

NASSAU DEMOCRATIC COUNTY COMMITTEE

Committee Person Handbook



STEPHEN J. SABBETH
Chairman

Rockville Centre Democratic Club

Incorporated in 1923 - Our 91st year.

324 Brower Avenue, Rockville Centre, NY 11570

mail@rvc-dems.com

(516) 418-2336

This handbook has been revived and posted by the Rockville Centre Democratic Club, as a service to the County Committee members of Nassau County and for the general information of Democrats of the County.

It has been a long time since a basic handbook has been provided to members of the Nassau County Democratic Committee, laying out the powers, responsibilities and effective techniques of County Committee Persons. This Handbook was produced in about 1994, approximately twenty years ago. Much of it is as timely and useful now as when it was first produced. Of course, some changes and updates should be made.

Please take note of changes or additions that you think should be made to make it accurate or enhance its usefulness. You can email suggested changes to Handbook@RVC-Dems.com.

This Handbook and the By-Laws of the Nassau County Democratic Committee, can be downloaded at the [website of the Rockville Centre Democratic Club](#). We regularly post to the site current and historical documents that provide important and interesting information. If you would like to be on our regular mailing list, send a request to: editor@RVC-Dems.com

December 31, 2013

Henry J. Boitel, President
Rockville Centre Democratic Club



Nassau Democratic County Committee

600 OLD COUNTRY ROAD, SUITE 329 • GARDEN CITY, NY 11530 • (516) 227-0505 • Fax: (516) 227-0640



Welcome to the Nassau County Democratic Committee. As a Committee member, you play a very important role in our party because you have the ability to make a difference in Nassau County.

Despite the use of advanced technology and political professionals in modern-day campaigns, the Democratic Party still depends on the Committee member to serve as its grass roots liaison to the community.

As a Committee member, you are the vital link between the party structure and the public. You are responsible for bringing the Democratic message to the voters, telling us what is on the voter's minds and actively promoting our candidates.

A County Committee member, is elected by the registered Democratic voters in each of Nassau County's 1,037 election districts. There are 2 committee members for each election district.

In this handbook we have identified the duties and functions of the County Committee member. One role of a County Committee member is to meet in convention to designate our candidates and elect our party leaders. Other roles involving community outreach, petitioning and registration are discussed in the pages that follow.

The development of an active, involved and reliable County Committee is perhaps my greatest hope. It has taken us a century to become competitive with Nassau Republicans. By strengthening our County Committee structure, we will be in a better position to elect more public officials and play a larger role in the County's affairs.

There is a difference between Democrats and Republicans. We Democrats know that the only way to be successful is to give the people good government. By recruiting and actively supporting quality candidates, we will elect more Democrats to public office.

I welcome new Committee people who are anxious to learn how to perform their duties. And I encourage veteran Committee members to review this handbook to evaluate the material.

I implore you to do your best as we work to make the Nassau Democratic Party the most effective political party in the State. I dedicate myself to that objective.

Stephen J. Sabbeth
Chairman

THE LOST VOTE

The success of a political democracy depends upon the participation and energy of its grass roots members - on whether you and I and our neighbors across America care enough to go out to vote or whether we stay home and let others decide for us.

Even in the excitement of a Presidential election, an appalling number of citizens simply do not bother to vote. In the gubernatorial year of 1990, 54% of Nassau voters went to the polls. In 1992, 81% of eligible Nassau County voters turned out to vote. In 1993, as Nassau voters elected a County Executive, the turnout fell to 52.5%.

Why is the non-Presidential record so poor? Some people could not vote because of restrictive residency or other requirements. Some were away on business or in the service, or were ill - but they could have voted if somebody had reminded or helped them to register and vote absentee. Surely the vast majority however just didn't bother.

But they might have voted, if somebody had encouraged them. We will never know if their votes might have altered the final results and perhaps the course of history! Our history books contain many instances of elections decided by a handful of votes - and even a single vote!

President Kennedy's victory margin in 1960 amounted to less than one vote per election district nationwide. In the 1964 Nassau elections, we witnessed an election that ended in a tie, with each candidate getting exactly half of the 106,742 votes cast for the office. On several occasions legislators won or lost by margins of less than 100 votes.

Only 3 Democratic Presidential candidates ever carried Nassau County. In 1912 Woodrow Wilson narrowly defeated both William Howard Taft and Theodore Roosevelt in a very close three way contest. In 1964 Lyndon Johnson carried Nassau decisively as he swept the nation in a landslide. In 1992 Bill Clinton earned a 60,000 vote margin as he carried the state and the nation over George Bush and H. Ross Perot.

Identifying and Encouraging the Democratic Voter to turn out on Election day - This is a prime responsibility of a committee person.

HOW TO WORK AN ELECTION DISTRICT

THE BASIC JOB

At this writing, there are 1037 Election Districts in Nassau. Two committee persons are elected by the E.D.'s Democratic Voters in each odd year Primary. An average of 695 voters is registered in each E.D. In each of these districts, - the smallest political subdivisions, - where elections are won or lost - the enrolled Democrats depend on the committee people to keep them informed on party matters and election issues.

The Basic Job of the Democratic Committee Person is Two Fold:

1. To reach every person eligible to vote, but not registered. Let them know how to register, and encourage them to enroll and vote Democratic.
2. To insure that every enrolled Democrat and every "Hidden Democrat" (registered to vote, not enrolled in the Democratic Party, but leaning our way) votes on election day.

