

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.