

Texas Democratic Party Grassroots Manual



2009 version

Texas Democratic Party
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Dedication

This Grassroots Manual is dedicated to anyone who's ever registered a voter, helped a candidate, baked a cake, knocked on doors, called voters, blogged, sent e-mail and everything in-between, to advance the Texas Democratic Party.

Purpose

The TDP Grassroots Manual is a guide to being an effective "grassroots activist" in the Texas Democratic Party. The term "grassroots" in this context refers to a political force that is driven by individuals and groups at the local level of government. "Activist" refers to an agent of political change. It's the mighty effort and steadfast dedication of ordinary citizens and groups that develop a strong political party. This manual explains the operations of the Texas Democratic Party and describes activities necessary to achieve success in electing Democratic candidates. It also serves as a reminder to volunteers and those holding positions of authority in the Democratic Party that we are entrusted with the responsibility of serving our fellow Democrats.

Acknowledgement

In sincere appreciation to Karl A. Silverman, whose fantastic work provided us with a great foundation upon which to build. Additional thanks to Dr. Dennis Teal, Zada True-Courage, Frank Ortega, Linda Perez, Madeleine Dewar, and all Grassroots Committee members responsible for the on-going revisions of this Grassroots Manual. Gratitude should also be extended to the many people who came before and many who are unknown to us who have contributed in some way to this document throughout the years.

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What it means to be a Democrat

Democrats stand for Hope, Equal Opportunity, and Fair Play. These are the values Texans share in our personal lives and the values we expect to define our economic and social policies. Texas Democrats are building a better state and a stronger nation where those who work hard and play by the rules can achieve their American dream.

We believe:

- In equal opportunity for all citizens.
- In rewarding, honest, hard work with a living wage in a tax system that is fair.
- In family values that are more than a political slogan.
- In quality education that gives all citizens the opportunity to reach their potential.
- In freedom from government interference in our private lives and personal decisions.
- In the benefits of individual strengths in our diverse population.
- In security in our homes and safety on our streets. Criminals should face swift and certain punishment.
- In separation of Church and State to preserve the freedom to pursue our beliefs.
- In a strong United States—morally, economically and militarily.
- In support of laws that protect our environment, including common-sense reforms that give us cleaner and safer air and water.

To preserve these values and to ensure that our state continues to provide economic opportunity to all Texans, we must be able to conduct effective election campaigns.

Texas Democratic Party Grassroots Manual

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Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

(The) Base or Base Voters Voters that consistently vote for Democratic candidates. Also refers to precincts with a Democratic Performance Index (DPI) of 65% and above. Areas always targeted by Democratic organizations for Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) efforts.

Block Captain A volunteer willing to assist the precinct chair. A block captain is typically responsible for one “block” in a precinct.

Block Captain Program A program consisting of one person per street, group of streets, city block, or group of blocks to assist the precinct chair in the coordination of Democratic campaign activities at the precinct level.

Blog A web log or blog is a website dedicated to posting messages typically focused on a point of view or issue.

Blue Dog Democrat A Democrat who votes more “conservatively” than a Yellow Dog Democrat.

Canvass An act or process of obtaining votes or soliciting opinions. To canvass a neighborhood involves contacting people either by mail, phone calls, door-to-door, or e-mail for the purpose of obtaining Democratic votes and/or obtaining opinions on various political issues.

Canvass the Vote To canvass a vote is to verify the unofficial election results, thereby making them official.

Caucus: A closed meeting of people from one political party, especially a local meeting to select delegates or candidates. Caucus also refers to a group of people, often within a larger group (e.g., a legislative assembly,) who unite to promote a particular policy or particular interests. (e.g., During Presidential election years, Democrats caucus by Presidential preference at their conventions).

Conventions (Precinct, County, Senatorial District, State) System to elect delegates, select resolutions, and make platforms.

Convention Committees:

Credentials (County, Senatorial, and State) Establishes the permanent roll of the convention and makes recommendations to the convention to resolve challenges to delegate credentials.

Nominations (County and Senatorial) Recommends delegates to fill and balance the state convention delegation. (State) Nominates State Democratic Executive Committee officers; SDEC members, as recommended by senatorial district caucuses; and, in presidential years, DNC representatives. In presidential years, the duties of the Nominations Committee for At-Large Delegates to the National Convention and the Nominations Committee for Presidential Electors shall be those implied by their titles or as assigned by the National Party Rules.

Platform (County and Senatorial) Typically combined with the resolution committee to screen and forward platform recommendations. (State) Writes and recommends to the convention a Party platform for the November General election.

Resolutions (County and Senatorial) Reviews and combines similar resolutions. Each resolution is then sent to convention with a “for” or “against” recommendation. (State) Considers resolutions submitted to the Convention, other than those within the proper jurisdiction of the Platform Committee; makes recommendations to the Convention.

Rules Committee (County, Senatorial, and State) (1) Ensures the *Texas Statute Election Code* and the *Rules of the Texas Democratic Party (TDP Rules)* are followed and (2) Considers questions about rules. (State) (1) Considers and recommends to the Convention proposed amendments to the permanent *Rules of the Texas Democratic Party* and (2) then *makes the new rules available online at www.txdemocrats.org*. The *Texas Statute Election Code* is available at (<http://tlo2.tlc.state.tx.us/statutes/el.toc.htm>)

County Chair Elected by the primary voters of a county to preside over the County Executive Committee (CEC). The county chair and CEC oversee the Democratic Party in that county.

CEC or County Executive Committee A body composed of the county chair and all the precinct chairs of a county. The CEC oversees the County Democratic Party’s activities.

Cycle Term generally refers to the period between one General election and the next.

Convention Chair – presiding officer of the convention

Delegation Chair – presiding officer and spokesperson for the delegation

DNC or Democratic National Committee Governing body of the national Democratic Party.

Down Ballot Candidate positions on a ballot listed below the highest office running.

DPI or Democratic Performance Index Average Democratic performance in a precinct or a given area based on recent elections. The DPI is calculated by averaging the percentage of votes that selected Democratic candidates received.

DRT or Data Retrieval Team Group that collects voting information from polling sites on Election Day and reports back to the Party and area coordinators. The turnout information is used to guide GOTV efforts.

E-Day Election day.

EV or Early Voting Texas allows voters to vote at selected voting locations prior to Election Day. Times vary but the days are set by statute, beginning the 17th day before an election and ending on the 4th day before the election. The term technically includes mail-in balloting (VBM=vote by mail) but is normally used to refer to early in-person voting. Votes cast in early voting are not counted until polls close on Election Day.

Election Judge A non-partisan administrative authority at a polling site.

FEC or Federal Elections Commission. Federal agency which governs all Federal campaign finance.

General Election The election in November of even-numbered years that determines who will hold state and county offices. This is a partisan election.

GPAC or General-Purpose Political Committee A Texas political committee that, supports/opposes more than one candidate or candidates voted on in more than one county (e.g., statewide candidates), but is not a committee of an identified candidate. If a County Party Executive Committee spends more than \$25,000 in a calendar year, it must form a type of GPAC by appointing a campaign treasurer within 15 days, and file reports of contributions and expenditures with the Texas Ethics Commission. County parties usually file on a special set of forms. Any other group that raises or spends \$500 must appoint a campaign treasurer and start filing reports.

GOTV or Get Out The Vote A program or program component to motivate and turn out voters.

Household List A list of registered voters grouped by address; used for phone banking and block walking purposes.

Independent (voter) A voter who votes in general elections but not in party primaries. A person not associated with a major political party.

LGBT An acronym referring collectively to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender/Transsexual individuals.

Marginal (vote/voters) See swing voters.

PAC Political Action Committee a private group, regardless of size, organized to elect or defeat government officials or to promote or defeat legislation. Legally, what constitutes a "PAC" for purposes of regulation is a matter of state and federal law. Source: Wikipedia

Platform A declaration of principles and policies adopted by a political party or candidate.

Poll Watcher A poll watcher is someone who is appointed by a candidate or a political party to observe the election day procedures.

Poll Worker Poll Workers are the people who ensure the conduct of fair and accurate elections. They prepare the election site by setting up voting equipment, greeting voters, verify registrations and providing voters with appropriate ballots.

Precinct Chair Party official directly elected by the primary voters in a voter precinct. Serves on the County Executive Committee, chairs the precinct convention, and is responsible for coordinating all campaign activity in a precinct. This is a partisan position vs. an Election Judge, which is a non-partisan position in the General election.

Primary Election Election held in March of even-numbered years to determine which of a party's candidates will be the party's nominee in the November General election.

Robert's Rules of Order Book of rules governing parliamentary procedure in all Party conventions, caucuses, and convention committees, except where contrary rules or procedures are specified by the *Rules of the Democratic Party*.

Rules of the Texas Democratic Party (TDP Rules) Official rules of the Texas Democratic Party. The Party rules can be found at the Party's website, which is www.txdemocrats.org.

Runoff Election Election to determine a party's nominee when no candidate receives more than 50% of the vote in an election. Only the two top vote-getters are on the ballot in a runoff election. There is no run-off in the General Election.

SDEC or State Democratic Executive Committee The SDEC governs the party between conventions. Body composed of the State Party Chair, Vice Chair, and other officers elected at the State Convention; two members elected by the delegates at the State Convention from each senatorial district; and representatives of several Democratic organizations.

Steering Committee A body representing all Democratic organizations, interests, and candidates in a given area for the purpose of coordinating activities.

Super Saturday (or Sunday) Weekend (and in some cases weekends) scheduled during Early Vote. Usually produces the highest turnout outside of Election Day.

Swing Voters Voters with an unpredictable history of voting for Democratic candidates. Precincts with a DPI between 45% and 65%. Areas usually targeted by candidates for voter persuasion.

Targeting Process of determining which demographic groups and precincts that have voters who are more likely to support a favored candidate or party.

TEC or Texas Ethics Commission. State agency which governs all Federal campaign finance.

TDP or Texas Democratic Party a.k.a. The State Party. The Democratic Party organization on the State level.

TDW or Texas Democratic Women Statewide organization in the Texas Democratic Party. Their goal is a re-emphasis of local, grassroots politics and specifically the role of women in the political process.

TDP Rules Rules of the Texas Democratic Party. 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 The official election code of the state of Texas. The Texas Election Code outlines the rules for voter registration, campaigning, elections, precinct conventions, etc... The Texas Election Code can be found at the Texas Secretary of State website.

VAN (Voter Activation Network) Also referred to as Texas VAN, the TDP's online voter file system. It is a voter identification program that helps the user manage voter data and create lists based on various voter characteristics such as voting history, geography, and demographics.

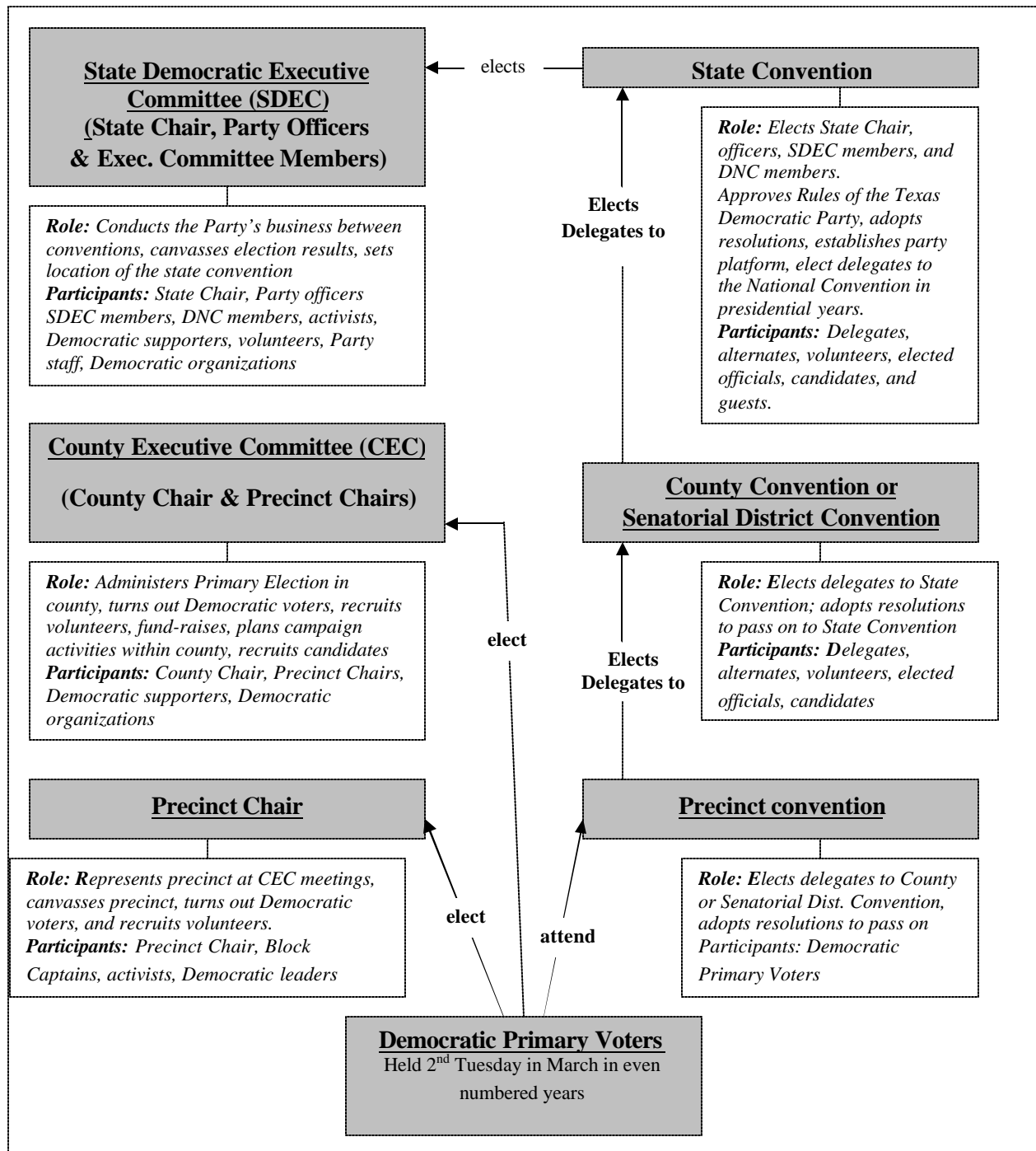
VBM or Vote By Mail A means of voting via the postal system that is available to elderly voters, voters with physical disabilities, people who will not be home for the election, and military personnel.

Voter File The Texas Democratic Party owns and maintains a database of all registered voters in Texas that is available on-line to precinct chairs, counties, and candidates.

Walk List A list of registered voters grouped by street and address; typically used for block walking purposes.

Yellow Dog Democrat In the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century, Yellow Dog Democrats were voters in the U.S. Southern states who consistently voted for Democratic candidates. The term arose from the notion that loyal Southern Democrats would vote for a yellow dog before voting for a Republican. Source: Wikipedia

Texas Democratic Party Election Process



Chapter 1-The Texas Democratic Party

The Texas Democratic Party (the TDP, the State Party, the 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 members of the SDEC represent party caucuses and affiliated organizations and are sometimes referred to as "Add-Ons." Add-on members may not vote on statutory matters.

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 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.
- Caucus and Organization representatives – Members from various 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 gender.

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
- 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
- (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

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.

Chapter 2 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 "go-to person" for all Democratic precinct activity. 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
- To call a CEC meeting when County Chairs fail to do so

Precinct Chair vs. Election Judge

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. According to TDP Rules, CECs are required to meet quarterly. See TDP Rules for information on quorum requirements and the order of business required at the statutory meetings.

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
- 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

Chapter 3 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.

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.

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.

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.

Chapter 4 Budgeting, Fundraising and Financial Reporting

Raising money is necessary and difficult. Party and campaign financial needs are different, so this section deals with some basics that apply to both types of fundraising. Fundraising is best organized by a person or committee devoted to that function.

