

1. 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.
2. The Precinct Chair The party leader in the voting precinct is the precinct chair, who is elected by the voters in the precinct in the Democratic Primary. The precinct chair is the most important elected official in the Democratic Party. An active, effective precinct chair makes an enormous difference in the success of the Party and our candidates.
3. 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:
  - a. Organize the precinct and get to know the people in the precinct
  - b. Be a standing member of the County Executive Committee
  - c. Represent the precinct by attending every County Executive Committee meeting
  - d. Get our voters to the polls
  - e. Bridge the gap between voters and elected officials
  - f. Help find judges, alternate judges, and election clerks
  - g. Get people to do the following volunteer jobs:
    - i. Work the precinct polling place on Election Day
    - ii. Pass out literature
    - iii. Report pertinent information back to the Democratic party headquarters and Democratic campaigns
  - h. Set up the polling sites on Election Day
  - i. Understand the TDP Rules and Texas Election Code
  - j. Encourage primary voters to attend the precinct convention
  - k. Place sign(s) at the Primary voting locations indicating the location of the precinct convention
  - l. Organize and conduct the precinct convention – see Appendix A

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

4. Organizing the Precinct: Get to Know the Precinct:
  - a. Get a map of the precinct from the county chair, county clerk, or elections administrator.
  - b. Drive around the precinct and learn its geographical boundaries and characteristics. Knowing your precinct allows you to plan precinct activities, including canvassing, finding meeting places, deciding where to distribute literature, registering voters, etc.
5. Organizing the Precinct: Canvass the Precinct:
  - a. Get a list of voters in the precinct from the county chair and/or access voter information for the precinct using the Party's on-line Voter Management System.

- b. Use the voter list to verify and update telephone numbers. Use local phone books and/or the Internet.
- c. Then, either in person (best method) or by phone, contact every registered voter that voted in any of the three most recent Democratic Primaries.
- d. Identify yourself as the precinct chair.
- e. Tell them that you are calling to identify all of the Democrats in the precinct so you can keep them informed of upcoming Democratic activities and events.
- f. Here is also your chance to ask them for assistance in further canvassing.
- g. Once all known Democrats have been called, call the remainder of the registered voters in the precinct that did not vote in the most recent Republican primary to find additional Democrats and others that lean our way. The voter list may be divided among the previously contacted Democrats.
- h. Pass updated and corrected phone numbers and/or information to the county chair. Sample scripts are located in Appendix G.
- i. Mailing is not truly considered canvassing, but is an alternative method of contacting registered voters.

Canvassing the precinct gives you an excellent feel for the makeup of your precinct and provides you with help for working in the precinct. Knowing where your Democrats are will decrease your workload and increase Democratic turnout during election cycles. Providing the county chair with updates and corrections ensures that campaign volunteers will be working with the latest information.

6. Organize the Precinct and Keep Voter Lists Current:
  - a. Use a notebook, 3x5 cards, or a computer to keep track of the Democrats in the precinct.
  - b. Work with the Democrats in the precinct to find people who will help you with your duties.
  - c. Once a month take the voter list and drive or walk around the precinct. Note homes for sale. When the sign comes down contact the new owners by phone or mail and update the voter list. Sample 'Welcome to the neighborhood' letter and postcard are located in Appendix G.
  - d. Additionally, during election cycles (any type of election), walk or drive around the precinct and note who has whose yard sign; it may be a good indication of the voter's leanings.
  - e. Keep the county chair informed of all changes to the voter list. Keeping your list current and the county list current ensures that the Party will have the latest information during election cycles.
7. Get to Know the People in the Precinct: Organize activities in the precinct to bring people together. For assistance, use canvassing volunteers or request assistance from the county chair or local Democratic clubs.

