# Precinct Chair Manual for Dallas County Democratic Party

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Precinct Chair Manual for Dallas County Democratic Party

I) INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on being part of the grassroots organization of the Dallas County Democratic Party (DCDP). On behalf of the DCDP we want to thank our Precinct Chairs (PCs) for taking on this significant role. Being an effective PC requires quite a few hours of work but come election time your good work can make the difference in a Democratic victory, and ultimately the role of a PC can be a very gratifying experience.

For the Democratic Party, the party of the people, the PC is the most critical position in our party. Unlike the Republican Party, which outspend Democratic candidates by factors of two or even three to one, our Democrat Party doesn’t have massive amounts of corporate money at our disposal. Our Democratic candidates depend on the PC to organize and work their precinct. Statistically, it has been shown that a higher voter turnout gives Democratic candidates a better chance to win.

As a PC, you are an integral part of our local, county, and state party organizations; you impact our Party’s platforms, rules and candidates. You play an essential role in our formula for success:

Precinct Chair organization and hard work = voter turnout & voter turnout = Democratic success!

A. Purpose

- This manual was developed to introduce the PC to the basic organizational techniques to build a volunteer base and assist with various precinct activities.

- The manual goes through a step-by-step process on how to successfully organize a precinct. Precinct activists will also benefit from reading this manual, as it will help them to understand the "big" picture and prepare them to be a precinct chair or to serve as volunteers to assist precinct chairs.

By no means is it expected that a PC do everything recommended in this manual and nor would it be feasible for someone who in most cases has a full time job and does the PC as a part time volunteer activity. The point of this manual is to provide the PC with a range of ideas to organize you precinct. Simply making the effort to organize your precinct and customizing the organizing tactics that works best for your precinct and yourself is the success formula that the DCDP recommends. To learn any best organizing practices, speak to other PCs to find out what is working for them and contact your Precinct Coordinator for your State House District. If you don’t know who your coordinator is contact the DCDP.

You Are Not Alone

This is an important point. The responsibility of a precinct chair is large, so plan your work and work your plan! Remember the adage, to eat an elephant, you must do it one bite at a time (pun intended).

PCs will need to recruit volunteers to help organize and work their precinct, as they are too large to be worked by one person. Enlist as many Precinct volunteers as you can to give you the help you'll need. Organizing and working a precinct is a true grassroots, person-to-person exercise. Precincts typically have from 1,000 to 3,000 registered voters, although in Dallas, over 100 precincts have only a few hundred voters.

Sample Precinct Plan - Note: In the resource section of this document, you will find an example of how one precinct chair (located in North Dallas in a Republican majority area) successfully organized his precinct by implementing a plan similar to the recommendations of this document. It’s a good
example of how a PC can make a significant difference in increasing the Democratic vote in their precinct. In 2004 this precinct increased its democratic voting percentage by 13 points from 2002!

B. Background of the Precinct Chair Position

When precincts are organized, the Democratic vote is maximized and our candidates win elections. The Precinct Chair is responsible for canvassing the precinct and coordinating all campaign work in that precinct, arranging gatherings, recruiting volunteers, and training and directing those volunteers. The Precinct Chair carries out all the Party's strategies in the precinct. A good Precinct Chair is the soul of the precinct.

The Precinct Chair gets the Party's message to the individual and carries out the Party's program to get the voters to the polls on Election Day. The PC is someone the Party can depend on to carry out responsibilities capably and efficiently. He or she should be both a good organizer and an outgoing person who likes people because the basis of all precinct organization is person-to-person contact. Should an elected Precinct Chair be unable or unwilling to organize their precinct, contact the Dallas County Democrat Party for their help in getting Democratic representation in the precinct.

C. Official Duties of a Precinct Chair

An active, effective Precinct Chair makes a huge difference in the success of the Party and our candidates. What follows is a brief review of the duties of a Precinct Chair.

1. Organize and Canvass Your Precinct


3. Attend quarterly DCDP Executive Committee Meetings: The Executive Committee is comprised of all elected Precinct Chairs.

4. Lead the Democratic Precinct Convention in your Precinct following the Primary election to elect representatives to the State Senate District Democratic Convention.

5. Act as Election Judge or Alternate Election Judge in the both the primary and general election. The Election Judge and Alternate Judge are paid positions on primary and election day.

A Precinct Chair is a publicly elected party official. The Precinct Chair is elected by the Democratic voters in a precinct in the first (general) primary election (or in runoff election, if no candidate gets a majority in the first primary). The names of candidates for Precinct Chair in a precinct are on the Democratic primary ballot for that precinct.

- Term of Office

A Precinct Chair’s term of office begins on the 20th day following the runoff primary and continues for two years or until a successor is elected or appointed and certified.

- Qualifications

1 In addition to the Primary Election, many PCs will be asked to be the Election Judge (Democratic Majority Precincts) or Alternate Election Judge (Republican Majority Precincts) in their precinct for the general election.
To be eligible for the office of Precinct Chair, an individual must be:

1. 18 years of age or older and a registered voter who has voted in the most recent Democratic primary (not counting runoffs) in the voting year.

2. A resident of the precinct from which he or she is seeking election.

3. Not a candidate for, or holder of, an elective office of the federal, state, or county government.

### Filing To Run for Precinct Chair

A qualified individual interested in running for Precinct Chair must obtain a filing form from the County Chair. Applications may be submitted beginning in early September before a general election year, and must be submitted by 6:00 p.m. on the filing deadline in January. This is almost always January 2nd, unless January 2nd falls on a weekend or legal holiday—be sure to check! An application may be mailed to the County Chair but must be received by the filing deadline. Write-in votes for Precinct Chair are permitted in the first primary, whether or not there are other candidates on the ballot. Write-in votes for Precinct Chair are not permitted in the runoff.