Budget, Fundraising, and Goals

It is critically important to have an operating budget. A budget is developed by determining what activities are planned and estimating their costs. It is best then to set fundraising goals and raise funds to pay for these activities.

Table 1 below is a sample of an election year budget. Table 2 is designed to help set fundraising goals.

Reasons People Give

Your fundraising team should develop and articulate reasons people want to contribute money. Generally, people are motivated to give money by the following:

- Personalities with charisma, intelligence, talent, and influence
- Power that comes from affiliation with a person or group
- Philosophy or ideology that supports what the contributor perceives is right and good
- Policies and programs that positively affect lives, serve interests, or confirm beliefs
- Political coalitions that advance causes and candidates
- Knowledge that their money will be used efficiently and effectively

A budget can be in itself an effective fundraising tool. Of course, the plan and budget should not be generally distributed, but it may be useful in discussions with business and professional people.

It is useful to let other prospective contributors know exactly what their money can do, e.g., their \$25.00 contribution can buy 100 bumper stickers or a phone line for one month, etc.

Asking for Money

What is the number one reason people give money? They are asked! There are several fundraising methods. The three most common methods are through personal contact, by mail, and events.

Personal Contact: Personal contact is the most persuasive method of solicitation. Face-to-face contact, especially with someone the contributor knows, is impossible to ignore. Potential contributors should be matched with solicitors to whom they would most likely respond.

Use the telephone to make appointments for in-person solicitations or to contact other potential contributors. Calls should be followed up by a personal letter from the person who placed the call, from a candidate, or from the finance chair or county chair. A follow-up letter should always include a reply card and a return envelope. You can also use your volunteer phone bank to solicit contributions or to remind people about upcoming fundraising events.

Mail: Mail reaches more people in less time and is the least intrusive type of solicitation. However, direct mail solicitation requires an up-front investment of money and can be very costly unless carefully targeted and designed to assure an adequate response. When re-soliciting people who have given to the County Party in the past, the expected response should be between 3 and 5%. The response from blind mailing ("prospecting") is closer to a return of 1%.

Fundraising Events: Events, especially during campaign season, create enthusiasm and visibility for the Party, our elected officials, and our candidates. Events also provide a tangible "deadline" for receipt of contributions. In addition, while some people will contribute without expecting anything but a "thank you," others are more likely to respond if they get something more tangible in return.

Start with a realistic projection of how many tickets and sponsorships you can sell and determine from that how much you can spend on the event itself. If you think you can sell 400 tickets at \$20.00 and 20 sponsorships at \$100.00, your projected gross will be \$10,000. Keeping your costs at 25-30% of that, or \$2,500 or \$3,000, means you've got a little more

than \$6.00 per person to spend—on everything, including invitations, postage, hall, food, and decorations. That arithmetic should tell you that you cannot afford to have a catered dinner at a nice hotel unless you can get everything donated.

Low-cost activities, if well planned and publicized, can attract people and make a profit: bake sales, garage sales, carnivals, BBQs, ice cream socials, car washes, rent parties. Be shameless: Use every opportunity to ask people to help or to contribute.

Several activities, from low-cost to high-dollar, are listed in the appendices.

Finding the Money / Contributors

Individuals

The best potential contributors are people who contribute. That's not a typo; it's a reminder to target people who are likely to give because they've given in the past.

Previous contributors are listed on past campaign finance reports on the Texas Ethics Commission website at www.ethics.state.tx.us/php/cesearch.html.

Presidential campaign contributors are listed by zip codes at www.fundrace.org. Additional information may be found at www.fec.gov.

Sponsors of previous events are another source of contributors. Candidates who are cooperating in the integrated campaign may provide their lists of contributors, and local Democratic clubs may allow the use of their membership lists. Phone banking only to Democrats in heavily Republican precincts typically yields better results than general blanket calling.

Be flexible with contributors. Someone who cannot give you \$100 in a single contribution might be able to give you \$25 a month during the campaign. Be sure to include on fund-raiser invitations the option, "I can't come, but here's my contribution of \$_____." Add a line to ask for occupation and employer of the contributor, see Financial Reporting. If someone says to call back in a week or a month, do it.

Political Action Committees and Groups

Many unions, business associations, corporations, and environmental and civic groups have set up political action committees to make contributions. If you are going to do aggressive fundraising, it is necessary to research and identify those various committees and groups to determine which entities are most appropriate from which to solicit funds. (See Financial Reporting and Compliance).

In-Kind Contributions

Sometimes donations of goods or services are easier to obtain than cash contributions. Some people like to know exactly what their money has bought, so they may prefer to buy it for you and give it to you. (See Financial Reporting and Compliance)

Financial Reporting and Compliance

WARNING! Due to the ambiguities and consequences for the Party created by the McCain-Feingold (BCRA) campaign law, County Executive Committees and clubs should avoid setting up Federal PACs until they've checked with the State Democratic Party Office 512-478-9800 and thoroughly explored all the ramifications! If you already have one established, please check with the State Party Office for important information.
The information below covers contributions for state elections and party building activities.

Before raising, spending or donating money or ANY in-kind, contributions, individuals, as well as County Parties, clubs, candidates and other groups must be fully aware of the Federal and State Election Finance laws.

When to Register as a Political Action Committee

As a general rule, money raised and spent to affect an election, or to support candidates or issues, or to promote a political party must be publicly disclosed. Therefore, not only candidates and officeholders are required to register with the Texas Ethics Commission (TEC), but county parties, clubs, and organizations that raise and spend money for political purposes must register if they meet specific criteria.

There are two types of Texas Political Action Committees (PACs): General-Purpose Political Committees (GPACs) and Specific-Purpose Political Committees (SPACs).

GPACs are for organizations that support or oppose more than one candidate or issue, while SPACs are for organizations that support or oppose specific (usually single) candidates or issues. Organizations that register with the TEC are required to appoint a treasurer, who is required to submit reports at specified intervals. Information about PACs and reporting can be found at www.ethics.state.tx.us.

County Party / County Executive Committees

A County Party / County Executive Committee has a special registration threshold, different from any other kind of political organization under Texas law. The Executive Committee can raise or spend \$25,000 in political funds in each calendar year without having to register as a political committee. The Executive Committee (1) must keep all records of political contributions and expenditures as if it were a political committee; (2) if it exceeds the \$25,000 threshold, must appoint a campaign treasurer within 15 days; and (3) must include the first \$25,000 of activity on its first report.

Clubs and Other Organizations

Most Party club and organization activities fit the definition of GPAC. A group can raise or spend \$500 before having to appoint a campaign treasurer, register with the TEC, and start filing reports. **The \$500 threshold is a one-time, cumulative threshold.** This does not apply to candidates, who must appoint a campaign treasurer before they raise any contributions or make any expenditures. This must be done no later than the date they file for a place on the ballot, because a filing fee is a political expenditure.

Once registered, a club or organization must wait 60 days and have contributions from at least 10 contributors before it can make any further political expenditure. Non-registered groups must be careful during a campaign, because if they exceed the \$500 threshold in the middle of a campaign and are not registered, they will be "frozen" from doing any further activity.

Candidates

Depending on the position being sought, a candidate must register with either the Federal Elections Commission, the Texas Ethics Commission or the county clerk. County and lower offices register with the county clerk. All candidates **MUST** familiarize themselves with the appropriate rules and regulations appropriate to the office being sought.

Political Advertising and Disclaimers

A disclaimer tells the public who has paid for a political communication. The general rule: disclaim everything. Texas law says that most political advertising must disclose that it is political advertising and who paid or contracted to pay for it. The disclaimer must be on the face of the advertising.

Political advertising is any "communication supporting or opposing a candidate for nomination or election to a public office or office of a political party, a political party, a public officer, or a measure that: (A) in return for consideration is published in a newspaper, magazine, or other periodical or is broadcast by radio or television; or (B) appears: (i) in a pamphlet, circular, flier, billboard or other sign, bumper sticker, or similar form of written communication; or (ii) on an Internet website."

Questions, Problems, Help If help is needed with record keeping or reports, please call the Texas Democratic Party office at 512-478-9800. The State Party Office will do what they can to help, or make a referral. Do not wait until the day before a report is due or until you're standing at the newspaper office with your ad in hand, to start asking questions.

Chapter 5 The Democratic Message

A message provides a context for how Democratic actions on key issues fit into the beliefs and fundamental values of our communities, our state, and nation. Messages are based on a common theme or series of themes, focusing on specific issues.

Messages come in two forms, oral and written. While their development is similar, their content and delivery differ. Oral messages are short and typically limited to no more than three issues at a time, while the written message may go into greater detail and cover up to three issues. In some cases, more than three issues may be covered in written messages.

Message Components

Themes: A theme is a unifying idea that is a recurrent element in a campaign. Themes are typically set by the campaign. A few examples are, but not limited to: Public Service, Better Government, Open Government, Take Back the 9th, Putting People First, The New Deal, The New Frontier, Leave No Child Behind, Opportunity for All, A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats, Keep Hope Alive, and Turn District 22 Blue.

Issues: An issue is a matter of public concern and the list of Democratic issues is extensive. A few examples are, but not limited to: Protecting Social Security, Protecting the Right to Privacy in our Homes, Public Education, Health Care Accessibility, Choice, Equal Rights, Environment, Free Speech, Jobs, Living Wages, Investing in Public Education, and Giving Patients the Right to Choose a Doctor.

Values: Democrats support principles, ideals, standards, and qualities considered worthwhile, and policies that honor parents, nurture children, and provide opportunity for every responsible individual. A few examples are Freedom, Opportunity, Prosperity, Community, Service, Cooperation, Trust, Honesty, Empathy, Responsibility and the Strength to Carry out that Responsibility, Protection, Fairness, Fulfillment in Life, and Open Communication.

Effective Oral Messages

An effective message is a short communication that conveys an idea or series of ideas. The message must be framed in such a manner as to invoke a mental picture to convey the fundamental beliefs of our Party.

An effective message:

- Will be meaningful with local facts or individual anecdotes
- Will be relevant to the audience
- Will be about Democratic values, not programs
- Will be theme consistent
- Will be short
- Will be repeated over and over (no fewer than three times)

Effective Written Messages

A written message conveys an idea or series of ideas and allows for greater detail and depth. Like an oral message, the written message must be framed in such a manner as to invoke a mental picture to convey the fundamental beliefs of our Party.

An effective message:

- Will be relevant to the audience
- Will be theme consistent
- Will focus on Democratic values more so than programs
- Will use color (when possible)
- Will use pictures relevant to the material (when possible)
- Will contain no more than three issues

Effective “Pocket” Messages

A “pocket” message or “push card” is a small piece of material that is handed out. It conveys an idea or series of ideas in short statements.

An effective “pocket” message:

- Will be readable (ample blank space around easily read print)
- Will use color (when possible)
- Will be relevant to the audience
- Will use pictures or logos only as an accent
- Will usually contain no more than three issues

An example of an effective “pocket” message was a wallet-sized hand-out card developed by the Texas Democratic Party titled, *What it Means to be a Democrat*.

Chapter 6 Get The Message Out

There are many things that can be done to get out the Democratic message in your community:

Outreach: Attend meetings of other organizations, offer to give guest speeches, and participate when they have community forums, etc.

Letters to the Editor: Writing letters to the editor is an effective way to influence public opinion. Newspapers are more likely to publish a letter from a local resident than from the Communications Director of the Texas Democratic Party or even from an elected official.

Utilize Technology - Internet Web Pages, Blogs, Webcasting, E-mail Distribution Lists, Cell Phones, Pagers, and Text Messaging: Websites, blogs, webcasting and distributing information via e-mail distribution lists, cell phones, pagers and text messaging are excellent methods of distributing and displaying the Democratic message.

Distribute Press Releases: Press releases are used to distribute a Democratic message or invite the media to an event.

Call Radio Talk Shows: Call in to local radio talk shows to talk about the Democratic message or to refute someone else's message.

Use Print and Electronic Media: Print and electronic media allow for a wide distribution of the Democratic message to people who are not Party activists.

Outreach

Many organizations share the ideals of the Democratic Party. We can build more effective organizational or message efforts by getting our "allies" involved in the effort to elect those who champion our shared priorities. These are important ways to implement this effort:

- Join and work with allied groups, get to know their leaders and members, and get them involved in Democratic efforts. Invite them to events and to meet officeholders so you can conduct press events on "shared priorities," etc.
- Identify key "allied" leaders to serve as "credible third-party spokespersons" on behalf of our candidates, our party, and our shared message
- Encourage allied nonpartisan groups to hold bipartisan forums on their issue priorities, providing us an opportunity to deliver our majority message to the broader membership and the media

Letters to the Editor

A letter to the editor is an effective method of delivering the Democratic message and an excellent vehicle for rapid response. Guidelines for submission are typically published. Abide by their rules of style and etiquette. Generally you can say what you really feel.

Read letters to the editor to identify like-minded activists and enlist them in your cause.

Writing Guide: A good letter to the editor is like a three-act play. Set the stage in your first paragraph. Then lay out the evidence to support your point in a clear and concise manner. Finally, make your point based on the information you have outlined:

- **Write Tight:** Keep it economical—two to four paragraphs with one or two sentences per paragraph. Explain your inspiration for writing the letter or column then make your point. Do not worry about winning the Pulitzer Prize. Simply write the way you talk.
- **Stick to the Facts:** Be prepared. Make your case with solid information and facts. Use your talking points or newspaper stories you've clipped or pulled from the Internet as a background resource or primer for letters and columns.
- **Use Examples:** Examples of Democratic issues are the \$3,000 teacher pay raise and state health insurance plan for teachers, health care coverage for 600,000 uninsured children, and a prescription drug assistance program for seniors. Examples of failed Republican leadership are the insurance crisis and poor fiscal management that allowed a record state budget surplus to become a record state deficit.
- **Stay on message:** Do not get sidetracked. Stick to your central message and theme.
- **Be Confident:** Write it with pride, but don't let your emotions distract from your point.

- **Be Cool:** Even though you might not agree, respect the rights of others to express their opinions.

Technology

Internet Web Pages - Blogs - Webcasting - E-mail Distribution Lists - Cell Phones - Pagers - Text Messaging:

Electronic methods of distributing the Democratic message are relatively new but are playing an ever increasing role in the political arena. In some cases they require financial resources and/or technical expertise.

Web Page: A web page is typically developed and maintained by a web master. It should have the following:

- An eye-catching banner
- Information about the Party or organization
- Current news
- Information on how to join or participate in Party or organization activities
- Contact information
- A calendar of events
- Links to other websites and blogs
- Frequent updates to maintain “freshness”

Blog : A web log or blog is a website dedicated to posting messages typically focused on a point of view, issue or issues. Messages are controlled by a traffic manager. The blog should have the following:

- An eye-catching banner
- Information about the focus of the blog
- Information on how to register and participate in the blog
- Contact information
- Links to other websites and blogs

Webcasting: Webcasting is a method of broadcasting live or delayed audio and/or video transmissions over the Internet. Political call-in shows are becoming common. Press conferences, activities, and events can also be webcast. Webcasters utilize computers, specialized computer applications, and the Internet to produce webcasts.

Cell Phones - Pagers - Text Messaging: These technologies allow for rapid distribution of information.

Radio Talk Show Call-in

Radio talk shows allow for immediate delivery of a message or response to someone else’s message.

The caller should adhere to these guidelines:

- Remain calm and never be incited to make a rash response, no matter what
- Speak clearly at a moderate pace
- Be well informed on subject matter
- Never name-call or use profanity
- Never lie

Talk radio has emerged as a powerful medium for expressing political views and opinions. Call in and express support for the Democratic Party and its candidates. Let the talk show host know that you are “proud to be a Democrat” and remind listeners that our Party has a proven record of helping middle-class families.

