



# Precinct Committee Person Guide & Resources

## County Party - Lehigh

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

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Welcome!

Dear Democratic Party Precinct Committee Person,

Thank you for working for the Pennsylvania Democratic Party in the critically important position of Precinct Committee Person (PCP)! You are the heart, soul, and strength of the party. Grassroots democracy begins with YOU. You represent the party to your neighbors and community and in turn you are the eyes and ears on the ground for both the County Party and State Party.

Your voter registration efforts and Get Out The Vote drives make the difference in elections. With your active and ongoing help in your precinct we will succeed in electing good Democrats to all levels of public office.

This guide was prepared by the Pennsylvania Democratic Party for you, the precinct committee person, by a group comprised of PADems staff and Democratic leaders from counties all across the state. In addition to this handbook please check with your County Chair and/or Executive Committee to discover the many opportunities for hands on training and education. PADems and County Parties offer plentiful opportunities for you and your friends to learn and engage!

Together we can build and sustain the best Democratic Party organization in the country. Thank you for your critical leadership!

### **Vision, Mission and Core Values**

As representatives of the Pennsylvania Democratic Party, PCPs need to know the vision, mission, and core values of the Party, and reflect these in their efforts.

#### **Vision:**

Create and develop strong, dynamic, active communities and leaders who champion and foster the core Democratic values.

#### **Mission:**

The Pennsylvania Democratic Party is dedicated to electing public servants fighting for the Democratic ideal that, in America, everyone has a right to go as far as their natural abilities and perseverance will take them.

Our principles are grounded in effective governance, inclusiveness and being champions for hard working Pennsylvanians. We believe that every person — no matter who they are or where they come from — deserves a fair shot at success. That is why our party — the party of Presidents Roosevelt, Kennedy, Clinton and Obama — fights every day for quality education, accessible health care and good paying jobs.

**Core Values:**

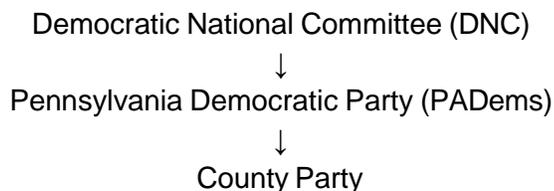
The Democratic Party is guided by these fundamental values:

- Raise incomes and restore economic security for the middle class
- Create good paying jobs
- Fight for economic fairness against inequality
- Bring Americans together and remove barriers to opportunities
- Protect voting rights, fix our campaign finance system, and restore our democracy
- Combat climate change, build a clean energy economy, and secure environmental justice
- Provide quality and affordable education
- Ensure the health and safety of all Americans
- Principled leadership
- Support our troops and keep faith with our veterans
- Confront global threats

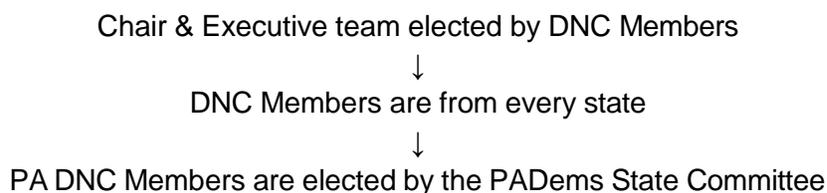
Protect our values, promote peace building, protect democracy, and safeguard vulnerable minorities including LGBT people and people with disabilities.

## Democratic Party Structure

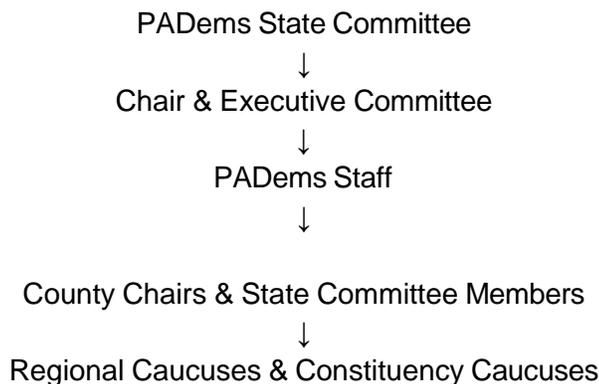
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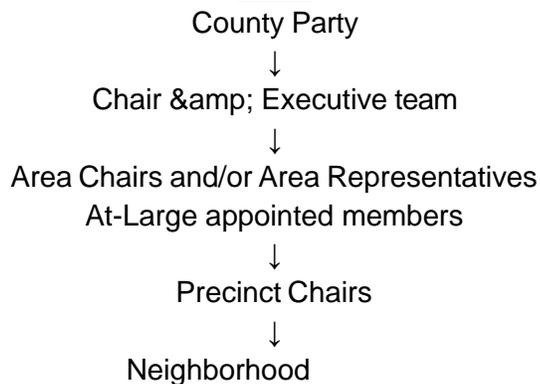
### DNC