Once a PC is elected to their position, if unchallenged in an election, and assuming the PC wants to maintain their position over a number of terms, the PC can remain a PC for an unlimited number of terms. PCs who move out of their precinct or run for elected office must relinquish the PC position.

### Precinct Chair Vacancies

From time to time, vacancies in the office of Precinct Chair occur. These vacancies may be filled by a majority vote of the County Executive Committee at a meeting at which a majority of the committee is present.
II. ORGANIZING YOUR PRECINCT

Whether you are in a Democrat or Republican majority precinct, every precinct has its role to play. In Democrat majority precincts the focus of the PC’s activities will be to get out the base, while in Republican majority precincts PC activities should concentrate on increasing the Democratic vote. Most importantly, PCs need to help grow the number of Democratic votes year over year. Remember how many close races there are every year. In November 2004 Democrats won several close elections: Hubert Vo won his Texas State House election by only 21 votes and in Washington State, Christine Gregorie won the Governor’s race by 121 votes in a race that cast almost 3 million votes.

You are an integral part of a larger coordinated campaign plan and organization. Your job as a Precinct Chair starts before the primary Election Day. In outline form, as a PC your job is to:

1. **Identify** Democrats in your precinct.
2. **Register** Democrats in your precinct.
3. **Get** Democrats out to vote (GOTV) in your precinct.
4. **Hold** the Democratic Primary as Election Judge and lead Precinct Convention for your precinct.

In order to do all this, you will need to find precinct volunteers to support you! When precinct chairs perform these basic functions, Democratic Candidates win! The following is an outline of the steps necessary to organize your precinct for victory. Your overall job as a Precinct Chair will look like this:

A. Getting Organized

Precincts are the smallest breakdown of our state into legally defined voting areas. In preparation for working your precinct, you will need to obtain the following items:

1. The **registered voter list** for your precinct from the Dallas County Democratic Party.

2. A **map** of your precinct at the Dallas County Elections Web Site, [www.dalcoelections.org](http://www.dalcoelections.org). Sub-divide it into logical areas.
3. Create a list of your precinct’s elected officials with contact information. Precinct Elected Officials include your Congressperson, Texas House Representative, School Board Trustee, and City Councilperson, for example.

4. Obtain business cards or other stationery with your contact information on it, for example at www.vistaprint.com one can obtain free business cards.

B. Campaign Timeline

The following calendar list is a comprehensive election year timeline:

October (prior to election year ex. 2005, 2007 etc.) – February
As we approach an election year the PC needs to get organized by recruiting the people who are going to help the PC with their precinct. Get maps, hold a small neighborhood event for Democrats, and develop your precinct materials. Recruit and appoint precinct volunteers.

January (election year)
Sweep your precinct either by phone or walking and identifying unknown voters. Add Democrats to your GOTV universe. Identify true independents.

February

1. First day for senior citizens over age 65, “disabled” voters or persons who know they’re going to be out of town (during Early Voting and on Election Day) to apply to vote by mail.

2. Based on your initial canvass, select a group of voters who have no previous primary voting history and target them for two contacts prior to the primary election. The goal is to increase the number of people who participate in the Democratic Primary and invite them to participate in the precinct convention!
   i. Phone
   ii. Post Card or E-mail

3. When early voting has begun contact (by phone, email or in person) your Democrats to encourage them to vote in the primary and to attend the precinct convention. Make sure you know the nearest Early Voting locations prior to making the calls. DCDP will provide a list of all early vote locations, so you can give a location near to a person’s workplace, for example.

March

1. First Tuesday in March, Primary Election Day (7am–7pm) & Precinct Convention at 7:15 p.m.

2. Senatorial Convention: third Saturday after the Primary unless that falls during Passover or Holy Saturday, then it is the next Saturday.

May
Hold an event for your precinct and target all known and identified Democrats for contact.
June or July

Texas Democratic Convention

July

Organize your fall election materials and lists. Begin collecting your Applications for Mail Ballots; if you get them now, you won’t have to mess with them later in the summer, when you’ll be busy.

July or August

Democratic National Convention (Only in Presidential Election years!!!)

August - Invite known Democrats to Labor Day Kick-Off in Fair Park

September

1. Applications for Mail Ballots are sent by Dallas County Elections Department to all voters over 65 and others who have previously voted by mail. Follow-up with your Democratic Seniors to be sure they have received their applications. Make arrangements to help them should they need assistance. BE SURE TO FOLLOW ALL RULES ON VOTING ASSISTANCE FOR SENIORS (for additional information see Absentee voting in this section under J. Voter Assistance Issues).

October

1. Early voting begins in two weeks. Contact your swing voters and ask them to vote for specific Democratic Candidates.

2. Early voting begins. GET EVERY KNOWN DEMOCRAT TO THE POLLS.

November (1st Tuesday) - Election Day

Polling locations are open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

C. Recruiting Precinct Volunteers

Working a precinct is a large job that will require help. Below is a list of suggested steps to find the people who will help you identify and turn out your Democratic voters as well as help to hold your elections:

1. Recruit a number of strong D's to be your key volunteers and ask them to be Precinct Volunteers. As a goal try to recruit 5-10 volunteers for every 1,000 registered voters in your precinct. An efficient way to recruit your volunteers is to review your voter registration list (this list can be obtained by the DCDP) to identify your “Super D’s”, voters who have voted in one or more Democratic Primaries. Contact your precinct’s “Super D” and ask them as Democrats to help in organizing your precinct.
2. A very effective means to recruit your volunteers is on primary day at your precinct polling location for the Democratic Primary. Everyone that walks in the door will be a Democrat. The Elections Department has authorized that people holding the primary election can request the telephone number and/or email address of primary voters. This information will prove extremely useful for the November election. Create a sign in sheet that all primary voters see to recruit volunteers, gets email and phone numbers.