Calling into a local radio talk show is very easy to do.

Many nationally syndicated programs are very conservative and in many cases have acted as unofficial “agents” of the Republican Party. They screen calls carefully, so it is not easy to “get through.”

Use Media Effectively - Print, Radio, TV and Electronic

In every community, there is a wide array of media outlets, each with its own audience and each with its own needs. Provide a media outlet with what it needs for its audience at the time it needs it, and excellent press coverage will follow.

Steps to Effective Media Relations

- Develop a **complete** media list
 - Locate every newspaper, radio station, TV station that serves the area
 - The Society for Professional Journalists may publish a media directory in large cities
 - Make a list of free newspapers
 - Make a list of professional or industry, special interest, minority, and college publications
 - Find out about local public affairs programs
 - Make a list of newsletters and websites of area Democratic clubs and affinity groups
- Develop contact information for **every** outlet
 - Get the names, addresses, phone numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses for a list of newsletters
 - Get the websites of area Democratic clubs and affinity groups
- Know the media
 - Make contact with and maintain relationships with editors and reporters who cover politics
 - Determine best format for each outlet [Mac vs. PC, e-mail vs. fax, etc.]
 - Schedule meetings with editorial boards once or twice a year
 - Continuously keep your contacts informed – mark FYI items to save them time
 - Get to know the reporters, develop a rapport, and maintain regular contact, even if not pushing a story or reacting to news. Know the reporters' strengths, weaknesses, and interests.
 - Who is best for investigative reporting?
 - Who covers such beats as campaigns or governmental agencies?
 - Who has the most institutional knowledge?
 - Who works fastest, slowest?
 - Which newspaper has the most manpower and reporters readily available?
- Keep volunteers and allies informed and involved
 - Make sure that everyone knows the Democratic message
 - Bring together volunteers to help with media relations
 - Use volunteers for researching the media
 - Provide other community organizations with our message
- Have a publicity plan – for the overall campaign and for each event
 - Identify individuals, community leaders and officeholders who can write columns and letters to the editor
 - Decide on a regular schedule and stick to it. For example, a letter could be sent on a weekly, semi-weekly, or monthly basis
 - Use the same approach for the electronic form of media—radio talk shows, local TV stations, etc. Call the news directors at local stations and ask to do live interviews.
 - Plan events that look good on TV, so reporters take pictures and provide news coverage, such as large, enthusiastic rallies. Put a face on the issues by having people tell compelling personal stories. Make events appealing!
 - Create a timeline for your plan, and make individuals responsible for specific tasks
 - Place a publicity schedule in the campaign timeline

Media Tips

- Keep abreast of the news
 - Scan the papers first thing every day
 - Check news websites frequently
 - Listen to radio and TV as often as you can
- Do your homework

- o Know the essential facts, but don't get bogged down in details
- o Back up your statement with information such as press clips, reports, and other materials
- Tell the truth
- Stay on message
 - o Be aware of what other Democrats are saying about the central issues
 - o Keep your answers within the framework of the Democratic Party positions on key issues
- Be aware of the basic guidelines and parameters for interviews
 - o Always assume you are "on the record"
 - o Don't be flippant or crude—anything you say could end up in print
- Be sensitive to timing. The old saying "Timing is everything" tends to hold true
 - o Know your local newspaper's deadlines and publication dates
 - o Time your events and releases with reporters' deadlines in mind
- Be proactive
 - o Don't just wait to respond to news
 - o Generate story ideas
 - o Package information to make the reporting job as simple as possible
 - o Anticipate calls and questions
- Be available. When people are regularly quoted in the press, you can be assured that is because they are very accessible, return calls, and have something quotable to say.
 - o Return calls to avoid lines in stories such as "could not be reached for comment"
 - o Do not refuse to comment
 - o When a reporter poses questions that cannot be answered sufficiently without more time and research, tell them you will call them back as soon as you can find the answers. (If you state a time by which you will respond, be sure to meet that deadline!)
 - o Be confident—speak with conviction
- Understand that TV wants events that are visual. Spanish TV wants Spanish speakers. Radio needs someone who speaks well and clearly. Print media has more space to fill, so they need more details, quotes, and pictures.
- Look at all angles of a submitted press release. Different angles appeal to different media
- Never miss an opportunity for publicity
- Never answer a question for a candidate. Refer media calls to the candidate when possible

Press Releases

Press releases alert reporters about stands on particular issues or let the media know about particular events.

Think about what you are going to write. Make it something you want to see written and would be interested in reading. It should be very detailed and contain what the reporters need to write their pieces.

Structure and Form of a Press Release

You should consider the following structure and form when writing a press release:

- Use the organization's letterhead for press releases
- Type "For Immediate Release" on the top left corner and type the date below that
- Type the contact information on the top right corner. Include name of organization and the phone numbers of two contacts. Ensure that these contacts can be reached easily. Include home numbers if appropriate. Cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses are appreciated
- Type "MORE" at the end of each page when your press release is more than a page long
- Type the contact information on successive pages as well

- Type “###” at the end of the press release. This is how journalists indicate the end of news copy.

What the Press Release Should Contain

You should do the following when writing a press release:

- Make the headline captivate the reader. Use the most important information in the headline—up to four lines if necessary. Use a subheading if needed, but keep it short. The headline and first paragraph should be where you concentrate your writing efforts. Your points should be made early in the release. Think about what is most important.
- Make pertinent and important information visible. Reporters generally glance at a press release for about 30 seconds. Keep the paragraphs short, and try to limit paragraphs to three sentences.
- Use quotes from spokespersons in the third or fourth paragraph, and summarize your organization in the last paragraph.
- Mention photo opportunity, if there is one. Be sure to send a copy of the release to the photo desk.

Distributing a Press Release

You must make sure the press release gets to the proper people:

- Send a press release a week before an event and send it again the day before the event.
- Press releases may be faxed, e-mailed or some combination of the two.
- Most importantly, make follow-up calls. Make these calls the day before or the morning of the event. Have a copy of the release handy and ready to be faxed when making these calls.

Advancing Democratic Media Events

Locations

Advance work may mean scouting out one location or many locations to find the best place for an event. It means asking questions to anticipate every possible problem. For example, if the advance person is looking for a good work site, it means identifying possible sites in a given locale, visiting those sites and asking questions.

Are there good visuals such as clearly visible machinery, a lot of workers on the site? Is it a union shop? Is there a location at the site where a candidate or a representative of the Democratic Party can speak to the workers, such as in an area of the factory floor that could be used, a cafeteria? Is it too noisy?

Is there a time when the workers change shifts or the machines are shut down? When is it busiest?

Are there any problems with the company, such as recent layoffs, union disputes, and safety violations? Is the media welcome to attend and take pictures? Is there room for the media? Is it convenient for the media, or is it out of the way and will require long travel times?

Does the location tell you anything about the substance of your event? What do you see? That’s the key test to apply when you’re planning message events. What does the location tell you about the Democratic Party or the candidate?

What people see is sometimes more important than what they hear or read. The bottom line: Think visually.

Media Event Planning Tips

You need to follow all of the following media event planning tips:

- Match your location with your subject. If you’re talking about health care, visit a health care clinic; jobs, visit a factory with workers; education, visit a classroom or job training site.
- Think big picture and small.
- Think people. You want to create events that put the Democratic Party in direct contact with people. If you visit a school, politely turn down the invitation to address the student body in the auditorium. That generally puts you on stage away from the kids. Opt for the gym or a classroom or the library. Take time to talk to individual kids, even if you have to kneel.

- Avoid distractions. Some factories are great visually, but too noisy. Some companies are willing to let you in for lunch breaks or other times when they shut down the machines.
- Think about what will be happening at your location during the time you've chosen.
- Always question crowd sizes. No doubt you'll have to ask someone how many people will be at a particular location when you're there, whether it is a factory, health clinic, lunch spot or school. Always check it out yourself. If you need 10 people and they say 10 people will be there, tell them you need 20 people. If 10 show up, you're covered. If 20 show, you're covered. Whenever possible, build or supplement a crowd yourself or double and triple check to make sure you'll have what you need.
- Get rid of the podium and you'll find you get better pictures with people involved in the subject you're covering. Whenever possible, avoid using a podium.
- Drive the day's schedule to ensure directions and travel times are correct. Do not do the test drive at midnight and assume you will make the location in the same 20 minutes. If your event takes place smack in the middle of rush hour, you'll be stuck in gridlock traffic when the event begins.

It's up to the advance person to make sure everything is as expected.

Did you anticipate a crowd at the senior center, but when you arrived everyone was gone on a field trip? No one was there except the media? Plan for alternatives. Do you have supporters in the area who can quickly build a senior crowd at the location? Can you move your event to another nearby location? Is there senior housing nearby where you can go door-to-door to talk to seniors?

An advance person must be absolutely unshakable—never appearing rattled, nervous, worried, anxious, short-tempered, or rude. Every crisis must be taken in stride and addressed efficiently, professionally, and politely.

Crisis Management

Media encounters can be pressure-filled events with rules, time limits, and even the occasional “cheap shot.” The twists and turns of a media situation can never be fully anticipated, but with discipline it is possible to maximize your control of the variables through a combination of knowledge, attitude, and strategy. The Texas Democratic Party, the county chair, the county executive committee, and the various candidate campaign offices should be consulted for the message.

Ensure that everyone understands how to respond in a crisis. For example, if you know protesters are coming to your event, try to arrange the site so those protesters cannot get close to the candidates. If you do not expect protesters, but they show up, do your best to isolate them in the rear of your event; get your crowd to drown them out; and if necessary, alert security or other officials.

What if the opposition shows up at your event or news conference? Generally, ignoring event-busters is the best advice. If that does not work, politely engaging them or inviting them to speak when you're done may work. Pushing, shoving, shouting, slamming doors, locking people out, or generating a confrontation or fight generally does not accomplish anything positive. It does ensure a spot on the news, simply not the one you wanted.

National Campaigns

National campaigns rarely communicate directly with local media as they typically care more about getting coverage in big papers, such as the *New York Times*. Therefore, it is important to maintain good relations with local media and to give a “local flavor” to the campaign. It is also important to maintain good local relations. When the campaign is over, the national group is gone, but you still need coverage of your local events.

Chapter 7 The Election Cycle

The standard “election year” occurs in even-numbered years. It begins with campaigning at the end of the first business day in January when the official candidate filling period closes. Following campaigning, the Democratic Primary Election is held and a Run-off Election where needed. Campaigning begins for the November General Election.

The full election cycle includes the odd-numbered years, sometimes referred to as the “off-years,” with the Texas Democratic Party (TDP) strengthening activities at all levels.

Party Registration in Texas

Voter registration and elections in Texas are dictated by state and federal law. With the exception of special elections, Primary and General Elections occur in even-numbered years. To participate in any election, a person must be registered. Registered voters are mailed voter registration cards. These cards should be signed and protected, as they are helpful when you go to vote.

One “registers” as a Democrat by voting in the Democratic primary. Unlike many other states, one does not register with a particular party nor does a voter have to pre-register with a particular party to vote in its primary.

Any qualified Texas voter 18 years of age or older who supports the “Statement of Principles” listed in Article I of the *Rules of the Texas Democratic Party (TDP Rules)* may participate fully in any Party meetings. These qualified voters may be elected to any Party Office, except where specifically prohibited by law or by *TDP Rules*.

To run for precinct chair, county chair, Senate District Executive Committeeperson, county or senate district delegate or alternate, state or national convention delegate or alternate, one must have voted in the most recent Democratic Party Primary (not including any run-off), or have signed an oath of affiliation in the voting year (see TDP Rules and Chapter 162, Texas Election Code).

Primary Election

Texas currently holds its Primary Elections in March of even-numbered years. The Democratic Primary of the TDP is open to any registered Texas voter who did not vote in another party's primary and who did not attend another party's political convention in that election cycle.

Special Note: Signing a petition to put a candidate on the ballot of a party counts as a declaration of party affiliation. Therefore, you may not sign a petition to put a Democrat on the ballot and vote in the Republican primary.

For a candidate to run as a Democrat in the General Election, the candidate must first register and run in the Democratic Primary. Registration dates and the dates of the Primary and run-off election are set by law. If there are no changes by the legislature, the Primary is held on the second Tuesday in March. If an opposed candidate does not receive more than 50% of the vote in the Primary, a Run-off Primary is held in April. As with the General Election, voting occurs on Election Day and during early voting, which typically begins approximately two weeks before Election Day.

To vote in the Primary and/or run-off, you must be a resident of your voting precinct and register to vote 30 days before the election. You may only vote in one political party's Primary. You may vote in a run-off election even if you did not vote in the Primary.

Your voting location may not be the same as for the general or local elections, because of the cost and complexity of the election. Locations and times of the Primary election are typically listed in the newspaper. You may also check with local Party officials or the county clerk's office. During early voting you can usually vote anywhere in your county, while on Election Day you must vote at your precinct's specified location. Precincts may be combined to save on personnel and money.

General Election

The General Election occurs on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November.

To participate in the General Election a voter must be a resident of the voting precinct and register 30 days before the election. Early voting begins approximately two weeks prior to Election Day.

Locations and times for early voting and the General Election are typically listed in the newspaper. For early voting a voter can usually vote anywhere in the county, while on Election Day a voter must vote at the location specified for the precinct.

Non-Partisan Elections

There are multitudes of nonpartisan elections across Texas, including, but not limited to, city, school board, MUD district, water district, navigation district, park board, library board, and port authority elections. It is important that Democrats run for and serve in these various capacities.

Running for and serving in these offices provides excellent training for those with future political aspirations.

It is important that every Democrat participate in each of these elections, supporting candidates who support our causes and points of view. In some cases, it is equally important to work against those running for office who are against our causes and points of view.

It is important to know that voting locations for each election are selected by the entity putting on the election. This typically means that voting places move around, depending on who is putting on the election. There seems to be a perception on the part of voters that polling locations are or should be the same for any and all elections. This causes a great deal of discontent. It is important to explain voting location selection to voters if they ask.

Voter Registration

To vote in Texas a person must register with the voter registrar in the county in which the person lives. Unless the county government designates a different person, the county tax assessor-collector is the voter registrar. In some counties, the county clerk is the designated voter registrar, while some hire an election administrator.

Deputy Registrar

The voter registrar is authorized to deputize citizens to register voters. This practice allows the voter registrar to cover every section of the county more effectively. The voter registrar must deputize any bona fide resident of a county who wishes to register voters. The TDP encourages active Democrats to become deputy registrars.

Once sworn in, the deputy registrar cannot refuse to register a person on the basis of sex, race, creed, color, national origin, or political affiliation. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** When registering voters, a deputy registrar must NOT be attired in political clothing or regalia.

Although this process actually registers the voter, the application must then be forwarded to the voter registrar for the voter to be included in the county voting rolls.

How a Voter Registers

A person may apply in person or by mail. It is more effective to register people to vote in person and collect the voter registration information at the time, than to leave it up to them to mail in their registration cards. Therefore, it is highly recommended that anyone registering voters become a deputy registrar. When a voter registers with a deputy registrar, the voter is given a receipt. The receipt may be used to vote, should the voter's registration card not be received in time and the voter meets the registration deadline.

Applicants must supply their complete names, residence addresses in the county, birth dates, places of birth, and last four (4) digits of their Social Security or Texas Drivers License numbers. Although the phone number is optional, people should be encouraged to provide that information so that they can be called if there is a problem with the application or the information is not clear.

For registration by mail, a business reply postcard-like envelope with postage paid by the state is available. Applications are available to individuals, organizations, businesses, and political subdivisions in reasonable numbers. No fee can be charged for voter application forms.

Students who are living away from home should be careful. Students are accustomed to filling in their permanent home addresses on forms; they should register under the address where they intend to vote. If they fill in their permanent home addresses and it is in another precinct or county, those are the locations where they will be registered and required to vote. The husband, wife, father, mother, son, or daughter of a person entitled to register may fill out a card for that person.

