

# ALLEGHENY COUNTY DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

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## **WHY COMMITTEE PEOPLE?**

As a Democratic Committee person you are the MOST IMPORTANT and MOST DIRECT link between all the voters and the Party organization. The Democratic voters elected you to be their party representative. They listen to your political views because they feel you are more knowledgeable in politics and government. In turn, the Party organization depends upon you to represent them to ALL the voters in your district. An effective committee person understands that Republican voters share our commitment to honest and competent government. It is the job of the Democratic committee person to reach out to Republicans and Independents, (as well as Democrats) and tell them about our quality candidates. Frequently, they will support Democratic candidates when properly informed. Therefore, the success or failure of your party, its message and candidates depends mainly on how well YOU do your job.

Remember: it is a job you chose. You filed a petition and the DEMOCRATIC VOTERS ELECTED YOU. In the Primary, the Democrats of your district expect you to weigh the qualifications and merits of all the Democratic candidates. They will look to you for advice as to which candidate they should support. In the General Election, it is your responsibility to support the DEMOCRATIC candidates THE VOTERS HAVE chosen.

## **THE COMMITTEE PERSON: Participation**

You should also attend County Committee meetings and participate in Party activities. This will help keep you informed and give you the opportunity to exchange ideas with other committee people throughout the County. This provides you with the greatest chance to influence both Democratic policy and the selection of county, state and federal candidates. You need the Party and the Party needs you. Just as you needed volunteers to help you in your district, the Party needs volunteers to staff Committee headquarters. You are welcome to bring a friend.

Whenever possible, participate in Committee fund raisers, either by working on a committee, selling tickets, or attending in person.

## **BE "IN THE KNOW"**

Voters in your district will expect you to be a "walking encyclopedia" of political facts.

Among the things you should have handy are:

- 1) The names, addresses and phone numbers of your U.S. Senators,
- 2) Congressman, State Senator and Representative, County, Municipal and School Board Officials.
- 3) When and where residents can register or change party, as well as election laws, dates and deadlines.
- 4) Location of County and State agencies so that you can refer your Voters for help with their problems.
- 5) What your County, Pennsylvania and Democratic National Committee is doing.

When one of your voters asks a question you cannot answer, call Democratic Headquarters and when you get the answer, telephone the person who asked you the question.

AND MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL – know your district, its boundaries, economic status, interests and residents. Also, know your opposition.

## **THE COMMITTEE PEOPLE: Duties, Responsibilities, Suggested Activities**

A Good Committee person;

1. Knows the district, and as many people in the district as possible, on a personal basis.
2. Helps solve local problems.
3. Extends his or her influence by working in civic sports and church groups.
4. Attends Party training sessions and meetings.
5. Makes regular door-to-door canvasses.
6. Is always a courteous and neat representative of the Democratic Party.
7. Works to increase the number of registered and voting Democrats.
8. Knows the election-day laws.
9. Always has candidate literature and materials handy, ready to promote our candidates.
10. Understands that being a good committeeperson is a 365 day-a-year

### **THE COMMITTEE PEOPLE: Responsibility to Communicate**

Do not be the kind of committeeperson who is only seen standing at the polls on Election Day. **Glad-handing does not work.** Try to visit each voter personally at least once a year. Make a definite point of calling on new people moving into the district. Even though they may have a definite feeling for the opposing party on their arrival, your call might pay off eventually with a change of registration or a vote for Democratic candidates in November. It is wise to keep your voters informed concerning registration, absentee ballots, and Election Day deadlines. By providing information about our candidates and how they can assist in solving problems, we not only win votes, but also encourage voters who saw no reason to vote to come out and support our candidates.

**Any action that you take shows the citizens that you are continually interested in serving them and not just soliciting their vote on Election Day. This builds the kind of relationship that you need to succeed.**

### **THE COMMITTEEPEOPLE: POLITICAL TOOL KIT**

Here is what you need to get the job done. Be prepared... you should keep yourself well supplied.

1. A district map (This is more to help your workers than you).
2. A current street list of all the voters in your district and backup lists with phone numbers for Election Day use.
3. Voter registration forms and absentee ballot requests.
4. Candidate campaign literature, candidate biographies, and candidate position papers.
5. Election Calendar.
6. A list of important telephone numbers.
7. Committee Person Handbook.
8. A plan YOU have developed to win the election in your district.
9. Your personal commitment to win.