### State



### Local



## The Basics of Being a Precinct Committee Person

### What is a Precinct?

A precinct is the smallest political unit in the country. Each precinct corresponds to one polling place where the residents of that precinct will go to vote and it is at the precinct level where elections are won or lost. Most importantly, the precinct is YOUR neighborhood. You know the people, the schools, and the community centers. You understand the problems, can relate to the concerns, and have a desire to improve your neighborhood and precinct! Because a precinct is your neighborhood, over time voters will come to see you as a resource for questions about candidates, issues, and voting.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### The Role of Precinct Committee Persons

The precinct committee person is the most important person delivering the Democratic Party message to voters and delivering the concerns of voters to the party. They are also the elected representatives of the Democratic Party to their neighborhoods and the neighborhoods elected representative to the party. For many voters, the precinct committee people are the real presence of the Democratic Party they see and meet.

### Responsibilities

1. Know Your Precinct
2. Canvass Your Precincts
3. Recruit and Train Volunteers
4. Register New Democratic Voters
5. Get Out The Vote; Volunteer on Election Day
6. Be Active in the Community and Party
7. Attend required LCDC meetings.

#### 1. Know Your Precinct

**Get a copy of your precinct map and precinct voter list from your party leaders.**

These tools will help you become familiar with your precinct. Learn the boundaries, the number of houses and apartment buildings, religious centers, schools, businesses, and polling places in your precinct.

Keep track of the Democrats who live on highly traveled streets in your precinct so that you can steer Democratic candidates to those people for yard sign locations. Make sure you share this information with your local Democratic Party so they can benefit and not duplicate your efforts.

## 2. Canvass Your Precinct

Canvassing your neighborhood means going door-to-door to meet Democratic voters or potential voters, share information on upcoming races or events, register new voters, update voter information, and most importantly to introduce yourself as their representative to the Democratic Party in their neighborhood! **It's important to let Democrats in your precinct know who you are and that you're there to help them. The BEST way to do this is to walk your precinct and knock doors.** If you have a rural precinct, sometimes the best way to contact Democrats is by making phone calls. Remember to introduce yourself as a neighbor, and briefly explain your role and how you can be of assistance. Make sure you remember to leave your contact information so people can get back to you!

### **Sample Canvassing Script:**

"Hi! I'm Sam, a neighbor on Elm St. I'm the Democratic Committee Person for this precinct. I just wanted to introduce myself and give you my contact information. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about Democratic candidates and elections. By the way, is there anyone in the household who needs to register to vote or change their registration status? I have some registration forms if you need them!"

Most Democrats will be thrilled that there is someone in their area available to answer questions about elections. You can also mail postcards with contact information, but postage can become expensive - leave the cards at the door with a nice handwritten "sorry I missed you!"

### **Precinct Canvassing Dos and Don'ts**

- Be brief and be a good listener.
- Be friendly!
- Have all the answers available, either in your head or in your literature. If you don't have the answer, be honest about it and promise to call back. That opens the door to a follow up call or visit.
- Do leave appropriate literature if possible.
- Do leave the names and contact information of local leaders in the Democratic Party.
- **Do not argue or antagonize. Do not raise controversial issues.**
- Do not make disparaging remarks about Democratic Party organizations or officeholders.
- Do not make any claims about opposition candidates which cannot be proven.