3. Precinct Captain

Precinct Captain, although not an official position, is a key leadership position in the precinct. The Precinct Captain is appointed by the Precinct Chair to be the second in command after the PC. Each Precinct should have a Precinct Captain to assist the PC in organizing their precinct.

D. Working with Precinct Volunteers

After recruiting your precinct volunters:

1. Draft a Victory Plan for your precinct and set goals for your precinct, such as increasing voter turnout or number of registered voters for Democrat majority precincts or increasing Democratic Performance Index (D.P.I.) in Republican majority precincts. DPI is derived by the number of people voting for the Democratic Party divided by the total number of people who voted in that election.

2. Have a meeting of all precinct volunteers to present your Precinct Plan (see sample plan in resource section for example).

3. Obtain e-mail addresses from all of your volunteers. Send regular communications to volunteers of what is going on in your precinct.

4. As you work with your volunteers, get their thoughts on the introduction materials.

5. Suggest that your volunteers get business cards and make sure they’re personalized.

6. Assign volunteers to different areas of responsibility including: voter registration, phone banking, walking precinct and planning events, etc.)

7. For your volunteers who will canvass your precinct, make copies of your voter list and distribute voters as evenly as possible according to your precinct blocks, identify:

   a) Democratic homes to visit. These people will be our "base" voters.

   b) Those homes that aren't registered. These will be used to build our base.

   c) Identify your independent or soft Republican households; these are your precinct “persuadable” voters.

8. You and your volunteers should become Deputy Voter Registrars. Contact the Dallas County Democratic Party or Dallas County Elections Department to become a registrar.

9. For those people who can’t go door-to-door, ask them to help by calling people in their area.

10. Finally, capitalize on any competitive races, they will excite your base and bring out volunteers.
E. Developing Precinct Materials

Voters will not come to you. You will have to go to the voter. And you will need to provide them with good information. Go to the Dallas County Democratic Party website www.dallasdemocrats.org, at the homepage go to “Precinct Chair Resource Center” you will find a variety of precinct chair tools to help organize your precinct. For the PC to have access to information at the Resource Center the PC must create their own password at the website.

1. Democratic Introduction and GOTV (Get Out The Vote) Materials:

This packet is for initial meetings with Democratic voters to introduce you and precinct volunteers. Don’t forget to include information about mail-in ballots or rides to the polls. For excellent GOTV suggestions go to Texas Democratic Party Grassroots Guide 2005 under the Resource section of this manual. See Chapter 9 “Get out the Vote (GOTV)”.

- Let voters know you are there and how they can contact you.
- Make sure they know locations of upcoming elections.
- Ask for contact information.
- Make them aware of Democratic club meetings and events in your area.

2. New Resident Introduction Materials:

Build an "Intro" package for initial meetings with new residents, unregistered and unknown (D vs. R) voters. Develop questions about voter’s concerns, issues and priorities. Identify whether they are D’s, R’s or independents, thank them.

F. Who Are My Voters?

Voters fall into three groups: Democrats, Republicans and Swing (i.e. Independent) voters. You should not waste your time with the Republicans you are not likely to change their mind. Focus your time on getting Democrats to the voting booth and educate the Swing Voters on the policies and the good news on the Democratic Party.

**Democrats**

Democrats will vote the correct way if you can get them to the polls. Your job is to get them to vote.

**Republicans**

*Do not waste your time with hardcore Republicans.* The likelihood of getting them see the light is not worth your effort. On the other hand, it is worthwhile activity to target “soft” Republicans, defined as someone who voted Republican in the past but is willing to listen to the Democratic message and consider voting for Democratic candidates.
Swing Voters

Swing Voters are voters with unknown affiliations. In your first sweep of your precinct, you need to identify true independents, previously unknown Democrats, and previously unknown Republicans. As you find unknown Republicans, put them into your Republican pile. Place your found Democrats in your GOTV universe and be sure they vote. Plan on targeting the independents with a persuasion message to justify voting for a specific Democratic Candidate.

G Contacting Your Voters

You have organized and recruited volunteers. Now what? Your goal is to:

1. Know all Democratic voters in your precinct.
2. Find unregistered Democrats, register them, and get them to vote.
3. Find strong Democrats and try to have them join your precinct team and the DCDP.
4. Contact swing voters and persuade them to vote Democratic.
5. Raise money for the DCDP and Democratic Candidates. Ask them to consider being a sustaining member of the Democratic Party!

It takes multiple contacts in multiple forms, to mobilize and get to know voters. The single most effective campaign tactic is person-to-person from a neighbor that the voter trusts. Whether introducing yourself to the precinct for the first time or running an election campaign, the following is a process you can use to turn out our voters.

PLAN→ WALK→ E-MAIL→ MAIL→ PHONE

1. PLAN: Your walk will require a good deal of organization as you will need to train and educate your volunteers who will be helping you. You will need to prepare a script, and discuss the basics of knocking on doors with them. Try to coordinate your fall work with the candidates in your area so that you can discuss the voter's choices with them sensibly.

2. WALK: Knock on the door and introduce yourself. This is perhaps the single most important action of the entire campaign: face-to-face contact with a potential voter. Depending on the stage of the campaign, you will either be identifying Democrats or turning out your base. Also this is an excellent time to inquire if the resident would be interested to put a Democratic candidate sign(s) in the front yard as it gets closer to election. Try to inquiry which candidate race may be most interesting to the resident, Congress, State House, Judge etc.

