

TEXAS DEMOCRATIC PARTY PRECINCT CHAIR HANDBOOK



2010 version

Texas Democratic Party
505 West 12th Street, Suite 200
Austin, TX 78701
(512) 478-9800
www.txdemocrats.org

Texas Democratic Party Precinct Chair Handbook

Table of Contents

DISCLAIMER/DEDICATION/PURPOSE/ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

LETTER FROM THE TDP STATE CHAIR

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A DEMOCRAT

CHAPTER 1: THE PRECINCT & PRECINCT CHAIR

PARTY STRUCTURE 101

VOTING PRECINCTS

WHAT'S A PRECINCT CHAIR (PC)?

HOW TO BECOME A PRECINCT CHAIR?

TERM OF OFFICE

FILING FOR OFFICE (PRIMARY)

FILLING VACANCIES (BETWEEN PRIMARIES)

PRECINCT CHAIR RESPONSIBILITIES

SERVING ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

CHAPTER 2: ORGANIZING YOUR PRECINCT

TDP VOTER FILE DATABASE (VOTER ACTIVATION NETWORK)

PRECINCT GEOGRAPHY

KNOW THE PEOPLE

KNOW THE PEOPLE (TARGETING)

RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

SUGGESTING PRECINCT ORGANIZING STRUCTURE

RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS (ELECTION WORKERS)

PRECINCT CHAIR VS. ELECTION JUDGE (GENERAL ELECTION)

GROWING THE BASE (VOTER REGISTRATION & ACTIVATION)

BE A RESOURCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

KEEP GOOD RECORDS

THE IDEAL PRECINCT

CHAPTER 3: PRECINCT CONVENTIONS

STEPS TO THE PRECINCT CONVENTION

ELECTION PROCEDURE

AFTER THE CONVENTION

CHAPTER 4: GOTV (GET OUT THE VOTE) AS A PRECINCT CHAIR

CANVASS THE PRECINCT

CANVASSING BASICS

CANVASSING (IN-PERSON)

CANVASSING (BY PHONE)

FLEXIBILITY FOR VOTERS

CONCLUSION

TEXAS MAJORITY BUILDER

Disclaimer

The Texas Democratic Party Precinct Chair Handbook is designed as a **“how-to” guide** to instruct political novices -- and longtime activists -- on the elements of a strong, modern campaign.

This handbook is a guide. It should **not** be used in place of the official *Rules of the Texas Democratic Party*, the *Texas Election Code*, or the rules of the Texas Ethics Commission. Should any issue arise, consult the *Rules of the Texas Democratic Party (TDP Rules)*, *Texas Election Code* or the rules and regulations of the Texas Ethics Commission.

Dedication

This Precinct Chair Handbook is dedicated to all current and former Precinct Chairs. We appreciate your time and sacrifice to advance the Texas Democratic Party and your local Party.

Purpose

This Precinct Chair Handbook is designed to help you fulfill the responsibilities of Precinct Chair (PC). As a PC, you represent your designated precinct on behalf of the Texas Democratic Party, as well as your local party. You are the vital link between the local elected officials, the party, and the voters. There are several ways to accomplish your PC goals. This handbook covers the techniques that have generally shown to be most effective. We urge you to consult your local Democratic leaders and the State Democratic Party for additional tactics. We realize that each county party’s political landscape differs. Some of the strategies in this handbook may not be practical in your area or you may have found other strategies that are effective that are not included here. This handbook is simply a proposed guide to a more effective system of organization on a basic level. Increased organization on the precinct level leads to an overall stronger county. As a result, our county and statewide nominees achieve a higher level of success in elections. *This handbook is intended to be a living document that you will add to as you become an experienced PC and as new tools become available.*

Acknowledgement

The Texas Democratic Party would especially like to thank Carol Wilder, Precinct Chair from Hays County, Guy Stuart, Precinct Chair & 2008-2010 SD24 Committeeman from Burnet County, and Stephanie Patrick for their work on this handbook. TDP would like to thank all of the county parties - especially Harris, Dallas, Travis and Tarrant counties - who submitted a copy of their Precinct Chair manual or handbook to use as a guide for the creation of this one.



May 2010

Dear fellow Democrat,

I want to say a big thank you to all of the current Precinct Chairs for your dedication and service to our Party!

Your participation as Precinct Chair is invaluable to our Party's local and statewide success. It's because of your hard work that we are able to take our message to every household, neighborhood, and precinct of our great state.

Because of you, we will continue to fight here in our state for fair representation and genuine leadership from the courthouse to the statehouse. Meanwhile, Republican career politicians continue to fail us by fighting for their special interest contributors, deregulating utilities, cutting children's health insurance, and spending taxpayer money on mid-decade redistricting. While many of our friends and neighbors faced difficult times, destructive Republican policies in our state have continued to make life difficult on the basic needs of Texas families.

Together we turned major urban counties blue, made gains across Texas and continually picked up more seats in the state legislature than anyone thought possible. As we continued to elect more Democrats to office, we were successful in blocking Republican efforts to enact a number of even more destructive policies.

