

Chapter 1 Democratic Party Overview and History

The Democratic Party (the Party) is a layered coalition of organizations. Each level can be called and is in fact the Democratic Party. Each level solicits funding and support:

National – The Democratic National Committee (DNC)

State – The Texas Democratic Party (TDP)

County – County Democratic Parties

The Democratic National Committee (DNC)

The Democratic National Committee, the oldest continuously functioning party committee in the world, was established by the National Convention in 1848. It has the following responsibilities:

- Plan the presidential nominating convention of the Party
- Promote the election of the candidates of the Party with both technical and financial support
- Work with national, state, and local party organizations, elected officials, and candidates

Anyone who declares him or herself a Democrat is considered a member of the DNC. The DNC has its headquarters and staff in Washington, DC, and convenes to elect its officers early in the year following the presidential election. The DNC officers, including the DNC Chair, who is referred to as the Party Chair, are elected by the 440-plus national committee members.

The national committee is composed of members selected by the following Democratic organizations:

- The Democratic organization in each state plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories (American Samoa, Guam, and the Virgin Islands)
- Democrats living outside the United States (Democrats Abroad)
- Representatives of various Democratic constituencies and elected officials

There are several functional caucuses and committees within the DNC. Detailed information about the structure and organization of national party is available at the DNC website, www.democrats.org.

A Brief History of the Democratic Party

At the start of the 21st Century, the Democratic Party can look back on a proud history — a history not just of a political organization but of a national vision. More than two hundred years ago, our Party's founders decided that wealth and social status were not an entitlement to rule. They believed that wisdom and compassion could be found within every individual and a stable government must be built upon a broad popular base.

Thomas Jefferson founded the Democratic Party in 1792 as a congressional caucus to fight for the Bill of Rights and against the elitist Federalist Party. In 1798, the "party of the common man" was officially named the Democratic-Republican Party. Jefferson was elected the first Democratic President of the United States in 1800. He served two distinguished terms and was followed by James Madison in 1808. Madison strengthened America's armed forces — helping reaffirm American independence by defeating the British in the War of 1812. James Monroe was elected president in 1816 and led the nation through a time commonly known as "The Era of Good Feeling" in which Democratic-Republicans served with little opposition.

The election of John Quincy Adams in 1824 was highly contested and led to a four-way split among Democratic-Republicans. A result of the split was the emergence of Andrew Jackson as a national leader. This war hero organized his supporters to a degree unprecedented in American history. The Jacksonian Democrats created the national convention process, the party platform, and reunified the Democratic

Party with Jackson's victories in 1828 and 1832. The Party held its first National Convention in 1832 and nominated President Jackson for his second term. In 1844, the National Convention simplified the Party's name to The Democratic Party.

In 1848, the National Convention established the Democratic National Committee, now the longest running political organization in the world. The Convention charged the DNC with the responsibility of promoting "the Democratic cause" between the conventions and preparing for the next convention.

As the 19th Century came to a close, the American electorate changed more and more rapidly. The Democratic Party embraced the immigrants who flooded into cities and industrial centers, built a political base by bringing them into the American mainstream, and helped create the most powerful economic engine in history. Democratic Party leader William Jennings Bryan led a movement of agrarian reformers and supported women's suffrage, the progressive graduated income tax, and the direct election of Senators. As America entered the 20th Century, the Democratic Party became dominant in local urban politics.

In 1912, Woodrow Wilson became the first Democratic president of the 20th Century. Wilson led the country through World War I, fought for the League of Nations, established the Federal Reserve Board, and passed the first labor and child welfare laws.

A generation later, Franklin Roosevelt was elected president running on the promise of a New Deal. Roosevelt pulled America out of the Depression by energizing citizens around the belief that their government could actively assist them in times of need. Roosevelt's New Deal brought water to California's Central Valley, electrified Appalachia and saved farms across the Midwest. The Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Social Security all brought Americans into the system, freeing us from fear, giving us a stake in the future, and making the nation stronger.

With the election of Harry Truman, Democrats began the fight to bring down the final barriers of race and gender. Truman integrated the military and oversaw the reconstruction of Europe by establishing the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Truman's leadership paved the way for civil rights leaders who followed.

In the 1960s, President John F. Kennedy challenged an optimistic nation to build on its great history. Kennedy proclaimed a New Frontier and dared Americans to put a man on the moon, created the Peace Corps, and negotiated a treaty banning atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons. Kennedy and Johnson worked together to end the practice of segregation in many southern states. Lyndon Johnson followed Kennedy's lead and worked to pass the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act. Following Kennedy's assassination, Johnson declared a War on Poverty and created Medicare — ensuring that older Americans would receive quality health care.

In 1976, Jimmy Carter was elected president, helping to restore the nation's trust in government following the Watergate scandal. Carter negotiated the historic Camp David Peace Accords between Egypt and Israel.

In 1992, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton was elected the 42nd President of the United States. President Clinton ran on the promise of a New Covenant for America's forgotten working families. After twelve years of Republican presidents, America faced record budget deficits, high unemployment, and increasing crime. President Clinton's policies put people first and resulted in the longest period of economic expansion in peacetime history. The Deficit Reduction Act of 1993 — passed by both the House and Senate without a single Republican vote — put America on the road to fiscal responsibility and led to the end of perennial budget deficits. Having inherited a \$290 billion deficit in 1992, President Clinton's last budget was over \$200 billion in surplus. The Clinton/Gore Administration was responsible for reducing unemployment to its lowest level in decades and reducing crime to its lowest levels in a generation. In 1996, President Clinton became the first Democratic president reelected since Roosevelt.

The late Ron Brown – the former Chairman of the Democratic Party – put it best when he wrote, “The common thread of Democratic history, from Thomas Jefferson to Bill Clinton, has been an abiding faith

in the judgment of hardworking American families, and a commitment to helping the excluded, the disenfranchised and the poor strengthen our nation by earning themselves a piece of the American Dream. We remember that this great land was sculpted by immigrants and slaves, their children and grandchildren.”