There are different ways of tackling the job, but where it has been approached systematically, the results have been phenomenal. We at Democratic Headquarters are more than willing to offer you any assistance you may need in setting up your own system.

THE TOOLS

THE CHIEF TOOLS OF THE JOB ARE:

1. A Telephone
2. Phone directory ("Reverse" Directory if possible)
3. Enrollment Book
4. Computer Printout
5. Filing or Index Cards
6. Filing Box (a shoe box will do)
7. Party Worker Button/I.D.
8. Pen
9. Comfortable Shoes
10. Workers to help you

THE ENROLLMENT BOOK - is published by the Board of Elections in the Spring of each year for each E.D., with later supplements to cover cancellations and new registrations. In the odd years these E.D. Books are orange, and in the even years they are blue. During reapportionment or when a district is being altered, the book covers may be white.

EACH BOOK CONTAINS:

1. Names and addresses of all registered voters, arranged by streets, plus a letter indicating how each is enrolled -

D - for Democrat

R - for Republican

C - for Conservative

RTL - for Right to Life

L - for Liberal

B - for Blank (Otherwise known as Independent) who chose not to enroll in the party.

V - for Void (the voter made some technical error while filling out the registration card.)

M - for Missing (refused to indicate or failed to indicate party preference in an enrollment blank).

2. A Map of the Election District appears on the back inside cover.

3. Data showing how many voters are identified in each of the eight categories listed above.

THE FILING CARD:

The card below is a suggested way for you to organize your own card file. You should have a card for each registered Democratic voter in your election district. This card can provide you with invaluable information - if you use it correctly.

NAME: _____ PARTY AFFILIATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____ PHONE#: _____

Election years in which person voted:

Primary:

General Election:

Volunteer Jobs a person will do or is capable of doing:

REMARKS: _____

Every item of information on this card will help you in some aspect of your job. You will probably want to keep the cards filed alphabetically by the voter's name; and since the election district enrollment book is arranged by street, the two will provide a cross-reference. On Election day your card file will come in handy.

Workers to help you - Obviously, covering an E.D. properly may prove difficult for just you and your co-committee person. You should divide the E.D. between both of you, and ideally you should have one worker for every 25 homes in the E.D. - people with pleasant personalities who will ring doorbells and make phone calls; people who will address envelopes or make up lists or fill out cards; people who will let you know when neighbors move. Some of these people may be neighbors whom you already know to be friendly to the Democratic Party; and some will be their friends. Networking will help you do a better job!

The Democratic Inspectors for your E.D. should be workers.

Inspectors are appointed by the Committee members and serve at your pleasure. They should be encouraged to help the party. As you canvass the enrolled Democrats, you will find some who need only a little encouragement to give you some time. People who attend Democratic club meetings should be asked to volunteer. Ads in the local weekly paper and letters to enrolled Democrats should bring some response as should a concerted drive among high school students and youth groups, as well as senior citizens and retired people.

Develop a list of active Democrats in your election district who traditionally vote in primaries. They are the party faithful. Some of them might be willing to work to elect our candidates.

Try to assign the worker in his or her home area. Don't over load anyone with too much work until he or she demonstrates commitment and capability. Make it clear that you are doing the same things yourself. Don't let the worker think you're pushing your job off onto him or her. Lead by example!

To give your workers a means of identifying themselves when they are out ringing doorbells, furnish each with a Block Captain's card or a Democratic campaign button.

**NOW THE TASKS FOR WHICH YOU HAVE
ASSEMBLED THESE TOOLS.**

THE REGISTRATION DRIVE

Registration is now a year round affair in Nassau since the passage of the "Register by Mail" law. In addition, we have Central Registration at the Board of Elections in Mineola and Local Registration on two days in late September or early October. The job of finding unregistered people favorable to the Democratic Party and getting them out to register is also a year-round affair.

The only fool proof way to find everyone who is not registered is to do a complete door-to-door canvass. This is the preferred procedure for many reasons. The Committee people and their workers become better acquainted with their constituents, their local problems, and the constituents are made more aware that the Democratic Party is active in the area. New workers can be found this way. This is also the best way to identify "Hidden Democrats" and other friendly voters.

Sometimes lack of volunteer help makes the door-to-door canvass impossible. And sometimes the effort to locate the unregistered must be undertaken on short notice. In such situations, a few short-cuts have been found very effective in locating a large percentage of those who are unregistered. These are not, however, a substitute when a door-to-door canvass is at all possible.

The Auto Canvass - Take your Co-Committee person, your enrollment book, a pen and some file cards. Drive up and down each street filling in on a card the address of every home that is not listed in the book. (A reverse telephone directory, in which numbers are listed by street is also helpful).

The One Spouse House - Spend an hour making a list from the enrollment book of every address from which only one person is registered. (The directory may help you spot another family member).

The Apartment Check - Make a list of all the names on apartment house doorbells that do not appear in the enrollment book.

The Spot Check For Move-Ins - Call neighbors and your friends on as many blocks as you can, and ask whether anyone has moved lately.

In the typical well-settled district, these short-cuts will yield each year 50 to 200 sure bets for finding potential new registrants - and potential Democratic voters or even workers. In an average area, experience has shown that nearly half of all new registrants will be Democrats.

