

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
BOARD OF ELECTIONS**

Brian Strege,	)	
Challenger	)	Administrative
	)	Order #25-011
	)	
v.	)	Re: Challenge to Nominating
	)	Petition Submitted for
	)	Doc Adams
Doc Adams,	)	
Candidate	)	

**MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER**

**Introduction**

This matter came before the District of Columbia Board of Elections (“the Board”) on May 16, 2025. It is a challenge to the nominating petition submitted by Doc Adams (“the Candidate”) in support of his candidacy for the office of Ward 8 Member of the Council in the July 15, 2025 Special Election (“the Special Election”). The challenge was filed by Brian Strege (“the Challenger”) pursuant to D.C. Official Code § 1-1001.08 (o)(1). Chairman Gary Thompson and Board member Karyn Greenfield presided over the hearing. The Board’s General Counsel and Registrar of Voters (“Registrar”) were present at the hearing. The Challenger appeared *pro se*; however, the Candidate did not appear. Accordingly, the hearing proceeded *ex parte* with respect to the Candidate pursuant to 3 D.C. Municipal Regulation §403.4.<sup>1</sup>

**Background**

On April 17, 2025, the Candidate submitted a nominating petition to appear on the ballot as a candidate in the Special Election contest for the office of Ward 8 Member of the Council (“the

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<sup>1</sup> 3 D.C.M.R. §403.4 states: “If any person or party waives the right to be present at the hearing or fails to appear at the hearing, the Board may proceed *ex parte*, unless the Board extends the time of the hearing or unless their appearance is required by statute.”

Petition”). The minimum number of signatures required to obtain ballot access for this office is 500 signatures of District of Columbia voters who are duly registered in the same ward as the candidate.<sup>2</sup> The Petition contained 705 signatures. Pursuant to Title 3, District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (D.C.M.R.) § 1603.1, Marissa Corrente, the Registrar, accepted 705 signatures for review.

On April 20, 2025, the Petition was posted for public inspection for 10 days as required by law. On April 28, 2025, the Petition was challenged by Brian Strege, a registered voter in the District of Columbia.

The Challenger filed challenges to a total of 439 signatures. Specifically, the signatures were challenged pursuant to Title 3 D.C.M.R. § 1607.1 of the Board’s regulations on the following grounds: 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 a duplicate of a valid signature; 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 is not made by the person whose signature it purports to be; and the signer is not a registered voter in the ward from which the candidate seeks election at the time the petition was signed.

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

On May 9, 2025, the Registrar delivered her report of her findings with respect to the challenge. The Registrar’s review of the challenge indicated that a total of 422 of the 439 signature challenges were valid. Specifically, 122 are valid because the signer is not registered to vote; 162 are valid because the signer is not registered to vote at the address listed on the petition at the time

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<sup>2</sup> D.C. Official Code § 1-1001.08(j)(1); 3 D.C.M.R. § 910.5

the petition was signed; 58 are valid because the signer's voter registration was designated as inactive on the voter roll at the time the petition was signed; one is valid because the signature is a duplicate of a valid signature; four are valid because the signature does not include the address of the signer; 44 are valid because neither the name of the signer nor the signature are sufficiently legible for identification; and 31 are valid because the signer is not a registered voter in the ward from which the candidate seeks election at the time the petition was signed.

Accordingly, the Registrar preliminarily determined that the Petition contained 283 presumptively valid signatures, which is 217 signatures below the number required for ballot access.

### **May 13, 2025 Pre-Hearing Conference**

Pursuant to Title 3 D.C.M.R. § 415.1, the Office of the General Counsel convened a pre-hearing conference with both parties on May 13, 2025. 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 Challenger agreed with the Registrar's determinations.

When the Candidate was asked if he was aware of any change of address forms that had been submitted for purposes of curing petition signatures in accordance with DC Official Code § 1-1001.08(o)(3)<sup>3</sup>, he argued that the Board was obligated under the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) - specifically referencing, 42 U.S.C. § 1973gg<sup>4</sup> - to notify voters whose

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<sup>3</sup> DC Official Code § 1-1001.08(o)(3) allows a signer whose address on a petition does not match the Board's records to have the signature deemed valid if the signer resides within the relevant electoral jurisdiction and files a change of address form with the Board by 5:00 p.m. on the tenth day after notice of the challenge.

<sup>4</sup> The NVRA is currently codified at 52 U.S.C. §20501 *et seq.*

addresses did not match Board records and to provide them an opportunity to update their registration within 21 days prior to the election. The Candidate contended that all signers who were otherwise registered voters in Ward 8 should have their signatures counted, regardless of address discrepancies.