History of the Democratic Donkey

When Andrew Jackson ran for president in 1828, his opponents tried to label him a "jackass" for his populist views and his slogan, "Let the people rule." Jackson, however, picked up on their name calling and turned it to his own advantage by using the donkey on his campaign posters. During his presidency, the donkey was used to represent Jackson's stubbornness when he vetoed re-chartering the National Bank. The first time the donkey was used in a political cartoon to represent the Democratic Party it was again in conjunction with Jackson. Although in 1837 Jackson was retired, he still thought of himself as the leader of the Party and was shown trying to get the donkey to go where he wanted it to go. The cartoon was titled "A Modern Baalim and his Ass."

Interestingly enough, the person credited with getting the donkey widely accepted as the Democratic Party's symbol probably had no knowledge of the prior associations. Thomas Nast, a famous political cartoonist, came to the United States with his parents in 1840 when he was six. He first used the donkey in an 1870 Harper's Weekly cartoon to represent the "Copperhead Press" kicking a dead lion, symbolizing Lincoln's Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, who had recently died. Nast intended the donkey to represent an anti-war faction, with whom he disagreed, but the symbol caught the public's fancy and the cartoonist continued using it to indicate some Democratic editors and newspapers.

Later, Nast used the donkey to portray what he called "Caesarism," showing the alleged Democratic uneasiness over a possible third term for Ulysses S. Grant. In conjunction with this issue, Nast helped associate the elephant with the Republican Party. Although the elephant had been connected with the Republican Party in cartoons that appeared in 1860 and 1872, it was Nast's cartoon published in 1874 by Harper's Weekly that made the pachyderm stick as the Republicans' symbol. A cartoon titled "The Third Term Panic" showed animals representing various issues running away from a donkey wearing a lion's skin tagged "Caesarism." The elephant labeled "The Republican Vote" was about to run into a pit containing inflation, chaos, repudiation, etc.

By 1880 the donkey was well established as a mascot for the Democratic Party. A cartoon about the Garfield-Hancock campaign in the New York Daily Graphic showed the Democratic candidate mounted on a donkey, leading a procession of crusaders.

Over the years, the donkey and the elephant have become the accepted symbols of the Democratic and Republican parties. Although the Democrats have never officially adopted the donkey as a party symbol, we have used various donkey designs on publications over the years. The Republicans have actually adopted the elephant as their official symbol and use their design widely.

What has the Democratic Party done for you lately?

The Democratic Party has been so successful in improving our lives, that sometimes people forget what we have accomplished that makes life better.

- The Democratic Party members are the people who brought you a minimum wage and the promise of prevailing local wages, 8-hour workday in a safe environment, unemployment benefits, and workers compensation when things go wrong.
- The Democratic programs of the Federal Home Loan Program, Water Quality Act, and Rural Electrification Act brought ownership of a home with utilities within reach of most of us.
- Democrats awarded veterans G. I. student benefits, home loans, and health care they so richly deserve.

- Democrats created plans, such as Head Start, Family and Medical Leave Act, and the Guaranteed Student Loan Program have helped us raise and educate our children.
- Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, the Family and Medical Leave Act, and the Securities and Exchange Act help us enjoy a secure old age.
- Democrats brought many of us our very right to vote in the Women's Suffrage Amendment and Voting Rights Act of 1965.

We must continue to fight groups who are trying to destroy all of these benefits that we take for granted now.

A List of Democratic Accomplishments

- 8-Hour Workday
- Social Security
- Minimum Wage Law
- G.I. Bill of Rights
- Marshall Plan
- NATO
- Peace Corps
- Medicare
- Medicaid
- Operation Head Start
- Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Voting Rights Act of 1965
- Water Quality Act
- Clean Air Act
- First Man on the Moon
- Women's Suffrage Amendment
- Workers Compensation Act
- Unemployment Compensation Act
- Rural Electrification Act
- Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
- Federal Home Loan Program
- Securities & Exchange Act
- Guaranteed Student Loan Program
- Family and Medical Leave Act
- School Lunch Program
- Motor Voter Act
- 100,000 New police on U.S. streets
- Balanced budget in 1998 as a result of the Balanced Act 1993
- Davis-Bacon Act

Chapter 2 The Texas Democratic Party

The Texas Democratic Party (the TDP, the State Party, the Party, Party) does the following:

- Plans and conducts the Party's biennial convention
- Promotes the election of the Party candidates
- Works with state and local Party organizations, elected officials, candidates, and various constituencies

Senate Districts

The State of Texas has 31 state Senate Districts. Their size and shape are set by the Texas Legislature. Boundaries of senate districts are independent of the boundaries of the state's 254 counties.

A senate district can consist of a portion of one county, an entire county, several counties, or portions of two or more counties.

By state law and *The Rules of the Texas Democratic Party*, elected representatives from the senate districts make up the majority of the State Democratic Executive Committee (SDEC), the governing body of the Party. The members of the SDEC elected from the senate districts constitute the statutory SDEC. The other individuals that have seats and vote at the SDEC meeting are there as a courtesy because of the significant contribution to Democratic victories. The courtesy members may vote on non-statutory issues. The senate district is also used in the delegate/convention process, see details in Chapter 4.

The State Democratic Executive Committee (SDEC)

The State Democratic Executive Committee (SDEC) is the executive body of the Texas Democratic Party. The TDP, including its executive body, is established by *Texas Election Code* and supported by the *Rules of the Texas Democratic Party (TDP Rules)*.

The operations of the TDP and SDEC are dictated by the *TDP Rules*, not the rules of the Democratic National Committee (DNC).

The TDP has a fulltime headquarters and staff in Austin. The state chair oversees the headquarters' operations and administers policy as set at the state convention and by the SDEC. Additional information is available at www.txdemocrats.org

The current State Democratic Executive Committee consists of the following 98 members:

- 8 TDP officers – The Texas Democratic Party Chair (Party Chair, Chair), Vice-Chair, Vice-Chair for Finance, Treasurer, Secretary, two Co-Parliamentarians, and Sergeant-at-Arms. Delegates at the state convention elect the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. The other officers are appointed by the Chair for a two-year term.
- 62 Senate District (SD) members – A man and a woman from each of the 31 senate districts elected to two-year terms by senate district delegates at the state convention. These officers are commonly called SDEC members.
- 16 Caucus and Organization representatives – Members from nine recognized caucuses and organizations are elected to two-year terms by members of their groups at the state convention.
- 12 DNC representatives – Representatives are elected to four-year terms by the state convention delegates at the state convention during presidential election years.