A voter may register to vote at any time, but his or her application must be received by the voter registrar 30 days before an election in order to vote in that election. Mail-in registrations must be postmarked by the 30-day deadline; if the deadline falls on a weekend or a state or federal holiday, the postmark deadline is extended to the next regular workday.

Persons Eligible to Register to Vote

Persons eligible to register to vote must have the following characteristics:

- Be citizens of the United States
- Be at least 18 years of age on the day of the election
- Be residents of the county

Persons Not Eligible to Register to Vote

These people are not eligible to register to vote:

- Persons convicted of a felony who have not completed time served, parole and probation. Once a convicted felon is “off papers,” however, he or she is eligible to vote and needs to register to vote again.
- Persons found to be mentally incompetent by a court of law.

Penalties and Fees

Any person giving false information to secure voter registration for himself or any other person is guilty of a third degree felony. There is no fee or poll tax for registering to vote.

Voter Registration Certificate

Within four weeks after the voter registrar receives the application, the voter should receive a voter registration certificate (card). The voter should notify the voter registrar, if he or she does not receive a voter registration card.

The voter should examine the certificate closely. If it is correct, the voter signs it and should carry it in his or her wallet. If the information is wrong, the voter should make corrections in the spaces provided and return it to the voter registrar.

Voter Registration Purge

In August of each election year, thousands of people are "purged" from the voter rolls. While the purpose of the purge is to remove the dead and former residents, this purge occasionally targets lower income, potential Democratic voters who have moved and have not re-registered. This is the reason continual voter registration is important in all potentially Democratic vote-rich areas. Democrats are opposed to targeted purging.

It is important that every precinct chair and county chair remain vigilant for voter purging in their precinct or county.

Nonpartisan Voter Registration Groups

In many areas of Texas, voter registration projects are conducted by nonpartisan, tax-exempt groups. These programs, while nonpartisan, are often targeted at populations that traditionally “under-vote.” Many in the targeted communities are likely Democratic voters—if they will register and vote.

Nonpartisan voter registration groups have certain fundraising advantages over partisan groups: Donations to these groups may be tax-deductible for the giver, while contributions to political parties and candidates are not. Corporate and union funds can be contributed for this kind of voter registration activity, but not to a partisan election campaign.

Many of these groups also provide excellent training and resources for voter registration efforts. County parties and their officers, however, have to be careful not to coordinate directly with these organizations, or to give or raise money for their efforts. (This is a new restriction on parties in the McCain-Feingold Campaign Finance Reform Law.)

Voter Protection: Voter Bill of Rights of Texas

Voter Protection is an important issue and therefore it is necessary that voters know their rights. It is also important that we inform our volunteers who work at the polls, so that they can help assure all citizens are able to exercise their right to vote. The rights noted below are from the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, as listed in the *Texas Election Code* found at www.lawyerscomm.org.

- If you are inside or are in line at your polling place any time between 7 AM and 7 PM on Election Day, you have the right to vote.
- You have the right to vote without presenting your voter registration certificate. If your name **is** on the voter registration roll you must do both of the following:
 - Sign an affidavit stating that you do not have your voter registration certificate with you
 - Present proof of identification
- If your name is **not** on the voter registration roll, you must do both of the following:
 - Sign an affidavit attesting to your eligibility to vote
 - Present proof of identification.
- If your name does not appear on the voter registration roll when you arrive at the polls, you have the right to vote a provisional ballot. However, you must cast your ballot in the correct precinct for it to count.
- If you make a mistake or “spoil” your paper ballot, you have the right to receive a “replacement ballot” and vote. You may receive a total of three replacement ballots.
- If you cannot read, do not speak English, or you are blind or otherwise physically disabled, you have the right to be assisted with voting. Assistance can be given by election officials or any other person except your employer, an agent of your employer, or an officer or agent of your union. Any interpreter or translator must be a registered voter of your county.
- If you are physically unable to enter the polling place, you have a right to vote without entering the polling place upon request.
- If you have been convicted of a felony, but have served the full length of your criminal sentence, including parole, and have registered to vote since then, you have the right to vote.
- When you are within 100 feet of a polling place entrance (or you are inside the polling place or room), you have the right to wait to vote (or to vote) without anyone electioneering or trying to influence your vote in any other way.
- If you have moved within the same county, you have the right to vote at the polling place of your former residence, upon filling out a statement of residence.
- You have the right to take time off from work to vote, unless the polls are open for two consecutive hours outside of working hours.
- You have the right to bring a child under 18 years of age into the voting station with you.
- You have the right to receive non-English ballots, instructions, and other voting materials throughout the state.

Chapter 8 Straight-Ticket Voting In Texas

Straight-ticket voting is the term for voting along party lines. Straight-ticket voting is also referred to as straight-party voting. The trend over the past decade in straight-party voting has not been helpful to the Democratic Party.

Nationally, the 2004 presidential election was close. However, almost half (48%) of voters lived in “landslide counties,” where one candidate received more than 60% of the vote. In Texas a lot more than half (80%) of the counties were “landslide counties.”

In the 2002 General Election for governor, 224 of 254 (89%) Texas counties were “landslide counties.”

In 1992 only 38% of all Americans lived in “landslide counties.” By 2000 the percentage had grown to 45%. By 2004 the post-WW II record was 48%. Americans and Texans are now clustered by political preference, not just for economic or ethnic or racial considerations. This has strong political implications in terms of how various areas are targeted for straight-ticket voting.

The table below shows the growth of straight-ticket voting in the last four election cycles.

Table of Straight-Ticket Voting Since 1998

Year	Voted Straight Ticket	Voted Straight Democratic	Voted Straight Republican
1998	48%	22%	25%
2000	49%	24%	25%
2002	50%	24%	26%
2004	58%	25%	32%

The sum of Democratic and Republican straight-party voting is less than total, because of rounding.

The growth of straight-ticket voting could mean the end of the idea that “all politics are local.” In 2004 almost 58% of all voters voted a party preference, most likely based on their national or statewide preferences. Local county races do not create straight-ticket voting. In fact, local races have been the reason historically for splitting the ballot between parties. In 2004, those local county considerations did not seem to matter to about 58% of the voters.

The major implication of Democrats managing only 44% of straight-ticket votes is that unless this situation changes, it will be nearly impossible for a Democrat to win a statewide office! Specifically, if 58% of the vote is party based and a Democrat gets only 44% of the straight-party vote, for a Democrat to win he or she must get 61% of the ticket splitters. Republicans can lose ticket splitters by less than 60-39 and still win. The chances of losing the straight-ticket vote by 12 percentage points and winning the ticket splitters by a landslide are almost nonexistent. If Democrats want to win again statewide, they must act to reverse this trend in straight-ticket voting.

The straight-party selection is typically located at the top of the ballot.

How to Generate More Straight-Ticket Democratic Votes

The grassroots level must stress the following:

- What Democrats stand for
- What Democrats have achieved
- What Democrats hope to achieve
- What Republicans have done and are doing to our nation and state

We have a statement of principles in the *TDP Rules* and a list of achievements in the Introduction. The Texas Democratic Party (TDP) should provide the details of what the GOP is doing in Texas. The evening news should give you this week’s lie, arrogant act, or destructive proposal from Washington.

Programs to stress straight-ticket Democratic voting in all our outreach and voter contact work are necessary, especially in strong Democratic areas. These programs can vary by local circumstances, but the following is an approach that has been tested and, as the data attached will show proven to work.

Model Straight-Ticket Program

Step 1: Target those areas that are 65%+ DPI or individuals that are consistent Democratic Primary voters or have been targeted as solid Democrats.

Step 2: During July and August, distribute material in person or by mail to the targeted areas and individuals emphasizing what the Democratic Party has done and what our candidates stand for. The candidates need to be in the material, but the emphasis needs to be the Democratic Party.

Step 3: During September, distribute in person or by mail slate material with whatever simple slogan that is appropriate telling people how and why to vote a straight Democratic ticket. Slogans should have meaning.

Examples of both good and bad slogans: “Vote 2 and You’re Through,” “Vote 1 and you are done,” “Vote 2 and we’ll all be blue,” “Vote Democratic for a better Texas,” “Vote Democratic for your children,” or a series such as “Vote Democratic for better education,” followed by “Vote Democratic for better health care,” and “Vote Democratic for a safer America.” Include a number, such as “Vote Democratic (2) for a better Texas,” only if there is a number on the ballot. We should promote a positive Democratic message, not a number, such as 1 or 2.

Step 4: During the last critical month of the election cycle, and especially during early voting and Election Day, material should emphasize the slogan and a simple version of the message (i.e., Democrats Fight For Families, Democrats Work For Us, etc.) Then, for early voting and on Election Day you should be able to hand out material and put out signs with just “Vote Democratic (2) for a better Texas” or whatever the straight-ticket slogan is and be effective. Put a number on the sign only if there is a number printed on the ballot.

Chapter 9 Grassroots Activities

“Top Ten” Simple Things You Can Do

10. **CHANGE YOUR VOICE-MAIL GREETING.** Several people hear your voice on your answering machine at home or your cell phone voice-mail each day. When the election nears, update your voice-mail greeting with a reminder to vote for your local and statewide candidates and include early vote and election-day dates.
9. **TAKE YOUR CANDIDATES WITH YOU WHEREVER YOU GO.** We meet people every day who need to hear about the Democratic Party and our agenda. We have materials to help. Pass out flyers in your neighborhood. Use talking points and issue papers to persuade friends and family. Give signs and placards to fellow supporters.
8. **RECRUIT MORE VOLUNTEERS.** Always keep your eyes open for individuals or groups willing to work for the Democratic cause. Keep lists current and be sure to contact volunteers often and keep them involved. Focus on young people; they are the future of our party.
7. **MONITOR THE MEDIA.** If you hear negative or inaccurate information on radio programs, do not hesitate to call in and provide an alternative viewpoint.
6. **MAKE A DONATION.** Any donation, large or small, to your state and area parties will help. Become a Texas Democratic Party Majority Builder for only \$10 a month. Pass on the message to friends and family. *(Call TDP at 512-478-9800 for more information.)*
5. **MAKE THE WINNING CONTACT LISTS.** Candidates will always need help with local phone banks and canvass programs. Be sure area phone banks start early and that you have enough volunteers to knock on all the doors, so we have time to identify ALL supporters before the election.
4. **HELP DURING EARLY VOTE.** In Texas, we have a unique opportunity to get people out to vote for almost two full weeks. Focus on Early Vote. Early voting wins Democratic campaigns. Let's bank those votes early.
3. **REACH BEYOND.** We need to create relationships outside of our normal circles.
2. **TAKE ELECTION DAY OFF.** Actually, we want you to work on Election Day, but instead of going to your job, help lead the Democrats to victory. The pay is low and the day will be long, but it will all be worth it when we celebrate on election night.
1. **VOTE EARLY AND NEVER VOTE ALONE.** We all know several people who have to be reminded repeatedly to go vote. Make it a social occasion. Gather your friends and go vote early as a group, and then go out and have some fun. Early Vote is a perfect time for this, since everyone in your county can vote at any early voting location.

Getting Involved

There is nothing more important at the grassroots level than participation. No party or candidate has ever been successful without an army of grassroots volunteers. Whether a novice or veteran volunteer, there are a variety of ways to participate at all levels in a campaign as well as directly in the Democratic Party.

Campaigns may be long and difficult, and as a volunteer you will be giving of your time and money. Be mindful not to overextend yourself time-wise or financially.

If you have more time than money, recruit new Democrats, volunteer your time, write letters to the editor, call in to a talk show, serve as a surrogate speaker, or organize a Democratic block meeting. If time is a problem, maybe you could help with fundraising. Remember: The world is run by those who show up! Participate.

How to Participate

The activities listed represent some of the many ways one can participate.

Become a Precinct Chair: The precinct chair is the heart and soul of the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party and our candidates do not succeed without active precinct chairs. For instruction on how to become a precinct chair, please see Chapter 3.

Assist Your Precinct Chair: If the precinct chair is the heart and soul of the Democratic Party, then the grassroots volunteer is the heart and soul of a campaign. The duties and responsibilities of the precinct chair are listed in Chapter 3, but you can assist the precinct chair in writing letters, making phone calls, and canvassing your precinct. This helps volunteers learn about the local workings of the Democratic Party.

Show Your Colors: One of the easiest ways to participate is to have a Texas Democrat bumper sticker on your car. Let others know that you are proud to be a Democrat. Place Democratic candidate yard signs in your yard during elections. Let your neighbors know who's worth supporting.

Join Your County Party: There are many activities that occur on the county level, as the county chair is responsible for a multitude of duties. Assistance is always greatly appreciated. This is especially true during the primary and fall election cycles.

Join Local Democratic Clubs: In many places local Democratic clubs are very active and bring in speakers, hold events, participate in campaigns, open and operate campaign headquarters. This is an excellent method of meeting fellow Democrats and learning about the local workings of the Democratic Party. To expand your participation you may also wish to join nearby local clubs or statewide clubs, such as the Young Democrats or Texas Democratic Women.

Donate Your Time and Money: The political process requires both, and there is nothing more important than volunteering your time. Okay, money is important, too. If you can't give time, give money. If you can't give money, give of your time.

Work on a Campaign: There are many activities that fall into this category. To name a few, you can write letters for the candidate, make phone calls, block walk, deliver yard signs, or work in the campaign headquarters. As you become more comfortable with the process, you may even wish to organize phone banks, block walks, and events. Detailed lists of campaign activities are listed later in other chapters.

Work on Local Elections: Local elections are an excellent way to learn about your community. These elections include, but are not limited to, city, school board, MUD districts, and water boards. Under Texas law these are nonpartisan elections, but you do meet other activists and meet the local "players." One reason many city elections are not held in November of an election year is to keep the partisan and nonpartisan elections separate.

Write Letters to the Editor and Call in to Radio Shows: Let your voice be heard. If you are passionate about a specific subject, write letters to the editor of your local newspapers and call in to radio shows that solicit input.

Get on Democratic E-mail Distribution Lists: Many county Democratic Parties and Democratic clubs distribute useful information by e-mail. This is rapidly replacing regular mail notification because of its speed and low cost. This is an excellent means of keeping informed of the many activities occurring in your area. Caution: While chat rooms are popular, they may or may not be useful to a volunteer.

Join Non-Political Activist Groups: Membership in groups such as the League of Women Voters, Save Our Springs, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and others allow you to meet other active people in your community. In many cases these people will agree with your slant on politics and give you the opportunity to bring them into the fold.

Vote in the Democratic Primary: The easiest way to be officially identified as a Democrat is to vote in the Primary, because Texas does not have political party registration. Alternatively, you may sign an oath of affiliation to identify yourself as a Democrat (see TDP rules and Texas Election Code, Chapter 162).

Vote a Straight Democratic Ticket in General Elections: You strengthen the Democratic Party locally, statewide, and nationally, when you vote a straight Democratic ticket.

The following are the rules for a ballot to be counted as a straight-ticket vote:

- If you have voted a straight-ticket and then you vote individually for up to two candidates, the ballot is still counted as a straight-ticket vote.
- If you have voted a straight-ticket and then you vote individually for more than two candidates, the ballot is not counted as a straight-ticket vote.

Voting individually for all of the Democrats on the ballot does not officially count as a straight-ticket vote.

Party Building and Campaign Activities

Party building and campaign activities are integrated processes, in that no one activity stands alone, but rather each supports the other. There are also several components, all of which are important. As an active Party officer or volunteer you should be involved in many of these activities.

As you become more comfortable with the process you may want to move up to become an activity coordinator. From being a coordinator you may wish to help run a campaign. Who knows, some day you may want to run for office. No matter where you fit in, you need to know the different components of a campaign.