### **Distribute Candidate Leaflets (Lit-Drop)**

Your county party should provide you with brochures from our major candidates, and local candidates will get you a copy of their brochures. Spend time delivering them to the Democratic or Democratic-leaning voters of your precinct. Organizing volunteers to perform lit-drops is an effective use your time and a great way to get volunteers involved.

There are two types of lit-drops. One is placing the literature in a secured area on the door of houses in the areas or precincts you want to cover. The second type of lit-drop is the "knock and drop." This is where you actually knock on the door of a voter and talk to that voter.

### **Some Common Questions from Voters – Be Prepared!**

- How do I find out if I'm registered to vote?
- How do I register to vote?
- Where do I register to vote?
- Where do I vote?
- What is my precinct number?
- When is the primary? What do I have to do to vote in the primary? Can independents vote in the primary?
- When is the general election? Can anyone vote?
- What does the Democratic Party stand for?
- Who are the candidates? What are their qualifications or positions? ·
- What can I do to help?
- Are there any Democratic clubs around? How do I join?
- Where can I get bumper stickers, buttons, campaign literature, etc? ·
- Who is the County Chair?
- Who's in charge of the precinct?

### **3. Recruit and Train Volunteers (Comes with experience)**

When you talk with your neighbors, tell them how much you enjoy your involvement in Democratic Party politics. See if they would be interested in doing volunteer work or becoming otherwise involved. Report all interested people to your local Democratic Party organization as soon as possible.

### **4. Register New Democratic Voters**

You can help your local party's voter registration effort by contacting each Democratic household in your precinct and asking if there are any unregistered Democrats living there. If there are you should help them register either online or at one of the places to register in person. Make note of your new registrants and place them on your list of Democrats to call prior to election. **Carry QR codes and/or voter registration forms** in your glove compartment, briefcase, purse, laptop bag, and have them wherever you go!

#### **Determining Eligibility to Vote:**

- Have been a U.S. citizen for at least 1 month before the next election · Have been a resident of Pennsylvania and the district you wish to vote in for at least 30 days before the next election.
- Be 18 years old by the next election.

#### **Where and When to Register:**

- Voters can register in person at a County Election Office, Department of Transportation, and any of the following locations:
- Register to vote online at the following website (QR code is available): <https://www.pavoterservices.pa.gov/Pages/VoterRegistrationApplication.aspx>
- State offices that provide public assistance and services to persons with disabilities
- Armed Forces Recruitment Centers
- County Clerk of Orphans; Court offices, including each Marriage License Bureau ·

- Area Agencies on Aging
- Centers for Independent Living
- County Mental Health and Mental Retardation offices
- Student disability services offices of the State System of Higher Education
- Offices of Special Education
- DA Complementary Paratransit offices
- Registration closes 30 days prior to any election and opens the day following an
- election.

### **Absentee/Mail-In Ballot**

To request an absentee/Mail-In Ballot, contact

<http://www.dos.pa.gov> or the PA Voters website (<http://www.votespa.com>)

## **5. Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV)**

The goal of every election season and Election Day is to make sure that supporters of Democratic candidates come out to vote. The term Get-Out-The-Vote specifically refers to the last week or few days before an election day. Entering the GOTV stage means that there is a switch from persuading voters to choose Democratic candidates to making sure identified supporters get to the polls and vote.

### **Before Election Day**

In the days leading up to Election Day, do one last door-knocking/literature drop in your precinct. You might need volunteers to get your precinct fully covered within the GOTV time frame. Make sure you get each volunteer a list of identified committed Democratic candidate supporters. Remind volunteers that **literature may NOT** be placed in mailboxes.

If there are areas that are considered un-knockable, or if you're short on volunteers, make phone calls or set up a phone bank to contact supporters.

### ***A Simple Script:***

"Hello, my name is Sam, and I'm calling to remind you to get out to vote this Tuesday (include date). The polls open at 7:00 am and close at 8:00 pm. Your polling location is at the municipal building located on Elm St. Do you need a ride to the polls?"

Make notes about each response; if the person does not seem to be supportive remove them from the list for future contacts over the next several days.

