

# *Democratic Precinct Committeemen Basics*

**What is a Precinct?** The precinct is the smallest political unit in the Country; each precinct responds to one polling place. A precinct is where elections are won or lost. Most importantly, it is your neighborhood. You know the people, the schools, and the community centers. You have your hands on the pulse of the precinct. You understand the assets and needs of your neighborhood and have a desire to improve it.

Never underestimate the power of the precinct-based leader. It is the precinct committeemen, actively participating in the Democratic Party at the precinct level, who win elections and promotes Democratic values and ideals at the local, state, and national levels.

The Democratic Party of Illinois begins with the precinct committeemen. Using tools and resources provided by the County and Township Democratic Parties, the precinct committeeman organizes their precinct and educates voters about important issues. It involves a minimum time commitment of a few hours each month (slightly more during campaign season) and the ability to help on Election Day to help Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV).

## **The Democratic Party's organization from precinct committeemen up is:**

- \*Precinct Committeemen (elected by Democratic primary voters)
- \*Township Chair (elected by precinct committeemen in their respective townships)
- \*County Chair (elected by all elected precinct committeemen in County)
- \*State Central Committeemen (based on Congressional districts; elected by Dem primary voters)
- \*State Party Chairman (elected by State Central Committeemen)
- \*National Party Organizations

## **Precinct Committeemen Job Description**

The Precinct committeeperson serves as the main communication source between the Democratic organizations and with current and future Democrats in his/her precinct. The individual committeemen are charged with connecting the people in their precinct with the Democratic Party structure, and the Party to the people.

The precinct committeemen is responsible for filling the roles that follow, keeping in mind that it is okay to begin slowly; filling one or two at the start. Your township chair is always available to provide support and answer questions. Remember, you are providing a critical service to the Party and to your community. Have fun!

## **Steps to successful precinct work**

1. Obtain the precinct map and walking list of your precinct and familiarize yourself with your neighbors and the geography of the precinct. You can get these materials from your Democratic Township Chairman or the Will County Clerk.
2. Get to know your Democratic and Independent neighbors:
  - A. Host a house party and invite your neighbors to talk about politics and issues concerning your precinct.
  - B. Canvass the precinct using the walk list. Keep track of changes in voter data on your lists (change of address/phone, candidate preferences) and provide updates to the Township Chair. This information will assist in maintaining an accurate voter file.
  - C. Organize a neighborhood watch effort or block party
  - D. Be creative in finding new ways to interact with your neighbors
3. Register new Democratic and independent voters
  - A. Canvass Dem. households and make sure all eligible voters in the house are registered.
  - B. Check the local paper for home sales in your precinct
  - C. Contact members of other groups you belong to and register them to vote
  - D. Think of new ways to identify unregistered voters and get the registered.
4. Participate in the Township and County Democratic meetings, events, and activities. Assist with coordinated voter registration drives, distributing literature for Democratic candidates, and getting voters to the poll on Election Day.
5. Be a visible Democratic Party support – display yard signs, window signs, campaign buttons, and bumper stickers. Write letters to the editor and speak out on important issues.
6. Recruit new committeemen and volunteers in your precinct and surrounding precincts.
7. Communicate with them regularly via personal contact or via email. Gather email addresses and other important information to assist in future recruitment efforts.

## **Your responsibilities during the campaign season:**

1. Reach out to all who want to volunteer within your precinct and get them active (alert them of the Wheatland Democratic website, get their contact information (including email address) and get all this information to your township chair.
2. Obtain petition signatures for yourself and other Democratic candidates seeking to appear on the ballot. These will be filed in December of odd numbered years (Oct/November in 2007).

3. Distribute Party and candidate literature through door-to-door canvassing.
4. Help identify where independent voters stand on our Democratic candidates. Record this info on your walk sheets so that it can be used in the future.
5. Hold house parties for Democratic candidates or offer to walk with the candidates.
6. Promote early voting and absentee ballots for those who may not be available on Election Day.
7. Help ensure a strong and effective Get-out-the-vote (GOTV) effort in the final days of the campaign. The County and Township Party will devise the Plan, you will help implement it.
8. Recommend Democrats from within your precinct to be Election Judges, poll watchers, poll workers, and as volunteers for other duties.

## **Precinct Committeemen qualifications:**

1. Any registered Democratic is eligible to become a precinct committeemen in the precinct in which he/she lives.
2. All you need is heart and desire to roll up your sleeves to help achieve Democratic victories.

## **One Becomes a Democratic Precinct Committeeman by:**

**Ballot Election:** During the primary election of even years, Democrats in your precinct will elect one committeemen person as the official representative for the Democratic Party. This person must follow many of the same rules as other candidates for office. This is done by:

1. Completing a Statement of Candidacy form (Township chairs will provide this).
2. Collect the required number of valid signatures of registered voters in your Precinct (minimum of 10, preferable to have 20-25). You may also sign your petition!
3. Your name will be placed on the Primary Election Ballot and, barring an opponent, you will become the official Precinct Committeemen.

**Appointment:** Many precinct committeemen start out as appointed precinct committeemen because state elections are only held every two years. It is very easy to apply for the precinct committeemen position. Just contact the township chair who will gather the important contact information and forward this onto the Will County Democratic Chairman for submission to the Will County Clerk.

**Precinct Committeemen Term of Office:** All precinct committeemen will run for election in the March (**this time it is February 5, 2008**) primary of an even numbered year and serve until the next primary election two years later. Thus if you are elected in February 2008 your term will extend until the next primary election in 2010. If you are appointed during this time period, you also serve until the next primary election in an even-number year.

**Advantages of being an elected Democratic Precinct Committeemen:**

●Elected Precinct Committeemen are eligible to vote for the Will County Democratic Party Leadership and the Democratic Party of Wheatland Township. These elections are determined by the WEIGHTED VOTE in your precinct during the primary election. The weighted vote is the total number of people who request a Democratic ballot during the primary. Thus, if 100 people ask for Democratic ballot in February 2008, you will cast 100 votes at both the Will County Democratic Party Convention in early 2008 and at the Democratic Party of Wheatland Township Convention in early 2008.

●Elected Democratic Precinct Committeemen demonstrate the strength of the Democratic Party in your township and county. By getting elected, you are not only laying the groundwork for the upcoming general election, but also letting the Republican Party know we are for real.

**Know your precinct:** Know the boundaries, the subdivisions, the religious centers, schools, and businesses. Obtain a map of the area from the Democratic Township chair and study it.

*Describing your precinct area:*

Precinct #: \_\_\_\_\_

Subdivisons: \_\_\_\_\_

School district(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Congressional District: \_\_\_\_\_

State Legislative (Senate) District: \_\_\_\_\_

State Representative: \_\_\_\_\_

Incumbent: \_\_\_\_\_

Incumbent: \_\_\_\_\_

Incumbent: \_\_\_\_\_

County Board District: \_\_\_\_\_

Incumbent: \_\_\_\_\_

Incumbent: \_\_\_\_\_

Incumbent: \_\_\_\_\_