Phone Banking

Phone banks provide a direct, relatively personal means of communication between the Democratic Party or a campaign and voters. Phone banks can be used for a variety of purposes:

- Identify voter attitudes toward the Party and its candidates (canvassing)
- Deliver a message to a select group of voters
- Invite voters to rallies, protests, and fundraisers
- Find yard sign locations and volunteers
- Get-Out-The-Vote during early voting and on Election Day
- Identify voter attitudes to separate undecided voters from those who support the Party or a candidate and only need some motivation and a reminder to ensure that their ballots are cast

Other methods are best for persuading voters.

Phone Bank Coordinator: The most important single factor in phone banking is having a capable phone bank coordinator. This will reduce confusion and duplication.

Setting Up a Phone Bank: Calls can be made from either a centralized phone bank where all the phones are under supervision or in a decentralized operation using volunteers who call from their homes.

- **Central Location:** The most efficient method of phone banking for calling a large number of people is utilizing a central location. You need to install phones at a headquarters or find phones already installed. Union halls or real estate, insurance, car dealerships, and law offices are locations that often have a number of phones and lines already installed. Callers need sufficient space for their telephone lists and report forms.
- **Home Calling:** Home calling is less desirable than centralized calling for calling a large number of people. Volunteers lose the fellowship of a headquarters and are more easily distracted. Someone must collect the information from the caller on a frequent, regular basis. However, with highly motivated volunteers this system can work well.

Targeting Calls: Target all the Democratic areas with one general phone message, or divide the area into logical groups (geographic, ethnic, DPI). Use a different phone message with each group. Decide who/where you'll be calling and for what purpose before you begin calling. Write different scripts for IDing versus encouraging people to go to the polls. Remember, phone banks are not good tools for persuasion and other methods of voter contact should be employed for that purpose.

Plan in Advance: Volunteers are easier to get if pre-selected dates and times are advertised. Canvassing/IDing should occur well in advance of early voting. Encouraging supporters to go to the polls (GOTV efforts) should occur immediately before and during early voting, through Election Day.

Caller ID: Today's technology allows for identifying incoming calls. Depending on the type of call, you may wish to block your ID. However, many people block unidentified calls.

Calling Times:

- For canvassing / IDing (to speak to a person.)

Mon – Thus	6 PM to 9 PM
Fri	Typically not a good day to call
Sat	10 AM to 8 PM
Sun	1 PM to 5 PM and 6 PM to 8 PM

Mon – Sat To speak to senior citizens call 10 AM to 5 PM

- For Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) (or a message that can be left on a recorder)

Mon – Thus 9 AM to 9 PM

Fri 9 AM to 5 PM

Sat 10 AM to 8 PM

Sun 1 PM to 5 PM and 6 PM to 8 PM

Necessary Supplies:

- **Location:** Phone banking is best accomplished in a location that has several phone lines and sufficient space for telephone lists and report forms. Check union halls, real estate offices, insurance agencies, car dealerships, and law offices.
- **A List of Registered Voters with Voting History:** Voter registration lists may be obtained from your database manager, the county chair, the campaign, or by using the TDP on-line voter management system.
- **Precinct Maps:** Precinct maps may be obtained through the county clerk, election office, or the county engineer.
- **Phone Books and Criss-cross Directory for your Area:** Borrow criss-cross directories from local businesses, particularly insurance and real estate offices, or use a copy in the library.
- **Prepare Scripts for each Caller:** Sample scripts are available in Appendix G.
- **Print Notation Explanation Sheets for each Caller:** Codes for calling lists are helpful. Examples might be N/A for no answer; D for supporters; I for those claiming to be Independents; R for those against us; YS for the person wanting a yard sign, SL for send literature. Place a line through bad telephone numbers.

Block Walking

Block walking means going door-to-door and trying to speak to voters in each household. This is the single best method to persuade voters, to get information, to organize and build the Party, and to get supporters to the polls. This door-to-door activity can be as simple an activity as covering a single precinct, as a precinct chair might do, or a supervised, targeted effort to reach as many voters as possible in a certain period. The downside of block walking is that it is the most labor-intensive method of voter contact, involving lots of hard work with little glamour.

Block walking should not be confused with literature drops (lit-drops) or door-hanging. In a block walk you knock on doors and speak to people, while lit-drops and door-hanging are used only to deliver material. Block walking is far more effective with a candidate, but it is also done without a candidate.

Block-Walk Coordinator: As with any campaign activity, it is helpful if one person is in charge to reduce confusion and duplication.

Targeting Your Area: A campaign must select where to expend its resources. Precincts with a high density of voting Democrats yield the best results. Precincts are typically listed with their Democratic Performance Index (DPI) in many available databases. DPIs are determined by previous election voting patterns. Precincts with a DPI of 65% or higher should be worked first, then the “swing precincts” with a DPI between 45% and 64%. Work precincts with a DPI below 45% only under special circumstances.

The impression any block walker makes at the voter’s door will last far longer than anything the block walker says. You are block walking to change or reinforce the voter’s attitude toward the Party and make citizens want to elect its candidates. People are friendlier, easier to approach, and more receptive if you are polite and dress neatly. Wear name tags to look more “official” and make the voter more comfortable. It’s also important for walkers to be familiar with any material they are distributing. **Be sure to wear comfortable shoes.** You may also wear a candidate’s t-shirts so that you are visible from a distance.

Necessary Supplies

- **A Block-walk List of Registered Voters:** Voter registration lists in a block-walk format (by street – split odd and even addresses) may be obtained from your database manager, the county chair, the campaign, or by using the TDP on-line voter management system.

- **Precinct Maps or Street Maps:** Precinct maps may be obtained through the county clerk, election office, or the county engineer.
- **Hand-out Material:** Campaign material and “sorry we missed you” cards should be provided.
- **Safety Equipment:** A cell phone with pre-programmed phone numbers, water, a snack, and a buddy make a safer walk.

Getting Ready to Walk

The following are steps to use in getting ready to walk.

- Map and sort walks by street. Obtain a map of the precinct (generally from the county clerk) and highlight the streets. Subdivide a large precinct into several “walks.”
- Create a walk package for neighborhoods. Take a 9x11 envelope and staple your map to it. If this is a small precinct then the map is OK. If it’s a large precinct, you must create two walk packages. On one map use a pink highlighter to section off one half of the precinct, and on the second package use a green highlighter. Two people walk one half and two walk the other. Place your survey form, script, literature, bumper stickers, voter registration forms, etc., inside the walk package. Use string and tape one end to a pen and the other to your packet so no one loses the writing instrument. Make sure to include a lapel sticker or button for identification, or provide the walkers with Democratic t-shirts.
- Walk with a partner who can log responses, tell you the names and voting history of a person without you having to manage a clipboard, list, pen, and push-cards/leaflets. Remember: You are trying to reach as many voters as possible.
- When you ring a doorbell, wait a little longer if the voter is elderly or if you see some indication that the voter may move slowly, for example, a wheelchair ramp to the house.
- Address a voter by name (“Mr. Smith?”). Voters will respond and warm up and are more inclined to be favorable.
- If no one is home, write a note in a bold, thick pen across the card. Something such as, “Ms. Smith, I look forward to visiting with you soon. - John.” You can write the message beforehand to save time on the street and just add the name at the door.
- Volunteers may need some training before they go block walking. Organize volunteers into teams of two, with one person walking the right side and one the left side of the street.

Optimum Block Walking Times

Weekdays	4 PM-7 PM
Saturdays	10 AM-5 PM
Sundays	1 PM-7 PM

Literature Drops and Door-Hanging

Literature drops (lit-drops) and door-hangings are excellent methods to distribute material over a wide area. This activity can be as simple as covering a single precinct or an effort to reach as many voters as possible in multiple precincts in a certain period. Lit-drops can be accomplished on foot or by tossing the material from a vehicle. The disadvantage of block walking is that it is a labor-intensive method of voter contact.

Lit-drops and door-hangings should not be confused with block walking. Lit-drops and door-hanging are used only to deliver material, while block walking entails knocking on doors and speaking to people.

Coordinator: As with any campaign activity, it is helpful if one person is in charge to reduce confusion and duplication.

Targeting: A campaign must select where to expend its resources.

Be sure to wear comfortable shoes.

Necessary Supplies

- **Precinct maps or Street Maps:** Precinct maps may be obtained through the county clerk, election office, or the county engineer.
- **Material:** Campaign material, such as “sorry we missed you” cards, clipboards, lists, and pens must be supplied.
- **Safety Equipment:** A cell phone with pre-programmed phone numbers, water, a snack, and a buddy are necessary.

Getting Ready to Walk or Drive

- Map and sort walks/drive by streets. Obtain a map of the precinct (generally from the county clerk) and highlight the streets. Subdivide a large precinct into several “walks.” Mark streets covered using a highlighter.
- Walk with a co-worker for safety reasons. One person does the even side of the street and the other person the odd side. Wear a lapel sticker or button for identification, or wear Democratic t-shirts.
- Volunteers may need some training before they go walking/driving.

Basic Safety: “Do’s and Don’ts” of Block-Walking, Lit-Drops and Door-hanging

- Do not start on the next street until both walkers are ready. It’s not safe and splitting up does not help you cover the area faster.
- Beware of dogs, and don’t go into fenced and gated yards.
- Always carry a bottle of water and a snack.
- Establish a time to meet back at the headquarters or central location.
- Do not go into anyone’s house, even if invited.
- Never walk across people’s yards.

U.S. Mailbox Reminder

Remember: It is against the LAW to place ANY material in or on a mailbox.

Canvassing

Canvassing is the term given to soliciting useful information. Precinct chairs use canvassing to identify Democrats and like-minded supporters in a precinct. Campaign canvassing seeks to find supporters over a significantly larger area. In rural or undeveloped areas, a phone canvass may be the most practical method to find supporters. There are two accepted methods of canvassing: going door-to-door and phoning.

The best way to canvass is by going door-to-door, but it requires more volunteers with transportation and a significant amount of time as compared with phoning. When canvassing door to door, try to update phone numbers, so phone lists and phone services can be used more effectively. (See Block Walking)

Phone canvassing is an excellent means of identifying supporters, especially when integrated into an overall voter contact program. It requires fewer volunteers, takes less time, and requires fewer resources than going door-to-door. However, less than 50% of voters can typically be reached by phone due to inaccurate lists, people moving, and phone number changes. (See Phone Banking)

Voter Registration Drives

Voter registration drives strengthen and expand the party's voting base and increase our candidates' chances of winning in November. Voter registration is best accomplished in Democratic high-density areas.

Locations: The best locations are those where you will find people that believe as we do. A few examples are stores, PTO meetings, houses of worship, neighborhood association meetings, unemployment offices, public access clinics, public events, high schools (senior events), sports events, and colleges (during registration).

Suggested Practices:

- Always ask permission to set up your table.
- Dress appropriately for the area you are visiting.
- Volunteers should reflect the makeup of the community (ethnicity / language).

Placing Signs

Yard signs and large signs are an important part of any election. They provide important information to voters. Signs should be put out for the Primary and General Elections.

Locations: The best locations are high-traffic areas such as intersections or along busy streets and highways. Signs at business locations are also important. Finding locations should be accomplished during phone banking and canvassing, by asking elected officials, and by asking in person. Signs should also be placed at polling locations.

Ordinances: Know the local, municipal, and county regulations on sign size and location. Follow them!

Suggested Practices:

Remember these rules when placing signs:

- Always ask or have permission before erecting a sign.
- Keep track of the locations of placed signs.
- Never touch a sign of the opposition party or campaign.
- Dress appropriately for the work you are doing, including using gloves and wearing eye protection and sturdy footwear.
- Retrieve signs after the election.

Organized Activities and Events for Visibility

Events are an excellent way to show our colors, get like-minded people together, and have fun. Besides being fun, they can also be high-visibility activities. They can be casual or formal and for just a few people or a few hundred. The list of events is almost endless but here are a few of the more popular events: picnics at public parks, backyard barbeques, yard sales, art auctions, ice cream socials, carnivals, book sales, wine tasting parties, lunches, dinners, coffees, dog shows, and meet-the-candidate events. Some of these events are easier to do than others, and some require more help than others.

It is vital that the Democratic message be displayed far and wide. The number of possible activities and events one can participate in or organize is endless.

The following are some of the possibilities for displaying the message:

- Democratic vehicle or float in a parade
- Democratic booth at fairs and community events
- Democratic hot dog picnics, ice cream socials, and backyard barbeques
- Democratic potluck dinners
- Democratic informal and formal dinners
- Rallies, protests, and town hall meetings

Event Responsibilities and Roles

Make sure one person at every event is responsible for identifying key participants and getting correct spellings, titles, and addresses. You are going to want to send thank-you notes to people who helped make the event possible and dignitaries who joined your event.

And at every event, someone must be prepared to record the names, e-mail addresses, and other information of people who want to volunteer or contribute. This list is valuable for future use.

Crowd-Building Techniques

Good crowd-building requires enthusiasm, tremendous organization, creativity, and hard work. Be sure to solicit additional suggestions about techniques that might be productive in a particular area or community.

The following sources of communication vary in their effectiveness depending upon location:

- Leafleting and posters
- Mass e-mailing
- Group invitations
- Paid advertisements
- Web pages
- Phone Banks
- Sound trucks
- Radio talk shows
- Phone banks
- Free media and public service announcements

Crowd-Pleasing Ideas

The following activities can be used to enhance an event:

- Music
- Pre-programs
- Ticker tape, confetti
- Enthusiastic speakers
- Organized enthusiasm
- Loads of signs and flags everywhere
- A core group of people to interact with the crowd
- Local business involvement (food vendors, local radio stations)
- “Crowd toys,” e.g., beads, pennants, pom-poms, glow sticks, other spirit items

Chapter 10 Ongoing Activities

Success for the Democratic Party is winning elections. We must elect people who can make a positive difference in our communities and our nation and pass laws to protect our rights, create a more secure nation, and provide fair opportunity for everyone.

The key to this success is giving individuals a reason to join us at a grassroots level to turn out voters. Achieving this goal requires year-round coordination. It cannot be accomplished in only the 60 days before an election. Our year-round effort must involve our core constituencies first and then reach out to new constituencies and voters who share our fundamental commitment to our communities.

Create relationships

In Texas with its huge districts, even the best candidate cannot spend five minutes with each voter or shake everyone's hand. This is one reason that candidates are often seen as out of touch with the individual. We should work to provide opportunities for our candidates to meet people. Then it is our job to represent our candidates and shake the hands of the people in our communities.

Encourage activity and keep activists involved

Never wait until September of an election year and the traditional Labor Day campaign kick-off to start organizing. Volunteers should be kept active and interested throughout the year. This will raise awareness for the few months of the election cycle so that our organization is ready to go when the primaries are over.

Get and stay organized

We need to make a concerted effort to gather and distribute information. An effective flow of information provides a means to motivate precinct chairs and recruit new chairs.

Activity Suggestions

Activists and organizers should remain active throughout every year. Appendix D has suggestions for organizing activities. The following activities are very helpful to the Party and our candidates.

Parades and Community Events

- Send information about parades, festivals, neighborhood meetings, etc., to candidates and party affiliates, including local Democratic clubs
- Encourage people to host community-based activities (BBQs, coffees, parties, etc.)
- Send representatives to as many events as possible
- Show that we are active by participation
- Create a personal relationship between individual voters and the Democratic Party

Democratic Party Meetings and Functions

Activists, elected officials, and candidates will want to do the following things:

- Attend meetings of local Democratic clubs and organizations
- Find out their plans, especially for the fall election
- Create personal relationships
- Seek active support and volunteers
- Encourage personal growth by urging group members to participate in different functions

Labor Meetings/Functions

Labor has always been an important factor in the Democratic Party. These are among the ways Labor can help.

