



# DEMOCRACY VOUCHER PROGRAM **2025 CANDIDATE TOOLKIT**

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**Seattle**  
Ethics & Elections  
Commission



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*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.

A person becomes a candidate once:

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

## Candidate Introductions

All City of Seattle candidates are strongly encouraged to submit a 200-word Candidate Introduction and photo. The SEEC will translate the introduction into additional languages and will publish the translations 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 2025.

## Democracy Voucher Candidate Agreements

### Democracy Voucher Program candidates agree to several activities and rules.

- Sign the Democracy Voucher Program Candidate Pledge agreeing to abide by all campaign laws and program rules.
- Agree to abide by the maximum campaign valuation (MCV) and contribution limits. Program candidates who face oppositional spending may apply for release from these limits.
- Agree to attend at least three debates ahead of both the primary election and the general election and to submit the debate reporting form one week after the election.
- Voucher proceeds may not be used to pay an immediate family member.

### 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 aforementioned collected Democracy Vouchers.

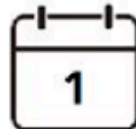
**Reached maximum voucher distribution:** Candidate cannot receive additional voucher funding for the election. Candidate may fundraise by collecting monetary contributions.

**Released from Individual Contribution Limit:** An individual may now donate a maximum of \$650 to this candidate (which includes the value of any Democracy Vouchers previously given).

**Withdrawn:** Candidate withdraws from the program or election.

# Timeline

**January 9, 2025**  
*Establish Seattle Residency*  
Candidates must be a Seattle resident by this date.



**January 1, 2024**

*Election Cycle Begins*

Candidates may sign the pledge before 2025 and begin collecting qualifying contributions and signatures.

**February 24, 2025**

*Democracy Vouchers are Mailed*

Candidates may begin collecting vouchers.



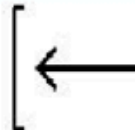
**May 5-9, 2025**  
*Candidate Filing Week*  
All candidates must file a Declaration of Candidacy with King County Elections.



**May 23, 2025**

*Final Pledge Day*

This is the last day candidates can pledge to join the Democracy Voucher Program.



**August 5, 2025**  
*Primary Election*



**November 4, 2025**

*General Election*



Form	Description	When	Where
C1	Statement of registration.	Within two weeks of becoming a candidate.	E-file with the PDC and the <u>SEEC</u> .
SEEC F1	Statement of personal financial affairs (Seattle).	Within two weeks of becoming a candidate and annually if elected.	E-file with the <u>Seattle City Clerk</u> .
PDC F1	Statement of personal financial affairs (WA State).	Within two weeks of becoming a candidate and annually if elected.	E-file with the <u>PDC</u> .
Pledge for Democracy Voucher Program (DVP) Candidates*	Agreement to participate in the DVP and abide by its rules.	Before soliciting or accepting vouchers and no later than two weeks after filing a Declaration of Candidacy.	E-mail to the <u>DVP</u> .
Declaration of Candidacy and Filing Fee	A form to place the candidate's name on the ballot and the fee that accompanies that form.	During filing week which begins the Monday two weeks before Memorial Day and ends the following Friday. In 2025, that is May 5 - 9, 2025.	E-file with <u>King County Elections</u> (KCE) or contact <u>KCE</u> for information on how to file in person.

\*Participation in the DVP is voluntary. If the candidate does not participate in the program, the pledge is not required.

### What are Democracy Vouchers?

Seattle residents receive four \$25 Democracy Vouchers they may donate to candidates running for Mayor, City Council, or City Attorney. Residents may assign one or more vouchers to any candidate who pledges to be in the program.

### Who can use vouchers?

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")
- A resident of Seattle for at least 30 days

Residents do not have to be a registered voter to use Democracy Vouchers.

- Those who meet eligibility requirements listed above may apply for Democracy Vouchers by contacting our office.

### How do residents get vouchers?

Vouchers will be mailed beginning February 24, 2025. Residents will also be able to access their vouchers online through a secure portal.

### How are vouchers returned?

Vouchers may be returned 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 online.
3. Candidates and their campaign representatives may collect vouchers and *Campaign Replacement Forms* directly from residents.

### When can campaigns begin collecting Democracy Vouchers?

Campaigns who have returned a Pledge can collect Democracy Vouchers beginning February 24, 2025, even if they are still working on the qualifying process.

Democracy Vouchers collected before a campaign is qualified are held and released to the campaign once they are qualified.