Texas Democrats made progress against failed Republican policies, such as fighting to undo a Republican school funding freeze that threatened local school districts with property tax hikes and academic cutbacks.

Texas Democrats worked tirelessly to put a roadblock in front of Rick Perry's Trans Texas Corridor - a plan for a foreign-operated tax and toll fiasco that would have taken almost 600,000 acres of Texas land. And it was Texas Democrats who helped restore CHIP coverage for thousands of Texas kids who were booted off the rolls by Republicans.

Success has given us momentum and Texas Democrats are more determined than ever to undo the many harmful Republican policies that have plagued Texans over the last decade. It won't be easy, but by organizing and continuing to fight in every corner of the state, we will succeed.

The most critical piece of our path to victory is a strong grassroots infrastructure, so whether you live in an urban or a rural precinct, please take the time to read this handbook, get organized and help us Move Texas Forward. If you are considering becoming a Precinct Chair, I hope this exciting work will push you to become a Precinct Chair sooner than later.

Your friend and fellow Democrat,

Boyd L. Richie
Chairman

What it means to be a Democrat

Democrats stand for Hope, Equal Opportunity, and Fair Play. These are the values Texas Democrats personally share and the values with which we define our economic and social policies. Texas Democrats aim to build a stronger state and nation while creating an ideal climate for hard workers and rule-followers to achieve.

We believe in:

- Equal opportunity for all citizens.
- Rewarding, honest, hard work with a living wage in a tax system that is fair.
- Family values that are more than a political slogan.
- Quality education that gives all citizens the opportunity to reach their potential.
- Freedom from government interference in our private lives and personal decisions.
- The benefits of the individual strengths within our diverse population.
- Security in our homes and safety on our streets. Criminals should face swift and certain punishment.
- Separation of Church and State.
- A strong United States of America—morally, economically and militarily.
- Support of laws that protect our environment, including common-sense reforms that stand for cleaner air and water.

To preserve these values and ensure that Texas continues to provide economic opportunity to all of its citizens, we must conduct effective election campaigns in all levels of the state's government.

Chapter 1: The Precinct & Precinct Chair

Party Structure 101

The Democratic Party (the Party) is a layered coalition of organizations including:

- The Democratic National Committee (DNC) – **National organization**
- The Texas Democratic Party (TDP) – **State organization**
- 254 County Democratic Parties (County Executive Committee: County Chair & Precinct Chairs) – **County Organizations**

Voting Precincts

The voting precinct exists to facilitate elections at the local level. The precinct is the smallest political subdivision in Texas. 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.**

What's a Precinct Chair (PC)?

A Precinct Chair plays many roles in an election cycle, ranging from voter registrar to organizer. As Precinct Chair, you are the party leader in your voting precinct. Precinct Chairs have a direct impact on local, statewide and national elections. With an active, effective Precinct Chair, we can succeed in electing Democrats in all levels of public office.

How to become a Precinct Chair?

Term of Office and Qualifications

The Precinct Chair is a party official elected by precinct voters in the Democratic Primary Election (or in the runoff election, if no candidate gets a majority in the first primary). The term of office for a Precinct Chair is two years, beginning on the 20th day following the Primary runoff election date (whether your county is subject to a runoff or not). The County Executive Committee fills vacancies for unexpired terms between primaries. A successful Precinct Chair is generally outgoing and self-motivated.

To be eligible for the office of Precinct Chair, an individual must be:

- A qualified voter in the precinct
- Affiliated with the Democratic Party – either by voting in the Democratic Primary or by taking an oath of affiliation (Anyone who voted in the Republican primary or signed a petition for a candidate of another party during the voting year is NOT eligible).

A precinct chair **can't** be a candidate for or holder of any elective office at the federal, state, and county levels.

Filing for Office

A qualified individual interested in running for Precinct Chair must do the following:

- Obtain a filing form from the County Chair or County Party Secretary
- Complete the application
- Sign the application before a notary public
- Have the form notarized
- Submit the application during the filing period (usually between late October and 6:00 PM on the first business day in January). The completed, signed, and notarized application may be mailed to the County Chair, but it must be received by the filing deadline.

NOTE: Currently elected Precinct Chairs need to re-file for office each term (or else they must be re-elected by the CEC after the new term begins).

Only contested candidates for Precinct Chair appear on the Democratic Primary ballot. Write-in votes for Precinct Chair are permitted in the primary, whether other candidates are on the ballot or otherwise. This rule does not apply to runoff elections. Write-in candidates must have filed their write-in candidacies.

Filling Vacancies (Between Primaries)

Precinct Chair vacancies for unexpired terms are filled by the County Executive Committee (CEC). The required quorum for a CEC meeting to fill a vacancy is a majority (greater than 50%) of filled Precinct Chairs.