3. E-MAIL: Collect e-mail addresses as you are walking, as this is an inexpensive form of communication for keeping voters informed.

4. MAIL: If you have a budget, drop post card reminders to your Democrats to VOTE. If your budget allows, send persuasive mail to swing voters. Contact DCDP about bulk mail options.

5. PHONE: Follow up your mailing with phone calls to turn out base & persuade the undecided.

Following the above process for contacting, identifying, and turning out voters will ensure success. There are few short cuts to effective organizing, but the pay-offs are huge.
H. Telephone Voter Identification

- Step One - Figure Out Who Is The Target:

A good first step to updating your precinct records is contacting by phone your Precinct residents who have voted in previous Democratic primaries. You also might look on www.fundrace.org to find neighbors who have donated to the Democratic Party. Since Texas is an open primary state, if a voter has a mixed primary voting history, note that, and use your best judgment about how to approach them.

Telephone script for your "Strong Dems":

"Hello, this is ____ your neighborhood Democratic precinct worker. We are bringing our precinct records up to date and would like to ask a few short questions. "Do_____ and _____ (naming the Democrats on your list for that address) still live at (stating the address on the list)?"

If the Answer is No to the above question, thank them for their time and hang up. Cross out their names on your list for that address and make a note to contact in person to determine who lives there now. Make no attempt to gather information from the current resident on the telephone as many people are uncomfortable giving out information over the phone to unfamiliar people.

If the Answer is yes, ask if there are other Democrats at that address. If so, enter their names on the list. Then mention that these others do not appear to be registered to vote and offer information regarding locations to register. This is also a good time to inform unregistered voters of deadlines for registration. Offer to take a voter registration form by their house later.

"Will anyone in the household need an absentee ballot?"

If the Answer is yes, explain the application procedure for an absentee ballot. Make an entry on your card for follow-up at the appropriate time.
"Would you be willing to work as a volunteer for the Democratic Party?"

If the Answer is yes, ask if they would like to become a precinct volunteer or at the DCDP. Make an appropriate note by their name, obtain their contact information including email and turn their names in to DCDP. If the caller indicates a willingness to work for a Democratic candidate, take the information, noting the candidate’s name. Supply this information to the DCDP who will advise the candidate's campaign organization.

“Would either of you like to join a Democratic Club in this area?"

If the Answer is yes, mention the Democratic clubs in your local area. Also refer them to the DCDP website on the home page see information under Clubs.

• Step Two – Visit residents who are listed or have no phone numbers

Try to visit all the residences from which the listed voter has moved or those which you don't have a phone number for. This should prove to be a good means to find unregistered or new Democrats. See the next section “Specifics about Canvas Walks” for more ideas. Greet the person with:

"Hello, I am _________, your volunteer Democratic precinct worker. We are bringing our precinct records up to date and would like to ask a few brief questions. Are there any Democrats at this address?"

I. Specifics about Canvas Walks

Regardless of whether you are doing a phone bank or a walk, you must plan ahead. One efficient way to work a campaign is to work in conjunction with a leading Democratic campaign in your district such as Congress, State Rep, District Attorney, Judge, Governor, Senate etc.

1. Understand the goal. - Are you identifying Democratic voters, registering voters, walking for a specific campaign etc?

2. Prepare a script for your volunteers

3. Have answers to questions that are not in the script prepared for your volunteers.

4. Have materials available for your volunteers (flyers, walk sheets, etc.) - The materials you prepare will be determined by the goal.

5. Have training ready for your volunteers so that you can effectively guide them in the interaction with voters.

6. Have water, food, etc. available for your volunteers.

7. After the activity, evaluate the success rate and make adjustments. Follow up with the voters in your precinct, and get ready to go on to the next phase.
Here is a sample registration canvass procedure that you’ll need to customize according to your goal.

**GOAL**

- To find and register all unregistered Democrats in the precinct.
- To recruit more Democratic volunteers to work with you as precinct volunteers or to help at your Democratic headquarters or telephone bank.
- To locate favorable voters who request absentee ballots. (Refer to the section "Absentee Voting").

**WHAT'S NEEDED**

- Precinct voter list.
- A supply of absentee applications, which can be obtained through your county chairman or the county clerk's or registrar's office.
- Voter registration forms
- Volunteers to work each block.

**J) Voter Assistance Issues**

1. **Transportation**

   Some voters, particularly the disabled and elderly, need assistance in getting to the polling place, and the local party or candidates will have rides to the polls. Find out what resources are available both for early voting and Election Day to move voters to the polls. Also remember that for those voters with mobility problems, curb-side voting is available.

2. **Foreign Languages**

   Not all of us speak, write, or read a second language. In Texas the most common foreign language you will encounter is Spanish. Republicans as well as Democrats are aggressively pursuing Spanish-speaking voters. Therefore, it is important to get out information on our issues and our Democratic candidates in both Spanish and English.

   There is not a stronger tool available to you than reaching out to voters in their primary language. It is a gesture of respect. Not only will these voters understand the issues, but they will remember who reached out to them in a language they understand and feel comfortable with. If you can, have a bilingual volunteer help you translate or create messages to voters who speak another language besides English. These people will know vocabulary and culture that can make your message effective.