Finally, if you have volunteers who would like to help at the polls on Election Day, it is always a good idea to try to have poll watchers inside the polls and poll greeters outside the polls. The watcher's job is to not only keep track of potential problems, but also to keep track of who has voted in your County Party or if candidates are doing tear-sheets for extra election day reminders to vote. Poll greeters are people who stand outside the polls, usually on a rotation, to greet voters and encourage them to vote for Democratic candidates.

## Election Day

Your Area or Municipal leader is responsible for providing you with several materials for Election Day: sample ballots, campaign literature, precinct list, and poll watcher certificate.

### Some tips to remember if you're working the polls:

- Pack water and snacks, dress sensibly (layers and comfortable shoes), introduce yourself to Judges, Inspectors of Elections, and any other volunteers. · Greet voters, promote voting down the ticket, offer campaign literature, and be prepared to answer questions about voting.
- **Review Appendix B**, Polling Location Rules, for PA election law requirements and prohibitions.
- At the end of the day, after the polls close and you turn in your voter totals and results (if available), take down all signs and posters. Some counties provide yard sign recycling services - check with your County.

## 6. Be Active in the Community and Party

### Developing and Maintaining Lists

As you walk and work your precinct, do your best to obtain voter's email addresses. Let voters know that this will help you keep them informed on Democratic issues, events, candidates, local issues, and Election Day information. Let them know that you only plan to use this form of communication sparingly. Don't forget to keep your communications positive!

### Candidates

Most County Parties will provide opportunities for you to meet and get to know candidates – especially municipal and county candidates. Sometimes Democratic candidates will also reach out to PCs throughout the area they are running in, and potentially give you ideas about ways to directly help their campaigns. Some ideas may include: writing letters to the editor, holding an event like a house party or panel discussion, participating in phone banks and canvassing events, distributing literature, and increasing voter turnout.

### Petitions

Why are they important?

Circulating a nominating petition is one of the most important responsibilities you have to your Democratic candidates! Before any candidate can be placed on the ballot they must collect a specified number of signatures. Because most county and higher petitions require at least 100 signatures, and because the circulation period only lasts three weeks, candidates will need your help collecting these signatures. As a committee person, it is recommended that you circulate at least one petition and get at least ten signatures. However, should you wish to circulate more and collect more signatures - go for it! **Specific training will be provided during petition cycles.**

## Appendix A

### **VAN/VoteBuilder**

VoteBuilder is the online database which holds the voter files. It contains the names and other important information about registered voters. This helpful tool will help you make lists of all registered Democrats in your precinct from which you can create walk lists, phone bank, organize volunteers, and GOTV efforts etc. It's the best strategic tool that

campaigns and the Party use to create targeted lists of voters to use to build events and to get people to the polls.

Canvassing will reveal updates that are needed to the VoteBuilder database. Please ensure that you provide your information back to your point person for VoteBuilder so it can be updated. The quality of the information we get out of the tool is only as good as the information that goes into it!

To get Votebuilder for use in your precinct, contact your County Party of PADems. If someone wants to use Votebuilder for a campaign in your area, have them contact the County Party or PADems. Remember, as an elected official for the party Voterbuilder is available to you for free, but candidates must pay \$0.004 per voter or more to use it.

## Appendix B

Guidance on Rules in Effect at the Polling Place on Election Day The Department of State is committed to ensuring that elections run as smoothly and fairly as possible. The following document sets out the Department's guidance regarding the laws and rules in effect at the polling place to help voters, elections officials, attorneys and watchers understand their respective roles, responsibilities and rights.

We encourage county election officials and Boards of Elections to review this advice with your county solicitor.

### Persons Explicitly Permitted in the Polling Place:

- Precinct Election Officials. These include the Judge of Election, the Inspectors
- (Majority and Minority), appointed clerks and machine operators.
- Voters in the process of voting but no more than 10 voters at a time. Others waiting to vote must wait outside the area where voting is occurring. · Persons lawfully providing assistance to voters.
- Poll watchers. Poll watchers are registered voters in the county who have been appointed by a party or candidate to observe at the precinct. One poll watcher per party and one poll watcher per candidate may be inside at any given time.
- **Watchers must remain at least 6 feet away when inside the area where voting is occurring.**
- Overseers are registered voters of the precinct who may be appointed, upon petition, by all of the judges of the county Court of Common Pleas to supervise the election. 25 P.S. § 2685.
- Two per precinct may be appointed and they must belong to two different political parties.
- Constables and Deputy Constables for the purpose of preserving the peace.
- (Other officials may be summoned by the local elections officials as needed. Please see section on police and peace officers, below)