Precinct Chair Responsibilities

The following includes both the official and the un-official duties and responsibilities of a Precinct Chair:

- Serve on the County Executive Committee (CEC)
- Organize the precinct
- Conduct the precinct convention
- Be a resource
- **GET OUR VOTERS TO THE POLLS!**

Serving on the County Executive Committee (CEC)

Grassroots efforts are more effective with an active, engaged County Executive Committee (CEC). **The CEC is comprised of the County Chair and elected Precinct Chairs.** Some of the various responsibilities of the CEC are:

- Raise funds and approve expenditures for conducting local party campaign activities
- Coordinate GOTV activities that will support the county's Democratic ticket
- Produce party materials
- Coordinate with all of the Democratic campaigns

Note: Don't forget to download and watch the Precinct Chair webinar at:

<http://www.txdemocrats.org/resources/grassroots-resources/>

Chapter 2: Organizing Your Precinct

As a Precinct Chair, there are various methods of organizing and involving local volunteers and activists, whether your precinct is primarily Democratic or Republican. In Democratic-majority precincts the PC's activities will focus on mobilizing a strong base of support, while Republican-majority precincts should concentrate on increasing the Democratic vote. All PCs must strive to increase the number of Democratic voters. Remember, you as PC are providing a wonderful service to the Party and your community. **Have fun!**

When organizing your precinct, it is important that you:

- Know the precinct geography
- Know your constituents
- Recruit Volunteers
- Canvass the precinct
- Increase the Democratic base

TDP's VOTER FILE DATABASE (VOTER ACTIVATION NETWORK)

Note: Don't forget to download and watch the VAN webinar at:

<http://www.txdemocrats.org/resources/grassroots-resources/>

Currently elected Democratic Precinct Chairs with internet access may obtain access to the VAN system for their precinct free of charge. You will need to fill out both the Voter File license and the online Account Request form. You will need to go to www.texasvan.com to fill out the online form and download the Voter File license form. After applying for access, you will receive a username and password from the VAN Director. VAN will aid a Precinct Chair in creating mailing labels, walk lists, phone lists, and counts & crosstabs. In addition, you can make needed corrections and/or additions to phone numbers, emails, and activist codes valuable for future elections.

PRECINCT GEOGRAPHY

Acquire a map of the precinct through the County Chair, County Clerk, or Elections Administrator. Familiarize yourself with your precinct's geographical boundaries and characteristics. With this knowledge, you may more effectively plan precinct activities - including canvassing, meetings, literature distributions, voter registration, and so on.

NOTE: *Maps or lists from your County Appraisal District, working in conjunction with VAN, can reveal unregistered households. With this information, you can contact these constituents to determine their partisan leanings and attempt to register them.*

KNOW THE PEOPLE

As a PC, you are the face of the Democratic Party in your precinct. Therefore, it's important to get to know as much about the voters in your precinct as possible. The first step is to do some research to get an overview of the voters in your precinct. Find out the answers to such questions as:

- How many voters are there? (VAN)
- How does this compare to the voting age population? (NCEC/census data)
- Where do people live, work, shop, eat, play, or go to school?
- How do those voters compare demographically (examples: age, gender, ethnicity, income)? (VAN/NCEC)
- What is the Democratic Performance (DPI) of your precinct? (NCEC data)

NCEC (**National Committee for an Effective Congress**) is an effective targeting tool designed to help campaigns and county parties allocate resources efficiently. NCEC data can help you figure out the answers to many of the questions above, plus provide you with other useful numbers such as: expected vote percentage, turnout percentage, and Democratic performance in a given precinct, county, state house district, etc. NCEC data may be obtained from your local Democratic Party.

Keep in mind your goal is to (1) identify a voter’s partisan preferences (2) contact those voters who are aligned with the Democratic Party or our candidates, and (3) organize them to vote and/or build the party.

KNOW THE PEOPLE (TARGETING)

The diagram below is a targeting grid. The column on the left represents partisanship. The row at the top represents likelihood to vote. All voters are assigned one of each of these codes by the TDP using various criteria. That enables us to categorize and prioritize different groups of voters and utilize the most effective strategy for communicating with them. As a Precinct Chair, your influence is most needed to increase voter turnout among Democrats.

	Certain Voter	Likely Voter	Potential Voter	Unlikely Voter	Non-Voters
Hard-Democrat	1	1	2	X	X
Soft-Democrat	1	1	2	•••••	•••••
Unknown	1	1	2		
Soft-Republican	2	2	2		
Hard-Republican				X	X

Note: These categorizations are intended only as a guide. Campaigns should determine their own targets based on polling, research, demographics of the district and available resources.

GOTV	Persuasion	Opposition/ Disaffected	Base Outreach	1 vs 2 = Priority level	X = No voters
-------------	-------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------	--	--------------------------

Precinct Chairs should focus on the GOTV (Hard and Soft Democrats who are Certain, Likely or Potential voters) and Base Outreach (Hard and Soft Democrats who are unlikely or Non-Voters) areas and leave Persuasion to the candidates, who are counting on the Party to turn out the base. In order of importance, the Precinct Chair’s priorities include: (1) GOTV-priority 1, (2) GOTV-priority 2, and (3) Base Outreach.