### **THE COMMITTEE PEOPLE: ORGANIZING THE DISTRICT**

If you can involve a number of people in your district during the year, it will be easier to find workers come election time. Some suggestions would be to have block or street captains and meet with them regularly in order that they might:

- Report the feelings of voters on their streets.
- Help find unregistered residents and get them registered and out to vote.
- Help arrange political social activities such as coffee klatches.

In short, anything that will encourage Democrats in your district to work with you as a team is our goal. Frankly, this is not an easy task but it is essential.

## **WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS**

To make the best use of volunteers:

1. Find out what special talents each volunteer has and make use of them. Discover what they will and will not do.
2. Make them a real part of your organization. Let them in on the planning stages, and let them know how projects turn out.
3. Have regular meetings to keep up their interests, and ask them to join you at county and candidates meetings.
4. Ask them for their ideas.
5. Give them the recognition and appreciation they deserve.

When looking for volunteers, never use anyone who creates a bad impression on voters. Look for assistance among active groups of people. Two groups, youth and senior citizens, have been targeted by the Republicans. You should pay special attention to them as well.

**INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE-** Give interested young people in your district constructive jobs to do. Listen to their ideas; channel their efforts so that they will work with you and for you within the Democratic organization. You could put them to work registering other young people. Usually you get better results if both young people and adults are each contacted by someone of their own age group.

**INVOLVE SENIOR CITIZENS -** There are many jobs they can do at home such as telephoning; addressing envelopes; making saleable items for fundraising; babysitting, etc.

Other important groups to involve are:

- housewives
- union members
- the disabled
- sports groups
- veterans
- environmental groups
- church, fire and rescue organizations

You should recruit most of your workers while doing your normal canvassing. To recruit volunteers in your district, you may want to deliver the attached questionnaire door-to-door, or in mail boxes. Once again, you can get better results if both young people and adults are each contacted by someone of their own age group.

## **YOUR ROLE IS THE KEY TO VICTORY**

The Democratic Party is the "Party of the People." YOU are the Ambassador of the Democratic Party in your work. Show that you believe in what you are doing by being a good citizen and stressing the importance of registering and voting. Registration is our first big step to our goal of a DEMOCRATIC VICTORY.

## **VOTER REGISTRATION: THE KEY TO GROWTH AND VICTORY**

Voter registration is a vital part of the political process. It is also an area given prime time emphasis by the Republicans. They have been boasting of their successes in this

regard. If we Democrats are to succeed, we must out register them. Here are some suggestions:

1. Organize your group. It is a good idea to have everyone who will be helping with your registration drive meet together to discuss registration procedures and your plans for the canvass of unregistered voters.
2. Organize the area. Try to include people who are familiar with the area. Maps with boundaries save time and help avoid overlapping worker assignments.
3. Remember to look for absentee ballots and party changeovers during your drive.
4. Always thank your workers and congratulate them on a job well-done. Teamwork is contagious.

### **WHEN SHOULD I REGISTER NEW DEMOCRATS?**

NOW is the time to register. You do not have to wait for the local or county party. You are the committee person and you are responsible for your district. Losers wait for someone else but winners take charge.

Plan when you will register. Forms are available at headquarters and the Allegheny County Elections Department.

REMEMBER: REGISTRATION DEADLINES ARE 30 DAYS PRIOR TO EACH ELECTION.

### **WHERE SHOULD I START AND WHO SHOULD I REGISTER?**

Examine your district. Start near the polling place and work out from there. Think of how your district may be affected by the following:

- Sale of neighborhood homes.
- New 18 year olds.
- Young people moving back home after the service or college.
- New developments.
- Dissatisfied Republicans.
- Women, particularly working women or women head of households.
- Unemployed and the underemployed.
- Senior citizens.
- Concerned young people.

Register those who identify themselves as Democrats. Some will register as Independents or Nonpartisan and some families will want to "split" their registration "to receive literature from both sides," This is called a convenience registration and encourage both to vote Democratic.

It is a good idea to stress to new registrants (particularly young people), the importance of registering with a political party. Many of them do not know that they can't vote in a primary election if they register Independent or No Party.