- Provide lists of all Central Labor Council meeting dates, times, and locations
- Have representatives attend as many events as possible
- Help create personal relationships between Labor and the candidates and workers
- Provide information about activities and encourage participation
- Provide information about candidates to members of Central Labor Council

Meet-and-Greets with NEW People

Reach out to new people all year with some of the following activities:

- Organize fish fries, BBQs, fiestas, etc.
- Invite Democrats in the area
- Mingle, talk to people one-on-one
- Make events fun—some of these events might also work as fundraisers

Help Build a Party Database

The following will help you build a party database that is difficult but important:

- Learn how to generate the files, lists, and labels you need
- Locate a “go-to” person for database questions and problems

Send Fundraising and Get-Involved Mailing

Use these mailing groups:

- Include identified supporters
- Reach the many people who would be willing to help, but may not have been reached by our previous fundraising and volunteer recruitment efforts

Create a Supporters List

Lists of voters and potential voters are extremely important, and the following techniques can help maximize their use:

- Group identified supporters by useful criteria (e.g., Hispanic, African American, female, lawyer, etc.) into as many groups as appropriate for each voter.
- Send update or issue-watch e-mails tailored for group interests, e.g., news of a Planned Parenthood endorsement to all women supporters. Updates keep our people abreast of what is happening and reach a more targeted audience than press releases. Supporters can also easily share this information with friends, colleagues, and family, helping us to reach a wider audience with a more personal touch.
- Assume that all mailed and e-mailed information will fall into Republican hands. Don't send anything you wouldn't mind seeing on the front page of your newspaper.

Create an Issues Section on the Website

The following will help you create a better website:

- Work with a talented volunteer or professional to create or update your website if you don't have one for your county party or yours was designed more than two years ago
- Include a reference to your website on printed literature about your County Party
- Post new information at least twice a week
- Create a section where people can choose which issues matter to them and submit their e-mail addresses. Include local or area issues as possible choices.
- E-mail the people who have chosen a certain issue whenever the party does something related to the issue. The e-mail addresses can also be used for general information about events and campaign activities.
- Check the website and respond regularly

Sign-Up Program

- Challenge supporters to sign up ten people to be on the e-mail update list
- Mail a bumper sticker to everyone who signs up
- Reward our supporters who meet the challenge (even if it's only a thank-you e-mail)

E-Newsletter

- Update supporters monthly or weekly about events, happenings on the campaign trail, news they might have missed
- Include issues section, especially if you don't have time or people to do targeted e-mails to different groups

Block Meetings

- A block meeting at your home is one of the most direct ways to recruit and organize Democratic voters in your precinct
- Block meetings are an excellent venue for introducing local elected officials and candidates to neighbors. Persuade the official or candidate to make a short presentation.

Democratic Clubs and Organizations

There are hundreds of Democratic clubs and organizations across Texas, each with its own focus. The memberships of these clubs and organizations should be encouraged to be active in party building activities throughout the year. For a listing, go to www.txdemocrats.org.

Appendix A The Precinct Convention

The precinct convention is the first step in the convention delegate process. That process begins at the precinct level and moves on to the county level and on to the state, and in presidential years, to the national convention. Much of what is done is set by state law, the *Rules of the Texas Democratic Party*, and *Robert's Rules of Order*.

WHY

The precinct convention is held to 1) elect delegates to the county/senatorial district convention, and 2) adopt resolutions for submission to the county/senatorial district convention.

WHEN - WHERE

The precinct convention begins at 7:15 PM (by state law), typically at the primary election polling location.

WHO

The precinct convention is open to any person who voted in the Democratic primary that day or during early voting. A person who comes late to the convention may still participate; however, they can't change decisions already made.

PREPARATION

The precinct chair inspects the polling area to determine a good convention location. A large sign is placed at the polling place telling exactly when and where the convention will be held. Each voter should also be provided the information verbally and given a hand-out reminder.

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

HOW

The precinct convention is called to order by the temporary chair. The precinct chair typically acts as the temporary chair, but if the precinct chair is not available, any interested Democratic primary voter from the precinct may pick up the convention packet and convene the meeting as the temporary chair.

A list of primary voters should be obtained from the precinct election judge. The list will contain both Election Day and early voting voters.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. All attendees must sign in after it is verified that they voted in the primary election.
 - In presidential years, convention participants sign in by presidential preference. The convention will allocate and elect delegates based on each presidential candidate's showing in the sign-in.
 - In non-presidential years, participants have an option of either signing in support of a "petition" of a particular "political preference" or signing in at-large.
2. When sign-in of all in attendance is complete, a permanent convention chair is nominated and elected to run the convention.
3. A secretary is nominated and elected to fill in the agenda/minutes form.
4. The convention chair announces the number of delegates allocated to the county/senatorial district convention. The convention packet lists this number. [See TDP Rules for specifics on how the precinct delegate allotments are made.]
5. Delegates are nominated. An equal number of alternate delegates are nominated. The following rules apply:
 - Convention participants may nominate themselves or any other participant.
 - If a non-attendee desires to be nominated as a delegate or alternate, they must notify the precinct chair prior to the precinct convention.
 - If convention attendees signed in by presidential preference or petition preference, the chair announces the percentage of people attending for each preference and how many delegates and alternates are allotted for each.

- In non-presidential years, the number of alternate delegates equals the total number of delegates allotted to the voter precinct
6. Nominations are held open until a motion is made, seconded, and passed by a two-thirds majority to close nominations.
 7. Delegates and alternates are elected.
 8. The precinct convention secretary records the names of the delegates and alternates on the agenda/minutes form. The Sign-in Sheets are annotated according to the sheet's instructions.
 9. A majority vote of the precinct convention ratifies the election of the entire body of the delegates and alternates.
 10. The precinct convention elects a delegation chair to represent the precinct's delegation at the county/senatorial convention.
 11. The convention considers resolutions or positions on issues. It is strongly suggested that resolutions or issue position papers be submitted in triplicate. They are voted on individually after proper discussion. A majority is required for passage.
 12. By motion and vote, the precinct convention is concluded.
 13. The convention chair and secretary sign the minutes.

POST CONVENTION

Originals and copies of the minutes, the convention sign-in list with the delegates and alternates marked, and any resolutions or other adopted items must be delivered by the permanent precinct convention chair as follows:

1. The original and one copy of each form are delivered to the county chair in one of the following ways.
 - By registered mail no later than the second day after the election
 - In person no later than 5:00 PM on the third day after the election
[In person down at the county courthouse Primary night is even better.]
2. The second copy of the minutes and marked sign-in lists must be sent to the state Party in the envelope provided.
3. The third copy is retained by the convention chair.

Appendix B The County/Senatorial District Convention

Elected delegates and alternates from the precinct conventions attend the county conventions or senatorial district conventions. Local, state, and federal candidates and elected officials should be invited to the convention. Much of what is done is set by state law, the *Rules of the Texas Democratic Party*, and *Robert's Rules of Order*.

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
- To establish platform positions to supplement the *State Party Platform*

The rules for county convention/senatorial district convention are as follows:

- A county convention is held if the county is in a single senate district. The county chair and county executive committee organize it. State Democratic Executive Committee members may also give assistance.
- A senatorial district convention is held if the parts of one county belong to more than one senate district. All or some of the senate districts in a county may have a joint convention, but each senatorial district must at least elect its own delegates, alternates and at-large delegates.

Setting the Date

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.

Location Selection

The time and location of the convention are determined by the county executive committee. Typically, the county chair or the senate district committee appoints a person or small committee to find a location for the convention.

The location must be easily accessible and large enough to accommodate all participants. The convention shall be properly publicized and in accordance with state law.

The convention location must be large enough to hold delegates, visitors, and guests, and be accessible and have ample parking. For seating in a non-presidential year, expect about 70% of the allotted precinct delegations, whereas in presidential election years, expect close to 90%. The location must also have at least three rooms where committees can hold their meetings.

Committees

The county or senatorial district conventions function with the use of the following four committees. There may also be a decorating committee, entertainment committee and/or speaker committee. Chairpersons and members of the committees are elected at a CEC meeting or at the senate district 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 county/senatorial district convention.
- The **Rules and Procedures Committee** ensures the convention follows *TDP Rules* and appropriate protocols.
- The **Nominations Committee** ensures the proper number and breakdown of delegates to the State Convention.
- The **Platform and Resolutions Committee** considers resolutions submitted to the convention and makes recommendations on those resolutions to the convention. This committee typically meets in advance of the convention to sort through the multitudes of submitted resolutions.

Order of Business

The Texas Democratic Party provides a packet with all appropriate forms to conduct the convention, including a Minutes Form that acts as an agenda.

1. Delegates, alternates, visitors, and guests sign in with the credentials committee.
2. Delegates, visitors, and guests are seated while the credential committee attends its work of quorum determination.
3. Opening ceremonies typically begin with a color guard.
4. The temporary chair of the convention calls the meeting to order. A temporary secretary and parliamentarian are nominated and elected. A temporary roll of delegates is established and credential and rules reports are made.
5. A permanent convention chair, secretary, and other officers necessary to conduct the convention are nominated and elected.
6. Delegates then proceed to precinct caucuses to elect delegates and alternates to the state convention. [See TDP Rules for specifics on how the delegate allotments are made.]
7. The results of the elections within the precinct caucuses are collected and given to the nominations committee. This committee then nominates a slate of at-large delegates that are used to balance the delegation to the state convention to reflect the sign-in by political preference (if any), the ethnic make-up, age and gender balance of the delegates of the county or senatorial district.
8. The convention considers reports from the platform and resolutions committee and conducts other business, as necessary.
9. The convention adjourns.

The convention occasionally goes into a recess when some committees meet. Listening to candidates, attending workshops, listening in on the committee meetings, or visiting old friends and meeting new ones may fill this time.

Appendix C The State Convention

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

- Announce nominations of state officers
- Elect the SDEC members
- Pass resolutions
- Adopt a platform
- Elect the Party's officers
- Elect Democratic National Committee members and delegates and alternates to the National Convention in presidential years.

A State Democratic Executive Committee meeting precedes the 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.

Attendees of the convention must realize that, because the purpose of the convention is to conduct the Party's business, not every moment will be exciting.

The convention occasionally goes into a recess when some committees meet. Listening to candidates, attending workshops, listening in on the committee meetings, or visiting old friends and meeting new ones may fill this time.

Time / Place / Participants

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. Limited seating for guests is available. Guest passes may be available from the State Party Office.

Order of Business

The senatorial district caucuses meet on Friday afternoon before the convention is called to order. The caucus elects the district's representative on the Credentials Committee. This committee will decide any disputes concerning who will be a delegate to the state convention.

The Texas State Convention is conducted in the following order:

1. The convention is called to order by the State Chair.
2. Temporary Credentials and Temporary Resolutions Committees are set.
3. A Temporary Roll is established and announcements made.
4. The convention then recesses for senate district caucuses to do the following:
 - a) Elect male and female representatives to the State Democratic Executive Committee
 - b) Elect members to serve on the permanent convention committees: Credentials, Nominations, Platform, Resolutions, and Rules
 - c) Form a Nominations Committee for at-large delegates to the National Convention in presidential election years.

The State Chair reconvenes the Texas State Convention to do the following:

5. Opening ceremonies are held.
6. Welcoming addresses, opening remarks, and speeches made by the convention chair and invited dignitaries are heard.
7. The reports from the various committees as they are ready are considered.
8. Permanent committees are set.
9. A State Chair and other officers are elected.
10. In years when a presidential election is held, each delegation elects delegates to the National Convention.
11. In years when a presidential election is held, each delegation elects electors who may cast their votes for the President at the Electoral College.

12. In presidential years, the state convention also elects the Texas members of the Democratic National Committee to four-year terms.
13. The *State Party Platform* is adopted.
14. Resolutions are debated and voted upon.
15. Other business before the convention is accomplished.
16. The convention, upon completion of business, adjourns.

Appendix D Event Planning Checklists

Parade Float / Vehicle

Having a Democratic vehicle or float in a parade is a high-visibility activity and a lot of fun. The following are important steps in having a vehicle or float in a parade:

- Watch local papers, TV, and flyers for parade announcements.
- Contact the parade organizers for entry forms.
- Find someone with a car (convertibles are nice) or pickup truck that is willing to have the vehicle decorated. A float is better, but then a trailer, a tow vehicle, and more decorations are needed
- Return the entry form in a timely manner (with the entry fee, if required).
- Set a meeting time/place for participants to gather, typically set by the parade organizers.
- Send out notifications.
- Assemble decorations and purchase tossing goodies (most parades allow you to throw candy or other ‘light’ items such as beads).
- Consider something to be noticed such as waving American flags and/or blowing bubbles in all parades, even those that do not allow ‘tossing.’
- If you wish to pass out material along the parade route, check with organizers to see what is allowed.
- Have adequate seating on the pickup or float. Standing may be unsafe, and the safety of all participants is paramount. Provide a safety briefing before starting.
- Have 2-way communication between the tow vehicle and float.
- Provide refreshments, especially for the longer parades.
- Suggest to participants that they bring sunscreen and hats.

Booth

Having a Democratic booth at a fair is a high visibility activity and a great way to meet and talk to people. The following are important steps to having a successful booth:

- Watch local papers, TV, and flyers for fair announcements.
- Contact the organizers for entry forms.
- Return the form, with entry fee, as required. Check the form to see whether they provide electricity and whether there is a charge.
- Determine what you’ll need to furnish:
 - A small tent--typically you get a 10X10 booth space. Have extra rope and tie-down weights (plastic water bottles that can be filled on-site work well).
 - Portable tables and chairs
 - Signs, decorating material, table coverings, and material tie-downs
 - Handout material such as free pamphlets, buttons, and bumper stickers
 - Bumper stickers, buttons, pins, etc. Most organizations allow their sale (Note: Do Not “sell” materials, rather, “request a contribution”). Have a cash box for money collected.
 - Garbage bags and paper towels
 - Electric extension cords
 - Adequate lighting (for night events)
 - Inclement weather gear
 - A supply of food and drink for the volunteers

- **Sign-up sheets** Many of your visitors may become future activists
- A hinged “V” formed of pegboards with elastic to create holders is good for displaying bumper stickers. People love reading the bumper stickers.
- The organizers may allow you to set up the day before or the morning of the fair.
- Make sure you have enough volunteers not only to staff the booth, but to set it up and take it down.

Hot Dog Picnic, Ice Cream Socials, Backyard Barbeque

The following checklist is for hot dog picnics, but can be applied to any number of events such as ice cream socials and backyard barbeques (non-potluck).