- a. Hold coffees, backyard parties, BBQs, and block parties. Begin these get-togethers with fellow Democrats, then move on to non-primary voters and non-voters.
  - b. Additionally, meet neighbors at homeowner association meetings and other such community activities. Meeting neighbors and bringing people together will increase your number of available volunteers, increase the voter turnout for the Democratic Party, and win elections.
8. Representing the Precinct: Represent precinct at County Executive Committee meetings: Attendance at every County Executive Committee meeting is ESSENTIAL, because the County Executive Committee directs the operations of the County Party!
9. Getting Our Voters to the Polls: Get our voters to the polls: It is important for precinct chairs to ensure every Democrat in the precinct votes in the Democratic Primary and General Election.
  - a. Talk to every Democrat prior to the start of early voting.
  - b. Keep in touch during early voting and mark those off that have voted.
  - c. Talk to those that have not yet voted between early voting and Election Day, and encourage them to vote on Election Day.
10. Bridging the Gap to Elected Officials: Bridge the gap between the Precinct and elected officials. A precinct chair can be a "bridge" or liaison between the people in the precinct and elected officials.
  - a. Through Party activities get to know the elected officials that cover the precinct.
  - b. The precinct chair can help a citizen or community group secure appropriate assistance with a particular problem or concern by contacting elected officials.
  - c. Knowing your elected officials will make it easier to participate in Party activities, increase your status within your precinct with both its citizens and elected officials, and make it easier to gain assistance when needed.
11. Finding Judges, Alternate Judges, and Election Clerks: Find election judge/alternate and clerks for your Precinct
  - a. The precinct chair assists the County Party in securing an election judge or alternate election judge and/or election clerks for voting precincts. (It is important that Democratic people working inside the polling place are assertive and well informed so voters see someone they know and to prevent voter intimidation. It is usually important that a precinct chair not be judge, alternate judge, or clerk.)
  - b. The precinct chair should be getting Democrats and like-minded voters to the polls.
  - c. In a precinct with voter intimidation problems or significant voter confusion with the voting systems, it can be more useful for the precinct chair to be the election judge, alternate judge, or clerk. It does no good to get a voter to the polls if the voter is intimidated into leaving or confused by the voting system in the polling place. The precinct chair should be someone the voters know and trust.

12. Knowing the Party Rules Know the TDP Rules and Texas Election Code: As the Party's representative in the precinct it is important that the precinct chair to understand the TDP Rules and Texas Election Code. The rules are available on line at [www.txdemocrats.org](http://www.txdemocrats.org). Copies of the rules may be available from your county chair or your senate district SDEC committee-members. Election training may be available from the county chair, the county clerk, or county election officer.
13. Term of Office and Qualifications:
- a. The precinct chair is a publicly elected party official and is elected by precinct voters in the Democratic Primary Election (or in the runoff election, if no candidate gets a majority in the first primary).
  - b. The term of office for a precinct chair is two years, beginning on the 20th day following the Primary runoff election. The County Executive Committee fills vacancies for unexpired terms.
  - c. A precinct chair should be an outgoing, self-motivated person who likes people.
  - d. To be eligible for the office of precinct chair, an individual must meet these requirements:
    - i. Be 18 years of age or older
    - ii. Be a qualified voter who has voted in the latest Democratic primary (not counting runoffs) in the voting year
    - iii. Be a resident of the precinct from which he or she is seeking election
    - iv. Not be a candidate for or holder of an elective office of the federal, state, or county government
    - v. (Optional, but highly desirable) have Internet and e-mail capabilities and basic computer skills
14. Filing for Office: A qualified individual interested in running for precinct chair must do the following:
- a. Obtain a filing form from the county chair or county party secretary
  - b. Complete the application
  - c. Sign the application before a notary public
  - d. Have the form notarized
  - e. Submit the application in the period that begins in late October and ends at 6:00 PM on the first business day in January
  - f. Check the filing deadline when you pick up your application. The completed, signed, and notarized application may be mailed to the county chair, but it must be received by the filing deadline.
  - g. Only contested candidates for Precinct chair appear on the Democratic Primary ballot.
  - h. Write-in votes for precinct chair are permitted in the primary, whether or not there are other candidates on the ballot, but not in a runoff. Write-in candidates must have filed their write-in candidacies.