The diagram below gives some guidance on strategies to employ with the different groups of voters. Do not waste resources on the voters in the Opposition/Disaffected area. These are people who are either highly partisan Republicans whose positions are entrenched or people whom it will be very difficult to persuade to vote at all and even if they do vote they are not likely to vote for Democrats. That doesn’t mean go out of your way not to ever speak to anyone who falls into this category, after all, they’re still your neighbors. It simply means that as a group they should not be included in your target universe for any activities you do.

Category	Priority 1	Priority 2
GOTV	Recruit these people for your precinct team right away.	Give these people extra motivation, education and transportation to get them to go to the polls.
Persuasion	Canvass these people to try to find out their partisan leanings, then code them as Democrats, Republicans, or Independents (VAN Activist Codes).	Canvass these people only if you have enough resources. Try to determine if they are open to voting for any Democrats or should be coded as Republicans (VAN Activist Codes).
Opposition/Disaffected	LEAVE THESE PEOPLE ALONE!	
Base Outreach	If you have the resources, canvass these people and invite them to events to try to get them engaged. However, as Election Day nears, cut them loose if they are still uninterested in voting.	

You can generate this diagram from VAN’s Counts & Crosstabs feature to get specific numbers of people in your precinct who fall into each of the categories. That will allow you to determine how many voters you have in your contact universe.

Note: Don’t forget to download and watch the Targeting webinar at: <http://www.txdemocrats.org/resources/grassroots-resources/>

Partisanship	C	L	P	U	N	U	Total
Hard Democrat	83	24	0	0	0	0	107
Soft Democrat	209	572	726	123	420	0	2,050
Unknown Partisanship	2	5	17	3	9	0	36
Soft Republican	15	10	19	0	5	0	49
Hard Republican	30	14	0	0	0	0	44
Total	339	625	762	126	434	0	2,286

Once you have a general idea of who the voters in your precinct are and where they fall in the targeting grid, organize social activities in your precinct, such as coffee gatherings, backyard parties, barbeques, and block parties to get to know them in person. Meet neighbors at homeowner's association meetings and other such community activities.

RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS

Note: Don't forget to download and watch the Recruiting & Managing Volunteers Power Point presentation at: <http://www.txdemocrats.org/resources/grassroots-resources/>

Organizing your precinct without assistance can prove overwhelming. Tasks may become more manageable through the recruitment of volunteers for your "Precinct Team." Delegation of your tasks leads to a more efficient precinct and a more involved constituency. Many of these volunteers may be future leaders of the precinct, region, or county. Clearly define the jobs or activities you wish your volunteers to complete. Try to assign informative, interesting projects to your volunteers, and give them tasks based on their individual skills.

Split up the territory among organizers:

Neighborhood/Precinct Coordinators

Block Captains

Create positions/committees for different activities. Some suggestions are:

House Party Host

Event Coordinator

Welcome Committee

Volunteer Coordinator

Phone Bank Coordinator

Block Walk Coordinator

VAN Coordinator

Refreshment Committee

Visibility Coordinator

Trainer

Newsletter Writer

Election Worker

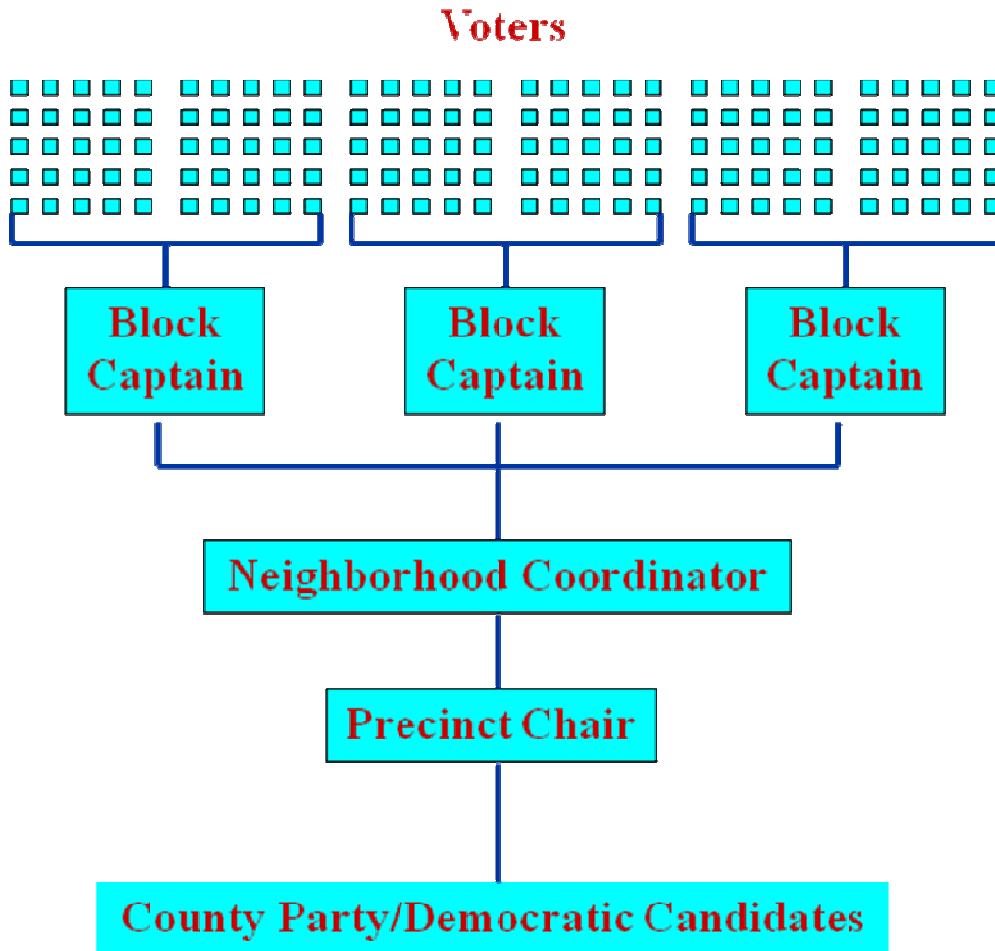
These positions are good training grounds for anyone who would like to become a precinct chair in the future but the position is filled at the moment. As you can see, there's a unique skill set for everyone in the precinct team. VAN coordinators especially are an excellent position for anyone who wants to help their non-technological Precinct Chair with utilizing the VAN system to the fullest.