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

Keep vouchers secure and return them to the SEEC in a timely manner. Campaigns may return vouchers in-person 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. Campaigns are not required to keep a record of returned vouchers.

## 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 a check to campaigns. As vouchers are processed, the resident's name, the candidate assigned to, and the status of the voucher will be made public [here](#).

1. For each voucher, the SEEC records the date it was received and which candidate it is assigned to. These vouchers are now in the "received" status.
2. Vouchers are then delivered to King County Elections (KCE) for signature verification.
3. KCE indicates whether the signature was matched or not.
  - The SEEC sends letters to residents with challenged 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 automatically move to the status of "accepted" when the online assignment is complete.
5. The SEEC mails the campaign a check in the amount equaling the total of all the newly accepted vouchers approximately twice a month. Once the check is issued, the voucher status changes to "redeemed" and will not be paid out on again.

## 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 activities 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 status of returned vouchers by viewing the program data page [here](#).

## Can residents change their voucher assignments?

No. Valid 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.



### What are qualifying contributions?

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

Candidates collect monetary contributions of at least \$10 from Seattle residents' 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")
- A resident of Seattle for at least 30 days.

To speed up the SEEC auditing process, we recommend you collect from registered voters (learn more about the voter file on page 13).

### What are qualifying signatures?

Signatures from residents showing they support your use of the program to fund your campaign. There are two types you can collect:

1. Signatures from Seattle residents who want to support your participation in the Democracy Voucher Program but are unable to give a monetary donation.
2. Signatures accompanying cash or check qualifying contributions.

To speed up the SEEC auditing process, we recommend you collect from registered voters.

### How many do I need?

The numbers vary by position. View the 2025 Maximum Campaign Valuation and Contribution Limits chart for details.

### When can I begin collecting, and how do I do it?

You may start collecting qualifying contributions and signatures once the election cycle begins. For 2025, that would be January 1, 2024.

Campaigns must use the *Candidate Qualifying Form* or the *SEEC remit envelope* when collecting in-person qualifying contributions.

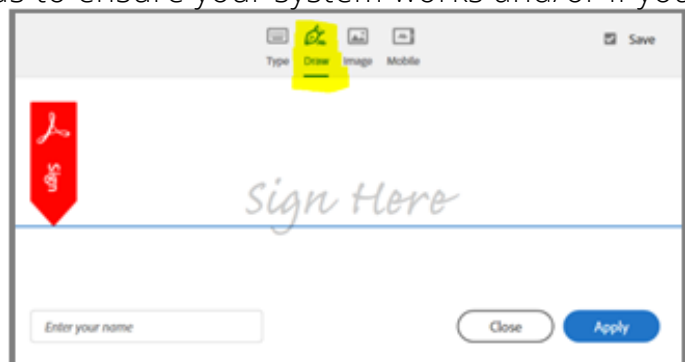
- *Candidate Qualifying Forms* are used to collect signatures of support or may be used to collect both a qualifying contribution and accompanying signature.
- *SEEC remit envelopes* are available free of charge from the SEEC for campaigns to use while collecting qualifying contributions.

Deposit all contributions within five business days of receipt and file C-3s online with the PDC and SEEC to report the contributions.

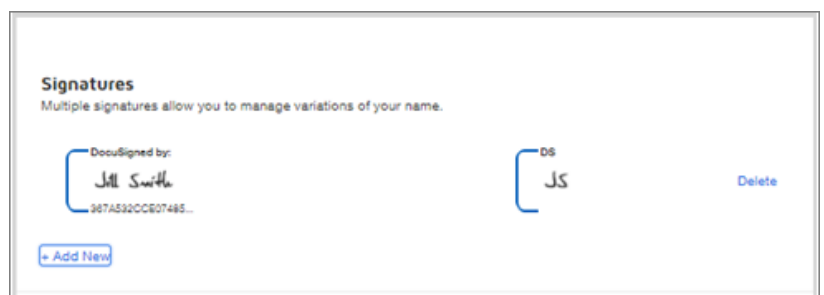
- For **cash, check, or person-to-person banking app contributions**, the resident completes the bottom portion of the *Candidate Qualifying Form* or completes the *SEEC remit envelope*. A signature from the resident is required so that we can validate the contribution.
- For **signatures only**, ensure the resident completes the top section of the *Candidate Qualifying Form*.
- For **online contributions**, once you ensure your website and payment system meet the SEEC requirements for validation, (see page 12 for system requirements) a signature from the resident is not required to validate this type of contribution. They do not have to complete the Candidate Qualifying Form.