At the present time there are seven functional committees in the party's executive committee; Finance, Grassroots, Legislative, Nominations and Legal, Resolutions, Rules, and Advisory. The State Chair sets the committees and appoints the chair of each committee. Each committee elects a co-chair of the opposite sex.

SDEC Committees

Advisory – The Advisory Committee is a special committee that allows for small Democratic organizations that are not large enough to be “recognized” to have input into the Party.

Finance – The Finance Committee is chaired by Vice Chair for Finance and co-chaired by Party Treasurer. It raises money for the Democratic Party, plans and encourages fundraising efforts, and advises the Chair on budget matters.

Grassroots – The Grassroots Committee works to increase voter registration and voter turnout, works with local party leadership, and plans and produces training sessions and material to increase local grassroots activity around the state.

Legislative – The Legislative Committee recommends positions on legislation of interest to the Party and monitors legislative activity.

Nominations and Legal Affairs – The Nominations and Legal Affairs Committee recommends replacements for vacancies in Party Offices and recommends replacements for positions on the ballot in public offices. Certifies ballot, canvasses returns of primary elections, and monitors conduct of elections.

Resolutions – The Resolutions Committee drafts and considers resolutions of interest to the Party and recommends action on all resolutions referred to the SDEC by the Convention.

Rules – The Rules Committee considers changes to the *Rules of the Texas Democratic Party*, which governs the SDEC, County Executive Committees, Delegate Selection, and Conventions.

SDEC Members

SDEC members represent all Democrats in their respective senate districts or organizations and are the direct links between Democrats at the local level and the TDP. Their most important role is to maintain two-way communications with their county chair(s), elected officials, and Democratic organizations in their districts. This allows them to receive and transmit ideas, ideals, and direction between the local level and the SDEC.

Senate district caucuses, at the state convention, elect SDEC members to two-year terms. SDEC members have several official and unofficial responsibilities. By *TDP Rules*, the only reason for removal is the support of an opposition party candidate.

Duties and Responsibilities

Official and unofficial duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following:

- SDEC meetings
- SDEC functional committee and subcommittee meetings
- SDEC workshops and training sessions
- Senate district committee meetings
- County executive committee meetings
- TDP events and activities
- Local Democratic club meetings

It is essential for SDEC members to perform the following duties:

- Understand *Robert’s Rules of Order* and the *TDP Rules*
- Pay personal travel expenses to SDEC meetings and other incidental expenses (average SDEC member cost is \$2,000/year)
- Have electronic communication connectivity
- Assist in TDP fundraising [See sample fundraising letter in Appendix G]

- Actively support the TDP platform and Democratic candidates
- Maintain activity records and submit as requested
- Disseminate party information and solicit input
- Act as liaison to county chairs
- Assist in developing TDP materials and messages
- Assist with county/senate district (SD) conventions
- Assist county chairs with administering the Primary Election
- Assist the TDP in developing and organizing the state convention
- Assist local, county, and State Party officials in finding and cultivating candidates
- Maintain a list of all elected officials in the SD and keep the Party abreast of changes
- Attend TDP electronic training as needed
- Never support a candidate of an opposition party
- (Optional but highly desirable) be proficient using electronic communication, database management, and Internet use (training available from Party)

Term of Office and Qualifications

The term of office for SDEC member is two years, beginning at the conclusion of the state convention.

To be eligible for the office of SDEC member, an individual must meet these qualifications:

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Be a qualified voter who has voted in the latest Democratic primary (not counting runoffs) in the voting year
- Be a resident of the senate district from which he or she is seeking election
- Not be a candidate for or holder of an elective office of the federal, state, or county government
- (Optional, but highly desirable) have political experience and knowledge of the district
- (Optional, but highly desirable) have Internet and e-mail capabilities and basic computer skills

How to Become a Senate District SDEC Member

The following steps are necessary to become a SDEC Member, representing one of the 31 senate districts:

- Attend your precinct convention on the night of the primary and get elected to the senatorial/county convention as a delegate.
- Attend the senatorial/county convention and get elected as a delegate to the state convention.
- Lobby the delegates and alternates of the senatorial district caucus, letting them know you are running and why you should be elected. (The list of delegates and alternates for a senatorial district caucus may be obtained from the TDP Headquarters.)
- Conduct your campaign until senatorial district meeting or senate district caucus at the state convention when the election will occur.
- Get elected by your fellow senatorial district delegates.

Vacancies for unexpired terms are filled as follows:

- The senate district committee submits its recommendation to the SDEC Nominations Committee.
- The Nominations Committee submits its recommendation, typically that of the senate district committee, to the body of the SDEC for a vote.

Senate District Executive Committee

A Senate District Executive Committee, more commonly called the senate district committee, consists of representatives from each of the counties within a senate district. The senate district committee, which is a committee within the senate district, should not be confused with the State Democratic Executive Committee, which contains two representatives from each of the 31 senate districts.

The representative is the county chair when the entire county is in the senate district. Where only a portion of a county is in a senate district, the precinct chairs of the precincts within the senate district elect a person to be their representative.

The senate district committee has two main functions.

- In the event there is a member vacancy for that senate district on the State Democratic Executive Committee (SDEC), that senate district committee is called upon to recommend a person to the SDEC Nomination Committee to fill the unexpired term.
- Should there be a withdrawal of the Democratic nominee for state Senate, the Senate District Executive Committee will choose a replacement.
- Another function is somewhat un-official and something that differs from committee to committee. This function is the negotiation to determine how the different positions that are elected at the state convention will be distributed. This sounds more confusing than it is. See the Chapter 4 for additional information.

Resources Available to the Party

The Rules of the Texas Democratic Party (TDP Rules); the *Texas Election Code*; a comprehensive voter database; and active Democratic clubs and organizations, and organized counties are essential resources.

TDP Rules - A copy of the *Texas Democratic Party Rules* can be obtained at no charge from the State Party Office or online at www.txdemocrats.org.

Texas Election Code - A copy of the *Texas Election Code* can be obtained from the Texas Legislature Online website at www.capitol.state.tx.us/statutes/eltoc.html. The Election Code outlines the rules for voter registration, campaigning, elections, precinct conventions, etc.

