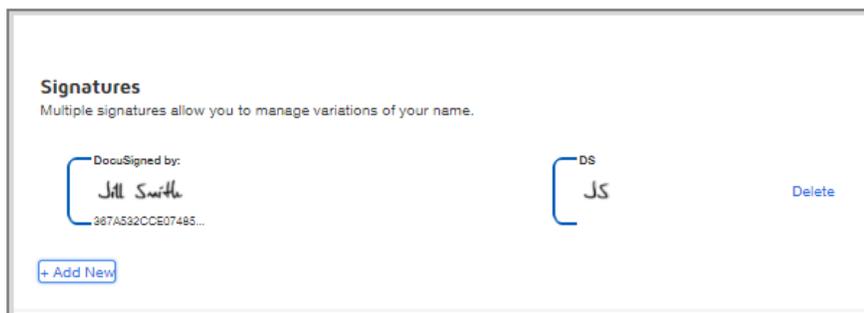
- For **cash or check contributions**, the resident completes the bottom portion of the *Candidate Qualifying Form* or completes the *SEEC remit envelope*. A signature from the resident is required so that we can validate the contribution.
- For **online contributions**, once you ensure your website and payment system meet the SEEC requirements for validation, then a signature from the resident is not required.
- For **signatures only**, ensure the resident completes the top section of the *Candidate Qualifying Form*.

The SEEC allows residents to complete the *Candidate Qualifying Form* electronically. There is commercially available software that will allow you to turn the form into an electronic document you can distribute to residents. Signatures gathered electronically must match the signature on file with King County Elections. To ensure the signatures match, the software you chose must have the ability for the resident to actually draw their signature, rather than using a default cursive font. Feel free to contact us to ensure your system will work.

This is an example of what works. See highlighted option. ►



This is an example of what does not work. See that a cursive font is not a real signature. ►



You may also mail the *Candidate Qualifying Form* to a resident for them to sign and return to you by mail or via scanned image such as a photo taken with the resident's cell phone.



As you gather the required contributions and signatures, complete the *Qualifying Contributions Spreadsheet* found here <http://www.seattle.gov/democracymvouchers/resources/candidate-and-campaign-resources> . Once you have collected all contributions and signatures, contact the SEEC.

Note: We recommend you gather 10% more than the minimum number of both contributions and signatures.

Your campaign will be asked to deliver an electronic copy of the *Qualifying Contributions Spreadsheet* and transaction log from any online payment system. Your campaign also must submit a hardcopy of the *Candidate Qualifying Forms* and *SEEC remit envelopes* to the SEEC.

Records associated with the qualifying process, both paper and electronic, must be preserved for six calendar years following the end of the election by either the campaign or the SEEC.

## **How does the SEEC process qualifying contributions and signatures?**

The SEEC takes several steps to review qualifying contributions and signatures.

1. Receive and review the spreadsheet for completeness.
2. Schedule a meeting with the treasurer to review online contributions.
3. Send forms/remit envelopes to KCE for signature review.
4. Verify C3 filing for each qualifying contribution and record findings on the spreadsheet.
5. Receive KCE verification results.
6. Contact the campaign with a summary of the results.

On average, campaigns can expect results from the SEEC within two weeks.



## FAQs from Seattle Residents

Here are some questions you may be asked and some sample answers you may wish to use.

### **Why do I (resident) need to contribute \$10 of my own money to show support for your campaign?**

The Democracy Voucher Program requires candidates show genuine commitment to running for office before being given public dollars to fund their campaign. One way to show that is to collect small-dollar donations from Seattle residents to show there is community support for my campaign.

### **I cannot donate to your campaign. Can I support your campaign in another way?**

Yes, you may sign your signature on the qualifying signature form and/or assign your Democracy Vouchers to my campaign.

### **Can I give a qualifying contribution to more than one candidate?**

Yes. You can give qualifying contributions to as many candidates as you want.

### **Can I give you my Democracy Vouchers to count as a qualifying contribution?**

No, qualifying contributions must come from the contributor's own funds in order to count. Again, this is to show community support for my campaign. However, you can give me your Democracy Vouchers.

### **Can I contribute both a qualifying contribution and my Democracy Vouchers?**

Yes, you may give both a qualifying contribution and Democracy Vouchers.

### **Will anyone know which campaign I contributed to?**

Yes. By law, contributions, including voucher assignments, are considered public information.