### Role of Judge of Elections

The Judge of Elections is the officer in charge of the polling place and enforces the rules for the conduct of election at the polling place, e.g., who is permitted within the polling place, the number of voters permitted inside, electioneering rules. The Department interprets the Election Code as setting forth minimum requirements that must be met. The Judge of Elections is responsible for keeping order in the polling place and may call upon various law enforcement authorities to assist him or her to that end. The Judge of Elections assigns the various election administration tasks to members of the Board of Election.

The Judge of Elections determines whether challenges to the identity or residency of voters are made in good faith. If the identity and residency of the voter is established to the Judge of Election's satisfaction, the voter may be permitted to vote normally, on the machine or by ballot as appropriate. See "challenges" below for procedures relating to challenges.

### **Pollwatchers (25. P.S. §2687)**

Poll watchers are registered voters in the county who have been appointed by a party or candidate to observe at the precinct.

- Watchers must be identified in advance and assigned to specific precincts.
- Watchers receive a credential from the county Board of Elections and must present the credential upon demand.
- Each party is entitled to appoint three watchers per precinct and each candidate is entitled to appoint two watchers per precinct.
- The watcher must be a registered voter of the county in which the watcher is appointed. Typically, party watchers may watch at any precinct in the county.
- Candidate watchers can watch in any precinct in which the candidate is on the ballot.
- Watchers allowed in the polling place are permitted to keep a list of voters. Because of this, election officials must clearly and audibly announce the name of every voter who appears to vote.
- Watchers allowed in the polling place are among the persons entitled to challenge the qualifications of voters on the permitted grounds, i.e. identity and residency. See “Challenges” below.
- **During times when voters are not present in the polling place, watchers are permitted to inspect the poll book and the numbered lists of voters but they are not permitted to mark or alter those documents in any way.**
- **Watchers may not engage voters or otherwise interfere with the orderly process of voting. Watchers should direct all challenges and other comments directly to the Judge of Elections who is the official in charge at the polling place.**
- Police Officers and Other Peace Officers - generally, police officers are not permitted in the polling place. Uniformed or plainclothes police officers must remain 100 feet or more from the entrance of a polling Place.

#### **The exceptions to this rule are:**

- When a police officer is personally voting
- When the polling place is located in a building that also houses a police station
- When police officers are summoned to preserve the peace (25 P.S. § 3060).

#### **If necessary, the local election officials or three voters in the precinct may call upon local officials, including constables, sheriffs, or police officers to:**

- Clear a path to the door if it is obstructed and preventing voters from voting
- Maintain order -Quell any disturbance if it arises
- Uniformed peace officers, such as constables or sheriffs, stationed in a polling place may have the effect of intimidating voters. The Department recommends that counties balance the potentially intimidating effect of uniformed constables in the polling place with the need to preserve peace.

## Items Brought Into the Polling Place

The following guidance relates to questions that typically arise about specific items.

### 1. Firearms

- Voters who have a legal right to carry a firearm cannot be prohibited from entering the polling place to vote.
- Pennsylvania law prohibits firearms in certain polling places, such as schools and courthouses. Since a firearm is not necessary to the process of voting, the Department recommends that counties prohibit firearms from being brought inside schools, especially if children are present and courthouses.
- Although a voter with a legal right to carry a firearm may not be precluded from voting, certain other behavior is illegal. Individuals inside or outside the polling place who behave aggressively with a firearm or who ostentatiously demonstrate that they are carrying a firearm and that behavior either is intended to or has the effect of intimidating voters will be removed, reported to the appropriate authorities for investigation and prosecution.