ALWAYS:

1. Tell the new voter where to vote and explain that you will be at the polls to answer any last minute questions.
2. After registering, provide the new voter with a handout showing them how simple the voting machine is to work. Be sure they understand how to vote Democratic, and why.
3. Tell them about their elected Democratic officials on the state, county and local levels and what a fine job they are doing.
4. Remember to say thank you.

### **WHO CAN VOTE?**

## IN PENNSYLVANIA YOU MAY REGISTER IF:

1. You have become a United States citizen at least 30 days preceding the election.
2. You will be 18 on the day of the election.
3. You have lived in your election district at least 30 days preceding the election.

If you are a registered Pennsylvania voter who has legally changed your domicile within the 30 day period prior to the election and therefore you have not lived in your new election district the required 30 days, you may vote in your old district.

## YOU MUST RE-REGISTER IF:

1. You have not voted at least once during the two preceding years.
2. You have changed your party affiliation.
3. You have legally changed your domicile from the district in which you voted previously.

## **ABSENTEE BALLOTS: THAT OTHER UNKNOWN ELECTION**

The most underrated important activity in most elections is the use of absentee ballots. This "other election" frequently decides the winner of the regular contest.

Your objective should be to build up an absentee ballot constituency of those who cannot vote on Election Day. Among the prime groups for your consideration should be:

1. Students; including students who frequently arrive home too late in the evening to vote.
2. Businesspeople; including long haul truckers and others frequently away on Election Day.
3. Military, including their families, serving elsewhere.
4. Handicapped people who cannot use the voting machines.
5. Senior citizens who are very unlikely to vote if the weather is bad.
6. Those going on vacation.
7. People with poor voting histories.
8. Residents of nursing homes.

We recommend you keep an ongoing list of ALL those who could use your absentee ballots. Visit them regularly and assist them in properly completing the application. You should see that it reaches the Election Department and advise the voter to look for the ballot in the mail.

It is very important to provide campaign literature for all Democratic candidates to each prospective absentee voter and take the time to personally go over it with them. Offer to assist them in properly doing all the paperwork involved. In politics very few things are as important as a sure vote. Here is your chance to develop a network of them. Advise the absentee voter that a person who has cast an absentee ballot but finds himself in the district on Election Day due to a change in circumstances must go to the polls and vote on the machines. While at the polls he or she will void the absentee ballot. Being present in the County and able to vote on Election Day opens the absentee ballot to challenge.

EMERGENCY BALLOTS ARE AVAILABLE BETWEEN WEDNESDAY AND 5:00P.M. FRIDAY  
THE WEEK PRIOR TO THE ELECTION.

## **PRE-ELECTION DAY ACTIVITIES:**

Here is a sample schedule to give you a feel for the timing of an election. Local Party Officers work with you to coordinate most of this activity:

**1. Two Weeks Before Election Day:**

- A. Schedule your Election Day workers and staff.
  - 1. Watchers certificates,
  - 2. Poll workers,
- B. Telephone squad and location
- C. Get-Out-the-Vote Team
- D. Designated babysitter
- E. Designated driver

**2. Night Before Election Day:**

- A. Distribute Election Day materials. Thank all workers in advance for their maximum effort, Review with them how close this election is and tell the new workers just how much the last effort means.
- B. Street lists, divided into sections of the district to be handled by each worker.
- C. Updated phone lists to telephone workers,
- D. Candidate posters to polling places,
- E. Distribute campaign buttons and worker buttons as needed,

**3. Election Day Activity:**

- A. At 6:00 A.M. perform the following checks:
  - 1. Present watchers certificates,
  - 2. Distribute sample ballots,
  - 3. Master voters list,
  - 4. Worker tags,.
  - 5. Put up poll signs for candidates,
  - 6. Vehicles check.

**The Committeeperson's Election Job:**

The committeeperson is the quarterback of the Democratic team they have assembled. You have only 780 minutes to score the number of votes to carry us to victory. Although your district represents only one of many districts, in our County we cannot win without you and your neighborhood team.

Your job on Election Day is to:

- 1. Greet voters and provide them with slate cards. When one of the committee people is busy and away from the polls the other should be at the polls to greet voters.
- 2. Answer any last minute questions voters may have.
- 3. Manage your Democratic team and deal with any problems. Your job is to get out the Democratic vote and to see that the polls are manned all day long until the last vote is accurately counted.
- 4. Conduct any exit survey which might be required.