### **I cannot find my vouchers. Can I get new ones?**

Yes! Please complete the Campaign Replacement Form to assign your vouchers to our campaign. You may also contact the Democracy Voucher Program directly to request replacements.

### **Can I give my Democracy Vouchers to multiple candidates?**

Your Democracy Vouchers may be given to any participating Seattle City Council candidate, City Attorney candidate or candidate for Mayor.

### **Can I give all my vouchers to one candidate?**

You may give all your vouchers to a single candidate or divide your vouchers among multiple candidates.

## 6. ONLINE QUALIFYING CONTRIBUTIONS

### Online Qualifying Contribution Payment System Requirements

Campaigns may collect qualifying contributions from their campaign website using a payment system that meets the following DVP and SEEC requirements for verification. A separate signature is not required to validate online contributions if the payment system these requirements.

#### Democracy Voucher Program Requirements:

1. The name, address, and CVV on the bankcard are each confirmed by the system. The SEEC will visually confirm that this confirmation occurred for each transaction.
2. The donation page must collect and record, for SEEC review, the following information:
  - The contributor's first and last name that as typed in by the contributor.
  - The contributor's Seattle residential address as typed in by the contributor.
3. Add the following statement to the checkbox language required by SEEC Rule 6:
  - A. "I am contributing my own funds to help this candidate qualify for the Democracy Voucher Program, which allows qualified candidates to receive public funds to help finance their campaign."

Records associated with the online qualifying contributions shall be maintained by the campaign for six years following the end of the election cycle or the campaign.

#### SEEC Requirements:

##### Seattle Elections Code Administrative Rule 6

When a contribution is made by credit/debit card over the Internet, the electronic record of the transaction created and transmitted by the accountholder shall constitute a "written instrument." This record must be printed in hardcopy and preserved by the recipient candidate or political committee for five calendar years.

A committee must collect the following information regarding credit card contributions, in addition to the information that otherwise must be reported under the Elections Code:

- a. Name on Card
- b. Date Contribution Processed (submitted to the bank)
- c. Authorization Code provided by the bank
- d. Expiration Date of Credit/Debit Card
- e. Credit/Debit Card Type (Visa, MasterCard, American Express, etc.)
- f. Last Four Numbers of Credit/Debit Card

A web page on which credit/debit card contributions are solicited shall provide the following boxes for the contributor to check for self-screening and affirmation that: (a) the funds being contributed are the personal funds of the contributor and are not those of another, (b) the contributor is not a foreign national who lacks permanent resident status in the United States, (c) the contributor is making the contribution via the contributor's personal credit or debit card for which the contributor has a legal obligation to pay, and not through a corporate or business entity card or the card of another, and (d) the contributor is at least 18 years old. If the contribution exceeds \$100, the web site must also require the contributor to list his or her occupation and the name, city and state of his or her employer.

## 7. REPLACEMENT VOUCHERS

There are two ways a resident can get replacement vouchers; one is by connecting with the SEEC and one is through campaigns using the *Campaign Replacement Form*.

### **Replacements from the SEEC**

Seattle residents who previously received vouchers may request replacements by phone, email, mail, or by submitting a request through the web form.

Residents can request either new paper vouchers or access to their online vouchers.

### **Campaign replacement option**

The SEEC authorizes the use of the *Campaign Replacement Form* to serve as a voucher replacement option for residents who no longer have their vouchers.

Only candidates and their representatives may use the replacement form to collect vouchers from Seattle residents.

## EXAMPLE: Campaign Replacement Form

# Democracy Voucher Program - Campaign Replacement Form

### Instructions for Residents:

1. Sign the signature line and write today's date for each voucher you intend to give to the candidate.
2. Complete the contact information at the bottom of this form.



## Seattle Democracy Voucher 2021 Primary & General Election

NO CASH VALUE • NON-TRANSFERABLE

I am assigning these vouchers to the participating candidates whose name is printed here:

**Candidate Name:**

Print participating  
candidate's name

1. Campaign staff may prepopulate the candidate name or residents can fill this field in.

I attest that I obtained this Democracy Voucher properly and make this assignment freely and not in exchange for payment of any kind. I am aware that assignment may not be changed and there is no guarantee of availability of funds. Assignment is complete upon delivery to the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, the candidate, or her or his registered representative. Vouchers may only be assigned to qualified candidates.

