

**§356. Review and challenge of petitions**

**1. Review.** When presented with a nomination petition, the Secretary of State shall review it and, if the petition contains the required number of certified names and is properly completed, shall accept and file it.

[PL 1985, c. 161, §6 (NEW).]

**2. Challenges.** The procedure for challenging the validity of a nomination petition or of names upon a petition is as follows.

A. Only a registered voter residing in the electoral division of the candidate concerned may file a challenge. The challenge must be in writing and must set forth the reasons for the challenge. The challenge must be filed in the office of the Secretary of State by 5 p.m. on the 5th business day after the final date for filing petitions under section 354, subsection 8-A. [PL 1989, c. 166, §4 (AMD); PL 1989, c. 502, Pt. D, §17 (AMD).]

B. Within 7 days after the final date for filing challenges and after due notice of the hearing to the candidate and to the challenger, the Secretary of State shall hold a public hearing on any challenge properly filed. The challenger has the burden of providing evidence to invalidate the petitions or any names upon the petitions. [PL 1985, c. 161, §6 (NEW).]

C. The Secretary of State shall rule on a challenge within 5 days after the completion of the hearing described in paragraph B. [PL 1985, c. 161, §6 (NEW).]

D. A challenger or a candidate may appeal the decision of the Secretary of State by commencing an action in the Superior Court. This action must be conducted in accordance with the Maine Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 80C, except as modified by this section. This action must be commenced within 5 days of the date of the decision of the Secretary of State. Upon timely application, anyone may intervene in this action when the applicant claims an interest relating to the subject matter of the petition, unless the applicant's interest is adequately represented by existing parties. The court shall issue its written decision containing its findings of fact and conclusions of law and setting forth the reasons for its decision within 20 days of the date of the decision of the Secretary of State. [PL 2011, c. 342, §10 (AMD).]

E. Any aggrieved party may appeal the decision of the Superior Court, on questions of law, by filing a notice of appeal within 3 days of that decision. The record on appeal must be transmitted to the Law Court within 3 days after notice of appeal is filed. After filing notice of appeal, the parties have 4 days to file briefs and appendices with the clerk of courts. As soon as the record and briefs have been filed, the court shall immediately consider the case. The court shall issue its decision within 14 days of the date of the decision of the Superior Court. [PL 1985, c. 161, §6 (NEW).]

F. Only a voter of the county establishing a charter commission may challenge the nomination petition for county charter commission member. The challenge must be in writing and must set forth the reasons for the challenge. The challenge must be filed in the office of the Secretary of State before 5 p.m. on the 55th day following the order of the county officers under Title 30-A, section 1321, subsection 1, or the receipt of a certificate of sufficiency under Title 30-A, section 1321, subsection 4. [PL 1987, c. 737, Pt. C, §§63, 106 (AMD); PL 1989, c. 6 (AMD); PL 1989, c. 9, §2 (AMD); PL 1989, c. 104, Pt. C, §§8, 10 (AMD).]

[PL 2011, c. 342, §10 (AMD).]

**SECTION HISTORY**

PL 1985, c. 161, §6 (NEW). PL 1987, c. 737, §§C63,C106 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 6 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 9, §2 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 104, §§C8,C10 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 166, §4 (AMD). PL 1989, c. 502, §D17 (AMD). PL 2009, c. 253, §22 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 342, §10 (AMD).

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