   Note: when speaking to individuals whose first language is not English, try to quickly determine if they are US citizens. Non-US citizens and residents with green cards can not vote.
3. Absentee Voting (Mail Ballots)

Absentee Voting is available if a voter is 65 or over or will not be in town during Early Voting or Election Day. Voting by mail is a great option, and it is automatically available to those 65 years old and older. **HOWEVER, anyone trying to assist or manage a vote-by-mail program needs to understand the rules.** PCs should get the latest update from Dallas County Elections before beginning a program. When you’re canvassing, it’s okay to have the voter fill out (or you fill out, listing yourself as “assisting” on the form) the request for a mail ballot. However, if you do this, you should also plan to follow up with the voter before you mail in the ballot, just to remind them that you’re about to send in the request, and to be on the lookout for the envelope from the Elections Department (a “Big Brown Envelope”). Ask your voters to call you when they receive the envelope, so you’ll know to do follow up calls to your other mail voters. This call is critical to getting the ballots filled out correctly and mailed in as the instructions are not clear and failure to follow the rules will result in the ballot’s being discarded uncounted. The Application for Mail Ballot has a place for a phone number, so be sure it’s filled out, and request permission to call the voter to remind them that the ballot will be coming.

**SPECIAL NOTE ON NURSING HOMES:** Be sure that the people you are organizing are mostly Democrats, don’t assume because they are elderly, they are going vote Democratic. We don’t want to unwittingly help a mostly Republican nursing home get their vote out!

4. Apartments

Apartments are difficult to organize, and many of our voters live in this type of housing. To register and activate apartment dwellers, you should start about 4 months before the targeted election. It will take several contacts to turn the person out to vote. Don’t spend your time registering if you do not have a follow-up plan in place. Do not be afraid to approach apartment managers if the building is gated. Remind the manager that registered voters have a more vested interest in their community and are less likely to move. This gives the manager an incentive to get his tenants registered and voting. An excellent place to meet your apartment managers is at the Neighborhood Crime Watch meetings, which all apartment managers in Dallas are required to attend at least quarterly.

5. Voter Registration

Every precinct chair should be registered with the Dallas County Elections Administration as a Deputy Voter Registrar. However, before you register someone to vote, TRY TO BE SURE THEY ARE A DEMOCRAT. Remember as a Deputy Registrar once you offer to registrar someone you must registrar them regardless if you find out they are Democrat or Republican. As mentioned above be sure that you are organizing mostly Democrats, if you feel someone is a Democrat offer to register them. If you live in a Democratic majority precinct or live near a Democratic friendly establishment such as a recycling center, inner city university, organic foods store (Whole Foods Market™), union hall etc., initiating a registration drive makes good sense. On the other hand setting up a registration booth in front of a premium car dealership (Hummer™), private golf club, or high end retailer (Neiman Marcus™) store would be a poor choice to look for lots of new Democratic votes. The larger challenge for Democrats is not only to register voters, but also to get those already registered voting.

A good resource for ideas on Voter Registration can be found in the Texas Democratic Party Grassroots Guide 2005, Chapter IX. See resource section for additional detail.
III. HOW TO ORGANIZE A PRECINCT CONVENTION

The below information is a summary of how to conduct a precinct convention. For more detail, an excellent information source is The Rules of the Texas Democratic Party Guidebook.

As Precinct Chair, you are responsible for serving as the temporary precinct convention chair at precinct conventions until the delegates elect a permanent chair (Sec. 174.027, Texas Election Code). You may be elected permanent precinct convention chair, but regardless, the following are the procedures for precinct conventions that the precinct chair needs to get things started. More specific information about conducting party conventions can be found in the Rules of the Texas Democratic Party.

Precinct conventions are to be held at the time and place (usually at the precinct’s polling place) designated by the County Executive Committee. The purpose of the precinct convention is to elect the apportioned number of delegates from each of the county’s precincts to the County’s Senate Democratic Convention. The duties of the Precinct Chair, as temporary convention chair, are to:

1. Get the letter of instructions, the minute’s forms and carbon list forms before the meeting so that any questions can be answered before your meeting begins.

2. Call the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m. or after the last voter has voted, if later.

3. Prepare and attach to the minutes a list with names and complete addresses of all persons present who are qualified to participate. A participant must be a registered voter and have voted in your precinct in the Democratic Primary this day, or by early voting. Carbon forms for this list are provided by your County Chair.

4. Hold nominations and an election for a permanent chair for your precinct convention, who will chair the meeting from this point until adjournment.

Under the permanent convention chair, the convention then will:

5. Nominate and elect a permanent secretary for your precinct convention who will keep an accurate and proper account of the proceedings;

6. Nominate and elect your assigned number of delegates and alternates to the County Convention. There is place on the list of participants to mark each person elected as a delegate or alternate.

7. Adopt resolutions and transact such other business as may be presented to your convention, attaching copies of adopted items to the minutes;

8. Adjourn.

The permanent convention chair and the convention secretary must then sign the minutes. The original and one copy of the minutes, the convention sign-in list with the delegates and alternates marked, and any resolutions or other adopted items MUST be delivered by the permanent chair to the County Chair EITHER in person by no later than 5:00 p.m. on the third day after the election, OR by registered mail no later than the second day after the election. The permanent convention chair retains a copy of everything for his or her records. In Dallas County the forms from the Precinct Convention can simply be returned in the same box with the Primary election results. The Dallas County Election Department will forward the Precinct Convention results to the DCDP.
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IV. PARTY STRUCTURE

A. County/ State/ Federal

Dallas County Democratic Party

Dallas County Democratic Party (DCDP) is locally funded and staffed. DCDP is the governing body and the driving force behind the precinct-and-grassroots effort. DCDP can help fill vacant PC positions and aid them in performing their duties. DCDP helps the precincts utilize reduced rate postage, printing, copying and other things where a group rate can save some money. The DCDP also coordinates activities with local clubs and hosts events throughout the year.