Get commitments and hold volunteers accountable

- Schedule volunteers to come in at a specific time (ex: 1pm), for an established period (ex: 3 hours), for a specific purpose (ex: phone bank). The more detailed the commitment, the more likely the volunteer will keep it.
- Give prizes or rewards for completing tasks
- Upon completion of a project, schedule volunteers to return *before* they leave

SUGGESTED PRECINCT ORGANIZING STRUCTURE

This diagram shows a suggested organizational structure of your Precinct Team. Again, this is just a suggested method of organization for your precinct. Since all Precinct Chairs are part time volunteers, we don't expect them to implement everything recommended in this structure if there aren't enough volunteers for it to be feasible.



Neighborhood Coordinators: The neighborhood coordinator is not an official Party position, but a PC may appoint one or more to provide assistance. The coordinator's duty is to organize Party activities in the precinct.

Block Captains: The block captain also serves the Party unofficially. A block captain resides in the precinct and assists the PC with events specific to their block or area.

RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS (ELECTION WORKERS)

It is important that Democratic election workers are assertive and well-informed. The Precinct Chair should assist the County Chair in filling all election judge slots and ensure those who fill them are properly trained. Some important criteria for election workers include:

- Knowledgeable, well-trained Democratic election workers are critical to protect the rights of our voters.
- The Precinct Chair should help the County Party recruit an Election Judge/Alternate Judge and Election Clerks to work during Early Voting and on Election Day.
- In most cases, it is not advisable for the Precinct Chair to be an Election Worker. The Precinct Chair is responsible for voter turnout and response to any Election Day issues that may arise. Fulfillment of these responsibilities is critical and difficult to achieve from inside the polls.

Precinct Chair vs. Election Judge (General Election)

The Election Judge and Precinct Chair are no longer shared duties. The Precinct Chair must attract voters to the polls, and the Election Judge must run the election.

- The Precinct Chair is a partisan Party position
- The Election Judge **appointment** is a partisan Party position, but their **conduct during the election** is expected to be non-partisan
- There is no law prohibiting a Precinct Chair from being an election judge, however, the Precinct Chair usually should **NOT** be the election judge
- The Precinct Chair should help find judges, alternate judges, and clerks

NOTE: As stated earlier, in some cases it is more useful for the Precinct Chair to be the Election Judge, Alternate Election Judge, or Clerk. This should be the exception rather than the rule. If the Precinct Chair is going to work the election, they should recruit someone to be responsible for getting out the vote in their precinct.

GROWING THE BASE (VOTER REGISTRATION & ACTIVATION)

The best way to register voters is to become a **Deputy Voter Registrar**. This position allows you to ensure that voters' registration applications are turned in properly. Always check the status of those you have registered with the Voter Registrar's office. You should welcome new neighbors and register them to vote (once you know they are Democratic-leaning). Familiarize yourself with voter registration law prior to becoming a Deputy Voter Registrar.

In Texas, a voter must register with the Voter Registrar in the county *30 days before* an election. In some counties, the County Clerk acts as the voter registrar, in other counties it is the Tax Assessor Collector, while some counties hire an Election Administrator. You may be appointed as a deputy Voter Registrar at any time. However, your term expires on **December 31 of the next even-numbered year**. Your appointment as a deputy Voter Registrar may be terminated by the appointing authority if:

- You fail to deliver a completed voter registration application to the registrar; or
- If you fail to properly review a voter registration application.