CANVASSING INSTRUCTIONS:

Call a meeting of your helpers as early in the year as possible, to explain the jobs to be done and to give them the materials they need. Give them the instructions in writing if you can, so they won't forget. Don't make this a substitute for the meeting where you can answer questions and also transmit the warmth of your own interest.

At the meeting, assign a section of the E.D. to each worker. Supply file cards. While the worker is there, have him or her copy from your own cards or lists: the already registered voters, taken from the enrollment book; the addresses

obtained during the auto canvass and the addresses resulting from your check of one spouse houses and apartment houses.

Each worker should make a note of boundaries of his or her area from the map in your enrollment book. Give the workers some extra blank cards - one or two for each address that is yet to be explored - so that he will have one for each individual.

Set a date for another meeting (not more than one or two weeks later) when the worker will be expected to transcribe from his or her cards to your master set the new information the canvassing has uncovered.

Should you need help or advice in planning your E.D. activity, call your County Headquarters!

Here are the specific instructions you will want to get across to your workers:

1. Visit each house on the cards assigned to you. Your object is to find unregistered voters, to try to determine whether they favor the Democratic Party. You should leave with them the registration information, mail registration forms, and other literature furnished by your Zone Leader or Headquarters.

2. After you have introduced yourself as a representative of the Democratic Party, explain that you are working to meet every eligible voter. Ask if you may have the names of those in the household who are not registered. (You will know by now whether the person answering the door is giving a friendly reaction. If not, just bow out politely).

Often the householder will not think of all the people who might be eligible. Ask whether there is a domestic worker who is unregistered, or if a son or a daughter has just turned eighteen or is away at college or in military service. Ask about an in-law or an infirmed person who could re-register and vote absentee.

Make note of any significant comment, such as "We're enrolled Republicans, but we often vote Democrat," or "We vote for the person, not the party."

Ask whether the unregistered people would need transportation or a baby sitter or other help on Election Day. Note all these bits of information on the file card.

3. Try to answer any questions about registering and/or about filling out the mail registration forms.

4. Urge that they enroll in the Democratic Party (emphasizing that they must enroll in a party to be able to vote in a Primary).

You will have to nag your workers a bit to get them to make all their calls before a second meeting. But it is essential that all the information be gathered and copied onto your master cards, for further use.

THE FOLLOW UP:

Through your Zone Leader, you will receive a copy of the Board of Elections' lists of people whose registration has been canceled for a variety of reasons, and, after Central Registration closes lists of those who have registered centrally. Your file cards, and those of your workers will have to be brought up to date to reflect this information.

READY FOR OCTOBER:

By mid-September you should have ready a list by streets, in duplicate, of all potential voters who are still unregistered and who are Democratically inclined or in doubt - with phone numbers.

A copy of this list goes to each of your workers for their area. The worker's job is to maintain contact with these people by another canvass in person and by phone - to get them out to register during the days of Local Registration.

Separate lists should be made for those who need transportation, baby sitters or other help, together with appointed times for these services. During the week before Registration, these people should be called and their appointments confirmed. The Committee person or the Zone Registration Chairperson - if the drive is being handled on a Zone basis - will make up assignments for the available workers.

Make a list of persons who have moved out of the E.D. and give it to your Democratic Inspectors. Ask them to check the books the first day of registration to see whether these people have been removed, and to let you know if they were not. Pass such information along to your Zone Leader or Registration Chairperson. These people can be challenged if they show up to vote.

Send a card to any Democrat who has moved - address it to his or her old address and it will be forwarded - reminding him or her to register from the new address.

Periodically you will receive lists of people who have changed their enrollment. If these people have become Democrats, you should visit them and introduce yourself. If they were Democrats and have changed, try to discover the reason why they switched parties. Try to persuade them to return to the Democratic Party.

ON LOCAL REGISTRATION DAYS:

Ask the Inspectors to keep a list of new registrants. Go to the polls yourself several times each day, with a copy of the complete list of those whom your workers have been urging to register. Check off those who have registered, and let your workers know who still needs to be followed up.

(By all means, congratulate the workers who have attained good results. Remind them to congratulate the new registrants when the opportunity arises).

Update your card file, by shifting the new registrants' cards into the registered file.

* * * * *

GAINING RESPECT

By the time Registration Days are over, the campaign is in full swing. You and your workers are thoroughly in touch with the grass roots. You know your constituents, something of their political feelings, their gripes and their enthusiasms. Probably you have had a chance to show them you can be helpful - perhaps by advising them how to go about installing a new traffic light or a stop sign, or cleaning up a vacant lot or enrolling in an adult education course.

They have had the chance to learn that Democratic Committee people and their workers are friendly people with an understanding of local problems. You have won their respect, and thereby the chance to win their votes.

There will be candidates' meetings, rallies, Democratic Club meetings, and other local campaign events. You will know which voters might like to be invited. Don't forget those who just turned eighteen. As first voters they are often the most interested. From those interested enough to attend a rally or meeting, you may be able to recruit new workers for the final campaign push - and even for the year-round work that begins again after Election Day.

FINDING "HIDDEN DEMOCRATS"

Like registration, finding "Hidden Democrats" is a year-round job - and it is a most important one. Experienced politicians are well aware that in any area where one party is traditionally in the minority, more people vote for that party than are enrolled in it. This is true in Nassau.

You must know who these "Hidden Democrats" are, if you are to do a really scientific job of pinpointing the voters whom you want to turn out on Election Day - and from whom you can solicit further support in party matters.