Campaigns may host the *Candidate Qualifying Form* on their official campaign website. There is commercially available software that will allow you to turn the form into an electronic document. These online signatures must match the signature on file with King County Elections. To ensure the signatures can be verified, the software you choose *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 works and/or if you'd like us to test a form.

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 >>>



As you gather the required contributions and signatures, fill out the *Signature Tracker* found [here](#). Once you have collected all contributions and signatures, contact the SEEC.

Qualifying contribution and signature forms can be translated into a supported language upon request by the candidate. For a list of the available languages please visit our website and navigate to our "[resources](#)" section for more information.

**Note:** We recommend you gather 10 percent more than the minimum number of both contributions and signatures in case there are signature failures.

## Submitting Qualifying Documentation

2025 TOOLKIT

Your campaign will be asked to deliver an electronic copy of the *Qualifying Contributions and Signature Tracker* and the transaction log from any online payment system to our office. Your campaign also must submit electronic or hardcopies of the *Candidate Qualifying Forms* and *SEEC remit envelopes* to the SEEC. Find more information on page 13.

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.

## What does the SEEC do next?

The SEEC audits each signature and contribution to ensure they are from Seattle residents, which district they are from (if needed), and if the signatures match. Campaigns can submit their signatures and contributions in batches ( see page 13) until they have the minimum needed to qualify. On average, campaigns can expect results from the SEEC within two to three weeks.

## What are the individual contribution limits?

Candidates running for Seattle offices are subject to a limit on how much they can receive from an individual or organization.

The amounts vary by position. See this [chart](#).

## What are the campaign limits for candidates participating in the program?

Candidates participating in the Democracy Voucher Program must honor the campaign limits for each office. These limits include money from both Democracy Vouchers and private contributions. See this [chart](#).

Candidates who reach their campaign limit must stop accepting contributions but may continue to collect vouchers towards the General election.

Campaign Limits for Participating Candidates	City Attorney	City Council At-Large	City Council District	Mayor
Campaign Spending Limits (Primary Election Only)	\$225,000	\$225,000	\$112,500	\$450,000
Combined Campaign Spending Limits for Primary and General Election	\$450,000	\$450,000	\$225,500	\$450,000

## 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 has these requirements.

### Additional 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 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:
  - "I am contributing my own funds to help this candidate qualify for the Democracy Voucher Program, allowing them 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.

### Seattle Elections Code Administrative Rule 6 - Receipts

When a contribution is made by a credit/debit card over the internet, the electronic record of the transaction created and transmitted by the account holder 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 website must also require the contributor to list his or her occupation and the name, city and state of his or her employer.

## Submitting the Qualifying Tracker and Documents

Campaigns must fill out and submit the Qualifying Contribution and Signature Tracker and all other documents for internal SEEC review before being deemed qualified. Only a candidate certified as qualified by the SEEC may redeem democracy vouchers.

### Qualifying Tracker Submission Timeline

Each submission in the chart below requires the respective numbers of both the qualifying contributions **and** signatures.

Position	1st Submission	2nd Submission	3rd Submission	Total
Mayor	100	250	250	600
City Attorney	100	150	150	400
City Council At-Large	100	150	150	400
City Council District	100	50	-	150

### Submitting Qualifying Contributions and Signature Forms

You may submit these documents either in-person or electronically – a shared online drive that the SEEC can download from has proven the most successful.

Electronic documents should be named the resident's first and last name only. If there are multiple people with the same name then a number can be added at the end to distinguish each file. Example: John Smith 2. No need for your campaign's name or the date.

### Seattle Voter File

It's important to pair the qualifying process with the Seattle Voter File, which you may obtain through submitting a Public Disclosure Request (PDR) [here](#). This voter file is updated near the beginning of each month. It is recommended that a new file is requested each month to ensure the most accurate voter data. You will use this file to fill out column C in the qualifying tracker (see image below).

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
[INSERT CANDIDATE NAME and POSITION TITLE]									
For Campaign Use								For SEEC Use	
Contributor First Name	Contributor Last Name	City of Seattle Voter ID	Contributor Residential Address	Monetary Contribution Type	Monetary Contribution documents provided?	Signature Form?	C3 Filed?	Contribution Confirmed?	KCE or SEEC Validation Confirmed?

All qualifying credit card donations are subject to review during the qualification process. Staff from the SEEC will meet with the campaign's treasurer to witness the download and transfer of this file during a shared-screen meeting.