15. Filling Vacancies: Precinct chair vacancies for unexpired terms are filled by the County Executive Committee (CEC) at a properly called meeting. The required quorum for a CEC meeting to fill a vacancy is a majority (greater than 50%) of filled precinct chairs.
16. Auxiliary Precinct Positions: Precinct chairs are responsible for a remarkable amount of work, and assistance is almost always required to accomplish the endless list of necessary tasks. This assistance can come from anyone willing to help the precinct chair, even from those not in the precinct, although that is preferred. There are no official names for those rendering assistance, nor are these official party positions. They are invaluable to the precinct chair, however, and therefore to the county and state parties, elected officials, and candidates.
  - a. Precinct Coordinator: The precinct coordinator is not an official Party position, but if an elected precinct chair is unable or unwilling to do the work, a precinct coordinator should be chosen to carry on Party activities in the precinct. A precinct chair may choose to have a precinct coordinator to provide assistance.
17. Block Captains: The block captain is not an official Party position. A block captain resides in the precinct and assists the precinct chair in the coordination of Democratic activities on that person's block or area.
18. The Ideal Precinct: The ideal precinct has an active precinct organization, led by the precinct chair.
  - a. The precinct coordinator and active block captains on every street work closely together to find Democrats and others that lean our way; keep them informed; and, organize opportunities for them to get together.
  - b. Democratic candidates are invited into the precinct to meet with voters and are provided assistance by the precinct's organization.
  - c. Elected officials are kept apprised of the precinct's concerns and respond to the precinct chair's inquiries.
  - d. The precinct organization meets frequently to socialize, plan, and carry out Party building activities. At election time they work even harder to get out the vote for our candidates.
19. Elected Official and Candidate Cooperation with Precinct Chairs: Here are some of the ways you, as a candidate or elected official, can help a precinct chair:
  - a. Invite precinct chairs to "addressing parties" and let them add messages to the cards or letters being sent to their precincts (except when using bulk mail). It is too expensive for most precinct chairs to pay the full price for mailing literature.
  - b. Offer to block walk with precinct chairs or their representatives in the precinct.
    - i. Invite precinct chairs to help plan an event that includes their precincts, such as a rally in a local park with games and light refreshments.
    - ii. Learn precinct chairs' names, and send them handwritten notes or make personal telephone calls.
    - iii. Personally greet and thank each precinct chair or election judge when they bring the ballot boxes to the courthouse on each Election Day.

- iv. Remember that they already have jobs, and they are trying to help you get one or keep one.
- v. Ask for advice about their precincts, and seriously consider the advice that they give you.
- vi. In the primary, positively tell why you are the best candidate.
- vii. Do not criticize your opponents to the precinct chairs. Remember that we are all Democrats, and we are going to need each other.
- viii. Encourage people who are active in a campaign to fill vacant precinct chair positions.

20. How to get Precinct Voters to the Polls:

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

Ideally, the precinct chair will be part—the most important part—of a larger integrated campaign plan and organization. Precinct chairs, as part of the County Executive Committee, and other precinct organizers should be involved from the beginning in planning the campaign for the whole county, including specific activities for Election Day and the early voting period. Each county is different, of course, and will have a different plan, but the job of precinct chair remains basically the same on Election Day:

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

21. Provide or know who in your area is providing rides to the polls: Many candidates help to arrange this service, or the County Party may have arranged for a pool of volunteer drivers.

- a. Find volunteers to work at the polling place handing out candidate literature and to be on the phone calling voters.
- b. You may also be asked to help get volunteers for a central phone bank or other joint efforts or to help in other precincts.
- c. Know what to do or where to call in your county for answers to questions about election law, voting fraud, or unfair practices taking place at your poll.