Texas Democratic Party

The Texas Democratic Party (TDP) is primarily concerned with coordinating statewide activities, such as recruiting statewide candidates, advertising, and marketing and organizing. It sets the rules that govern our Senate Districts (31 in Texas) and our County Parties (254).

National Democratic Party

There are essentially three branches of the National Democratic Party: The Democratic National Committee (DNC), the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC).

The DNC is primarily the vehicle for managing the national convention every four years and a major entity in supporting the Party’s presidential nominee. The DSCC is responsible for recruiting and raising money for Democratic candidates for the U.S. Senate. The DCCC serves the same function for the U.S. House of Representatives.

There are also numerous Democratic interest groups and committees at the national level (i.e. the Democratic Leadership Council). However, the national committees have very little impact on state and local elections in Texas.

B. Pertinent County Officials

The County Chair

The responsibility of a County Chair is to develop effective ways to organize, energize, and mobilize the Democratic Party from the county to the state level. The County Chair is also responsible for conducting a primary election that ensures equal treatment of voters and guarantees equal and nondiscriminatory access to the election system for the elderly, disabled and minorities.

In Dallas County, the County Chair also appoints professional staff to run and administer the County Party in compliance with Federal Election Commission reporting requirements and other state and federal rules governing county party organizations. The Executive Director and other staff implement the policies of the Chair and work full time for the DCDP.
The Precinct Coordinator

The Precinct Coordinator helps PCs and DCDP organize and manage the hundreds of precincts in Dallas County. The precincts are grouped according to our 16 state representative districts. Dallas House Districts average 40 to 50 precincts. If possible each district should ideally have 3 to 4 coordinators, each working with 10 to 15 precincts. The Precinct Coordinator will assist PC in recruiting, training and working the precincts. These volunteer positions are important in helping reach our county goals in increasing the Democratic vote.
V. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

What Meetings Does a Precinct Chair Attend?

The Dallas County Executive Committee passed a resolution in 2005 that the DCDP Executive Committee would meet at least quarterly each year at the call of the Chair. In election years below are the sequence of meetings around the primary that are required by statute (Sections 172.082, 1172.116, Texas Election Code):

The following are the key items of business at each of the three required meetings:

**First Meeting- In January**

1. To 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. To approve the County Chair’s appointment of the five-member Primary Committee (or, by resolution, to change its composition), which has the duty to make up the official ballot.

**Second Meeting-** on before the second Friday following the first Primary.

1. To 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;

**Third meeting: On or before the second Friday following the Runoff Primary**

1. To canvass and certify the returns of the second or runoff primary, as was done following the first or general primary.
VI. RESOURCES

A. Election Code and Democratic Party Rules

The Texas Election Code by downloading it from the Texas Legislature Online Web Site at http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/statutes/statutes. The Election Code file can be downloaded, but it is a very large file. This document provides information on rules for voter registration, campaigning, elections, precinct conventions, etc.

A copy of the Party Rules can be obtained for free from the state party office or on line at Texas Democratic Party site at www.txdemocrats.com, the link to the party rules is txdemocrats.org/files/Rules2004.pdf

B. Texas Democratic Party Grassroots Guide 2005

An excellent resource guide is the Texas Democratic Party Grassroots Guide 2005. For the PC there are two chapters that are must reads, they are: Chapter 8 “Don’t Forget about the Base” and Chapter 9 “Get out the Vote (GOTV)”.

This information can be resourced at the Texas Democrat Party website under Grassroots Guide, at txdemocrats.org/getinvolved/grassrootsguide

C. On-Line Sites

Below is a list of helpful on-line sites that will provide valuable information to the PC.

- Dallas County Democratic Party: http://www.dallasdemocrats.org
- Dallas County Elections Department: http://www.dalcoelections.org
- Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee: http://www.dccc.org/
- Democratic National Committee: http://www.democrats.org/
- Democratic Issue Links: http://www.democrats.org/links/
- Texas Secretary of State, Elections Division: http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/index.shtml
- Texas Legislature OnLine: http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/
- Texas Democratic Party: http://www.txdemocrats.org

D. Sample Precinct Plan

This is a detailed actual example of how to successfully organize a precinct. In 2004 the Precinct Chair for 1811, located in North Dallas in a Republican majority area recruited 30 precinct volunteers, organized and canvassed his entire precinct. The precinct’s team hard work led to outstanding results. Precinct 1811 increased its Democratic voting percentage (DPI) by 13 points. This document takes you through a step by step description of how the Precinct was organized.

Also included is a sample precinct social invite letter.
D) Sample Precinct Plan

1811 Precinct Plan Purpose
The purpose of this document is to describe Precinct 1811 organizational plan implemented in 2004, the tactics used to support the plan and the ensuing results. This document can also be a template for how to effectively organize a precinct.

Precinct 1811 objectives for 2004 were the following:
- Form a precinct organization team
- Help raise awareness of the Democratic Party in Precinct
- Increase DPI from low 20s to mid 30s in 11/04 election

Background
- Precinct 1811 is located in Far North Dallas in HD 102 and Congressional District 32. It is a Republican-majority precinct. In the 11/02 election, the precinct’s DPI (Democrat Percent Index or percent voting Democrat averaged in the low 20s).
- Prior to the start of 2004, Precinct 1811 did not have a Precinct Chair and lacked organization.

