

Essex County Democratic Committee Manual



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INTRO

The Essex County Democratic Committee values the talents and abilities of our County Committee Members and seeks to foster an open, cooperative, and dynamic environment in which the residence of the county can thrive. In this handbook you will find the keys to a successful partnership between the Essex County Committee and the residence of this great county.

GLOSSARY

Challenger- Someone who is chosen by the candidate or political party to observe poll site operations and procedures on Election Day.

Constituency- Body of voters in a specific area who elects a representative to the legislative body.

Persuasion/persuading- A process in which Candidates try to convince voters to change their attitudes or behavior through messaging/ voter contact.

Voter Card Files- Recording of registered voters in a set area. Usually kept by Political parties on the most local level.

Election and Challenging

Each Election District has Election Day Board workers, which are paid to operate the election. There are two Republicans and two Democrats on each Board. Each respective chairperson may recommend the persons for these jobs. This is the most elemental form of patronage. Those appointed serve for one year at a time.

The County Committee also has the responsibility of staffing the polling place as Challengers, throughout the entire thirteen-hour day. **ALL CHALLENGERS MUST ATTEND CHALLENGER TRAINING.** The County Committee Members must act as challengers themselves and will be on hand at 5:45am for the opening and at the 8:00pm closing of polls to check the machine totals.

The duties of the Challengers are to be certain that no Democrat is denied his right to vote, and that no one vote who is not entitled to vote. Members are provided with a list of the registered voters, and the challengers will check off those who vote.

Registration Drives

Every fall there is a drive to get eligible voters registered before the 40th day prior to the General Election. Members of the County Committee are responsible for the important function, which should be done year round. This allows them to maintain personal contact with the voters. The showing of the Democratic Party in any Election depends largely on how thoroughly registration has been carried out. All District Leaders should walk with voter registration cards. They also should know the deadlines for both Primary and General Elections.

Keep a special note of young people about to become 18 years of age and see that they get registered. Those whose birthday falls between the close of registration and Election Day may register and vote.

County Committee/District Leaders Duties to the Party

The Primary function of a political party is to nominate candidates for public office. The members of the party and the registered voters are divided geographically into Election Districts. On average, each District Leader has six to seven hundred voters in each district. District leaders serve as a liaison for the residents to their elected officials. They are the party officials at the most local level.

Their official functions include electing local party officers, such as the chairperson, vice chairperson and treasurers, also electing county officers, chairperson, vice chairperson and others. They are members of the municipal committee, county committee, state committee and national committee.

Throughout the year District Leaders should keep in touch with their constituency through newsletters, phone calls, and door knocking. District Leaders should look to meet the concerns of their constituency.

District Leaders are elected in a primary election held on the first Tuesday in June. They serve a two year term. Their official term starts the Saturday after primary day.

On the Monday following the primary election, the newly elected County Committee members gather as a Municipal Committee and elect their Municipal Chair and Vice Chair. The following Wednesday, the entire County Committee, all one thousand one hundred eighty-eight members of Essex County Committee, gather to elect their County officers. On neither occasion, can a proxy vote be cast.

Democratic Committees holds County Committee meetings once a month. **ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY.**

Both the voter and the Party benefit when members help their new neighbor register to vote. Having voter registration forms on hand for those new residents whose former address was within the county and for those who are about to move within the city limits.

Learn all you can about the candidates, as the party voters will look to you for such information and advice. Organize events such as meet and greets for Democratic candidates in the district. Introduce them to neighbors and key residents. District Leaders should also walk door to door with candidates at least once during the election.

Recruit volunteers for campaigns. District Leaders should also recruit delegates. Delegates will be instrumental in helping District Leaders executing all of their duties both to the party and to the community.

Have absentee ballot applications available and know how to advise voters on the new law. Military applications may be requested without previous registration.

Remind the party voters to vote on Election Day. Party voters who have not come out to the polls by late afternoon should be called by phone. Try to arrange assistance for the voters who need it to enable them to come out to vote. It is necessary to keep records in doing this task.

An efficient way to keep records, is to maintain an index card file, preferably two. One should have the name, address, and phone number for each voter filed alphabetically for convenient use on Election Day. The other, is a card for each house number; kept alphabetically by street, just as on the official voter registration list.

*****Sample Index Card*****

Last Name, First Name	Date of Birth
Registered Address	
Phone Number, Email Address	
Poll Location	
House hold Makeup: Name and Date of Birth	

Duties to the Community

Each District Leader is responsible for engaging their constituency. Remember, they elected you. You serve to help them stay connected. Your responsibility goes beyond the party and Election Day. You serve as a liaison between your constituency and the elected officials. Each District Leader should know what events are held by the Mayor and Ward Council Members and help spread the word. Be mindful that these events can benefit some more than others.

District Leaders should help organize their areas, assist with Block Association, and help create volunteers and community engagement opportunities.

District Leaders should attend Democratic Party meetings and events on behalf of the district, listen to the residents to learn what issues are affecting their quality of life, such as housing, employment, education, environment and crime. They should also organize meetings and events in the district to give community members updates and a voice in the city government.

Be the friendly neighbor with information and assistance for the district's residents. Newer residents, especially those from out of town, tend to be more in need of help

District Leaders will be instrumental in promoting

Getting Elected

Any registered voter can run for Member of the County Committee in his or her district. Petitions, which are obtained from the Municipal or Ward Chairman, must be signed by members of the Democratic Party. When completed, they are signed by the person who obtained the signatures, notarized, signed by the candidates, and filed with the Municipal Clerk at least forty (40) days before the Primary Election Day.

Two Candidates are allowed for each petition filed. The petition also contains a "designation" which will appear under the candidate's name on the ballot. The first person to file with a particular designation is entitled to it unless the name is incorporated. The County Chairman does not reveal the regular party designation until the filing deadline day, so as to control who uses it.

Candidates on the ballot do not need credentials to be presented at the polls. If there is a contest for the seat, the candidate will have a busier day, to counting those who have agreed to vote for him against the total number of Democratic voters, and making many phone calls late in the day to "pull" as many of his/her people to the polls as possible.

Candidates will need to hold a minimum of 2 "Coffee Clutches" during the campaign. These parties should be hosted by your neighbors in district. The purpose is to familiarize the candidate with their constituency, along with persuading them to vote for him/her.

During the Campaign, every Candidate is expected to knock doors 3 times a week. They will also make phone calls 2 times a week, until Election Day.

Every election comes with some cost, so each candidate will be responsible for raising money for the campaign.

Democratic Party Structure

National Chairman

State Chairman & National Committee Members

County Chairmen & State Committee Members

Municipal Chairman

County Committee Members/District Leaders

Democratic Voters

New Jersey Democratic State Committee

The Democratic State Committee is the highest level organized Democratic Committee in the State of New Jersey. It is the only official body with the authority to guide the future of the Democratic Party, coordinate all Democratic activities and influence throughout the state of New Jersey with the Democratic Party nationally. The State Committee chooses the Democratic National Committee members from New Jersey. The State Committee is comprised of elected members from all 21 Counties in New Jersey. These members are elected in the Primary Election Year when the Governor is on the ballot and serve a four-year term.

County Committee/District Leaders

Every elected member of the County Committee is automatically considered a member of the municipal committee, better known as District Leader. This guide will help define the role of District Leadership.