

Republicans Call Primary

The Smith County Republican Party has called a primary to be held on May 3, 2022, for all county offices that will be on the August 2022 general ballot.

A Republican primary for county offices will be a different process for Smith County. For the past several years, county candidates have all been considered “Independent” candidates. With the local GOP decision, the winner of the primary election will be listed as a “Republican” on the August ballot.

The choice to call for a primary has always been in the hands of both local political parties and in recent history, both parties decided against the primary process. The two parties also have the choice to select nominees by caucus, another process both parties have not implemented in recent history.

At the present time, it is not known whether the Democratic Party will nominate any candidates by primary election or caucus or choose to do neither. If the party chooses to do neither, no candidate will be listed (on the August county general ballot) as a “Democrat.”

For the 2022 election cycle, parties must notify the local election commission office if they wish to have a primary by August 23, 2021. The law also allows for the parties to rescind that call no later than November 19, 2021.

Persons interested in running as an “Independent” candidate will still have that option available, but with an earlier qualifying deadline. Although qualifying at the same time as the May primary candidates, the Independent candidates will not have their name listed on the May ballot but on the August General Ballot only.

With the Republican Party request for a primary, all candidates (except school board and city offices) are impacted with a qualifying deadline earlier than in recent elections. Under state law, if one party has a primary, all candidates must qualify at the same time, including independent candidates. In this case, the qualifying deadline is Noon, February 17, 2022. The first day to pick up petitions will be December 20, 2021.

The offices currently subject to a May primary are Mayor, County Commission (All Districts), Trustee, General Sessions Judge, Sheriff, Circuit Court Clerk, County Clerk, Register of Deeds, and Road Superintendent (To fill an unexpired term). The Sheriff and Highway Superintendent candidates will have an earlier filing due February 3, 2022 with the Peace Officers Standards & Training and the TN Highway Officials Certification Board, respectively.

Meanwhile, School Board and any city candidates are not subject to primary elections and will continue to have the usual qualifying deadline of April 7, 2022. They will be able to pick up petitions on February 7, 2022.

“Our office understands this is an unfamiliar process for potential candidates,” said Yvonne Gibbs, Smith County’s Administrator of Elections. “Any candidate or voter with questions are encouraged to call our office.”

No official primary request has been received from either party regarding the 15th Judicial District Offices.