Current information on elections is available from the Secretary of State at the website www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/index.shtml. Questions can be directed via e-mail to elections@sos.state.tx.us or asked via telephone at 1-800-252-VOTE (8683).

Voter Database - The State Party provides an on-line Voter Management System that includes all registered voters, their addresses, phone numbers, and voting histories. This database can be used to identify solid Democrats and swing voters in selected areas.

Information contained in the database is available to SDEC committee members, county chairs, precinct chairs, and candidates by applicable district.

Access to the system is coordinated through the Voter File Director at the State Party Headquarters. To obtain access: go to www.votermanagement.com and fill out an application.

Clubs and Organizations - There are numerous local, regional, and statewide Democratic clubs and organizations in Texas. These groups are typically made up of Party activists, campaign activists, and other active Democrats. They have their own officers and structures and provide support for the Party at all levels. A majority of them are not officially connected to the Party.

The *TDP Rules* prescribe how a statewide organization may gain representation in the State Democratic Executive Committee. Currently, these groups are the Texas Young Democrats, the County Chairs Association, the Texas Democratic Women, the Coalition of Black Democrats, the Non-Urban Caucus, the Tejano Democrats, the Stonewall Democrats, House Democratic Caucus, and the Senate Democratic Caucus.

Chapter 3 The County Democratic Party

The Democratic Party at the county level is the county Democratic Party (County Party, Party). The 254 county Democratic parties, which are headed by county chairs, are the focal points of campaign and Party building activities.

The 254 counties in Texas are further divided into voter precincts, each led by a precinct chair. County Commissioners' Courts, not the Texas Democratic Party, determine precinct boundaries. By virtue of *Texas Election Code* and *Texas Democratic Party Rules (TDP Rules)*, the County Party and its voter precincts are subdivisions of the State Party, although they operate somewhat independently of the Texas Democratic Party (State Party).

The governing body of the county Democratic Party is the County Executive Committee (CEC). The CEC is chaired by the county chair and composed of the county chair and all precinct chairs within the county.

Any resident in the county who supports the statement of principles of the Democratic Party and voted in the most recent Democratic Primary is considered a member of the County Party.

The 254 county parties are represented at the state level by their senate district members of the State Democratic Executive Committee.

Voting Precincts

The voting precinct exists to facilitate elections at the local level. The precinct is the smallest political subdivision in Texas, while the senate districts are the largest. State law sets the maximum number of registered voters in a precinct based on the county's population.

The County Commissioners' Court determines precinct boundaries.

The Precinct Chair

The party leader in the voting precinct is the precinct chair, who is elected by the voters in the precinct in the Democratic Primary. The precinct chair is the most important elected official in the Democratic Party. An active, effective precinct chair makes an enormous difference in the success of the Party and our candidates.

Duties and Responsibilities

The following is a list that includes, but does not limit, the official and unofficial duties and responsibilities of the precinct chair:

- Organize the precinct and get to know the people in the precinct
- Be a standing member of the County Executive Committee
- Represent the precinct by attending every County Executive Committee meeting
- Get our voters to the polls
- Bridge the gap between voters and elected officials
- Help find judges, alternate judges, and election clerks
- Get people to do the following volunteer jobs:
 - Work the precinct polling place on Election Day
 - Pass out literature
 - Report pertinent information back to the Democratic party headquarters and Democratic campaigns

- Dress the polls on Election Day
- Understand the *TDP Rules* and *Texas Election Code*
- Encourage primary voters to attend the precinct convention
- Place sign(s) at the Primary voting locations indicating the location of the precinct convention
- Organize and conduct the precinct convention – see Appendix A

The Democratic vote is maximized when the party is organized at the precinct level

Organizing the Precinct

Know the Precinct: Get a map of the precinct from the county chair, county clerk, or elections administrator. Drive around the precinct and learn its geographical boundaries and characteristics.

Knowing your precinct allows you to plan precinct activities, including canvassing, finding meeting places, deciding where to distribute literature, registering voters, etc.

Canvass the Precinct: Get a list of voters in the precinct from the county chair and/or access voter information for the precinct using the Party's on-line Voter Management System. Use the voter list to verify and update telephone numbers. Use local phone books and/or the Internet.

Then, either in person (best method) or by phone, contact every registered voter that voted in any of the three most recent Democratic Primaries. Identify yourself as the precinct chair. Tell them that you are calling to identify all of the Democrats in the precinct so you can keep them informed of upcoming Democratic activities and events. Here is also your chance to ask them for assistance in further canvassing.

Once all known Democrats have been called, call the remainder of the registered voters in the precinct that did not vote in the most recent Republican primary to find additional Democrats and others that lean our way. The voter list may be divided among the previously contacted Democrats. Pass updated and corrected phone numbers and/or information to the county chair. Sample scripts are located in Appendix G.

Mailing is not truly considered canvassing, but is an alternative method of contacting registered voters. Canvassing the precinct gives you an excellent feel for the makeup of your precinct and provides you with help for working in the precinct. Knowing where your Democrats are will decrease your workload and increase Democratic turnout during election cycles. Providing the county chair with updates and corrections ensures that campaign volunteers will be working with the latest information.

Organize the Precinct and Keep Voter Lists Current:

Use a notebook, 3x5 cards, or a computer to keep track of the Democrats in the precinct. Work with the Democrats in the precinct to find people who will help you with your duties.

Once a month take the voter list and drive or walk around the precinct. Note homes for sale. When the sign comes down contact the new owners by phone or mail and update the voter list. Sample 'Welcome to the neighborhood' letter and postcard are located in Appendix G. Additionally, during election cycles (any type of election), walk or drive around the precinct and note who has whose yard sign; it may be a good indication of the voter's leanings.

Keep the county chair informed of all changes to the voter list.

Keeping your list current and the county list current ensures that the Party will have the latest information during election cycles.

Get to Know the People in the Precinct:

Organize activities in the precinct to bring people together. For assistance, use canvassing volunteers or request assistance from the county chair or local Democratic clubs. Hold coffees, backyard parties, BBQs, and block parties. Begin these get-togethers with fellow Democrats, then move on to non-primary voters

and non-voters. Additionally, meet neighbors at homeowner association meetings and other such community activities.

