

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