1811 Voting Stats Comparison 2000-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Registered voters</th>
<th>Voters</th>
<th>Turnout</th>
<th>Dem. votes</th>
<th>DPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2842</td>
<td>1,859</td>
<td>65.4%</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2682</td>
<td>1,469</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2578</td>
<td>1,938</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress 32</td>
<td>1,914</td>
<td>Frost</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House 102</td>
<td>1,884</td>
<td>H. Miller</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33%*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Avg DPI for 2004 for 3 races

How Precinct 1811 organized
The organization of Precinct 1811 benefited from 2 local competitive races, Martin Frost for Congress (32nd district) and Harriet Miller for State House Representative (HD 102). These races were used as the catalyst to organize our precinct. Having local competitive races and attractive candidates that were well funded helped to both attract local volunteers and support for Democratic candidates in our precinct. The precinct team fully leveraged Frost’s campaign organization efforts and worked closely with Frost and Miller campaign staffs.

Importance of customizing the message for 1811
We were successful in forming an 1811 Precinct team consisting of 19 block captains and 11 additional precinct volunteers, for a total of 30 Precinct 1811 volunteers. With our large number of volunteers we were able to canvass the entire 1811 precinct without outside assistance for Frost and Miller. Unlike the Sessions & Goolsby campaigns who imported volunteers to campaign, the fact our volunteers were from the community gave our team high credibility within our precinct. Our volunteers were known in the community, as such friends and neighbors were more open to support Frost/Miller when they knew a volunteer.

Localizing the Message – Targeting the Cross Over Vote
As 1811 is a Republican majority precinct, we focused on winning swing votes. We developed cross over vote friendly messaging for Frost and Miller (education, environment, jobs, balanced budget, and support
for Bush’s anti terrorism legislation) with the goal to obtain the maximum cross over vote factor. As Bush was quite popular with Republicans in the precinct we strategically chose not to co-brand with the national ticket; we advised Frost/ Miller volunteers not to lead with Kerry in their political messaging in our precinct. Our message was to show how Frost and Miller’s moderate positions better reflect the moderate voters in our precinct as compared to the hard right conservative, Pete Sessions and the do nothing TX State HD 102 legislator, Tony Goolsby.

Precinct Chair Manual for Dallas County Democratic Party

Precinct Organization Recommendations/ Timeline

1) Form Precinct Leadership Team – Share the work
   a. Assign one or two precinct captains ASAP, 4+ months prior to primary.

2) Understand Your Precinct – Set strategies and goals
   a. Review voting patterns of former elections. Determine the Democratic percent voting index (DPI), turnout percentage and party voting majority, i.e. Democrat or Republican.
   b. For example, if Republican majority precinct, focus on growing the DPI. If the precinct is majority Democrat, consider increasing the turnout percentage.
   c. Every precinct has its role. Remember many candidates win close races

3) Start organizing – the earlier the better
   a. Start planning 3 to 4 months prior to Democratic primary.
   b. Consider hosting an event in your precinct to invite Democrats in your precinct. The event should create local excitement and a means to identify local volunteers.

4) Recruit local volunteer team – you must delegate the work
   a. The larger the volunteer team the more you can share the work.
   b. The more recruits the more people who can spread the word to their family and friends, i.e. 6 degrees of separation.

5) Make Organizing Fun
   a. Consider having a house party. People like to get to know each other.
   b. Invite local candidates to attend to get them exposure and create excitement within precinct.
   c. Request attendees to bring food and drink, “Pot luck theme”.
   d. Ask attendees to introduce themselves and why they are there.
   e. Make event fun.
   f. Ask for help and explain why necessary to share work.

6) Make sure volunteers are trained and know what to do
   a. Review campaign messaging and customize it for your precinct.
   b. Suggest volunteers become deputy registrars so they can register voters.
   c. Train on how to Canvass, role play canvassing.
   d. Give volunteers specific blocks to make them feel responsible.

7) Set Quantitative goals – share them with your volunteers to motivate
   a. Tell volunteers goal is to grow Democratic base or increase turnout.
   b. Break down for volunteers how many homes/residents they are responsible for. If they have to cover 40 homes and need to canvass in one month, assume 5 minutes per home. This breaks down to 200 minutes in 4 weeks or 50 minutes a week, which is very manageable even for the busiest people. Remind the volunteers to make at least 2 attempts at each home.

8) Communicate Frequently
   a. Keep people involved in the campaign.
   b. Set up an email list, communicate weekly through email, and consider setting up a web-site. Yahoo has free interactive website where members can post various information.
   c. Share campaign results and successes.
## Key Activity Timeline for 1811 in 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activity Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Jan. 04 | ▪  (Precinct Chair) & (Precinct Captain) agree to form precinct team.  
▪  To create awareness and excitement in our local area, we decide to coordinate a “Meet Your Local Democratic Candidates Forum” with 10 surrounding precinct chairs. Event preparations commence by 1/15/04, 50 days prior to event. Form a working committee and divvy out responsibilities to various precinct chairs. |
| Feb. 04 | In preparation for 3/04 Candidates event, send out mailers and record a phone call out to all Democratic primary voters from 2000 and 2002. |
| March 04| ▪  Conducted “Meet Your Democratic Candidates Forum” on 3/4/04 at Fretz Center, coordinate event with 10 Far North Dallas Precinct Chairs, estimated attendees 120  
▪  Event helped generate lots of buzz in the local area for Democrats.  
▪  As result of event’s success we formed a North Dallas Dems Group. NDD mission is to help elect Democrats, provide Democratic leadership in HD 102 per campaigning and be a support group for Precinct Chairs. |
| May 04  | ▪  In May received from the Frost campaign (a similar list was available from the Democratic Party) a list of approximately 200 “Democratic friendly” residents located in Precinct 1811 who had voted in at least one Democratic Primary since 1996.  
▪  Precinct leadership team called through entire resident list. We identified ourselves as the local Democratic Precinct leadership. We asked respondents about their support for Frost, interest to be volunteers and if they would like to be kept up to date on the campaign.  
▪  Precinct sponsors 5/12 fundraiser for Harriet Miller, 12 attendees.  
▪  Worked with Frost campaign team in getting Frost literature and signage at local precinct Memorial parade. |
| June 04 | ▪  Start preparations for a July 8th Precinct 1811 Social/ Organization meeting. On 6/24 mailed a letter to the list of 120 qualified residents in Precinct 1811, inviting them to attend a precinct organization meeting. One week after the letter went out, followed up with a phone call. |
| July 04 | **Hold 1811 Precinct Social on July 8, have 29 attendees**  
▪  Candidates Harriet Miller, Carlos Cortez and representative from Frost campaign gave campaign updates.  
  ▪  Based on the good attendance, the Precinct event is a success.  
  ▪  At event we asked the attendees to join our precinct organization team.  
  ▪  Attendees were enthusiastic about the event and organizing our precinct.  
▪  After Precinct Social we initiated weekly email communication to residents who wanted to be part of the precinct volunteer team. Communications give updates on Frost & Miller campaigns and status of 1811 volunteer work. |
| Aug. 04 | •  In July and August held four 45 minute canvassing training sessions at Precinct Chair’s home. At the meeting we reviewed fine points of canvassing, distributed Frost handout materials and divvied up precinct block responsibilities. A total of 21 volunteers were trained on canvassing. Each volunteer was given a list of approximately 30-40 residents they were responsible for canvassing.  
•  Volunteers were also encouraged to become voter registrars so they could register new voters during their canvassing.  
•  **Canvassing of 1811 was completed in 6 weeks.** starting in August and completed by early September. |
| September|  •  **Hold 2nd Precinct Social on 9/9/04 with 15 attendees** to celebrate completion |
of 1st round of canvassing.
  
