

Ottawa County Democratic Party Endorsement Policy

As a requirement for consideration for endorsement, all in-county candidates *must* be current members of both the Michigan Democratic Party (MDP) and the Ottawa County Democratic Party (OCDP).

OCDP differentiates between an “endorsement” and a “recommendation”. *Endorsements* are offered to candidates in partisan races where party affiliation is publicly recognized. In non-partisan races, party affiliation may or may not be publicly recognized. A *recommendation*, therefore, may be considered for any candidate who applies. In endorsing a candidate, OCDP is offering its own, and asking membership to offer their, full unreserved support. In recommending a candidate, OCDP is asking membership to consider supporting the preferred candidates.

Candidates in State-wide and Federal level races who seek OCDP endorsement are requested to complete and return an application as outlined below; however, OCDP endorsement is not dependent on the application, and will generally follow MDP and Democratic National Committee (DNC) endorsements.

NOTE: OCDP will generally not endorse/recommend any candidates prior to the filing deadline for a given race, though exceptions will be considered on a case by case basis.

1. PRIMARIES:

A. For candidates running in partisan races: For consideration for endorsement, candidates are required to:

1. Complete and return the OCDP Candidate Application for Endorsement questionnaire no later than 15 days after the **filing deadline** for the particular open position. Email the application to runforoffice@ottawadems.com.
2. Meet with the Recruiting, Screening and Recommendations (RS&R) Committee no later than 30 days after the **filing deadline** for the particular open position. Exceptions to this requirement may be granted dependent on scheduling conflicts. The meeting may take place in-person or utilizing an on-line application such as Zoom or Google Meet.
3. The RS&R Committee will convey its recommendations to the OCDP County Committee for a vote. A simple majority vote of the County Committee is required to approve a candidate endorsement.
4. Candidates will be notified by email of the final endorsement decision as soon as possible after the County Committee vote.

B. For candidates running in non-partisan races: OCDP will **NOT** offer formal endorsements to candidates running in non-partisan races, but will offer its recommendation if the candidate requests it. Candidates are required to:

1. Complete and return the OCDP Candidate Application for Recommendation questionnaire no later than 15 days after the **filing deadline** for the particular open position. Email the application to runforoffice@ottawadems.com.
2. Meet with the Recruiting, Screening and Recommendations (RS&R) Committee no later than 30 days after the **filing deadline** for the particular open position. Exceptions to this requirement may be granted dependent on scheduling conflicts. The meeting may take place in-person or utilizing an on-line application such as Zoom or Google Meet.
3. The RS&R Committee will convey its recommendations to the OCDP County Committee for a vote. A simple majority vote of the County Committee is required to approve a candidate recommendation.
4. Candidates will be notified by email of the final recommendation decision as soon as possible after the County Committee vote.

2. GENERAL ELECTIONS:

- A. Any candidate previously endorsed or recommended will retain that endorsement or recommendation into the general election phase.
- B. Any candidate not previously endorsed or recommended may seek endorsement (partisan) or recommendation (non-partisan) and are required to:
 1. Complete and return the OCDP Candidate Application for Endorsement or Recommendation questionnaire no later than 15 days after the date of the **primary election** (as applicable) for the particular open position. Email the application to runforoffice@ottawadems.com.
 2. Meet with the Recruiting, Screening and Recommendations (RS&R) Committee no later than 30 days after the **primary election** (as applicable) for the particular open position. Exceptions to this requirement may be granted dependent on scheduling conflicts. The meeting may take place in-person or utilizing an on-line application such as Zoom or Google Meet.
 3. The RS&R Committee will convey its recommendations to the OCDP County Committee for a vote. A simple majority vote of the County Committee is required to approve a candidate endorsement/recommendation.
 4. Candidates will be notified by email of the final endorsement decision as soon as possible after the County Committee vote.