All election materials issued to a deputy registrar, including the certificate of appointment, receipt books, receipts, applications and other forms in the volunteer deputy's possession, must be returned or accounted for upon termination of appointment.

For more information about voter registration, refer to page 34-35 of the *TDP Grassroots Manual* and the *Texas Election Code*, Title 2, Chapters 11-20 on Voter Qualifications and Registration.

Finally, identify Democratic-leaning voters who are not currently active in the Party and invite them to events to try to get them involved.

BE A RESOURCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

- Publicize your contact information.
- Be available to answer questions.
- Get to know your elected officials, and establish a working relationship with them and their staff.
- Have campaign materials to provide.
- Have information about the local Democratic Party executive committee and clubs meetings in the county.

- Know the election laws (Texas Election Code). You can download the Texas Election Code from the website: <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/> in Acrobat PDF, MS Word, or HTML form.

- Know the TDP Party Rules. You can download them at: <http://www.txdemocrats.org/resources/tdp-rules/>

- Get trained (and conduct training for others)
 - TDP
 - County Party
 - Elections Office
 - Other Organizations (list on TDP website) <http://www.txdemocrats.org/resources/training/>

- Stay informed
 - Sign up for emails from the Party, elected officials, candidates, and Democratic clubs/organizations
 - Attend local Democratic meetings and events
 - Watch and read the news

KEEP GOOD RECORDS

(Make sure your County Chair has a copy of these records as well.)

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| - Election Results | - Resource Links |
| - Precinct Organization Documents | - Sign Placement Lists |
| - Contact List | - Training Materials |

These will be extremely valuable for the next Precinct Chairs!

The Ideal Precinct

The ideal precinct is an active agent led by the Precinct Chair. The precinct coordinator and block captains work closely together to find Democrats and liberal Independent voters, keep them informed, and organize opportunities for them to meet. Democratic candidates are invited into the precinct to meet with voters. They are also provided assistance by the precinct's organization. Elected officials are kept informed of the precinct's concerns and respond to the Precinct Chair's inquiries. The precinct organization meets frequently to socialize, plan, and carry out Party-building activities. Nearing the election, a large push is made by the PC for voters to support Democratic candidates.

Chapter 3: Precinct Convention

At 7:15 p.m., on the evening of the Primary Election, Democratic primary voters throughout Texas will meet to hold their precinct convention to do the following:

1. Elect delegates to the county or senatorial district convention
2. Adopt resolutions that will be submitted to the county or senatorial district convention

In preparation for the precinct convention, the precinct chair should:

1. Attend training on convention procedure - rules may change from one convention to the next, so it is important to familiarize yourself with the rules prior to each convention.
2. Do a walk-through of the precinct convention location to observe space availability or possible difficulties beforehand.
3. Help publicize the place and time of the convention and encourage Democrats to attend.

Despite how it may seem, the convention is easy and quick to conduct. Basic rules you must comply with include:

1. Voters who **VOTED in the Democratic Primary** can participate in the Precinct Convention.
2. The current Precinct Chair has priority in terms of running the precinct convention and is considered the temporary chair of the convention; however, anyone can start the convention in the event **the PC is not in attendance or the seat is vacant**.
3. Make sure that the election judge has the **“Precinct Convention Here Tonight”** reminder sign/poster to post on the wall prior to the opening of the polls.

STEPS TO THE PRECINCT CONVENTION

Step 1: Precinct Chair will pick up the precinct convention packet from the Election Judge at 7 pm (or when the last voter has voted). **Please note:** if the precinct chair is **NOT** the election judge, it would be a good idea to contact the Election Judge by phone the night before to coordinate the pick-up of the precinct convention packet.

The precinct packet should contain the following items:

1. A letter from the State Party Chair
2. Precinct Convention Minutes Form
3. Precinct Convention Sign-in Sheet (aka “Exhibit A”)
4. Reporting form for those elected as Delegates to County/Senatorial District Convention (aka Exhibit G)
5. Reporting form for those elected as Alternates to the County/Senatorial District Convention (aka Exhibit H)
6. Other items helpful to the conduct of the convention as deemed necessary by the State Party.

Step 2: The Temporary Convention Chair (usually the PC) calls the precinct convention to order and appoints a temporary Secretary to take minutes of the convention proceedings – use the prescribed forms included in your precinct packet.

Step 3: The Temporary Convention Chair will ask the eligible convention attendees to sign in on the Precinct Convention Sign-in Sheet, **Exhibit A** (also known as the “enrollment”). A person becomes eligible to participate in their precinct convention if they voted in the Democratic Primary on Election Day, via mail or during early vote. The Election Judge should have provided the PC (or presiding officer of the convention) a copy of the **poll book**. This resource will verify any questions about a participant’s qualifications.

Step 4: The first order of business is to elect a Permanent Convention Chair and Secretary. In addition to the Permanent Convention Chair and Secretary, the precinct convention is entitled to elect other officers (such as a Parliamentarian) if the convention participants deem it necessary to do so.