### **Contributions cannot be solicited or accepted from the following:**

- Those who have received more than \$250,000 in the last two years through a City contract.
- Those who have spent or paid someone more than \$5,000 to lobby the City in the last 12 months.
- A 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.

Qualifying contributions must come from the contributor's own funds. Democracy Vouchers do not count as qualifying 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.

### **Candidates shall not use Democracy Voucher proceeds:**

- For any cash payments. Cash includes but is not limited to currency and cash equivalents such as gift cards and gift certificates;
- In violation of any law;
- To pay the candidate (except to repay or reimburse a loan to the candidate's political committee or campaign in an amount not greater than that provided in RCW 42.17A.445 (3) or WAC 390-05-400;
- To pay a member of the candidate's immediate family as defined in SMC 4.16.030;
- To pay any entity which the candidate or an immediate family member holds a 10 percent or greater ownership interest;
- To pay any amount over fair market value for any services, goods, facilities, or things of value;
- To pay any penalty or fine;
- To pay any inaugural costs; or
- To pay any office funds costs.

Portal is the Democracy Voucher Program's online platform that allows residents to easily and quickly assign vouchers. Residents do not receive paper vouchers in the future, but they may revert back to paper vouchers by calling the Democracy Voucher Program and opting out of Portal.

### How it Works

Residents who assign their vouchers using the online Portal are authenticated when they first create their user account. To create their account, residents must first locate the invite code printed on their vouchers or receive an invite email from our office. Residents then submit their full name, date of birth, and last-four of their Social Security number to a third-party identity validation provider. That information is then matched to credit bureaus, public utility records, and/or university records to verify the resident's identity is associated with the record in the program's database.

### The Benefits of Portal

As a result of not requiring signature verification, Portal users will see their vouchers accepted and redeemed much quicker than with paper vouchers. In turn, this allows the candidates to gain access to the funds sooner.

For candidates, Portal is significantly more streamlined in getting voucher funding. Relative to paper vouchers, the use of Portal cuts down the steps residents must take to use their vouchers and is quicker for staff to process than both paper vouchers and campaign forms. Therefore, if candidates can persuade a resident to donate via Portal, it significantly increases the chances of success and payout.

Candidates are welcome to place the DVP Portal link on their own websites.

The screenshot shows the top of the City of Seattle Online Democracy Vouchers Portal. At the top is a dark blue header with the "Democracy Vouchers" logo and a user name "Annie Tran". Below the header, the text "CITY OF SEATTLE" and "Online Democracy Vouchers" is displayed. On the left, there is a "Language Preference" dropdown menu set to "English" and a "Submit Selection" button. To the right, a message states: "This page allows Seattle residents to access and assign their Democracy Vouchers online. Once an online account is created, residents will no longer receive Democracy Vouchers by mail. Democracy Vouchers for future elections will be accessed online." Below this message is an "Assign Vouchers" button. At the bottom of the page, a footer provides contact information: "Please e-mail democracyvoucher@seattle.gov or call 206-727-8855 for assistance."

Residents can get new replacement vouchers by contacting the SEEC. Residents who do not have their vouchers may also sign 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 [here](#).

## Request Replacement Democracy Vouchers

Name:

\*

Birth Date (Month/Day):

\*

House Number:

\*

E-mail:

\*

\*How would you like your vouchers?

☒ Mail my paper vouchers

☐ E-mail me an invitation code for online vouchers (e-mail required)

Language Preference:

\*



### Campaign Replacement Form 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 original vouchers.

The Commission has strict rules regarding the collection of Campaign Replacement Forms. Read [Rule 16.J](#) to ensure compliance

Campaigns may post the Campaign Replacement Form (CRF) on their websites but please ensure the "Signature" portions are modified to be "Drawn-in" (similar to the qualifying process on page 10). Otherwise, they will be rejected by King County Elections and your campaigns will not receive these funds. Note: there will be a nominal fee for using a third-party program to do this, the price will depend on the supplier. Campaigns may send a link to where the form is hosted on their website but may not share a direct link to the form.

Campaigns must request a copy of this form to host on their website or to use in the field. This form *cannot* be shared in any way with the public but *can* within the campaign.