The Poll Watcher's Job:

This is one of the most important and least understood jobs on Election Day. As a rule, only qualified electors, (registered voters residing in the district), may serve as poll watchers. However, the courts can approve poll watchers residing outside the district. Problems with poll watchers should be referred by yourself to your municipal chair or in the absence of a local organization, directly to Democratic headquarters. Watchers certificates should be obtained through headquarters.

Valid poll-watchers certificates are issued by your County Board of Elections. The number of poll watchers allowed is two for each candidate in the Primary and two for each party in the General Election per voting district. Watchers certificates should be obtained before Election Day.

The responsibilities and duties of poll watchers are:

1. Poll watchers should verify that all counters are set to zero before the election begins.
2. During election hours (7 a.m.-8 p.m.) poll watchers may sit inside the poll in a designated area and observe the election.
3. The most important job of a watcher is to sit in the poll and keep a list of those who have voted. This is called SCRIBING.
4. Challenge anything irregular or against the law such as a non-resident voting or assistance being given to an able-bodied voter.
5. Call the County Election Board if the local election officers cannot settle a dispute.
6. During vote counting, including absentee ballots, poll watchers may sit in a designated area to observe the count. A good watcher will also make certain that all machines are properly sealed before the count is taken.

### **HOW TO CHALLENGE A "WOULD-BE VOTER": THE RULES OF THE GAME**

Even though the registered affidavit of an individual may be on file in the binder, any member of the Election Board, qualified watcher or voter then present at the polls has the right to challenge the right of that person to vote on the grounds of residence. This challenge does not in itself prevent the individual voter from voting, but the following steps must be taken before he/she is allowed to vote:

1. Anyone so challenged must be put under oath by the judge,
2. The proper challenge form must be signed by said voter,
3. The challenged voter must then produce one qualified voter of the division who shall make affidavit as to his identity or residence in the division.

NOTE: ANY PERSON PUT UNDER OATH COMMITS PERJURY IF HE OR SHE FAILS TO TELL THE TRUTH AND IS SUBJECT TO ANY AND ALL PENALTIES PROVIDED IN THE ELECTION CODE FOR SUCH A VIOLATION.

### **IN CONCLUSION**

It is our sincere hope that you will find this manual helpful to you in carrying out your responsibilities as a Committee Person.

We have done our best to cover as completely as possible the types of situations you will routinely encounter. If you have any suggestions as to additional information which you believe should be included in this manual, we would appreciate your passing them along to Democratic Headquarters.

Likewise, if you have any other ideas as to ways that we can help you to make your job easier, please let us know. As your elected party leaders, we stand ready to assist you in any way we can, we are as close to you as your telephone.

**ALLEGHENY COUNTY  
DEMOCRATIC HEADQUARTERS  
412.281.8901**

**COMMITTEES AND THEIR FUNCTIONS:**

Pursuant to the Party Bylaws, the County Chair may appoint and supervise the functions of, such standing or special subcommittees as may be necessary or advisable to carry out party business and to delegate thereto such powers and duties as may be necessary or advisable. In that regard, these current committees have been created. They are listed below with a short description of their focus.

- 1.) GOTV(Get Out The Vote) - Serves to assist with activities as outlined in this handbook regarding phone banking, door knocking dropping literature and coordinating election day activities.
- 2.) Education - Serves to educate new committee people and friends of the Democratic Party on their duties and obligations to help elect democrats.
- 3.) Mediation - Serves to settle any disputes or potential disputes between committee members or candidates in an effort to improve communication and cooperation within the party.
- 4.) Bylaws - Reviews the bylaws of the Allegheny County Democratic Committee and recommends changes, where necessary, depending on the needs of the party and input of committee people.
- 5.) Rules Enforcement - Serves to enforce the rules of the Allegheny County Democratic Party. Where potential rules infractions exist, this committee may review the facts and make recommendations to the Chair and to the Executive Board.
- 6.) Judicial Review - Committee comprised of those who work in or are associated with the legal community. This Committee's charge is to interview candidates seeking judicial office, who are seeking the Party's endorsement, and to make recommendations to the Party on the qualifications of each candidate.
- 7.) Candidate Search - Serves to seek out candidates for public office based on qualifications, merit, and with an ideology that is consistent with the values of the Democratic Party.
- 8.) Events and Fund Raising - Serves to help with events and fund raising activities in the County, City, Wards and Municipalities.

