



# COUNTY OF MANITOWOC

## COUNTY CLERK

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Manitowoc, WI 54220

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To: Candidates for Elected Office  
From: Jessica Backus, County Clerk  
Re: Guidelines for disclaimers/attributes and political signage

The following information is provided as a guide for complying with election laws regarding disclaimers/attributes and political signage.

**Disclaimers/Attributes:** Everything communicated on behalf of a campaign must have a disclaimer.

Wis. Stat. 11.1303 states that, "Every printed advertisement, billboard, handbill, sample ballot, television or radio advertisement or other communication containing express advocacy which is paid for by any contribution or disbursement shall clearly identify its source." Disclaimers must be on the communications before they are displayed or given out. This also includes t-shirts, bumper stickers, and yard signs.

**Format and Examples:**

**Registered Committees:**

- a. A committee should identify itself as the source of a communication by the words "Paid for by" followed by the name of the committee. The attribution may also include the name of the committee's treasurer or other authorized agent of the committee. Whether a committee directly pays for a communication or accepts a communication as an in-kind contribution, the committee is responsible for the communication and should be listed in the attribution (§ 11.1303(2)(b)).
- b. The attribution must be readable, legible, and readily accessible (§ 11.1303(2)(g)).
- c. A candidate committee may not use an abbreviation to identify the committee (§11.1303(2)(e)).

*EXAMPLE: Paid for by Mary Smith for County Supervisor*

- d. When a committee places a communication for express advocacy in coordination with a candidate committee, both the committee making the payment and the committee accepting the communication as an in-kind contribution should be listed in the attribution (§ 11.1303(2)(b)).

*EXAMPLE: Paid for by Citizens for Government, Authorized by Mary Smith for County Supervisor*

- e. When a committee places a communication for express advocacy that is not in coordination with a candidate, that committee should include the words "Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's agent or committee" in the attribution (§ 11.1303(2)(d)).

*EXAMPLE: Paid for by Citizens for Government, Not Authorized by Any Candidate or Candidate's Agent or Committee*

Other Persons:

- a. Communications for express advocacy costing more than \$2,500 and paid for by any person other than a committee shall identify its source by the words "Paid for by" followed by the name of the person (§ 11.1303(2)(c)).
- b. The communication should also include the words "Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's agent or committee" in the attribution (§ 11.1303(2)(d)).
- c. The attribution must be readable, legible, and readily accessible (§ 11.1303(2)(g)).

*EXAMPLE: Paid for by John Smith, Not Authorized by Any Candidate or Candidate's Agent or Committee*

**EXCEPTIONS:** Disclaimers are not required on small items where it cannot be conveniently printed, such as pins, buttons, pens, balloons, nail files, and similar small items. This also includes text messages, social media communications, and certain small advertisements on mobile phones.

**Political Signs: Signs must have a disclaimer before being displayed.**

- a. Signs are prohibited from being located in the transportation right-of-way. A right-of-way consists, but is not entirely inclusive of the following areas: The area between the sidewalk and a street, certain distances off of roads, certain distances off of county/state/federal highways, and bridges.
- b. No signs may be placed on government-owned buildings, grounds, or structures.
- c. Signs must be removed within 15 days following the applicable election. (County Code Ch. 8(n))
- d. Size Limitations:
  1. Manitowoc County, excluding the City of Manitowoc and the City of Two Rivers:
    - i. No size regulations.
  2. City of Manitowoc and City of Two Rivers:
    - i. Signs shall not exceed 11 square feet unless affixed to a permanent structure (e.g. a house, garage, billboard – NOT a fence). It shall not extend beyond the perimeter of the structure, nor obstruct a window, door, fire escape, ventilation shaft, or other area which is required by building codes to remain unobstructed.
    - ii. No sign shall obstruct, impede, or in any other form interfere with traffic or pedestrian safety.
    - iii. Any sign with electrical, mechanical, or audio auxiliary must comply with the provisions located in applicable city ordinances.
    - iv. City of Manitowoc only – a sign cannot exceed 16 square feet in a non-residential zoning district, but the 11 square-foot rule applies in a residential zoning district.