Most of the time, when you identify yourself as a representative of the Democratic Party, the person answering the door will indicate at once by his or her manner or comments whether he or she is friend, foe, or totally disinterested.

When you are not sure indicate that you are making a survey of the district, and start asking for all of the items of information that your file card requires. If you still don't get any helpful side-comments, you can make a pretty good guess from the answers.

A good number of "Hidden Democrats" will come to light while you are following up on the auto canvass and the one-spouse house and apartment projects. Canvassing the other homes has to be sandwiched in between other tasks. Try to do it as early in the year as you can.

CAMPAIGNING

Many of the projects that have become standard features of Democratic Campaigning are directly dependent upon the individual Committee people. These include:

Walk-Throughs - Candidates are regularly scheduled for tours, door-to-door, through key Election Districts, to shake hands and exchange a few words with homeowners and to ask for their support. It is important that they be accompanied by a Committee person or an assigned party worker to brief them on local problems and to provide a local touch in meeting voters.

Motorcades - Local candidates, traveling in a motorcade rigged with sound equipment tour an E.D. and shopping districts stopping every few blocks to meet residents and distribute campaign literature. They should be accompanied by the local Committee person and party workers.

Koffee-Klatsches - Printed invitations are mailed to newly registered voters independents and non-registrants in one or more E.D.'s inviting them to someone's home or a small local hall to meet one or two of the candidates. The Committee person's assistance is essential, both in making the initial arrangements and in following up the invitations with phone calls to assure a worthwhile attendance. Emphasis should be placed on encouraging attendance by non-committed citizens.

Railroad Station, Bus Stops, and Shopping Center Tours - These standard features of local campaigning, for which all candidates are scheduled by their campaign, should be worked out in cooperation with Zone Leaders, who must assure that Committee people or other workers are available to accompany the candidates. (It is bad psychology - both for the candidate and for the voter if a candidate goes out campaigning alone).

Literature Distribution - Whether or not a countywide mailing is possible, the tried and true technique of leaving literature at every door still has an important place. This is often a duty of the Committee person. This obviously is an ideal campaign job for the youngsters who often turn up, wanting to be helpful. The impact of this technique in certain areas cannot be exaggerated. Paying for such distribution is costly. By relying upon dependable Committee people, instead of paying for delivery, campaign dollars can be allocated for more printing.

PREPARING FOR ELECTION DAY

Two Weeks To Go:

Two weeks before Election Day, canvassing should be completed. It's time to start getting everything in order for turning out the vote and staffing the polls.

Workers - To the extent that you can find the volunteers, tasks should be divided up rather than saddling your year-round workers with all of them.

GETTING OUT THE VOTE

Jobs To Be Done -

Door-to door distribution of literature (teenagers or younger)

Babysitting

Transportation

Telephone Squads

Poll watchers (the longer one person can serve the better - but you will need substitutes)

Lists - Pull from your file all cards for enrolled and "Hidden Democrats", and friendly voters, and rearrange them by streets, temporarily. Making a separate list for each street: list voters' names, addresses, and phone numbers. Put the appropriate block captain's name in the upper right-hand corner of each page. Make up the list in duplicate - one for a block captain, or worker and one for you.

The County Headquarters may provide one computer printout by E.D. of all voters (except Republicans) arranged alphabetically by surname. The printout includes telephone numbers and other vital information for voter canvass and pulling purposes.

Make another list, arranged by street, covering transportation and baby sitter requests. Make sure that the block captain makes and confirms appointments for these Election Day services.

Four Days To Go:

You and your co-Committee person must complete and double check your final assignments of workers:

1. For telephoning voters on election eve and Election Day.
2. For poll watching. The Election Law limits the number of Watchers for each party to two. The practice has been to permit substitutions as long as not more than two Watchers are present at one time. Assign workers to shifts, and give each a Watcher's Certificate (furnished by your Zone Leader).
3. For Transportation and Baby Sitter Appointments.

Election Eve:

1. Phone Your Inspectors, to be sure that they will be at the polling place by the required 5:30 A.M., and ask if they need transportation. Also ask them, during any period that a Democratic Watcher is not present, to make a list of the names of persons voting - so that the next Watcher can bring his records up to date.
2. Phone your workers, to make sure that calls are being made: to remind voters of the hours that the polls are open, and to confirm transportation or baby sitting appointments. Voters should be asked what time they expect to go to the polls, so that follow-up calls tomorrow need not be wasted before that hour.

ELECTION DAY

Opening and Closing - The polls are open from 6:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M. statewide, in all years. One Committee person should be at the polling place by 5:30 A.M., and both should be there from closing time until the final count is tabulated. Each must have Watcher's Certificate, to be entitled to go inside the guardrail, to inspect the voting machine etc., since a Committee person has no rights in the polling place as a Committee person but only as a Watcher.

Checking the Machine - When the machine is opened, the Committee person must do these things:

1. Check the **Protective Counter** (on side of machine), which shows the cumulative total of all votes cast on the machine in the past and write down the number. At day's end, this number should have increased by the amount of the figure then registered by the public counter.

2. Check the **Public Counter** (on the side of the machine), which will show the total number of those who enter the machine to vote. Also check all the **vote counters** (on back of machine). Public and vote counters should all register 000. If any of them register any other number, write it down and call it to the Inspectors' attention, so that it will be subtracted out of the total at the end of the day.