Step 5: Next, you will elect delegates and alternates to the County/Senatorial District Convention. The number of delegates and alternates the precinct is entitled to elect should have been provided to you. (Remember: there are **no secret ballots** in the Democratic convention process). The Permanent Chair calls for nominations for the delegate and alternate slots. The procedure for electing delegates and alternates varies depending on whether it is a presidential or a non-presidential year. Details regarding these differing procedures can be found in the *Rules of the Texas Democratic Party*.

Step 6: After the election of delegates and alternates concludes, the Permanent Convention Chair calls for nominations for, and the election of, a Delegation Chair from among those delegates just elected.

Step 7: At this time, the Permanent Convention Chair asks the participants if any of them have resolutions to present to the body for consideration. Such resolutions should be read, discussed and voted upon. Following the adoption of resolutions, if any, the Permanent Convention Chair should call for additional business to be brought before the body. If there is no additional business, a motion to adjourn the convention is in order.

AFTER THE CONVENTION

The Permanent Convention Chair **MUST** ensure that the convention materials are returned to the County Chair no later than three (3) days after the convention.

CHAPTER 4: (GOTV) Get out the Vote

CANVASS THE PRECINCT

Note: Don't forget to download and watch the Voter Contact webinar at:
<http://www.txdemocrats.org/resources/grassroots-resources/>

As a PC, you know your constituency best. You are the precinct "opinion maker." This means your neighbors and elected officials rely on you for information, advice, and help in solving neighborhood issues.

Now that you've volunteered, made your maps, recruited other volunteers and know which candidates you are supporting, your main priority is canvassing.

Canvassing is the act of contacting voters to disseminate and collect information. This information will assist you in effectively targeting and maximizing the Democratic vote while simultaneously disseminating the Democratic message. Additionally, the information you collect will provide the most recent, accurate information for your volunteers.

Your canvass will prove invaluable in your role as a Precinct Chair. You will learn about the demographic make-up of your precinct, what issues are important, what messages people are receiving from our candidates, and how the voters feel about the Party. Canvassing can help you:

- Identify constituents who do not vote in primaries but support Democrats in the general election.
- Identify constituents who are not registered but would most likely support Democrats.

Typical canvassing questions include:

- **“What political party do you identify with?”**
- **“What issue is most important to you?”**
- **Which candidates will you be supporting in the election this November.**

CANVASSING BASICS

- Know the issues and candidates.
- Make sure you have all necessary materials (lists, scripts, literature, pens).
- Canvass during optimal hours (i.e. 65+ during the day, and under 65 after 6 pm).
- Follow the script and mark responses on lists.
- Update voter information (moved, e-mails, phone numbers, deceased).
- **Input all data gathered back into VAN system.**
- Follow up via mail or e-mail.
- Encourage Democratic voters to volunteer.

CANVASSING (IN PERSON)

- Canvassing in-person is the single best method to persuade voters, to get information, and to organize and build the Party
- Only knock on doors of targeted households.
- Leave literature on doors in cases where constituents are not home. Leave a “sorry I missed you” note that includes your contact info.
- Note houses that are abandoned or inaccessible.
- Walk your Block Socials.
 - Schedule for a small chunk of time (2-3 hours max).
 - Have a party at the end.
- Retrieve e-mails and phone numbers at the door.

Rule of Thumb: On average, a canvasser should make 15-20 contacts per hour.

- ✓ **As a general rule, do NOT go to houses where all voters are Republican. Focus your time on constituents that are more likely to be persuaded.**

CANVASSING (BY PHONE)

- Not generally as effective as door-to-door canvassing
- Procedure roughly the same - still collecting IDs and information
- Good to use in rural areas or in places where walking isn't possible
- Phone-Banking Socials
 - Provide camaraderie
 - Legal, real estate, or doctors' offices are good locations
 - Invite volunteers to bring their cell phones
- Call from home
 - Less accountability, unsure if canvasser actually made calls

Rule of Thumb: On average, a canvasser is able to call 25-30 voters per hour

FLEXIBILITY FOR VOTERS

Today's winning campaigns require a strong focus on field efforts, including door-to-door canvassing, phone calls, and letters – as PC, you will be doing all of these! These efforts help us win elections by getting as many of our supporters to vote (preferably in early voting) as possible.

Early Voting (both by mail and in person) has been responsible for Texas' steady increase in overall voter turnout over the past few general elections. From 1992 to 2008, early voting in Texas increased tremendously, and ***now accounts for almost half of all votes cast in statewide races.*** The early voting period usually falls between 17 and 4 days prior to each election. Registered voters may vote early at a location convenient to them within their political subdivision.

Curbside voting, or voting from the car at any given voting location, is available to any voter who has difficulty walking or standing for long periods. This option is available both for early voting and Election Day. State and Federal law requires all early and Election Day polling locations to be physically accessible to voters with disabilities. Call your election official for information on your particular voting sites.