Meeting neighbors and bringing people together will increase your number of available volunteers, increase the voter turnout for the Democratic Party, and win elections.

Representing the Precinct

Represent precinct at County Executive Committee meetings: Attendance at every County Executive Committee meeting is ESSENTIAL, because the County Executive Committee directs the operations of the County Party!

Getting Our Voters to the Polls

Get our voters to the polls: It is important for precinct chairs to ensure every Democrat in the precinct votes in the Democratic Primary and General Election. Talk to every Democrat prior to the start of early voting. Keep in touch during early voting and mark those off that have voted. Talk to those that have not yet voted between early voting and Election Day, and encourage them to vote on Election Day.

Bridging the Gap to Elected Officials

Bridge the gap between the Precinct and elected officials: A precinct chair can be a "bridge" or liaison between the people in the precinct and elected officials. Through Party activities get to know the elected officials that cover the precinct. The precinct chair can help a citizen or community group secure appropriate assistance with a particular problem or concern by contacting elected officials.

Knowing your elected officials will make it easier to participate in Party activities, increase your status within your precinct with both its citizens and elected officials, and make it easier to gain assistance when needed.

Finding Judges, Alternate Judges, and Election Clerks

Find election judge/alternate and clerks for your Precinct: The precinct chair assists the County Party in securing an election judge or alternate election judge and/or election clerks for voting precincts. It is important that Democratic people working inside the polling place are assertive and well informed so voters see someone they know and to prevent voter intimidation.

It is usually important that a precinct chair not be judge, alternate judge, or clerk. The precinct chair should be getting Democrats and like-minded voters to the polls.

In a precinct with voter intimidation problems or significant voter confusion with the voting systems, it can be more useful for the precinct chair to be the election judge, alternate judge, or clerk. It does no good to get a voter to the polls if the voter is intimidated into leaving or confused by the voting system in the polling place. The precinct chair should be someone the voters know and trust.

Knowing the Party Rules

Know the *TDP Rules* and *Texas Election Code*: As the Party's representative in the precinct it is important that the precinct chair to understand the *TDP Rules* and *Texas Election Code*.

The rules are available on line at www.txdemocrats.org. Copies of the rules may be available from your county chair or your senate district SDEC committee-members. Election training may be available from the county chair, the county clerk, or county election officer.

Term of Office and Qualifications

The precinct chair is a publicly elected party official and is elected by precinct voters in the Democratic Primary Election (or in the runoff election, if no candidate gets a majority in the first primary).

The term of office for a precinct chair is two years, beginning on the 20th day following the Primary runoff election. The County Executive Committee fills vacancies for unexpired terms.

A precinct chair should be an outgoing, self-motivated person who likes people.

To be eligible for the office of precinct chair, an individual must meet these requirements:

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Be a qualified voter who has voted in the latest Democratic primary (not counting runoffs) in the voting year
- Be a resident of the precinct from which he or she is seeking election
- Not be a candidate for or holder of an elective office of the federal, state, or county government
- (Optional, but highly desirable) have Internet and e-mail capabilities and basic computer skills

Filing for Office

A qualified individual interested in running for precinct chair must do the following:

- Obtain a filing form from the county chair or county party secretary
- Complete the application
- Sign the application before a notary public
- Have the form notarized
- Submit the application in the period that begins in late October and ends at 6:00 PM on the first business day in January
- Check the filing deadline when you pick up your application. The completed, signed, and notarized application may be mailed to the county chair, but it must be received by the filing deadline.

Only contested candidates for Precinct chair appear on the Democratic Primary ballot. Write-in votes for precinct chair are permitted in the primary, whether or not there are other candidates on the ballot, but not in a runoff. Write-in candidates must have filed their write-in candidacies.

Filling Vacancies

Precinct chair vacancies for unexpired terms are filled by the County Executive Committee (CEC) at a properly called meeting. The required quorum for a CEC meeting to fill a vacancy is a majority (greater than 50%) of filled precinct chairs.

Auxiliary Precinct Positions

Precinct chairs are responsible for a remarkable amount of work, and assistance is almost always required to accomplish the endless list of necessary tasks. This assistance can come from anyone willing to help the precinct chair, even from those not in the precinct, although that is preferred. There are no official names for those rendering assistance, nor are these official party positions. They are invaluable to the precinct chair, however, and therefore to the county and state parties, elected officials, and candidates.

- **Precinct Coordinator:** The precinct coordinator is not an official Party position, but if an elected precinct chair is unable or unwilling to do the work, a precinct coordinator should be chosen to carry on Party activities in the precinct. A precinct chair may choose to have a precinct coordinator to provide assistance.

- **Block Captains:** The block captain is not an official Party position. A block captain resides in the precinct and assists the precinct chair in the coordination of Democratic activities on that person's block or area.

The Ideal Precinct

The ideal precinct has an active precinct organization, led by the precinct chair. The precinct coordinator and active block captains on every street work closely together to find Democrats and others that lean our way; keep them informed; and, organize opportunities for them to get together. Democratic candidates are invited into the precinct to meet with voters and are provided assistance by the precinct's organization. Elected officials are kept apprised of the precinct's concerns and respond to the precinct chair's inquiries.

The precinct organization meets frequently to socialize, plan, and carry out Party building activities. At election time they work even harder to get out the vote for our candidates.

Elected Official and Candidate Cooperation with Precinct Chairs

Here are some of the ways you, as a candidate or elected official, can help a precinct chair:

- Invite precinct chairs to "addressing parties" and let them add messages to the cards or letters being sent to their precincts (except when using bulk mail). It is too expensive for most precinct chairs to pay the full price for mailing literature.
- Offer to block walk with precinct chairs or their representatives in the precinct.
- Invite precinct chairs to help plan an event that includes their precincts, such as a rally in a local park with games and light refreshments.
- Learn precinct chairs' names, and send them handwritten notes or make personal telephone calls.
- Personally greet and thank each precinct chair or election judge when they bring the ballot boxes to the courthouse on each Election Day.
- Remember that they already have jobs, and they are trying to help you get one or keep one.
- Ask for advice about their precincts, and seriously consider the advice that they give you.
- In the primary, positively tell why you are the best candidate. Do not criticize your opponents to the precinct chairs. Remember that we are all Democrats, and we are going to need each other.
- Encourage people who are active in a campaign to fill vacant precinct chair positions.