Watchers - Watchers need only be qualified voters of the city or county in which the E.D. is located. When your first Watcher arrives, introduce him or her to the Democratic Inspectors. Give the Watcher a pen and plenty of paper, plus the following instructions, preferably typed. Each member of the County Committee should carry a Watcher's certificate so that he or she may function as a Watcher at the polls.

Instructions to Watchers

Please list name and address of each person as he/she votes. Also check off those voting whose names appear on the list of friendly voters given to you. Lists should be picked up periodically by your Committee person or an assigned worker.

That's all. The "pull" will be done by Committee people, volunteers, and telephone squads.

If you miss a name the Democratic Inspectors will help you when they have a free moment.

Please be sure that the person who relieves you understands these instructions, and introduce him/her to the Democratic Inspectors.

If you are unable to secure Watchers for the entire day, the Democratic Inspectors can make the list of voters, and they may have time to list only the names, not the addresses. (Often the Republican and Democratic Inspectors have a working agreement whereby one of them makes a list of all voters, with a copy, so that one copy is available for each party's workers).

Checking off the Voters - Many different and serviceable systems have been devised by generations of Committee people. The system set forth below is aimed at keeping paperwork to a minimum.

1. Each of your block captains or campaign field workers may have a list of friendly voters for each street in his/her area.

2. The other copy of this list, (with each street on a separate sheet) is at election day headquarters that you or your co-Committee person have set up. Keep the street sheets in alphabetical order.

3. You and your co-committee person's card files (alphabetical by voter's name) should be at this headquarters.
4. When a Committee person or worker brings in from the polling place a list of those who have voted, pull their cards from the file.
5. Arrange the pulled cards by streets.
6. Check these cards against the street lists, crossing off the list each voter who has voted.
7. As you check each card, put it in a pile for the appropriate block captain or volunteer (his/her name has been written in the corner of the street list).
8. When you have finished checking the batch of cards, call each block captain to read off the names from the cards in his or her pile, so he or she can cross them off on the copy of the street list. Then the block captain or volunteer will be set to follow up on the rest.
9. Put the "voted" cards out of the way (in a safe place) so they won't get mixed up with cards for those who have not yet voted.

During The Day - You and your co-committee person should stop in at the polling place frequently to observe voter turnout and to solve any problems. If a Watcher fails to show up, the committee person should fill in, if possible (though it is more important to be getting out the vote). If a block captain or other worker is missing or falling down on phone calls, transportation or baby sitting, one of you should fill in.

Keeping in Touch - It is most important that you or your co-Committee person or an experienced and responsible worker be reachable by phone at all times during Election Day. Your other workers, your Zone Leader, and County Headquarters must be able to communicate with your E.D. whenever an emergency arises.

Recording The Vote - When the polls close, one Committee person should record on a sample ballot the vote for each candidate as it is read off the machine. It is the other Committee person's right and duty. (if he or she has a Watcher's Certificate) to stand behind the machine to make sure the figures are being read off correctly.

Also record the absentee votes. Phone the results to your Zone Leader immediately.

Then go out and celebrate. Whether you carried your E.D. or not, if you have done the things suggested here it's a safe bet that the results will show a big

improvement over those from the last comparable election (Presidential, gubernatorial or local) **THANK ALL THE WORKERS.**

How Did the System Work?

Naturally, there will be variations on the procedures outlined above that will work better in your particular E.D. Some things you won't be able to do because you can't find enough volunteers - or you will be able to refine the system because you have more than a minimum of workers. Maybe your Zone can conduct both registration and Election Day drives on a Zonewide basis from a campaign headquarters with a battery of phones and platoons of workers. Most often the "Command Post" is a kitchen or finished basement.

But whatever your local situation, the important duties are to pinpoint your friendly constituents, get them registered, and get them out to vote. The more advance street work and preparations you are able to carry out, the more professional and effective your operation will be.

Your Main Responsibilities

The main functions of a Committee person are as follows:

1. **Attend meetings of your Zone, A.D., Town, Club ...** It's at these meetings that we learn about and choose our local and county candidates.
2. **Petitioning ...** It is through the petitioning process that our candidates realize their position on the ballot. Democratic designating petitions can only be signed by registered Democrats.

The best way to get signatures from enrolled Democrats is to go door-to-door using your E.D. book. The required amount for each petition varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. For Committee members to secure their own ballot position the minimum number is equal to 5% of the enrolled Democrats in each E.D. Always witness more signatures than you need. Even the best petitioner makes a few mistakes - (incorrect address, unregistered voter signatures)... Allow for a margin of error. The best advice is to double the required amount.

3. **Aliens** - In canvassing for potential new registrants, ask if there are non-citizens in households who are interested in becoming citizens. Any help you can give in supplying forms or in explaining how to fill them out is likely to be appreciated. (And don't forget to look out for newly naturalized citizens who can register to vote).

4. **Helping Your Constituents** - The better you get to know your constituents through canvassing, the more they are apt to ask your advice or help on a personal or community problem. You may find yourself acting as an employment agency, psychiatrist, veterinarian, garden expert, real estate agent, baby sitter or chauffeur. By helping you become a better Committee person, you may even make a few good friends.

The best rule is always to show that you are interested and will try to help, but never promise results until you know what (if anything) can be done and whether you can do it. Often your most useful role will be as a leader in a community cause - getting signatures on a petition for a traffic light, or heading a delegation to a Town Village Board meeting to support some proposed action.