3. RETRACTION/WITHDRAWAL OF ENDORSEMENT:

- A. Retraction: The RS&R Committee may recommend the retraction of a candidate endorsement or recommendation if during a candidacy any of the following occur: criminal behavior, civil judgement, criminal sexual conduct or sexual harassment, campaign finance violations or any other unethical behavior as determined by the OCDP Chair in consultation with the RS&R Committee. A majority vote of the OCDP Officers is required to retract an endorsement or recommendation.

- B. Withdrawal: Each election has unique dates by which a candidate can withdraw and remove their name from the ballot.
 - 1. Endorsed/recommended candidates who withdraw before the deadline will have their OCDP endorsement withdrawn.
 - 2. Endorsed candidates that withdraw after the withdrawal deadline cannot have their names removed from the ballot and the RS&R Committee will decide on a case-by-case basis whether or not to publicly withdraw the endorsement/recommendation.

4. BALLOT INITIATIVES AND REFERENDUMS:

- A. Positions on bonds, millages, boards, etc. will be taken at the recommendation of the membership on a case by case basis. Representatives from ballot initiative or referendum committees may seek endorsement from OCDP.
- B. Requests for endorsement for or against should be submitted to the RS&R Committee no later than 90 days from election day. That request should be in writing to the RS&R Committee and sent via email to runforoffice@ottawadems.com
- C. The RS&R Committee will evaluate each request and make endorsement recommendations to the membership no later than the membership meeting two months prior to the election.
- D. A majority vote of the membership present to vote is required to approve an endorsement for or a recommendation against a proposal or referendum.
- E. As a general rule, an initiative or referendum endorsed by MDP or the DNC will be endorsed in kind by OCDP.

5. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO CANDIDATES:

OCDP can offer limited financial assistance to candidates/campaigns as follows:

- A. OCDP will reimburse candidates their filing fee expense, if so requested.
- B. Other requests for financial assistance for candidate campaigns will be considered by the RS&R Committee and are granted, whole or in part, based on an evaluation of the vitality of the campaign and OCDP's ability to help.
 - 1. Judicial candidates cannot ask OCDP for money, but may be offered money by OCDP.
 - 2. Donation offers will be in coordination with campaign treasurer, re: considering donation limits, reporting requirements, etc.

6. BENEFITS OF CANDIDATE ENDORSEMENT:

Prior to a formal OCDP endorsement, the candidate may take of advantage of:

- Reimbursement of filing fees, if requested by candidate
- Possible initial “seed money” investment in campaign, amount at discretion of RS&R committee or OCDP Chair, Vice Chair and RS&R Committee Chair and subject to OCDP by-laws.
- Mentorship by former/current OCDP candidates.
- Directions on access to MDP resources (VAN subscriptions, candidate training, printing services, etc.).
- Direction to other training resources (GLPA-LEAD, for example).
- Ability to address membership during the Candidate Updates period at the monthly OCDP meetings.
- Visibility on OCDP website “Candidates” page.
- Promotion via OCDP social media and email (e.g., “Meet the Candidate” emails).
- Possible temporary or scheduled use of the OCDP Holland office for organizing canvassing efforts, distribution of campaign literature, etc.
- Inclusion in the election Voter Guide produced by OCDP prior to the General Election.

Following OCDP endorsement, additional benefits include:

- “OCDP Endorsed” notification on the OCDP website “Candidates” page and in subsequent social media and email communications.
- Increased OCDP communications prior to the General Election.
- Usage of the OCDP logo and “OCDP Endorsed” by the candidate in their campaign literature.
- Inclusion of “OCDP Endorsed” on the election Voter Guide produced by OCDP.
- Possible additional financial aid dependent on the vitality of the campaign.

The same benefits mentioned above may apply to “Recommended” candidates; however, the use of MDP assets such as VAN is limited to MDP/OCDP members only. Public acknowledgement of OCDP recommendation on the OCDP website and in other communications will be at the discretion of the candidate in coordination with OCDP.

7. APPLICABILITY & MISCELLANEOUS

This policy document is effective immediately upon approval by the OCDP Officers subject to a review by the Rules Committee. It is not retro-active or applicable to any date or decision made prior to the approval date. Amendments will be done and approved on an as needed basis.

Approved as of: April 1, 2024