  o We approved the adoption of Precinct 2205 on behalf of Miller campaign, and discussed next campaign steps for 1811 Precinct team.
  
  o Candidates Lupe Valdez and representatives from Frost and Miller campaigns gave campaign updates.
    • Distributed Precinct 1811 Campaign Plan on 9/30 that discussed in detail our work for Frost, Miller and our final campaign efforts.

| October | Host “Meet Your Candidates Forum” at Spring Creek Elementary on 10/12/04. Event co-hosted by both Democratic and Republican Precinct Chair, estimated attendees 110.

|       | Most precinct volunteers worked for either Frost or Miller campaign on a once a week basis. |

| December | Host holiday party for all 1811 and 1802 precinct volunteers to celebrate volunteers’ work. |

### Results – Many Success Points

- Formed a Precinct team consisting of 19 block captains and 11 additional precinct volunteers, for a total of 30 (Precinct 1811) volunteers.
- Canvassed entire 1811 precinct without any outside assistance for Frost and Harriet Miller.
- Voter contact work identified 222 Frost supporters and 230 undecided residents.
- Precinct Visibility campaign, had more than 120 Frost signs in Precinct 1811, ran about even with Sessions.
- Completed canvassing of Precinct 1811 by early Sept.
- Adopted key Democratic precinct not being worked in HD 102, Precinct 2205.
  
  o Increase registration. Precinct volunteers assisted in registration of some 898 voters in precincts 2205, 2200 and 2204.
  
  o Recruited precinct chair for open chair in 2205.
  
  o Registration efforts proved successful as Precinct 2205 turnout increased from 15% (“02) and 30 % (“00) to 44% in 2004, Precinct’s DPI increased from 59% (“02) and 71% (“00) to 85%.

- November 2004 election results showed Precinct 1811 DPI for Frost & Miller increased by up to 14 percentage points, compared to 2002.
- Customizing our message proved successful as our local candidates captured up to 6% more votes than precinct’s straight Democratic vote of 29%.
- Precinct team’s strategy and work can take credit for winning 75-100 cross over votes for Frost & Miller.

### Key Learning

- Growth of Precinct 1811 DPI can be attributed to two factors:
  
  o strong local candidates (Frost, Miller, Valdez etc.)
  
  o good local organization.
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Sample Precinct Event Invite Letter

Democratic Social - Organizing our Precinct ____
Thursday, July 8th, 7-8:30pm

At the home of ____ Precinct Chair __

Joe Dallas
123 St.
Dallas, TX 75xyz
972-123-4567 / xx@sbcglobal.net

June 24, 200_

Dear Neighbor:

Good day I am the Democratic Precinct ___ Chair for our neighborhood. It is my pleasure to invite you to my home on July 8 at 7pm for a Democratic Social - Organizing our Precinct # ____- which is bordered by Hill, Beltline, Coit and Arapho.

This year’s election will be a turning point for our nation. This election is too important for us to sit on the sidelines. The purpose of the meeting is two fold: 1) to introduce you to some of the great local Democratic candidates who are running in Dallas; 2) ask your help to organize our precinct to ensure better turnout. Note this event is not a fundraiser. I promise the event will be interesting and time well spent. It’s also a great opportunity to meet like minded people who live in our neighborhood.

Please RSVP by July 3rd at the above telephone numbers or email. Let us know:
- If you are able to attend
- or if you are interested in getting involved but this is not a good date/ time
- or if you want to be kept informed of our organizational progress
- or if you have received this letter by mistake, and prefer not to be contacted again

Agenda
- Guest visits by representatives from Congressman ABC, State Representative Candidate XYZ and Candidate 123 for State Civil District Judge.
- Organizing our Precinct for November victory, how we can make a difference locally in our precinct

If you want to have impact in our upcoming election, to effect change in Washington, Austin and Dallas, this is where to start. Hope to hear from you and see you on July 8! Please RSVP by July 3rd.

Sincerely,

Name
Precinct Chair #