Determine Purpose

- Group fun
- High visibility and/or increasing volunteers or membership

Determine Date and Time

- Group fun - pick what's best for the group
- High visibility - weekend afternoons are best

Determine Location

- Group fun - backyard or local park
- High visibility - city or county parks on main highways with good traffic

Secure Location

- Back yard - get a volunteer's back yard
- City or county park
 - Check out park - does it have enough picnic tables, restrooms, parking, water/electricity available, trash cans and/or dumpsters, shade?
 - Call city or county parks and recreation department - find out where to go to secure location (2 months prior)
 - Go to appropriate office and secure date and location (1 month prior)
 - Be prepared to pay fee and deposit
 - For local park you may need resident of that city to make reservations
 - Ask about general rules - if possible, get a copy of the rules
 - Prepare to answer questions you may be asked
 - Number of attendees (estimate low)
 - Will alcohol be served? - you need to hire law enforcement
 - **Follow their rules!**

Requisition of Food and Supplies - Based on expected number of attendees

- Hot dogs and buns
 - 2 hot dogs per person
 - 1 package of turkey dogs (for dietary restrictions) per 20 people attending.
- Chips
 - 1 bag per person
 - Individual variety packs work best
- Optional additional foods
 - Potato salads or cole slaws (requires cooling) 1 quart per 20 people
 - Cookies or desserts
- Condiments
 - Mustard and catsup (individual packets or squeeze bottles), relish (jar or squeeze bottles), sauerkraut (jar)
 - Optional - mayonnaise (individual packets or squeeze bottles)
- Serving Utensils

- Long-handled tongs
- Slotted spoons
- Forks
- Small sharp knife
- Coolers and ice (or cold packs)
 - Food (keep separate from anything else)
 - Drinks
 - Ice for drinks
- Garbage can/s - as needed
- Drinks
 - Plastic cups 1 per person
 - 5-gallon container (self-serve) of lemonade or ice tea
 - Bring additional mix, water, and ice to make more
 - Assure someone is responsible for making replacements
 - Bottled water (currently more popular than canned drinks)
 - Individual small bottles 1 per person
 - Additional bottles if no self-serve container
 - Canned drinks
 - Variety of regular and diet, plus some caffeine-free canned drinks (1 per person if you have bottled water but no self-serve container)
 - Optional - variety of 2-liter bottles (but must have cups and ice)
 - Wine (if permitted)
 - Variety of boxes (glass containers frequently not allowed)
 - Variety of bottles - don't forget corkscrew
 - Beer (if permitted)
 - Variety of regular and light
 - 1 can or bottle per 5 people depending on the group
 - Optional – 5-gallon container (self-serve) of homemade sangria (remember ice)

Coolers and Ice

Label all coolers

- 1 small cooler for ice for drinks with 2 cups for serving ice
- 1 or 2 large or very large coolers with ice for cooling bottled water and canned drinks
- 1 cooler with ice for cooling alcoholic drinks (keep separate from non-alcoholic drinks)
- 1 large cooler with extra ice

Paper Goods and Supplies

Suggestion: Purchase in bulk quantity when possible

- Hot dog trays 2 per person
- Paper/plastic plates (large or small) at least 1 per person
- Plastic silverware at least one set per person
- Napkins (1-2 large packages)
- Paper towels (1-2 rolls)
- Trash bags - several food-store plastic bags and 1 box of garbage-can size
- Masking tape (1 wide roll)
- Table cloths (optional)
- Handi-wipes or baby wipes
- Plastic gloves for food handlers

Cooking equipment

- 1 small portable (table -top) gas grill with fuel (works as well as big and is easier to move)
- 1 spare fuel tank
- Long-tip lighter (matches as backup)
- Scissors (for cutting food only)
- Scissors (for cutting open packages)
- Serving Utensils
 - Long-handled tongs
 - Slotted spoons
 - Forks
 - Small sharp knife

Tables and Chairs

- 1 sign-in and/or donation table and chair/s
- 1 cooking table and chair
- 1 foodstuffs table
- Picnic table and/or portable tables
- Chairs - stackable plastic chairs work well
 - Supplied by organization
 - Supplied by attendees

Miscellaneous

- Flags and banners
- First aid kit
- Small fire extinguisher
- Bullhorn - for announcements
- Handouts about group - other groups
- Name tags and markers
- Sign-in sheets and pens
- Candidate material

- Fundraising items for sale/donations
- Tents and/or sun umbrellas - if no shade
- Children's toys/games - someone should be responsible for watching over activities

Invitations

- Homemade or locally printed postcards (4 per page) - include date, time, location, charge, etc.
 - Mail to group and/or larger list 2 weeks prior to event (blind mailings = 3% response)
 - D or DDs - can utilize precinct chairs for personal messages. Additional postage may be needed. (D=voted Democratic in the last primary, DD=voted Democratic in two out of the last three primaries.)
 - Elected officials
 - Candidates
 - Labels
 - Group list
 - Voter list
- Letters - usually not worth cost
- Flyers - hand out at meetings
- Internet - distribution / websites / blogs
- Robo-calling or phone-tree calling

Scheduling

- 30 minutes minimum for setup - depending on number of volunteers
- 3 to 4 hours for event
- 30 minutes minimum for cleanup - depending on number of volunteers

Financial Planning

- Expect total costs about \$3/person; \$2/person for second event (from bulk purchase leftovers of equipment and packaged food)
- Event money supplied by group or sponsors
- Donations - Taking donations typically brings in as much as charging for event
 - Have well-marked small pail or clear container as donation jar (put in a few \$5's and \$10's as 'seed' money - can be used to purchase more supplies if needed)
 - Have change or someone responsible for making change
 - Have someone responsible to get money to treasurer
- Fees \$5 adults, \$2 children, 4 and under free (suggested amounts)
 - Have large poster with amounts clearly listed
 - Have change
 - Have someone responsible to make change
 - Have someone responsible to get money to treasurer

Potluck Dinner / Barbeque

The following checklist is for a potluck dinner or potluck barbeque.

Select Coordinators

- Food Coordinators
 - RSVP person for food being brought
 - Person for purchasing food and supplies
- Setup-Cleanup / Decorations Coordinator
- Invitation Coordinator

Determine Purpose

- Group Fun
- High visibility and/or increasing volunteers or membership

Determine Date and Time

- For group fun - pick what's best for the group
- For high visibility - evenings and weekend afternoons are best

Determine Location

- Group fun
 - Backyard
 - Local park
- High visibility
 - Facility of adequate size for expected attendance
 - City or county parks on main highways with good traffic

Secure Location

- Volunteer's backyard
- City or county park / facility
 - Check out park / facility - Does it have enough (picnic) tables, chairs, restrooms, parking, (shade), water/electricity available, trash cans and/or dumpsters
 - Call city or county Parks and Recreation Department or facility - find out where to go to secure location (2 months prior)
 - Go to appropriate office and secure date and location / sign contract (1 to 2 months prior)
 - Be prepared to pay fee and deposit
 - For local park you may need resident of that city to make reservations
 - General rules – **Follow their rules**
 - Ask about rules
 - Get a copy of rules, if possible!
 - Questions you may be asked
 - Number of attendees (make best guess)
 - Will alcohol be served - you may need to hire law enforcement

Requisition of Food and Supplies - Based on expected number of attendees

- Main dish (if group supplying)

- Side dishes (if group supplying)
- Bread(s) (if group is supplying)
- Desserts (if group is supplying)
- Condiments
 - Mustard, Catsup, Mayonnaise, Relish
 - Individual packets or squeeze bottles
- Serving Utensils
 - Long-handled tongs
 - Slotted spoons
 - Forks
- Cooler/s and ice (or cold packs) for food (keep separate from anything else)
- Garbage can/s - as needed
- Drinks
 - Plastic cups 1 per person
 - 5-gallon container (self-serve) of lemonade or ice tea
 - Bring additional mix, water, and ice to make more
 - Assure someone is responsible for making replacements
 - Bottled water (currently more popular than canned drinks)
 - Individual small bottles 1 per person
 - Additional bottles if no self-serve container
 - Canned drinks
 - Variety of regular and diet, plus some caffeine-free canned drinks (1 per person if you have bottled water but no self-serve container)
 - Optional - variety of 2-liter bottles (but must have cups and ice)
 - Wine (if permitted)
 - Variety of boxes (glass containers frequently not allowed)
 - Variety of bottles - don't forget corkscrew
 - Beer (if permitted)
 - Variety of regular and light
 - 1 can or bottle per 5 people depending on the group
 - Optional – 5-gallon container (self-serve) of homemade sangria (remember ice)

Coolers & Ice

- Suggestion: Use masking tape to label all coolers
- 1 small cooler for ice for drinks
 - Place 2 plastic cups in cooler for serving ice
- 1 or 2 large or very large coolers with ice for bottled water/canned drinks
- 1 cooler with ice for alcoholic drinks (keep separate from non-alcoholic drinks)
- 1 large cooler with spare ice

Paper Goods & Supplies

- Suggestion: Purchase in bulk quantity when possible
- Large paper/plastic plates 1/person
- Small paper/plastic plates 1/person

- Plastic silverware - at least one set per person
- Napkins (1-2 large packages)
- Paper towels (1-2 rolls)
- Trash bags - several food-store plastic bags & 1 box of garbage can size
- Masking tape (1 wide roll)
- Table cloths (optional)
- Handi-wipes or baby wipes
- Plastic gloves - for food handlers

Cooking / Heating Equipment

- Chafing dishes
- Spare fuel
- Long-tip lighter (matches as backup)
- Scissors (for food only)
- Scissors (for cutting open packages)
- Utensils - long-handled tongs & small sharp knife

Tables and chairs

- 1 sign-in and/or donation table & chair/s
- Several for holding the food
- Outdoor event
 - Picnic table and/or portable tables
 - Chairs - stackable plastic chairs work well
 - Supplied by organization
 - Supplied by attendees

Miscellaneous

- Flags and Banners
- First aid kit
- Small fire extinguisher
- Bull horn - for announcements
- Handouts about group - other groups
- Name tags and markers
- Sign-in sheets and pens
- Candidate material
- Fundraising items for sale/donations
- Tent/s and/or sun umbrella/s- if no shade
- Children's toys/games - someone should be responsible for watching over activities

Invitations

- Home-made or locally printed post cards (4 per page) - include date, time, location, RSVP Coordinator, charge, etc.
 - Mail to group and/or larger list 2 weeks prior to event (blind mailings = 3% response)
 - D or DDs - can utilize precinct chairs for personal messages. Additional postage may be needed. (D=voted Democratic in the last primary, DD=voted in the last 2 Democratic primary or voted Democratic in 2 out of the last 3 primaries.)

- Elected officials
 - Candidates
- Labels
 - Group list
 - Voter list
- Letters - usually not worth cost
- Flyers - hand out at meetings
- Internet - distribution / web sites
- Robo-calling or phone-tree calling

Scheduling

- 30 minutes minimum for setup - depending on number of volunteers
- 2 to 4 hours event
- 30 minutes minimum for cleanup - depending on number of volunteers

Financial Planning

- Expect total costs about \$4/person; \$3/person for second event (from bulk purchase leftovers of supplies and packaged food).
- Event money fronted by group or sponsors
- Pricing: Taking donations typically brings in as much as charging for event
- Donations
 - Have well-marked small pail or clear container as donation jar (put in a few \$5's and \$10's as 'seed' money - can be used to purchase more supplies if needed)
 - No need to have change and someone responsible to make change (can use seed money to make change if you have to)
- Fees \$5 adults, \$2 children, 4 and under free (suggested amounts)
 - Have large poster with amounts clearly listed
 - Have a donation jar

Fundraiser or Dinner Checklist

6 Weeks from Event

- Select event date (no Wednesdays or Sundays in most areas)
- Secure event location and caterer or have volunteers prepare the food
- Set date for organizational meeting and develop list of tasks to assign
- Develop event fundraising goal
- Develop a host committee list
- Decide ticket costs or sponsorship levels
- Contact potential host committee members and secure money commitments
- Clean up and finalize mailing list for invitations
- Design and print invitations and tickets

4 Weeks before Event

- Check in with host committee members by phone or meeting
- Send letter inviting all local officials as guests
- Plan entertainment and book a photographer if necessary
- Hold organizational meeting to assign tasks like addressing invitations, decorating, greeting and sign-in, taking photos, and clean-up

3 Weeks from Event

- Mail invitations or solicitation letters
- Recruit a group to create decorations, sign-in sheets, nametags, and program design, as well as coordinate set-up and clean-up
- Continue to call and solicit contributions

2 Weeks before Event

- Run ads in local/neighborhood papers or on radio, if necessary
- Have your event included on the community calendars
- Continue to call and solicit contributions
- Develop and print program
- Finalize details of who will speak and when
- Confirm with caterer, entertainment, and location
- Contact the media

1 Week before Event

- Phone bank to remind guests and get a head count

2-3 Days before Event

- Prepare nametags (local officials and sponsors)

1-2 Days before Event

- Contact the media

Day of Event

- Hold final organizational meeting at event site
- Fax or e-mail event reminder to sponsors and steering committee
- Set up your event EARLY
- Make sure you have the following:
 - Plenty of volunteers to help you
 - An area for elected official check-in
 - Sign-in sheets
 - Ballpoint pens (for sign-in sheets)
 - Sharpie markers (for name tags)
 - Name tags for elected officials and sponsors
 - Blank name tags
 - Bumper stickers
 - Contribution envelopes
 - Change for ticket purchases
 - Container to collect contributions at the door
 - Decorations
 - Tape and scissors
 - Thank-you board to showcase your sponsors

Day after Event

- Send thank-you letters to host committee, volunteers, contributors, and attendees
- Call those who pledged money, but did not attend/contribute
- Send a thank-you gift, if someone hosted the event in their home

Community/Neighborhood Coffee Checklist

2 Weeks from Event

- Select date for event
- Secure event location
- Place ads in weekly or community newspapers
- Prepare/send postcards to community leader list and voters in the area

1 Week from Event

- Prepare and distribute fliers to area shops, city hall, post offices, libraries, etc.
- Assign volunteers/staff to assist with set-up, refreshments, sign-in, photos, etc.
- Prepare handouts and collect state brochures, maps, etc.
- Prepare sign-in sheets

1-2 Days before Event

- Reminder calls to invitees

Day of Event

- Sign-in sheets
- Nametags
- Member and/or staff business cards
- Pens/pencils
- Refreshments, if not held at restaurant
- Disposable cameras

Day after Event

- Send thank-you letters to attendees, helpers, hosts, and media

How to Organize a Rally

A well-attended, well-publicized rally with a good purpose and theme, at an effective location, at a good time and day, with easily photographed elements will have a big impact.

Organizing a rally

The key to the success of a rally is getting the message across.

Determine the purpose of the rally

A rally can accomplish a number of objectives at the same time:

- Generate much needed media (local, state, or national magazines, radio and TV stations, electronic forums) attention for our issue or candidate
- Show the power of your group
- Have a long-term effect on those witnessing the rally.
- Inform people where to find like-minded groups of people
- Give notice to politicians on the specific issues
- Encourage voter turnout during elections

Set the Date

Consider several things when you set the date to get the best crowd:

- Set the date VERY early, at least one month in advance
- Set the time when people will attend (probably a weekend afternoon)
- Reset the day and time early in the process if necessary to get the best location

Find a location

Consider these factors in choosing a location:

- Can everyone easily reach the location?
- Is there ample parking or will car pools be needed?
- Is there adequate power for lighting and sound systems?
- Can the rally legally be held at the time and place you want?
 - Call local or county officials to determine whether you need a permit to hold a rally
 - Call your local ACLU or city or county office if there is a problem
- For voter turnout: is there a polling location nearby?

Get people to attend

People must attend and rally, or there is no rally. A mixture of ages and ethnic groups makes the group interesting.

To spread the word and build a group, you need these resources:

- Local Democratic clubs
- Call lists
- E-mail lists
- Websites
- Blogs

Contact the media

Well-organized steps are necessary to establish effective media (newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, and electronic forums) coverage.

Groups should have up-to-date lists of media sources available. The lists must include the following information that news departments will furnish:

- Contact names
- Telephone numbers
- Fax numbers
- E-mail addresses

Before each event, take the following actions:

- Call your contact names at least one week before the rally, if possible
- Fax and e-mail a media release stating the time, date, and place and the reason for the rally
- Call the media the day of the event, and ask whether they intend to cover it
- Have one or more media spokespersons for the event with a well-developed message
- Make sure the point of the rally is in a written message to pass out to the media
- Make sure usable quotes are in a written message to pass out to the media
- Take pictures

After the event, do the following (these steps are repeated in the “After the Rally” section).

- Write a story featuring the event
- Send the story with pictures to all of your media contacts that did not attend
- Thank all of your media contacts that did attend

Signs, Banners, and Flags

U.S. and Texas flags are necessary.

Remember these rules when working with signs:

- Make sure some of the signs reflect your theme
- Make sure some of the signs are easy to read from a long distance
- Make signs with short, to-the-point messages
- Use color
- Keep the signs clean and remove any sign that is questionable
- Never tease or insult a fellow Democrat
- Make sure the sticks on the signs adhere to any regulations

Costumes make GREAT pictures. These can be purchased at a fun shop for about \$30 each.