Most citizens are much more interested in fighting for a stop sign or against another gas station than in whom is running for Town Clerk. This is why it is imperative that a good Committee person be as familiar as possible with local problems, and as active as possible in local civic organizations. If you need help or information, call on your Zone Leader or County Headquarters, the Clerk of your incorporated village, the Town Clerk (in unincorporated areas), your Village or County Police Department or the Board of Elections.

Even though some of these officials are Republicans, they must as public officers, give you information to the extent that it is available to any citizen.

5. **Election Follow-Up** - If your results were particularly good, it is excellent public relations if you can get a story published in the local weekly. Also send a note to the enrolled Democrats - summing up the results, thanking them for their support, and urging them to join or form a Democratic Club and to spare a little time to work for the party as volunteers. A "Thank You" note is a good idea even when the results are poor - and don't forget to include your "Hidden Democrats."

6. **Your Workers** - Keep in touch with them during the year. Encourage them to join or form a Democratic Club. If they don't call you, call them. Inquire about neighborhood developments, especially changes in residence.

7. **Letters To The Editor** - Your local Pennysaver or weekly is a vehicle to inform the public about Democratic activities. News releases and meeting notices can be sent in about Democratic activities. Letters to the editor can be written about your legislators' voting records, or any important issues. Make sure your information is accurate. Check the facts and discuss what you want to write with your Zone Leader or County Headquarters, when you intend to speak as a Democratic Party representative.

8. **Be a Joiner** - In many parts of the county, one of our major problems is that the civic, fraternal and service organizations are overwhelmingly dominated by

Republicans. Where there are few or no active Democrats among their members, our candidates are seriously hampered during campaigns because they are rarely invited to speak at these organization meetings.

9. Make Periodic Door-to-Door Visits - Ideally each and every home in your E.D. should be visited at least twice a year by a Democratic worker. Nothing discourages County Headquarters more than the phone call from the citizen who complains, "I've lived here for five years and I am a Democrat and I've never met a worker from the Democratic Party".

REGISTRATION AND VOTING

To vote, one must be registered. Under Permanent Personal Registration, a person remains registered unless he or she moves from the address from which he or she registered. (Permanent registration is not retained by voting in a school or library election or in a special district election such as for water/fire commissioner).

If a person moves (even within the same E.D.) their registration is canceled, and they must re-register. If he or she has not moved, he or she can secure reinstatement via mail, by responding to the card received from the Board of Elections.

The Board furnishes to each Polling Place a handbook containing much factual information, as well as instructions and sample forms. Answers to some of the most frequent questions are given below:

Registration - Where and When

In Nassau, a person eligible to register may do so in any one of four ways:

Central Board of Registration - Citizens may register in person at the Board of Elections 400 County Seat Drive, Mineola. It is open from Monday through Friday 9:00 A.M. to 4:45 P.M. EXCEPT:

1. During the 30 days before the first day of Local Registration.
2. During the 30 days following Election Day.
3. During the 10 days before and five days after a Primary or special election.

Local Registration - Is usually held every year early in October. Check with your County Headquarters or the Board of Elections for exact days, time, and place.

Mail Registration - State Law allows all persons qualified to vote to register and enroll by mail. Mail registration forms are available through your Zone Leader or at the County Board of Elections as well as at many public places (post offices,

libraries, town and village halls, etc.). The deadline for receipt of these applications by the Board is the 20th day before the election in which the registrant would be eligible to vote.

Who Can Vote:

Voter Eligibility - By Election Day, a voter must have been a resident of the state and county for thirty days (this period can date from the closing of title by a homeowner). He or she must be a citizen by the last day for registration and must have reached the age of 18 on or before the day after Election Day. A person who moves within the county after Local Registration has closed may register centrally at the Board of Elections up to 10 days before Election Day.

Literacy - Proof of literacy is not required.

Naturalization - Upon the filing of appropriate papers a naturalized citizen can register and vote.

Military Voters and Their Families - A military voter is not required to register personally. When he or she is out of the country, a member of the family may apply for a military ballot which is obtainable from the Board of Elections. He or she is deemed registered upon filing of the application.

Military services includes the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, Coast and Geodetic Survey, Public Health Service, National Guard when in service of the U.S., cadets and/or midshipmen/women of the U.S. Military, Naval, Air Force and Coast Guard Academies.

Military Voter includes not only a qualified voter in the actual military service, but also the spouse, parent or child of such voter accompanying him or her, if these persons are qualified voters and residents of the same E.D.

Married Women - A married woman may fix her domicile for voting purposes at a place different from that of her husband.

Absentee Voting:

Persons in the categories below may vote absentee in general election and in primary and special elections. Applications for absentee ballots, if mailed, must be postmarked not later than the seventh day before Election Day. Applications may be filed in person at the Board of Elections through the day before the election.

Illness and Disability - Persons permanently or temporarily ill or physically disabled, or the spouse, parent or child accompanying a permanently ill or disabled person outside the county. A permanently disabled person may apply to receive an absentee ballot automatically for future elections.

Business - Persons unavoidably absent because of duties, occupation or business requiring them to be outside the county on election day.

School - Students who will be outside the county on election day.

Vacation - The law permits absentee voting due to vacation plans.

Armed Forces - Persons in the Armed forces and the spouse, parent or child of such person who will be outside the county on Election Day.

Enrollment:

Enrollment in a political party is not the same as registration to vote. Enrollment is effected by filling out the enrollment or party affiliation box on your registration at the time you register. It should always be stressed to new registrants that unless they enroll in a party they cannot vote in Primary elections.