VBM (vote by mail) is available to Texas residents who are:

- going to be away from their county on Election Day and early voting
- sick or disabled
- 65 years of age or older on Election Day
- confined in jail, but eligible to vote

Applications for a ballot by mail must be submitted to the early voting clerk on or after the 60th day before Election Day and before the close of business on the 7th day before Election Day. If the 7th day is a weekend, the last day to submit an application is the preceding Friday.

DO NOT get involved with mail-ballot programs without first familiarizing yourself with the appropriate legal restrictions. In general, the best ways to help Democrats that require mail-in ballots is helping them with the application and reminding them via phone to get their application or ballot returned promptly. If you would like more training on how to run a mail ballot program, please contact the TDP.

As a PC, you should encourage all Democrats in your precinct to vote early, either in person or by mail:

- Re-contact identified Democrats and encourage them to vote.
- Provide basic voting information such as poll locations, hours, and which official documents are needed.
- Offer rides to voters during phone banks and block walks.
- Ask Democrats who have already voted to volunteer.

Conclusion

We hope you have found this manual helpful and that you will continue to use it as a reference tool. In addition, some of the resource materials used in this handbook come from our grassroots resources webpage - <http://www.txdemocrats.org/resources/grassroots-resources/>. This site contains many webinar topics of interest to you, your local party, and other activists, all designed to help organize and win elections from the local to the statewide level.

No county party in our State is unimportant. In fact, organizing counties with lackluster Democratic performance is a high priority. In counties that traditionally vote Republican, our candidates (especially statewide) cannot succeed unless our losses are minimized. Similarly, strong Democratic counties should strive to increase their margins of victory each election cycle. This will help offset votes from Republican-dominated counties.

One vote can make a difference. The PC's largest goal is to rally, empower, and turn out Democratic voters. By organizing your precinct, fostering a strong Democratic community, and educating voters, you as Precinct Chair can make a difference, too.

The Texas Democratic Party Texas Majority Builder Program

Dear Fellow Democrat,

Texas Majority Builders are the sustaining donors and financial backbone of the Texas Democratic Party. Their generosity helps us Move Texas Forward by providing the Party with the resources to train our candidates and activists, to maintain a professional staff and to take our message to voters across Texas. **By becoming a Texas Majority Builder today, you can do all of this for as little as \$10 a month.**



Your donation will directly fund:

- Get Out the Vote campaigns
- An enhanced voter list and online voter file (www.texasvan.com)
- Training for grassroots organizers and candidates
- Day-to-day operations of the Party

As a Texas Majority Builder, you will receive a membership card and lapel pin. You will also receive recognition in some Party materials, discounts to official Party events, periodic briefings on the work of the Party and exclusive access to the Texas Majority Messenger Clips, a weekly review of news and politics in and affecting Texas.

Texas Democrats are ready to win this November from the courthouse to the Governor's mansion, but we need your support today in order to make this a reality. Please join me and hundreds of Democrats from across the state to return responsible leadership to Texas as a Texas Majority Builder.

Your friend and fellow Democrat,

Boyd L. Richie

Boyd L. Richie
Chairman



For just 33 cents a day you can become part of the backbone of the Democratic Party. Become a Texas Majority Builder today!



Texas Majority Builder Enrollment Form

Please complete this form and send to the Texas Democratic Party:
505 W. 12th St., Ste. 200
Austin, TX 78701
Phone: 512-478-9800
Fax: 512-480-2500
Email: amansfield@txdemocrats.org

Name: Mr. Mrs. Ms. _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Senate District: _____

County: _____ Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Fax: _____ Email: _____

Occupation: _____ Employer: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Recruited by: _____

Yes, I would like to become a *Texas Majority Builder* today for a minimum of \$120 per year!

Please select your payment option:

★ Bank Draft - occurs on the 15th of every \$10 \$15 \$20 \$25 Other _____

Bank Name: _____ Account Number: _____

**** Please enclose a voided check - the encoded numbers are needed for correct routing.**

★ Credit Card

Annually: \$ _____ Semi-Annually: \$ _____ Quarterly: \$ _____ Monthly: \$ _____
(\$120 or more) (\$60 or more) (\$30 or more) (\$10 or more)

Card Type (circle one): MasterCard Visa AmEx Discover

Name (as it appears on card): _____

Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____ Security Code: _____

Signature: _____

Direct Bill

Annually: \$ _____ Semi-Annually: \$ _____ Quarterly: \$ _____
(\$120 or more) (\$60 or more) (\$30 or more)

★ Indicates options that help to conserve Party resources - help us Go-Green!

Paid for by the Texas Democratic Party, www.txdemocrats.org
This communication not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.

Contributions are not tax deductible for federal income tax purposes.

Federal law requires political committees to report the name, mailing address, occupation and name of employer for each individual whose contributions exceed \$200 in a calendar year. Your contribution may be used in connection with federal elections and is subject to the limitations and prohibitions of the Federal Election Campaign Act. Individuals and partnerships may contribute \$10,000 each year to our federal committee. The state party also accepts non-federal political contributions and corporate or union treasury donations in accordance with Texas law. Please indicate on your contribution if the funds may not be used federally.