How to get Precinct Voters to the Polls

The precinct has been canvassed. New voters have been registered. Lists are up-to-date and everybody likely to vote for Democratic candidates is known. Friends and other volunteers are ready to help.

Ideally, the precinct chair will be part—the most important part—of a larger integrated campaign plan and organization. Precinct chairs, as part of the County Executive Committee, and other precinct organizers should be involved from the beginning in planning the campaign for the whole county, including specific activities for Election Day and the early voting period.

Each county is different, of course, and will have a different plan, but the job of precinct chair remains basically the same on Election Day:

- Contact all known Democratic voters to make sure they vote (or have already voted during the early voting period or by mail).
- Contact voters identified as likely to vote for Democrats to make sure they vote.
- Keep records of your contacts throughout the day as well as the turnout at your polling place so that you can report this information to your headquarters.

- Provide or know who in your area is providing rides to the polls. Many candidates help to arrange this service, or the County Party may have arranged for a pool of volunteer drivers.
- Find volunteers to work at the polling place handing out candidate literature and to be on the phone calling voters. You may also be asked to help get volunteers for a central phone bank or other joint efforts or to help in other precincts.
- Know what to do or where to call in your county for answers to questions about election law, voting fraud, or unfair practices taking place at your poll.

Precinct Chair vs. Election Judge - General Election

It is no longer the case that the election judge and precinct chair are synonymous. The precinct chair should be getting Democrats and like-minded voters to the polls, while the election judge should be running the election.

Rationale:

- The precinct chair is a partisan Party position.
- The election judge is a non-partisan position.
- There is no law prohibiting a precinct chair from being an election judge.
- The precinct chair usually should **not** be the election judge.
- The precinct chair should help find judges, alternate judges, and clerks

As stated earlier, in some cases it is more useful for the precinct chair to be the election judge, alternate judge, or clerk. This should be the exception rather than the rule.

The County Executive Committee (CEC)

The County Executive Committee (CEC) is composed of the precinct chairs of each of the county's voting precincts and the county chair. The county chair calls and presides over CEC meetings. Precinct chairs may also call meetings through a petition process. Elected local and county Democratic officials are not members of the CEC but should be invited to all meetings.

County Executive Committee administers the following business of the County Party:

- By statute, the CEC has certain responsibilities for the conduct of the Democratic Primary in the county.
- By *TDP Rules*, the CEC may adopt continuing rules for the conduct of its business.
- By *TDP Rules*, the CEC shall have primary responsibility for planning and integrating the General Election campaigns of the Democratic Party's nominees within the county. This includes the following responsibilities:
 - Raising funds for conducting local campaigns
 - Supporting the statewide effort for the entire ticket
 - Developing materials
 - Integrating local services for all Democratic campaigns
 - Optionally, establishing precinct committees to facilitate and coordinate within the formal party structure

Responsibilities of the County Executive Committee

Grassroots efforts are more effective with an active, engaged County Executive Committee (CEC). Ideally these activities are done as the CEC; however, if the CEC is unable to meet a quorum to make

decisions, the county chair is still responsible for seeing that statutory requirements for running a primary are met.

The CEC has the following responsibilities:

- Establish basic County Party goals and objectives
- Electing a county party secretary and treasurer
- Establish a budget and prepare election finance planning
- Establish standing party committees and appoint committee members
- Establish steering committees as necessary
- Assist the county chair in recruiting active precinct chairs
- Establish a County Primary Committee with these responsibilities:
 - Plan Primary Election financing
 - Organize and train Primary Election personnel (election, administrative, volunteers)
 - Secure election equipment, contract for special services
 - Obtain rental agreements for polling places and central counting location
 - Coordinate with the County Election Administrator on voter registration lists and related election activities
 - Conduct election training schools
 - Provide for voter education programs
 - Conduct other related Primary Election activities as provided for by statute and *TDP Rules*
- Establish General Election campaign committees to do the following:
 - Prepare and plan election financing
 - Provide voter education programs
- Campaign
 - Conduct the Get Out The Vote (GOTV) campaign
 - Conduct other related General Election activities as provided for by statute and *TDP Rules*

County Executive Committee Steering Committees

A CEC may form steering committees to assist in completing any specific task. Steering committees should involve and represent all Democrats in the community, officeholders, candidates, party officers, and constituency groups.

County Executive Committee Meetings

There are two types of County Executive Committee (CEC) meetings, statutory and non-statutory. CEC meetings are called by the county chair or by petition of the precinct chairs. It is the responsibility of the party calling the meeting to set the agenda. CEC members shall be notified in writing at least five days in advance of the meetings.

To conduct routine business in most counties, a quorum consists of 25% of filled precinct chairs. A majority (greater than 50%) must be present to conduct vacancy elections. Provided a quorum is met, elections require a majority vote (50% plus at least 1) of those in attendance at a properly called CEC meeting.

By the *TDP Rules*, many CECs are required to meet quarterly. See the *TDP Rules* for details. In election years Texas law requires three statutory CEC meetings.

Statutory County Executive Committee Meetings

The following are the statutory meetings:

- First meeting: January
- Second meeting: Thursday or Friday following the second Tuesday in March (to canvass Primary election)
- Third meeting: Thursday or Friday following the second Tuesday in April (runoff primary)

The following is the order of business at each of the three required meetings:

The First Meeting

This meeting must perform the following duties:

- Receive from the county chair the names of all candidates for state, district, county, and precinct offices as certified to appear on the ballot
- Determine by lot (drawing) the order in which these names will appear on the ballot
- Approve the county chair's appointment of the five-member Primary Committee (or, by resolution, change its composition), which has the duty to make up the official ballot
- Give final approval as to which voting systems (paper or machine ballots) shall be used in the primaries and early voting. [voting systems were probably previously determined by a committee]
- Assist and approve the county chair's appointment of election judges and alternates
- Order the consolidation of two or more county election precincts if necessary, and select the polling places [precinct groupings should have been done earlier].
- Set the hour (at 7:15 PM) and place of precinct conventions to be held on the day of the first primary
- Give final approval for the time and place of the county/senatorial district convention to be held on the third Saturday after the first or general primary
- Give final approval to the precinct groupings, where necessary, for purposes of caucusing to elect delegates at the county/senatorial district convention
- Hear the appointments made by the county chair for each senatorial district; appointee must live in the senate district