A public record is published by the Board of Elections annually in the enrollment books, which list all registered voters and how they are enrolled. (The books are not always the last word, however. They may contain errors, since voters may subsequently change their address or party affiliation.)

Change of Enrollment - Any voter who wants to change their enrollment may do so by asking for a Registration Card. They cannot do so, however, on Election Day. The voter's new enrollment card in a different party goes into a locked box and does not take effect until the following year. (Thus, one who changes his or her enrollment during any year cannot vote in the Primary of their new party until the following year).

Transfer of Enrollment - A voter who moves within the county may re-register and transfer his or her enrollment, thus keeping it valid, any time during Central or Local Registration - except that the last day to transfer and still be able to vote in the Primary is 30 days before the Primary.

Voting Hours

Polling places are open for all general elections from 6:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M., in all years statewide.

Time Off for Voting

The Election Law authorizes an employee to take off only such time as it is necessary for him or her to vote, not more than two hours of which shall be paid for by the employer.

The time that an employee needs to take off is to be arranged between employee and employer. If they need time off, they must notify their employer not more than ten nor less than two working days before election day. Not less than ten working days before election day, every employer must post a notice, (where it can be seen as employees come from or go to work), setting forth the provisions of the Election Law.

Inspectors

All Inspectors of Elections should attend the instruction meetings conducted by the Board of Elections. Those who do not may be considered ineligible by the Commissioners of Elections.

A handbook for Inspectors and a booklet concerning operation of voting machines are made available. Inspectors receive \$5.00 plus mileage for attending the meetings. Chair people receive slightly more.

Inspectors must be at the polls at 5:30 A.M.

Inspectors are appointed for a two year term. The Chairperson is elected by his Board (or, if there is a tie, by the toss of a coin) at the first meeting of the Board after its term begins. The Chairperson continues as such until the end of the term unless he or she resigns or is removed as an Inspector. Vacancies are filled pursuant to the Election Law. As of 1994, Inspectors are paid \$45 for Local Registration Days, \$100 for Primary Day, and \$100 for Election Day.

The Board of Elections is in charge of elections and under the law is supreme. No one else should be permitted to interfere.

The Voting Machine

The powers and duties of Inspectors (and of Clerks who attend extra machines, if any) are set forth in the Election Law. Following are some of the key points:

Before the Polls open, Inspectors should examine the face of the machine to make sure the ballots are in their proper places, that the machine number and protective counter number are the same as on the key envelope, and that the seal is unbroken. When a majority of the Board is present, unlock and open the door of the counter compartment and see that all registering and public counters start with 000 (make note of any numbers on those that do not).

Do not allow anyone to open the rear counter compartment until the polls close. Do not make, or allow anyone else to make, a test vote.

Instruct each voter who is unfamiliar with the voting booth on his proper use by using the display model. Call their attention to where the names of candidates are located. Don't leave the instructing to the Republican Inspectors.

Remind every voter that he or she must not only pull the levers but LEAVE THEM DOWN. (The vote is wiped out if the levers are pulled up again.)

Require strict observance of this provision: "The election officers shall not themselves be, or allow any other person to be, in any position or near any position that will permit one to see or ascertain how a voter votes, or how he has voted, nor shall they permit any other person to be less than three feet from the machine while such machine is occupied."

If the machine becomes out of order, notify the Board of Elections (516) 571-2411 and the local Democratic Headquarters. If repairs or substitution cannot be made, paper ballots - including sample ballots, printed or written - may be used. If this happens, the sections of the Election Law applicable to voting by paper ballots apply.

After the polls close, open the doors of the counter compartment and canvass the votes registered for each candidate on the counters and recorded on the paper roll for write-in votes. Also canvass votes registered for any amendments, propositions or questions that appear across the top of the machine. Close and lock the doors of the counter compartment.

Voting Rights:

Here are the answers to some questions that frequently arise:

All qualified voters in line at the hour fixed for closing the polls must be permitted to vote.

A person must be permitted to vote, even though another has previously voted in his or her name. (People vs. Doe, 109 App. Div. 670).

A person registered in the wrong E.D. must be permitted to vote.

If a voter has two or more residences, he or she has an absolute right to select either as his or her voting domicile. (Matter of Rooney, 172 App. Div. 274).

Once a residence is established, it continues until the voter establishes a residence elsewhere. (Opinion of Attorney General, 1932, 45 State Dept. Rep. 115).

No person shall be deemed to have lost his or her residence by reason of his or her absence while in the Armed Forces, or while engaged in the navigation of the waters of the state, the United States or the high seas, or while a student, or while employed in the service of the United States. There are also other exceptions. All such persons otherwise qualified are entitled to vote from their last residence in New York. (Constitution, Article 11, Section 4; Election Law).

A person convicted of a felony loses their right to register and vote only if sentenced to imprisonment. He or she regains this right when their maximum

sentence has expired, or they have been discharged from parole, or they have been pardoned or restored to the rights of citizenship by the Governor. (Election Law).

There is no hard-and-fast answer to the question of whether a college student may vote from his or her college address. Each case must be considered separately, based on individual circumstances. (See Election Law).

If disputes over these or other questions arise, call County Headquarters at 227-0505 or the Board of Elections at 571-2411.