**\$25**  
VOUCHER 1 OF 4

**Signature:**

2. Residents must sign their signature for each signature line if they wish to contribute their vouchers

**\$25**  
VOUCHER 2 OF 4

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**\$25**  
VOUCHER 3 OF 4

**Signature:**

**Date:**

3. Residents must sign the date for each vouchers.

**\$25**  
VOUCHER 4 OF 4

**Signature:**

**Date:**

### RESIDENT CONTACT INFORMATION:

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR CAMPAIGN STAFF ONLY**

1. Fill in the candidate or campaign name.
2. Sign the bottom of the form.
3. Fill in the resident's Voter ID.

Print Campaign Representative Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Campaign Representative Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Resident Voter ID: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Campaign staff complete this section

## 8. CAMPAIGN REPRESENTATIVES

Campaign representatives are individuals, either paid or volunteer, who are acting as members of the campaign. In this role, representatives are individuals and are not representing an organization.

### **Campaign Representatives**

Representatives may collect Democracy Vouchers, assist residents with replacement vouchers via the *Campaign Replacement Form*, and help residents access their vouchers online.

A candidate's representative is an individual who is registered with the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission for the purpose of receiving vouchers on behalf of the candidate per SMC 2.04.624(c).

Representatives must be registered with the SEEC prior to collecting vouchers. To do this, the campaign sends an email to the SEEC with the first and last names of each campaign representative. This list can be updated as frequently as needed. There is no limit to the number of representatives a campaign may have.

### **Campaign representatives may not “bundle”**

The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) defines "bundling" as the process in which campaign contributions are collected from donors, by a third party, and provided in bulk to a campaign.

Organizations, organized as either a non-profit or a for-profit, may not bundle contributions, or act as an intermediary or agent to transmit vouchers. Nor may an organization provide a means to transmit (e.g. a drop box) vouchers to a candidate or to the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission.

The PDC defines a "Democracy Voucher" as a campaign contribution and subject to RCW 42.17A. As a contribution, all statutes, rules and guidance that apply to contributions apply equally to Democracy Vouchers.

## 9. REPORTING & INVOICING

### **Reporting Requirements**

Democracy Voucher Program candidates are subject to the same reporting requirements as any candidate running for City office. The SEEC strongly encourages campaigns to schedule a compliance training that will cover reporting requirements.

### **Invoicing**

Qualified campaigns in good standing will receive a check of voucher proceeds by mail at least twice monthly.

#### **How the invoicing works:**

1. SEEC checks to ensure the campaign is current with all program requirements.
2. SEEC queries the voucher database to determine the funds available for the campaign, notifies the campaign of the amount, and then mails a check to the campaign.

# 10. REQUESTING RELEASE FROM LIMITS

## Release Requirements

Under certain circumstances the law allows candidates to request to be released from their contribution limit or from their maximum campaign valuation.

The current regulations are under review.

# 11. CLOSING OUT YOUR CAMPAIGN

Once the candidate is no longer a program candidate, the campaign must return all unused voucher proceeds to the program. The candidate is no longer considered a program candidate when any of the following happens:

- The candidate fails to advance to the General Election. This candidate may continue to redeem vouchers through the first business day in September (date subject to change) of the election year.
- The candidate fails to file a Declaration of Candidacy with King County Elections.
- The candidate withdraws from the race.

## **Rule 16E . Use of Democracy Voucher Proceeds – SMC 2.04.630(i) and (j)**

1. A participating candidate has 45 days from withdrawing, becoming ineligible, losing qualification, losing an election, or winning the general election to pay all campaign debts and obligations. If a participating candidate dies, the campaign has 90 days to pay all campaign debts and obligations.
2. After paying all campaign debts and obligations, any remaining funds, up to the amount of Democracy Vouchers redeemed by the candidate, will be considered Unspent Democracy Voucher Proceeds. Such funds must be refunded to the Democracy Voucher Program within 45 days (or 90 days upon the death of a participating candidate).

## **Conditions under which the campaign may be required to return all received voucher proceeds.**

If the campaign violates, or fails to complete, the program requirements, the Commission may order the return of all voucher proceeds ever received. Reasons may include exceeding the MCV, obtaining vouchers through forgery, or other violations of the program requirements or Elections Code.

Note: Rule 16E is currently under review and subject to change.