22. Precinct Chair vs. Election Judge: General Election It is no longer the case that the election judge and precinct chair are synonymous. The precinct chair should be getting Democrats and like-minded voters to the polls, while the election judge should be

running the election.

Rationale:

- a. The precinct chair is a partisan Party position.
- b. The election judge is a non-partisan position.
- c. There is no law prohibiting a precinct chair from being an election judge.
- d. The precinct chair usually should not be the election judge.
- e. 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.

23. 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.

- a. The county chair calls and presides over CEC meetings.
- b. Precinct chairs may also call meetings through a petition process.
- c. 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:

- d. By statute, the CEC has certain responsibilities for the conduct of the Democratic Primary in the county.
- e. By TDP Rules, the CEC may adopt continuing rules for the conduct of its business.
- f. 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:
  - i. Raising funds for conducting local campaigns
  - ii. Supporting the statewide effort for the entire ticket
  - iii. Developing materials o Integrating local services for all Democratic campaigns
  - iv. Optionally, establishing precinct committees to facilitate and coordinate within the formal party structure

24. 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:

- a. Establish basic County Party goals and objectives
- b. Electing a county party secretary and treasurer

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

25. County Executive Committee Meetings:

- a. There are two types of County Executive Committee (CEC) meetings, statutory and non-statutory.
- b. CEC meetings are called by the county chair or by petition of the precinct chairs.
- c. It is the responsibility of the party calling the meeting to set the agenda.
- d. CEC members shall be notified in writing at least five days in advance of the meetings.
- e. To conduct routine business in most counties, a quorum consists of 25% of filled precinct chairs. A majority (greater than 50%) must be present to conduct vacancy elections. Provided a quorum is met, elections require a majority vote (50% plus at least 1) of those in attendance at a properly called CEC meeting.
- f. By the TDP Rules, many CECs are required to meet quarterly. See the TDP Rules for details.
- g. In election years, Texas law requires three statutory CEC meetings.

26. Statutory County Executive Committee Meetings :

- a. The following are the statutory meetings:
  - i. First meeting: January

- ii. Second meeting: Thursday or Friday following the second Tuesday in March (to canvass Primary election)
- iii. Third meeting: Thursday or Friday following the second Tuesday in April (runoff primary)
- b. The following is the order of business at each of the three required meetings:
  - i. The First Meeting This meeting must perform the following duties: •
    1. Receive from the county chair the names of all candidates for state, district, county, and precinct offices as certified to appear on the ballot
    2. Determine by lot (drawing) the order in which these names will appear on the ballot
    3. Approve the county chair's appointment of the five-member Primary Committee (or, by resolution, change its composition), which has the duty to make up the official ballot •
    4. Give final approval as to which voting systems (paper or machine ballots) shall be used in the primaries and early voting. [voting systems were probably previously determined by a committee]
    5. Assist and approve the county chair's appointment of election judges and alternates
    6. Order the consolidation of two or more county election precincts if necessary, and select the polling places [precinct groupings should have been done earlier].
    7. Set the hour (at 7:15 PM) and place of precinct conventions to be held on the day of the first primary
    8. Give final approval for the time and place of the county/senatorial district convention to be held on the third Saturday after the first or general primary
    9. Give final approval to the precinct groupings, where necessary, for purposes of caucusing to elect delegates at the county/senatorial district convention
    10. Hear the appointments made by the county chair for each senatorial district; appointee must live in the senate district
  - ii. The Second Meeting This meeting has the following duties:
    1. Canvass and certify the returns of the first or general primary by comparing poll lists with the tally lists and return sheets to determine those candidates for county and precinct offices who received the necessary votes for nomination.
    2. Determine the particular offices for which no candidate received a majority of votes cast and order that the names of the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes for that office be placed on the ballot for the runoff primary.

