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**CIRCULATING AND CANVASSING CITY/TOWNSHIP  
NOMINATING AND QUALIFYING PETITION FORMS**

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Michigan Department of State  
Bureau of Elections  
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## **CIRCULATING AND CANVASSING CITY/TOWNSHIP PETITION FORMS**

The following is a summary of the laws, court rulings and Attorney General Opinions which govern the validity of signatures on city/township nominating and qualifying petition forms.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- A signature is acceptable if it includes the signer's signature and name (cursive and printed); the signer's street address or rural route number; the signer's Zip Code; and the date on which the signer's signature was affixed to the petition.
- Each signer must affix his or her signature to a petition sheet which bears -- in the heading of the sheet -- the name of the city or township and county in which the signer is registered to vote. The heading of the petition sheet shall not list more than one county, city or township.
- A signature is invalid if the signer is not registered to vote in Michigan, or registered to vote in the state but not in the city or township listed in the heading of the petition sheet.
- A petition sheet is acceptable if the circulator's statement includes the circulator's signature and name (cursive and printed); the date on which the circulator's signature was affixed to the petition; the circulator's complete residence address (street address or rural route number, city or township, state, and Zip Code); and for a circulator who is not a resident of Michigan, the circulator's county of registration (if registered to vote) and the circulator's mark (cross or check mark) in the nonresident box in the Certificate of Circulator.
- A petition sheet is invalid and none of the signatures affixed to the petition sheet shall be counted as valid if the circulator is not a resident of Michigan and fails to mark the nonresident box in the Certificate of Circulator.
- Certain variations are accepted. For further information, see "Acceptable Sheet Variations" and "Acceptable Signature Variations" below.

### **PETITION SHEET VALIDITY**

#### **DEFECTS IN THE HEADING WHICH RENDER AN ENTIRE SHEET INVALID**

A petition sheet is invalid if it contains one or more of the following defects in the heading of the sheet:

- City or township and county where circulated are not listed.

- More than one county or more than one city or township listed.
- Village or “unincorporated place” is listed instead of township of circulation when village or “unincorporated place” is not contained within a single township.
- Required information concerning candidate or office sought omitted. This includes the candidate’s name and address, party affiliation (if applicable), the office sought, and the district served by the office (if any). In addition, judicial candidates must follow the instructions for completing the heading that are printed on the reverse side of the nominating petition.

### **DEFECTS IN THE CERTIFICATE OF CIRCULATOR WHICH RENDER AN ENTIRE SHEET INVALID**

A petition sheet is invalid if it contains one or more of the following defects in the circulator’s certificate:

- Not signed by circulator.
- Signed by more than one circulator.
- The date indicated in the Certificate of Circulator is missing, incomplete, or earlier than the date entered by every petition signer.
- The circulator’s residence address is missing, incomplete, or includes a P.O. Box in lieu of a street address or rural route. (Note, however, that the circulator’s failure to include the correct Zip Code, by itself, is not a fatal defect.)
- Special note for nonresident circulators only: A petition sheet is invalid if the circulator is not a resident of Michigan and fails to mark the nonresident box in the Certificate of Circulator.

### **ACCEPTABLE SHEET VARIATIONS**

The following variations do not render a petition sheet invalid:

- With respect to the selection of the “City” or “Township” in the heading of the petition, the following principles apply:
  - A petition sheet is valid even if the circulator fails to strike either the “City” or “Township” in the heading. (Note: the sheet is valid regardless of whether (1) there is only one city or township by that name in the county listed in the heading, or (2) there is both a city and a township by that name in the county listed in the heading.)

- A petition sheet is valid even if the circulator strikes both the “City” or “Township” in the heading. (Note: the sheet is valid regardless of whether (1) there is only one city or township by that name in the county listed in the heading, or (2) there is both a city and a township by that name in the county listed in the heading.)
- There is only one circumstance in which the circulator’s selection of the “city” or “township” will render the signature invalid – if the circulator strikes the incorrect unit of government. (For example, if the circulator indicates that the signers are registered to vote in the City of Lansing but in fact they are registered to vote in Lansing Township, the petition sheet is invalid.)
- A village or “unincorporated place” listed in the heading of the petition instead of the township, as long as the village or “unincorporated place” is wholly contained within a single township.
- For all offices except judicial offices, the failure to include the “Term Expiration Date” does not render a petition sheet invalid if it can be ascertained which position the candidate is seeking. For example, if a candidate is seeking nomination or election to the office of County Clerk, the candidate is not required to include the “Term Expiration Date” because there is only one position to be elected. If there are multiple positions available with different term ending dates, the candidate should include the “Term Expiration Date.” (Judicial candidates must follow the instructions printed on the reverse side of the nominating petition with respect to the “Term Expiration Date.”)
- Illegible circulator signature.
- Any of the following: circulator prints name in entry provided for signature; circulator fails to print name in entry provided for printed name; circulator enters his or her cursive signature in entry provided for printed name. (Note: A circulator’s signature is invalid if circulator prints name in entry provided for printed name and fails to enter his or her signature in the signature entry.)
- Circulator fails to enter his or her Zip Code or enters an incorrect Zip Code.
- Circulator lists village or “unincorporated place” instead of the township in which he or she resides, as long as the village or “unincorporated place” is wholly contained within a single township.

## PETITION SIGNATURE VALIDITY

A signature is invalid if it contains one or more of the defects or omissions listed below. The codes used to mark defects and omissions on petition sheets are shown to the left of the descriptions.