The Second Meeting

This meeting has the following duties:

- Canvass and certify the returns of the first or general primary by comparing poll lists with the tally lists and return sheets to determine those candidates for county and precinct offices who received the necessary votes for nomination
- Determine the particular offices for which no candidate received a majority of votes cast and order that the names of the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes for that office be placed on the ballot for the runoff primary
- Determine by lot (drawing) the order in which these names appear on the ballot

The Third Meeting

This meeting has only one duty, canvass and certify the returns of the runoff primary

Filling Vacancies

The CEC may be asked to submit a nominee for a vacancy of an elected office that occurs when the party's nominee cannot be on the ballot for the General Election. The required quorum for a CEC meeting to fill a vacancy is a majority (greater than 50%) of filled precinct chairs.

The County Chair

The county chair is the leader and presiding officer of the county Democratic Party. The county chair is responsible for a multitude of duties and, along with the County Executive Committee, is responsible for organizing and strengthening the Party at the county level.

A county chair should be outgoing, self-motivated, and organized.

Duties and Responsibilities

The county chair's official and unofficial duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following:

- Recruiting enthusiastic, responsible people to serve as precinct chairs or precinct coordinators in every precinct in the county
- By rules, training precinct chairs
- Calling and chairing meetings of the County Executive Committee
- Bringing together the diverse groups within the Democratic Party and local community
- Raising funds for the local effort
- Recruiting, training, and managing volunteers and volunteer program
- Building and maintaining a local Party database
- Organizing and assisting local Democratic clubs and organizations
- Developing and maintaining a good working relationship with the local media and representing the Party with the media
- Representing the county Party to candidates, officeholders, and local, state, and national Democratic organizations
- Supervising party office staff authorized by the County Executive Committee
- Recruiting and developing candidates
- Executing/administering of the Primary Election and Primary fund
 - Establish a budget
 - Order and keep inventories of office/election supplies
 - Handle the money provided by the state and candidate filing fees
 - Determine the order of candidates' names on the ballot
 - Certify the Democratic Party Ballots
 - Canvass the results
 - Pay election workers
- Preparing for conducting the precinct and county conventions
- Opening campaign headquarters
- Establishing phone banks and block walks
- Targeting and canvassing voters

At the first mandatory CEC meeting prior to the Primary, if a county has more than one senate district, the county chair appoints a temporary chair for each respective senatorial district within their county. The temporary chair must live in the senate district and is responsible for assisting the county chair with the coordination and organization of the county/senatorial convention.

Term of Office and Qualifications

To be eligible for the office of county chair, an individual must meet these requirements:

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Be a qualified voter who has voted in the latest Democratic primary (not counting runoffs) in the voting year
- Be a resident of the county from which he or she is seeking election
- Not be a candidate for or holder of an elective office of the federal, state, or county government
- (Optional but highly desirable) have Internet and e-mail capabilities and basic computer skills

Filing for Office

The county chair is a publicly elected party official and is elected by precinct voters in the Democratic Primary Election (or in the runoff election, if no candidate gets a majority in the general primary).

A qualified individual interested in running for county chair must do the following:

- Obtain a filing form from the county chair, the secretary of the County Party, or from the State Party
- Complete the application
- Sign the application before a notary public
- Have the filing form notarized
- Submit the application to the county chair in the period that begins in early December and ends at 6:00 PM on the first business day in January. The specific opening date is 30 days before the first business day in January of an election year. The form may be submitted in either of two ways:
 - Hand the completed, signed, and notarized application to the county chair
 - Optionally, mail the completed, signed, and notarized application to county chair, but it must be received by the filing deadline
- In very large counties (population greater than 1 million), submit a petition containing the signatures of 15 percent of the current precinct chairs in the county. A sample of the petition can be found in Appendix K.

If the county chair is running for reelection, the county chair keeps the application.

The names of county chair candidates appear on the Democratic Primary Ballot. Write-in votes are permitted in the primary, whether or not there are other candidates on the ballot, providing the candidates must have filed their write-in candidacies. Write-in votes are not permitted in a runoff.

Filling Vacancies

County chair vacancies for unexpired terms are filled by the County Executive Committee at a properly called meeting. The meeting may be called by the outgoing county chair, the county Party secretary, or by the State Chair if there is neither a current county chair nor secretary. The required quorum for a CEC meeting to fill a vacancy is a majority (greater than 50%) of filled precinct chairs.

Chapter 4 Delegate and Convention System

The Texas Democratic Party (TDP, State Party, the Party) holds conventions in even-numbered years to conduct the business of the Party. Involvement in the TDP three-level convention system is highly encouraged. Detailed information on each convention may be seen in the appendices.

These are the three levels of the TDP convention system:

- **Level 1: Precinct Conventions** are open to everyone in that precinct who voted in the Democratic Primary.
- **Level 2: County Conventions [or Senatorial District Conventions in counties that have multiple Senatorial Districts]** are open to delegates elected in the precinct conventions in that county or senatorial district.
- **Level 3: State Convention** is open to delegates elected by delegates in county and senatorial district conventions. Seating is by senate district.

To be a delegate to the state convention, a Democratic Primary voter must first be elected as one of the allotted precinct delegates to the county / senatorial district convention. The delegates from the precinct convention attend the county / senatorial district convention where they elect the delegates to the state convention. The numbers are determined by the number of Democratic votes cast for governor in the last gubernatorial election.

In presidential years, Texas delegates to the national convention are elected at the state convention.

Precinct Conventions

Democratic primary voters meet on the evening of the Primary Election to hold the precinct convention and to do the following:

- Elect delegates to the county or senatorial district convention. In presidential election years, the delegates are elected based on presidential preference
- Adopt resolutions that will be submitted to the county or senatorial district convention

The precinct chair prepares for the precinct convention and typically acts as its temporary chair. However, if the precinct chair is not available, any interested Democratic primary voter from the precinct may convene the meeting.