After the Candidate presented his issues with the Registrar's findings with respect to these 162 signatures, he was advised that, even if he was credited with each of these signatures, he would still have only 445 presumptively valid signatures, 55 below the minimum number required for ballot access. Nonetheless, the Candidate stated that he desired to bring these matters before the Board for review and the matter was set for a Board hearing on May 16, 2025.

The Candidate and Challenger were duly notified of the hearing during the pre-hearing conference and by email on May 14, 2025.

#### **May 16, 2025 Board Hearing**

The Board convened the hearing in this matter at the scheduled time of 9:30 a.m. on May 16, 2025. As mentioned above, the Candidate did not appear.<sup>5</sup> The Board's General Counsel informed the Board that, pursuant to 3 D.C.M.R. §403.4, the Board is permitted to proceed *ex parte* when a party is not present. The attorney from the Office of General Counsel ("OGC") assigned to this matter informed the Board of the notice sent to the parties regarding the hearing. Notice of the hearing was first provided verbally to the parties during the pre-hearing conference, at which time the parties were informed that the hearing would be held virtually on May 16, 2025 at 9:30 a.m. The parties were further advised that they would receive an email containing the notice and a link to the meeting. On May 14, 2025, OGC transmitted written notice of the hearing to the parties via email. The email included the notice as published on the Board's website, as well as

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to the notification provided to the parties, at the commencement of the Hearing, a telephone call was placed to the Candidate's phone number. It went unanswered.

the date, time, and the link required to attend the virtual hearing. The Board entertained a motion to proceed *ex parte* and that motion was passed unanimously.

The Registrar was present at the hearing and presented her findings. The representative from the Office of the General Counsel then discussed the issues raised by the Candidate during the May 13, 2025 pre-hearing conference. Finally, the Challenger stated that he agreed with the findings of the Registrar and requested that the Board deny ballot access to the Candidate.

The Board's General Counsel recommended that the Board uphold the challenge to the Candidate's nominating petition.

After hearing from the Registrar, the Challenger, and the Board's General Counsel, the Board Chair made a motion that the Candidate be denied ballot access. The motion was duly seconded and passed unanimously.

### **Discussion**

The minimum number of signatures required to obtain ballot access for this office is 500 signatures of individuals who are duly registered voters in Ward 8 in the District of Columbia. Only signatures of "registered qualified electors" residing at the address listed on the Board's records at the time of signing are valid.<sup>6</sup>

The Candidate contends that the Board is obligated to notify petition signers to update their addresses within 21 days prior to the election. However, neither the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), 52 U.S.C. § 20501 *et seq.*, nor District law imposes such a duty on the Board to cure address defects for petition signers after submission to the Board. The Board has repeatedly held that it is not required to disregard statutory requirements for address matching, nor is it required to

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<sup>6</sup> See D.C. Official Code §§ 1-1001.02 and § 1-1001.08(j)(1).

cure or proactively correct defects in submitted petitions.<sup>7</sup> The responsibility to ensure that signers are duly registered voters, *i.e.*, registered voters who reside at the address listed on the Board’s records, at the correct address at the time of signing and/or to cure address discrepancies in accordance with D.C. Official Code § 1-1001.08(o)(3) rests with the candidate and the signers themselves – not the Board.

Based on the Registrar’s findings, the Petition contains a total of 283 presumptively valid signatures, which is 217 signatures below the minimum required for ballot access. Even if the Board were to credit the Candidate with every signature for which he disputed the Registrar’s findings, the total would only rise to 445 signatures—55 below the minimum number required for ballot access.

### **Conclusion**

For the reasons indicated above, it is hereby:

**ORDERED** that the challenge to the nominating petition submitted by Doc Adams in support of his candidacy for the office of Ward 8 Member of the Council in the July 15, 2025 Special Election is hereby **UPHELD** and that Doc Adams is denied ballot access in the contest for that office.

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<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., *Harnett v Courniotes*, BOE Case No. 24-020 (issued September 4, 2024) (holding that the statutory deadline to cure address mismatches could not be extended), *Michael v Gurley*, BOE Case No. 18-007 (issued April 23, 2018) (denying ballot access where candidate failed to secure sufficient valid signatures and rejecting the argument that the Board, rather than the candidate or signatories, should be responsible for updating voter addresses to validate petition signatures), *Singleton v Bettmann*, BOE Case No. 14-005 (issued March 12, 2014) (where the Board held that it cannot extend the time for submitting change of address forms and stated that “candidates are implored to verify the signatures on their nominating petitions prior to submitting them to the challenge period process”), *Tracelosky v. Settles*, BOE Case No. 13-039 (issued February 25, 2013) (discussing the candidate’s “singular obligation” to secure valid signatures).

The Board issues this written order today, which is consistent with our oral ruling rendered today.



Date: May 16, 2025

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Gary Thompson  
Chairman  
Board of Elections