

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

Joseph Bishop-Henchman, )	
Challenger )	Administrative
)	Order #26-033
)	
v. )	Re: Challenge to Nominating
)	Petition Submitted for
)	the Ward 1 Committeemen/
Democrats United to Free )	Committeewomen of the
DC slate in Ward 1, )	Democratic State Committee
Candidates. )	

**MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER**

**Introduction**

This matter came before the District of Columbia Board of Elections (“the Board”) on April 17, 2026. It is a challenge (“the Challenge”) to the nominating petition submitted by the Democrats United to Free DC slate (“the Candidates”) to run for the office of the Ward 1 Committeemen/Committeewomen of the Democratic State Committee in the June 16, 2026 Primary Election (“the Primary Election”). The Candidates are Stanley J. Mayes, Rebecca Ann Washington, and E. Gail Anderson Holness. The challenge was filed by Joseph Bishop-Henchman (“the Challenger”), a registered voter in the District of Columbia, pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 1-1001.08(o)(1). Chairman Gary Thompson and Board member Karyn Greenfield presided over the hearing. All parties appeared *pro se*.

**Background**

On March 17, 2026, the Candidates submitted a nominating petition to appear on the ballot as a candidate in the Primary Election contest for the nomination for the office of Ward 1 Committeemen/Committeewomen of the Democratic State Committee (“the Petition”). The

minimum number of signatures required to obtain ballot access for this office is 100 signatures of District of Columbia voters who are duly registered in the same ward and party as the candidate. Pursuant to Title 3, District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (D.C.M.R.) § 1603.1, Marissa Corrente, the Board’s Registrar of Voters (“the Registrar”), accepted 106 signatures for review after a preliminary review of the petition.<sup>1</sup>

On March 21, 2026, the Petition was posted for public inspection for 10 days as required by law. On March 29, 2026, the Challenger filed the Challenge.

The Challenger filed challenges to a total of 48 signatures. Specifically, the signatures and affidavits were challenged pursuant to Title 3 D.C.M.R. § 1607.1 of the Board’s regulations on the following grounds: the signer is not registered, the signer according to the Board’s records is not registered to vote at the address listed on the petition at the time the petition was signed, the signature is not dated; the petition does not include the address of the signer, the petition does not include the name of the signer where the signature is not sufficiently legible for identification, the signature was not personally witnessed by the circulator, the signer is not a registered voter in the ward from which the candidate seeks nomination at the time the petition was signed, and the signer is not registered to vote in the same party as the candidate at the time the petition is signed.

### **Registrar’s Preliminary Determination**

The Registrar’s initial review of the challenge indicated that a total of 29 of the 48 signature challenges were valid. Following the prehearing conference, the Registrar updated her findings,

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<sup>1</sup> In her preliminary review, the Registrar determined that page 3 of the petition was missing a circulator date on the circulator’s affidavit, and page 14 was not in the proper form for a circulator petition, as the top of the form was cut off by the candidates when they copied the original form. Separately, page 2 had a circulator petition that was predated by the circulator with a date that occurred before some of the dates listed next to the voter signatures.

and found that 26 of the 48 challenges were valid. This finding placed the candidate slate below the threshold needed for ballot access.

In her updated report, the Registrar found that four challenges are valid because the signer is not a registered voter, four are valid because the signer is not registered to vote at the address listed on the petition at the time the petition was signed, one is valid because the signature does not include the address of the signer, five are valid because the signature was not personally witnessed by the circulator as evidenced by the predated circulator's affidavit on sheet 2, three are valid because the signer is not a registered voter in the jurisdiction from which the candidate seeks nomination at the time the petition was signed, and nine are valid because the signer is not registered to vote in the same party as the candidate at the time the petition is signed.

Accordingly, the Registrar preliminarily determined the Petition contained 80 presumptively valid signatures, which is 20 signatures below the number required for ballot access. The report also noted that, if the circulators could address the missing circulator date on sheet 3 and the pre-dated circulator affidavit on sheet 2, the candidates could gain back 13 valid signatures (three from sheet 2 and ten from sheet 3) subject to the Board's waiver of formal error of the circulator defects. Finally, if the Board credited the valid signatures on page 14, where the top of the petition form was cut off, the candidates would secure an additional 6 signatures.