CODE	EXPLANATION
<i>JURISDICTION ERRORS</i>	
DUAL	Dual jurisdiction entry; two or more jurisdictions are given.
<i>ADDRESS ERRORS</i>	
OC	The address given is located outside of the city or township listed.
NA	No street address or rural route number is given.
<i>DATE ERRORS</i>	
ND	Signature is undated or an incomplete date is given.
ED	Signature is dated before the first date the petition is authorized by law to be circulated.
SDC	Signature is dated after the circulator dated his or her signature.
<i>SIGNATURE ERRORS</i>	
CO	Signature is crossed out prior to filing.
IN	Incomplete signature. For example, signature appears as follows: "Mrs. Smith," "Mr. Smith," "Jane," "John."
NR	Signer is not registered to vote within the electoral district.
DUP	Signer signed petition twice (or more times), or signed nominating petitions for more candidates than there are persons to be elected to the office.
<i>MISCELLANEOUS ERRORS</i>	
MC	Miscellaneous identification problem.

### ACCEPTABLE SIGNATURE VARIATIONS

The following variations are acceptable and do not render a petition signature invalid:

- Signature appears as follows: J. Smith; J.B. Smith; Mrs. J. Brown; Mrs. J.B. Brown; Mrs. John Brown.
- Illegible signature.
- Any of the following: signer prints name in entry provided for signature; signer fails to print name in entry provided for printed name; signer enters his or her cursive signature in entry provided for printed name. (Note: A signature is invalid if signer prints name in entry provided for printed name -- and fails to enter his or her signature in the signature entry.)
- Signer fails to enter his or her Zip Code or enters an incorrect Zip Code.
- Ditto marks.

## ATTENTION TO DETAIL ADVISED

Michigan contains 83 counties, 279 cities, 1,240 townships and 254 villages. Contained within Michigan's townships are numerous "unincorporated places" which bear separate, unique names. Additionally, all of the state is served by post offices with names that in many cases do not correspond to the names of the cities, townships and villages they serve. Circulators using the "city/township" petition form are advised of the following:

**CITIES AND TOWNSHIPS:** All registered voters in Michigan are registered in a single city or township within the state. Because many cities and townships share the same name, it is important that the place of registration listed in the heading of the petition sheet be clearly identified as a "city" or a "township." For example, in Shiawassee County there is a City of Owosso and a Township of Owosso.

Remember, if a registered voter signs a petition sheet that lists in its heading the wrong community of registration, the signature is invalid. For example, if a voter registered in the City of Owosso signs a sheet which lists the Township of Owosso in its heading, the signature is invalid.

A number of cities in the state overlap county boundary lines. (No townships overlap county boundaries.) When obtaining a signature from a voter who is registered in a city that crosses county boundaries, make sure that the voter signs a sheet which properly identifies the voter's city and county of registration.

**VILLAGES:** Villages are Michigan's smallest units of government. Some villages are wholly contained within a single township; others cross township boundaries. (Villages are not contained within nor do they cross into cities.)

A village resident who signs a "city/township" petition form must sign a sheet which bears in its heading the name of the village resident's township of registration. Further, the signer must be registered to vote in the township. A signature affixed to the petition by a village resident will be found invalid if the person is not registered to vote in the appropriate township.

If an error is made and the name of a village is listed in the heading of a petition sheet, the sheet will be accepted only if the village is wholly contained within a single township. As noted above, the signers of the sheet must be registered to vote in the appropriate township. A petition sheet will be found invalid if it lists in its heading the name of a village and that village is located within multiple townships.

A number of villages in the state also overlap county boundary lines. When obtaining a signature from a voter who is registered in a village that crosses county boundaries, make sure that the voter signs a sheet which properly lists in its heading the signer's county of registration.

**UNINCORPORATED PLACES:** Michigan contains a number of unincorporated places that, unlike cities, townships, and villages, do not qualify as separate units of government. Some unincorporated places are wholly contained within a single township; others cross township boundaries. (Unincorporated places generally are not contained within nor do they cross into cities.) Michigan residents who live in unincorporated places register to vote with their township clerk.

A resident of an unincorporated place who wishes to sign a “city/township” petition form must sign a sheet which bears in its heading the name of the person’s township of registration. If an error is made and the name of an unincorporated place is listed in the heading of a petition sheet, the sheet will be accepted only if the unincorporated place is wholly contained within a single township. A petition sheet will be found invalid if it lists in its heading the name of an unincorporated place and that unincorporated place is located within multiple townships.

**POST OFFICES AND ZIP CODES:** All post offices are referred to by name and serve delivery areas of varying sizes. Each delivery area is assigned a Zip Code. In some cases, the name of a person’s post office will correspond to the name of the person’s city or township of residence. In other cases, especially in sparsely populated areas, the name of the person’s post office will not correspond to the name of the person’s city or township of residence. Thus, a person’s mailing address may or may not correspond to the name of the city or township where the person is registered to vote. For example, Mason residents are registered to vote in the City of Mason and have a Mason mailing address. However, persons registered to vote in Genesee Township, Richfield Township and Vienna Township in Genesee County have a Mt. Morris mailing address.

When circulating a “city/township” petition form – especially in sparsely populated areas – make sure that potential signers of the petition correctly identify the city or township in which they are registered to vote and sign a petition sheet which bears the name of that city or township. For example, if a voter registered in Genesee Township, Genesee County signs a sheet which lists Mt. Morris (the name of the voter’s post office), the signature is invalid.

**IMPORTANT**

The information provided above is offered as a summary of the provisions which govern the validity of petition signatures; it is not a complete interpretation of the governing laws. Questions may be addressed to:

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P.O. Box 20126  
Lansing, Michigan 48901-0726  
Telephone: (517) 373-2540 or (800) 292-5973  
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