Only candidates and their named representatives may use the CRF to collect vouchers from Seattle residents. Paid signature gathering of CRF is permitted, however, only a limited number of campaign staff are granted this privilege, must attend a training before collecting, and sign an attestation. The following chart is the number of paid representatives allowed to provide and collect CRF:

Position	Number of Paid Collectors
Mayor	5
City Attorney	5
City Council At-Large	5
City Council District	2

Lastly, per SEEC Rule 16.i. While collecting Replacement Forms, Collectors and Paid Collectors: "Shall disclose their role in writing via a conspicuous and legible sign, placard, or badge stating, "DEMOCRACY VOUCHER CAMPAIGN REPLACEMENT FORM COLLECTOR for [Candidate]."

## SAMPLE: Campaign Replacement Form



# 2025 Seattle Democracy Voucher - Campaign Replacement Form

### Information for Residents

- Democracy Vouchers are used by residents to distribute public funds to local campaigns.
- Seattle residents get a **total of four Democracy Vouchers** to assign to participating candidates.
- Vouchers may be given to one candidate or multiple candidates running for **mayor, city council, or city attorney**.
- Giving vouchers is the same as donating to a campaign and will be **public information**.

### 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.

I am assigning these vouchers to the participating candidate:

Candidate Name:

I attest that I received this Democracy Voucher properly and make this assignment freely and not in exchange for payment of any kind. I am aware the 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 the campaign's representative. Vouchers may only be assigned to program candidates.

**\$25**

VOUCHER 1 OF 4

Signature:

Date:

**\$25**

VOUCHER 2 OF 4

Signature:

Date:

**\$25**

VOUCHER 3 OF 4

Signature:

Date:

**\$25**

VOUCHER 4 OF 4

Signature:

Date:

**RESIDENT CONTACT INFORMATION** (Complete the \*asterisked sections for your voucher assignment to be valid):

Printed Name\*:  Date of Birth\*:

Address\*:

Phone Number:  Email Address:

### FOR CAMPAIGN STAFF ONLY

1. Fill in the candidate or campaign name.
2. Complete this section of the form.
3. Fill in the resident's Voter ID.

Print Campaign Representative Name:

Campaign Representative Signature:

Collection Address or Location:

Collection Date / Time:

Voter ID:

### 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 name 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.

### Democracy Vouchers are Subject to "Bundling" Restrictions

The Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) defines "bundling" as the process in which campaign contributions are collected from donors by a third party which then delivers those contributions 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.

*Candidates may use answers listed below as a guide to answer FAQs from residents.*

### **Why do I 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 participating 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 may assign your Democracy Vouchers to me.

### **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?**

Yes. Your Democracy Vouchers may be given to any City of Seattle candidate who is participating.

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

Yes. You may assign all your vouchers to a single participating candidate or divide your vouchers among multiple participating candidates.

### 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 covers reporting requirements.

### Invoicing

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

#### How Invoicing Works

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

Under certain circumstances the law allows Primary and General candidates to request release from their contribution limit and/or from their maximum campaign valuation if faced with significant oppositional spending.

See [SMC 2.04.634.B](#) for details.

See also: Administrative Rule 16.G. Democracy Voucher Program / Primary Elections  
This rule only applies if a candidate is in an election race that will have a primary election.

### 1. Campaign Spending and Contribution Limits

- a. Pursuant to SMC 2.04.634.B, the Commission may release a candidate from the maximum campaign valuation identified in Table A for SMC 2.04.634 or from the contribution limits imposed by SMC 2.04.630.B.
- b. If the Commission releases a candidate from the maximum campaign valuation limits or contribution limits described in Rule 16.G.1.a above, the limits are reinstated the day the candidate again becomes eligible to redeem democracy vouchers.
- c. If the Commission released a candidate from maximum campaign valuation limits or contribution limits as described in Rule 16.G.1.b above, then the money raised and spent in excess of the Primary maximum campaign valuation during the period commencing with the Commission's release decision date and ending with the Rule 16.G.1.b reinstatement date shall not count toward the total campaign valuation limit in Table A for SMC 2.04.634

Note: Requesting release from the DVP contribution limit can occur at any time.

Campaigns do not have to have reached or been released from the MCV to request release from the contribution limit.

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 received 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.

### Administrative Rule 16.D. Use of Democracy Voucher Proceeds - SMC 2.04.634.C and E

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 the Democracy Vouchers redeemed by the candidate, will be considered Unspent Democracy Voucher Proceeds. Such funds must be refunded to the Democracy Voucher Program within those 45 days (or 90 days upon the death of a participating candidate).
3. A participating candidate or their treasurer can request an extension, which the Director shall grant upon a showing that complying with these deadlines would constitute an unreasonable hardship.

### **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.