In all, if the Board waived as formal error the defects with the three circulator petitions in accordance with 3 D.C.M.R. § 1607.2,<sup>2</sup> the candidates would still have only 99 valid signatures, one short of the number required for ballot access.

The deadline to submit change of address forms as to address the four valid challenges on address issues was April 9. No change of address forms were submitted in this matter.

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<sup>2</sup> This provision provides that "the Board may waive a defect for good cause shown consistent with applicable statutory provisions."

### **April 13, 2026 Pre-Hearing Conference**

Pursuant to title 3 D.C.M.R. § 415.1, the Office of the General Counsel (the “OGC”) convened a pre-hearing conference with both parties on Monday, April 13, 2026. In her findings report issued prior to the pre-hearing conference, the Registrar outlined her determinations with respect to the validity of each signature challenged and provided a key code explaining the notations she used to indicate the basis for upholding or denying each challenge.

The candidates identified several challenged signatures that they asked the Registrar to revisit. In addition, a circulator, Ms. Shelore Ann Cary Williams, stated that she had personally witnessed the signature collected on sheet 3 but forgot to date the circulator affidavit. After the conference, she provided a notarized statement to the Board indicating that she had collected signatures between February 17 and 20, 2026, and also provided a screenshot of a text she sent to Candidate Mayes on February 21, 2026 indicating that the Petition sheets she circulated were ready for him to pick up. The dates identified by Ms. Cary Williams are within the dates permitted for the collection of signatures for a nominating petition for this primary election.

As for sheet 14, Candidate Mayes highlighted that the cut-off of information at the top of the page was a photocopying error. While some lines at the top of the sheet were missing, including the date of the election, all of the other pertinent information about the candidates, the office titles, election information, and instructions to the voters were included. (The Registrar noted that the date of the election was included elsewhere on the form).

Mr. Bishop-Henchman said at the pre-hearing conference that he supported the Registrar’s initial findings and that the slate was therefore under the threshold for ballot access.

As the parties were not able to resolve the matter, it was set for a Board hearing on April 17, 2026. The Candidate and the Challenger were duly notified of the hearing.

Before the April 17, 2026 hearing, the Board received an email from circulator Bobby Holmes, who had predated his form before all the signature were collected. The email was not notarized, but it contained Mr. Holmes' signature. In the email, he states that he paused his signature collection efforts due to bad weather but then continued collecting after he had signed the affidavit. He said that "[e]ach of those voters was known to me and I sought their signatures to complete my form." He described the pre-dating as an "inadvertent process error."

### **April 17, 2026 Board Hearing**

The Registrar was present at the hearing and presented her findings. During the Board hearing, Candidate Mayes spoke and asked the Board to credit the signatures from the three affidavits that had been found to have defects. He also said that one of the challenged signatures that had been determined to be invalid because the voter had written the wrong apartment number should be accepted.

The Challenger said that it would be appropriate for the Board to waive as formal error the failure to include a date in the circulator's affidavit on sheet 3 given that the circulator provided an affidavit asserting that she had collected the signatures within the allowed time period. The Challenger argued against accepting the challenged signatures on the other two sheets with defects. He also argued that the slate was below the threshold for ballot access in any event.

### **Discussion**

The minimum number of signatures of required to obtain ballot access for this office is 100 signatures of District voters who are duly registered in the same ward and party as the candidates. As a result of the Challenge, the Registrar determined that the Petition contained a total of 80 presumptively valid signatures.

Given that the Candidates did not produce sufficient evidence to rebut the Registrar's findings,<sup>3</sup> we cannot find that there are sufficient signatures for the Candidate to achieve ballot access.

**Conclusion**

As a result of this challenge, the Board finds that the Petition contains 80 presumptively valid signatures – 20 signatures below the number required for ballot access. It is hereby:

**ORDERED** that challenge to the nominating petition of the Democrats United to Free DC slate for the office of Ward 1 Committeemen/Committeewomen of the Democratic State Committee in the Primary Election is hereby **UPHELD**, and Candidates Anderson Holness, Mayes, and Washington and are denied ballot access in this contest for the June 16, 2026 primary election.

The Board issues this written order today, which memorializes its oral ruling rendered on April 17, 2026.

Date: April 18, 2026



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Gary Thompson  
Chairman  
Board of Elections

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<sup>3</sup> Regarding the circulator page defects on sheets 2, 3, and 14, because including those signatures would not bring the candidates above the threshold, the Board did not reach those issues.