The County Party provides a convention packet with instructions, forms, and easy-to-fill-in agenda/minutes. The packet is typically kept at the polling place on the Primary Election day.

The precinct convention is open to anyone who voted in the Democratic Primary that day or during the early voting period. By Texas law, the precinct convention begins at 7:15 PM.

It is called to order by the temporary chair at the precinct's polling location. The precinct convention is typically at the polling location.

A detailed explanation of the precinct convention can be seen in Appendix A.

County / Senatorial District Conventions

County and Senatorial District conventions elect delegates to the state convention and conduct the business of the Party. Local, state, and federal candidates and elected officials should be invited to the convention. The purposes of the county or senatorial district conventions, in the urban counties with multiple senate districts, are the following:

- To elect delegates and alternates to the State Convention
- To adopt resolutions that will be passed on to the State Convention
- Optionally, to establish platform positions for inclusion in the *State Party Platform*

The county and senatorial district conventions are held on the third Saturday after the first Primary. However, if that date occurs during Passover or on the day following Good Friday, the convention is held on the next Saturday that does not occur during Passover or on the day following Good Friday.

The convention shall be properly publicized and in accordance with state law. The location must be easily accessible and large enough to accommodate all participants. The time and location of the county convention is determined by county executive committee; the senatorial district convention by the senate district committee.

A county convention is held when the county is in a single senate district. It is organized by the county chair and county executive committee. The SDEC committee members may also give assistance.

A senatorial district convention is held when the senate district encompasses several counties and/or parts of counties. However, it is more common that county conventions are held that include senate district caucuses. A senate district convention is organized by the senate district committee. The SDEC committee members may also give assistance.

When a combined county/senatorial district convention is held, the delegates sign in according to their senate district. The convention begins with all of the delegates together and then splits into senate district caucuses to conduct the remainder of the convention's business. A detailed explanation of the county convention and senate district convention can be seen in Appendix B.

County and senatorial conventions function with the use of the following four committees:

- **Credentials Committee** - The Credentials Committee signs in delegates and alternates; establishes the permanent roll of the convention; and makes recommendations to the convention to resolve challenges to credentials of delegates to the state convention.
- **Nominations Committee** - The Nominations Committee ensures the proper number and breakdown of delegates to the State Convention.
- **Platform and Resolutions Committee** - The Platform and Resolutions Committee considers resolutions submitted to the Convention and makes recommendations on those resolutions to the Convention.
- **Rules and Procedures Committee** - The Rules and Procedures Committee ensures the convention follows appropriate protocols and *TDP Rules*.

Either the County Executive Committee or the senate caucus, made up of precinct chairs within the senate district, selects the committee members.

Note to convention goers - the convention occasionally goes into a recess when some committees meet. This time may be used for listening to candidates, attending workshops, listening in on the committee meetings, or visiting old friends and meeting new ones.

County / Senatorial Convention Senate District Caucus

A Senate District Caucus is a subdivision of a senate district and is an essential part of the convention process and consists of convention delegates.

Pre-convention, the caucus consists of all of the delegates elected at the precinct conventions to the county/senatorial convention from within a single county or portion of a single county of a senate district. Two examples: (1) In a senate district that has several counties, the delegates of County **A** would be a senate district caucus; the delegates of County **B** would be another caucus, etc. (2) In a senate district that has portions of several counties, the delegates in County **X** within that senate district would be a caucus, the delegates in County **Y** within that senate district would be another caucus, etc.

Prior to the county/senatorial convention, the purpose of the senate district caucus is to organize the county/senatorial convention senate district caucus and to select convention committee chairs and committee members.

At the county/senatorial convention, the purpose of the caucus is to conduct the business of the convention, including electing senate district delegates to the state convention.

Senate District Delegation

The senate district delegation is made up of all the delegates and alternates that are elected to attend the state convention from the county/senatorial district conventions.

At the state convention, the senate district delegates elect state convention committee members, Senate District Executive Committee members, and in presidential years, delegates to the national convention depending on the process selected by the senate district committee.

State Convention Senate District Caucus

The senate district caucus is a sub-division of the senate district at the state convention and consists of the delegates from a single county or portion of a single county within the senate district. It has the same geographical boundaries as the senate district caucus at the county/senatorial district convention. The purpose of the senate district caucus at the state convention is to recommend or select state convention committee members, SDEC members, and in presidential years, delegates to the national convention, depending on the process selected by the senate district committee.

The senate district caucus at the state convention is made up of state convention delegates elected at the county/senatorial district convention. It should not be confused with the senate district caucus that occurs at the county/senatorial district convention, which is made up of delegates to the county/senatorial district convention elected at the precinct conventions.

For additional information on the individual conventions, see the appendices.

State Convention

The purpose of the State Convention is to conduct the following business of the Party:

- Elect the Party's officers
- Elect the SDEC senate district committee members
- Pass resolutions
- Adopt a platform
- Additionally, in presidential years, elect Democratic National Committee members and delegates and alternates to the National Convention

A full meeting of the State Democratic Executive Committee precedes the two-day State Convention. Specific information about the State Convention is mailed to each delegate and alternate in advance of the event. Information is also available on the Internet.

The Texas State Convention is held in June of even-numbered years at a location selected by the State Democratic Executive Committee.

Elected delegates and alternates are grouped by senate district.

Guest passes may be available from the State Party office for the limited seating available.

Because the purpose of the convention is to conduct Party business, attendees should understand that not every moment will be exciting. The convention occasionally goes into a recess when some committees meet. This time may be used for listening to candidates, attending workshops, listening in on the committee meetings, or visiting old friends and meeting new ones.

National Convention

In presidential years, the Democratic National Committee convenes a national convention with the set purpose of nominating the Democratic nominees for president and vice-president.

The process to become a delegate or alternate begins, in general, at the precinct convention when the attendees sign in under their presidential preference, while the specific rules for national convention and delegate selection vary from one convention to the next. That preference is carried forward to the county/senatorial district convention and on to the state convention. Prior to attending the state convention, anyone wishing to be a delegate or alternate to the national convention files a request to be a delegate and/or alternate with the DNC.

Delegates and alternates to the national convention are selected in the senate district caucuses. The nominations committee fills the remainder of the Texas delegation.

Organization Chart of the Texas Democratic Party