### 2. Electronic Devices

- Although the Election Code does not address the use of electronic devices in the polling place, the Department recommends that counties adopt common sense rules that take into account the need for order in the polling place and the right of citizens to vote unimpeded.
- Recent court cases have found a First Amendment right to take “ballot selfies,” i.e. a picture of oneself voting.
- The Department recommends that voters who want to take a picture of themselves voting take care that they not disclose the selections of voters other than themselves. The Department recommends that voters wait until after they leave the polling place to post ballot selfies on social media.
- The counties may permit other persons (such as poll watchers) who are lawfully in the polling place to use portable electronic devices, but should consider limiting
- the location of use to outside the area where voting occurs. For example, poll
- watchers may be permitted to have portable electronic devices as long as the devices remain 6 feet away from the area where voting occurs.

### 3. Campaign and Election Materials

#### 4. **The Election Code prohibits electioneering at the polling place. 25 P.S. § 3060.**

- This prohibition extends to the local election officials and those officials (Judge of Elections, Inspectors and Clerks) should not wear partisan apparel or buttons.
- **Because poll watchers who remain in the polling place during the course of voting may be confused by voters as election officials, the Department believes that poll watchers should also refrain from wearing partisan apparel or buttons.**
- No signs or other campaign material should be present in the polling place
- The Department recommends that enforcement of the prohibition on electioneering should not prevent eligible voters from voting. Thus, in the Department’s view, individual voters who appear at the polling place to exercise their right to vote are permitted to wear clothing, buttons or hats that demonstrate their support for particular candidates. However, voters who are in the polling place to vote should not campaign for their chosen candidates, and Judges of Election should ask those voters to refrain from doing so while in the polling place.

- Voters are also permitted to bring campaign literature into the polling place and the voting booth if it will assist them in making their selections. However, the campaign literature should be removed when the voter leaves.
- The Judge of Elections should, from time to time during the course of the day, make a “sweep” of the room and remove all campaign literature left in the polling place.
- **Any other person or voter not in the process of voting, campaign workers, signs and all other electioneering material must be located at least 10 feet away (outside) from the entrance to the room where voting occurs.**

## Challenges to Voters to the Right to Vote and Resolution of Challenges

### 1. Grounds

- A person is presumed to be a bona fide qualified elector and must be allowed to vote if his or her name appears on the poll book.
- Voters who are lawfully in the polling place, local election officials, poll watchers and overseers may challenge a voter’s right to vote.
- Such challenges are limited to identity and residency, i.e., that the voter is not the person they say they are or that the voter does not live in the voting precinct.
- A voter’s eligibility to register to vote is not a permissible challenge at the polls. The laws governing voter registration include a process for such challenges and that process occurs before the election.

### 2. Process

- The Judge of Election has the obligation to determine if a challenge rests on a good faith basis. The Judge of Election must not permit routine or frivolous challenges that are not supported with a stated good faith basis.
- If the Judge of Election is satisfied as to the identity and residency of the voter and believes that the challenge does not have a good faith basis, the voter should be permitted to vote normally.
- If the Judge of Election cannot determine in good faith the residency or identity of the voter, the voter shall be permitted to bring another voter from the precinct to sign an affidavit vouching for the challenged voter’s identity or residence.
- Once that procedure is followed, the voter must be permitted to vote normally. A challenged voter who is unable or unwilling to find a witness to vouch for him or her must be given a provisional ballot.
- The elected officers of the precinct (Judge of Elections, Majority and Minority Inspectors) have the responsibility of determining the qualifications of the persons presenting themselves to vote. In the event of a disagreement, the Judge of Elections decides.

### 3. Illegal Behavior and Penalties

- The two Inspectors of Election must swear an oath that they will not, without just cause, delay or refuse to permit any person to vote whom they believe to be entitled to vote.
- The Judge of Election must swear that he or she will use his or her best endeavors to prevent any fraud, deceit or abuse in carrying on the election process in the election district, including challenges made to electors' identity, residence or other qualifications to vote.
- Anyone who intentionally refuses to permit a person to vote who is entitled under the law to vote commits a crime under the Federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Pennsylvania Election Code.
- Using lists compiled from returned mail from private direct mailings to challenge voters is illegal and does not amount to a good faith basis for challenging voters.
- Routine challenges based on race or ethnicity or other protected traits are unlawful.
- It is unlawful to challenge every African-American, every Latino, every student, etc. who appears to vote.



## OFFICERS

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