Chants and Cheers

Noise is an important element of a rally. Prepare in advance in the following ways to use noise effectively:

- Create simple chants and cheers that express the theme
- Select a reoccurring event to trigger a cheer, such as every time a blue car drives by
- Have a bullhorn if necessary, but make sure you have necessary permits

Have the Rally

If possible, plan in advance what you will do at your rally. The rally should be fun and effective. The following are important factors for a good rally:

- Plan a theme for your rally that is energizing, peaceful, and legal
- Make sure the point of the rally is obvious
- Plan activities for your rally that can be photographed effectively
- Have plenty of signs, some of which must be easily photographed
- Ensure there is a still digital camera and a video camera
- Video tape the event
- Take plenty of pictures for your website.
- Take a variety of pictures for the media that cannot attend
- Have hand-out material for people who are attracted to the rally
- Help the various groups participating to get to know each other

Consider paying an off-duty police officer for protection and for guidance on the laws.

After the Rally

The rally is over, but the following work is to be done:

- Collect the signs for future use
- Make sure the place is left clean
- Thank the police for their help
- Thank all of your media contacts that did attend
- Have an after-rally party or dinner. These functions are a good time to try to get to know others in the group and welcome new faces. This will be the time to relax, have fun, and watch your coverage on the local TV stations.
- Write a story featuring the event
- Send the story with pictures to all of your media contacts that did not attend
- Thank all of your media contacts that published a story or pictures
- Update your website
- Update any relevant blogs
- Update your telephone lists
- Update your e-mail lists

How to Organize a Protest

The key to the success of a protest is getting the message across. A well-attended, well-publicized protest with a good purpose and theme, at an effective location, at a good time and day, with easily photographed elements will have a big impact.

Determine the purpose of the protest

A protest can accomplish a number of things at the same time:

- Generate much needed media (local, state, or national magazines, radio and TV stations, electronic forums) attention for our issue or candidate
- Show the power of your group
- Disrupt an event designed to showcase the opposition and discourage future showcasing events or attendance at such events
- Have a long-term effect on those witnessing the protest.
- Inform people where to find like-minded groups of people
- Provide an opportunity to distribute information about the protest and your group

An example of a protest to disrupt an event designed to showcase a candidate of another party: A protest was assembled across the street from an appearance by a local politician. The cars honking at the protestors disrupted the event, with many in attendance leaving.

At another event, 150 protestors with signs highlighting his failures were waiting for a local congressman being “honored by a government-financed institution.” He had a counterprotest of only four individuals. Needless to say, the counterprotest was nothing more than an additional embarrassment to the congressman. The institution prepared elaborate food for 50 invited guests; fewer than ten crossed the protest line. Some invited guests came and then left when they saw the media photographing the protestors and guests.

“Harassment,” although that is a harsh word, can wear thin on a candidate and staff. Again, the long-term effects can accumulate.

Set the date

Consider several things when you set the date to get the best crowd:

- Set the date VERY early, at least one month in advance
- Set the time when people will attend (probably a weekend afternoon)
- Reset the day and time early in the process if necessary to get the best location

Sometimes events set the date. For example, if a politician is suddenly indicted or campaign headquarters suddenly opened, you may have to react quickly.

Find a location

Consider these factors in choosing a location:

- Can everyone easily reach the location?
- Is there ample parking or will car pools be needed?
- Is there adequate power for lighting and sound systems?
- Can the rally legally be held at the time and place you want?
 - Call local or county officials to determine whether you need a permit to hold a protest
 - Call your local ACLU or city or county office if there is a problem

Get people to attend

People must attend and protest, or there is no protest.

Get specific information on the event to determine how many people will be necessary to conduct the protest. Sometimes just a handful is enough; other times a large protest is necessary to generate interest and have an effect. A small gathering where a large crowd is needed only dissolves the purpose of the protest.

To spread the word and build a group, you need these resources:

- Local Democratic clubs
- Call lists
- E-mail lists
- Websites
- Blogs

A mixture of ages and ethnic groups is usually best. However, depending on the purpose of your protest, you may want to tailor your crowd to the issue (i.e., medicare cuts – seniors, student loans – students, etc.)

Contact the media

Well-organized steps are necessary to establish effective media (newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, and electronic forums) coverage.

Groups should have up-to-date lists of media sources available. The lists must include the following information that news departments will furnish:

- Contact names
- Telephone numbers
- Fax numbers
- E-mail addresses

Before each event, take the following actions:

- Call your contact names at least one week before the protest, if possible
- Fax and e-mail a media release stating the time, date, and place and the reason for the protest
- Call the media the day of the event, and ask whether they intend to cover it
- Have one or more media spokesperson for the event with a well-developed message
- Make sure the point of the protest is in a written message to pass out to the media
- Make sure usable quotes are in a written message to pass out to the media
- Take pictures

After the event, do the following (these steps are repeated in the “After the Protest” section).

- Write a story featuring the event
- Send the story with pictures to all of your media contacts that did not attend
- Thank all of your media contacts that did attend

Signs, Banners, and Flags

U.S. and Texas flags are necessary.

Remember these rules when working with signs:

- Make sure some of the signs reflect your theme
- Make sure some of the signs are easy to read from a long distance
- Make signs with short, to-the-point messages
- Use color

- Keep the signs clean and remove any sign that is questionable
- Never tease or insult a fellow Democrat
- Make sure the sticks on the signs adhere to any regulations

Costumes make GREAT pictures. These can be purchased at a fun shop for about \$30 each.

Chants and cheers

Noise is an important element of a protest. Prepare in advance in the following ways to use noise effectively:

- Create simple chants and cheers that express the theme
- Select a reoccurring event to trigger a cheer, such as every time a blue car drives by
- Have a bullhorn if necessary, but make sure you have necessary permits

Have the Protest

If possible, plan in advance what you will do at your protest. The protest should be fun and effective. The following are important factors for a good protest:

- Plan a theme for your protest that is energizing, peaceful, and legal
- Make sure the point of the protest is obvious
- Plan activities for your protest that can be photographed effectively
- Have plenty of signs, some of which must be easily photographed
- Ensure there is a still digital camera and a video camera
- Video tape the event
- Take plenty of pictures for your website.
- Take a variety of pictures for the media that cannot attend
- Have hand-out material for people who are attracted to the protest
- Help the various groups participating to get to know each other

Consider paying an off-duty police officer for protection and for guidance on the laws.

After the protest

The protest is over, but the following work is to be done:

- Collect the signs for future use
- Make sure the place is left clean
- Thank the police for their help
- Thank all of your media contacts that did attend
- Have an after-protest party or dinner. These functions are a good time to try to get to know others in the group and welcome new faces. This will be the time to relax, have fun, and watch your coverage on the local TV stations.
- Write a story featuring the event
- Send the story with pictures to all of your media contacts that did not attend
- Thank all of your media contacts that published a story or pictures
- Update your website
- Update any relevant blogs
- Update your telephone lists
- Update your e-mail lists

How to Organize a Town Hall Meeting

Organizing a town hall meeting

The key to the success of a town hall meeting will come in getting our message across. A town hall meeting can get local and even national attention, greatly increase membership to your organization, and give notice to politicians on the specific issue(s). A town hall meeting should always be considered to be a fun event, one that excites membership and increases interest in your organization and cause.

Select a single issue for the town hall meeting. Current “hot” topics draw more media.

Determine the purpose of the town hall meeting

A town hall meeting can accomplish a number of things at the same time:

- Generate much needed media (local, state, or national magazines, radio and TV stations, electronic forums) attention for our issue or candidate
- Show the power of your group
- Have a long-term effect on those witnessing the town hall meeting.
- Inform people where to find like-minded groups of people
- Provide an opportunity to distribute information about the town hall meeting and your group

Set the date

Consider several things when you set the date to get the best crowd:

- Set the date VERY early, at least one month in advance
- Set the time when people will attend (probably a weekend afternoon)

Find a location

Consider these factors in choosing a location:

- Can everyone easily reach the location?
- Is there ample parking or will car pools be needed?
- Is there adequate power for lighting and sound systems?
- Can the town hall meeting legally be held at the time and place you want?
- Call local or county officials to determine whether you need a permit to hold a town hall meeting
- Call your local ACLU or city or county office if there is a problem

Get people to attend

People must attend and town hall meeting, or there is no town hall meeting.

Get specific information on the event to determine how many people will be necessary to conduct the town hall meeting. Sometimes just a handful is enough; other times a large town hall meeting is necessary to generate interest and have an effect. A small gathering where a large crowd is needed only dissolves the purpose of the town hall meeting.

To spread the word and build a group, you need these resources:

- Local Democratic clubs
- Call lists
- E-mail lists
- Websites

- Blogs

A mixture of ages and ethnic groups makes the group interesting.

Contact the media

Well-organized steps are necessary to establish effective media (newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, and electronic forums) coverage.

Groups should have up-to-date lists of media sources available. The lists must include the following information that news departments will furnish:

- Contact names
- Telephone numbers
- Fax numbers
- E-mail addresses

Before each event, take the following actions:

- Call your contact names at least one week before the town hall meeting, if possible
- Fax and e-mail a media release stating the time, date, and place and the reason for the town hall meeting
- Call the media the day of the event, and ask whether they intend to cover it
- Have one or more media spokesperson for the event with a well-developed message
- Make sure the point of the town hall meeting is in a written message to pass out to the media
- Make sure usable quotes are in a written message to pass out to the media
- Take pictures

After the event, do the following (these steps are repeated in the “After the Town hall meeting” section).

- Write a story featuring the event
- Send the story with pictures to all of your media contacts that did not attend
- Thank all of your media contacts that did attend

Signs, Banners, and Flags

U.S. and Texas flags are necessary.

Remember these rules when working with signs:

- Make sure some of the signs reflect your theme
- Make sure some of the signs are easy to read from a long distance
- Make signs with short, to-the-point messages
- Use color
- Keep the signs clean and remove any sign that is questionable
- Never tease or insult a fellow Democrat
- Make sure the sticks on the signs adhere to any regulations

Costumes make GREAT pictures. These can be purchased at a fun shop for about \$30 each.

Chants and cheers

Noise is an important element of a town hall meeting. Prepare in advance in the following ways to use noise effectively:

- Create simple chants and cheers that express the theme
- Select a reoccurring event to trigger a cheer, such as every time **a leader makes a certain hand motion.**
- Have a bullhorn if necessary, but make sure you have necessary permits

Have the Town hall meeting

Plan in advance what you will do at your town hall meeting. The town hall meeting should be fun and effective. The following are important factors for a good town hall meeting:

- Plan a town hall meeting that is energizing, peaceful, and legal
- Make sure the point of the town hall meeting is obvious
- Plan activities for your town hall meeting that can be photographed effectively
- Have plenty of signs, some of which must be easily photographed
- Ensure there is a still digital camera and a video camera
- Video tape the event
- Take plenty of pictures for your website.
- Take a variety of pictures for the media that cannot attend
- Have hand-out material for people who are attracted to the town hall meeting
- Help the various groups participating to get to know each other
- Sign in attendees

Consider paying an off-duty police officer for protection and for guidance on the laws.

After the town hall meeting

The town hall meeting is over, but the following work is to be done:

- Collect the signs for future use
- Make sure the place is left clean
- Thank the police for their help
- Thank all of your media contacts that did attend
- Have an after-town-hall-meeting party or dinner These functions are a good time to try to get to know others in the group and welcome new faces. This will be the time to relax, have fun, and watch your coverage on the local TV stations.
- Write a story featuring the event
- Send the story with pictures to all of your media contacts that did not attend
- Thank all of your media contacts that published a story or pictures
- Update your website
- Update any relevant blogs
- Update your telephone lists
- Update your e-mail lists

Appendix E Sample Democratic Club Constitution

It is highly desirable that any document drawn for a Democratic organization adhere to the *Rules of the Texas Democratic Party* and Principles therein. The constitution below is only an example.

Article I - Name

The name of this organization shall be The XXXXXXXXX Democrats; hereafter called the club.

Article II - Purpose

The purpose of this club shall be the following:

- a. To stimulate in people an active interest in governmental affairs
- b. To increase the efficiency of popular government
- c. To perpetuate the ideals and principles of the Democratic Party
- d. To identify and engage Democrats in a friendly forum
- e. To attract new members to the Democratic Party
- f. To help acquaint voters and potential voters with the issues and the candidates
- g. To promote by our efforts the highest degree of governmental response to public needs

Article III - Policy

Section 1. This club shall not endorse or support the candidacy of any person for any public office prior to nomination by the Democratic Party or in any other manner give its influence as an organization to the cause of any candidate or faction of the party, other than in a General Election campaign.

Section 2. This club shall support actively and by appropriate means the nominees of the Democratic Party in national, state, and local elections; it shall endeavor to maintain permanent contact with voters throughout the area, and shall function continuously in order that it may contribute to the growth and influence of the Democratic Party. (Optional – not part of the *TDP Rules*.)

Article IV - Membership

Section 1. Any person who is a Democrat is eligible for membership.

Section 2. Members may be suspended for cause and in cases of exceptional gravity may, by a three-fourths vote of the membership, be expelled. Any member so expelled shall have the right to appeal to the members in good standing, at a meeting called for such purpose, by written notice, whose action determined by a majority vote thereof, shall be final.

Article V - Officers

Section 1. The officers of the club shall consist of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and such others as may be necessary.

Section 2. The duties of the officers shall be those customarily assigned to and performed by like officers in similar organizations and clubs, and such others as may be found necessary.

Section 3. The officers shall be elected annually by a majority vote of the members present and voting, and shall hold office until the election of their successors.

Article VI - Meetings

Section 1. Meetings shall be held on a regular basis.

Section 2. Special meetings may be called by one or more of the elected officers at a time, place, and in a manner to be decided upon by the club in its by-laws.

Article VII - Dues

Section 1. A membership fee may be charged at the discretion of the club.

Section 2. Special assessments may be levied as the membership deems necessary for efficient operations.

Article VIII - Voting

Section 1. All decisions to be made by the general membership of the club shall be by a majority vote except in those instances otherwise provided for.

Section 2. Only persons who are members in good standing shall be eligible to vote.

Article IX - Amendments

Upon petition of not less than five members, amendments to the constitution may be proposed, and within 30 days may be ratified by an affirmative vote of not less than two-thirds of the membership present and voting. A quorum for this purpose shall be one more than one-half of the membership.

Article X - By-Laws

The club may adopt such by-laws when it deems necessary. By-laws shall be adopted when approved by a majority vote of the members in good standing present at a regular meeting, or at a special meeting called by written notice stating the purpose for which the special meeting is called.

Appendix F Sample Scripts and Letters

Sample Walk Script

(This script is a sample only. Candidate names and election dates are not current.)

Good afternoon, my name is _____. I'm with the Democratic Party and would like to ask you a few questions regarding local voting and community issues.

1. Are you Mr./Ms. _____? (Confirm that the person you are speaking with is one of the registered voters on your list)
2. Will you be voting in the upcoming election?
3. Will you be supporting:
 - Tony Sanchez (D) or Rick Perry (R) for Governor?
 - Ron Kirk (D) or John Cornyn (R) for U.S. Senate?
 - John Sharp (D) or David Dewhurst (R) for Lieutenant Governor?
 - Charlie Stenholm (D) for U.S. Representative?
 - Jeri Slone (D) or Scott Campbell (R) for State Representative?

Thank you for your time, I just have a few more questions.

4. Do you consider yourself to be a Democrat, Republican or independent?
5. Will you need a ride to the polls? (Check the appropriate response)

Thank you very much for your time. I would like to leave you this information regarding candidates and I would like to remind you that Election Day is **Tuesday, November X from 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM.** Do you know your voting location? (If no, leave location.)

Remember, if you cannot vote on Election Day, **early voting is available October X - November X from 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM.**

Thank you again for your time and have a nice day.