PARTY ORGANIZATION

The Nassau Democratic Party is run by its county committee members. A maximum of 2,074 committee members meet at least twice a year to elect party leaders and designate candidates. The party is organized by zones. A zone is a geographic community-based subdivision structured within town lines.

Enrolled Democrats Elect (In Primary Election):

- a. Two County Committee members in each election district in odd-numbered years.
- b. One State Committeeman and one State Committeewoman in each Assembly District, in even-numbered years.

County Committee members Elect:

- a. A Zone Leader in each Zone - within 15 days after odd-year Primary.
- b. Officers of County Committee (Chairperson, three Vice-Chairpersons, Secretary and Treasurer) - at County Convention within 20 days after odd-year primary.
- c. Three Vice-Chairpersons for the respective towns - not later than March 31 of each even numbered year. These officers are to direct the town campaigns and provide leadership in research and in development of potential candidates, on a year round basis.
- d. Assembly District Chairperson - within 30 days after the even-year Primary, Committeeman or the State Committeewoman or the State Committeewoman as A.D. Chairperson (commonly called A.D. Leader).

Year-Round Operations

At the county level, the party's affairs are administered and its decisions made

throughout the year by the County Chairperson, the Policy Committee, and the Executive Committee.

Policy Committee - Meets frequently. It consists of the County Chairperson, the Vice Chairpersons, the State Committee members and the Town and City Leaders, the Secretary, and Treasurer. Certain party officials and the Law Committee Chairperson serve at the chairpersons' pleasure in an ex-officio capacity having no vote.

Executive Committee - Meets on the call of the County Chairperson, usually five to seven times a year, consists of officers of the County Committee, State Committee members, Zone Leaders, City/Town Leaders, and Committee Chairpersons.

Meetings are also held periodically for all County Committee members by Assembly Districts. These serve a two-fold purpose. They give the Committee members an opportunity to raise questions and discuss problems with the party leadership. They also provide information to the Committee members concerning issues of the day, major organizational plans and the Committee member's role in carrying them out.

Local Leadership - Zones

The county is geographically divided into Zones by the Executive Committee, usually following the generally accepted boundaries of a local community. Zones may consist of any number of E.D.'s, traditionally, a Zone normally does not exceed 20 E.D.'s.

County Party By-Laws require that meetings of Committee members within a Zone be called by the Zone Leader not less than once every 60 days. At these meetings, plans which were developed by the county leadership are explained to Committee members, tasks are assigned, problems are discussed and potential candidates for public office are recommended. Committee member's suggestions and their feedback of grass-roots opinion are presented for the Zone Leader to bring to the county level.

Democratic Clubs

The local club, serving an area covered by one or more Zones in a local community, is an important arm of the party. Through its public meetings, social functions and fund-raising activities, it encourages broader citizen participation in the party's affairs and more effective reflection of public opinion in the party's councils. It provides a means of obtaining Democratic publicity in local newspapers.

The By-Laws provide that the word “Democratic” may be used in the name of any club or association only with the approval of the Executive Committee.

Youth

As soon as the Supreme Court in 1970 approved federal legislation authorizing 18-year-olds to vote for federal offices, the Nassau Democratic County Committee took a leadership role enlisting these young people into full participation. The County Chairman appointed the first under - 21 Committee member in the state. Numerous others were named soon thereafter, and an even larger number were elected in the 1971 Primary.

Young people are not segregated into a separate organization but are encouraged to work within the party’s regular framework. They play a major role in the party’s year-round registration drives, and deserved much of the credit for Nassau’s leading the state in numbers of under - 21 new registrants in 1971.

To amplify the role of young people in our party we maintain a Young Democratic group. Membership in this state - affiliated group is restricted to Democrats between 18-35 years of age.

While certain young people wish to be independent voters Committee members should stress to young people - as indeed to all new registrants - that unless they enroll in a political party they cannot vote in the Primary.

Young Democrats are also active in other party functions, such as discussion of vital issues and selection of candidates. They may utilize facilities at County Headquarters. All Committee members are urged to seek out interested youths and to refer them to County Headquarters if they want to work at the county level.

CANDIDATE SELECTION

Official designation of the party organization’s candidates for public office (and also for members of the State Committee) is made by the Committee members. This places a heavy burden of responsibility upon the Committee members to select the strongest possible candidates - and also upon their Zone and A.D. Leaders to assist them in acquainting themselves with the qualifications of potential candidates and in weighing their respective merits.

All prospective candidates are asked to complete an extensive questionnaire and be interviewed and approved by a screening committee. Prospective judicial candidates must also be screened and approved by our Democratic Judicial Screening Panel as well as the judiciary committee of the Nassau Bar Association.

Petitions and Primaries

Even after a candidate for public office has become the organization's official designee, he is not the party's official nominee until after the Primary.

The date of the Primary is set each year by the State Legislature. It usually falls in September except the Presidential primary which traditionally is held in March or April.

On Primary Day - Polling Places Are Open Only If:

a. Designating petitions for two or more candidates for the same office have been duly filed with the Board of Elections.

Or

b. A petition for the opportunity to ballot (write in) has been duly filed.

These provisions apply to candidates for both public office (who are nominated in the Primary, for election in November) and party position (who are elected in the Primary).

Circulating the organization's official designating petitions is one of the Committee member's basic responsibilities. Usually he or she must get enrolled Democrats' signatures on five or six petitions at the same time (covering various candidates for public and party offices in appropriate political subdivisions).

The number of signatures required for each office is fixed by the Election Law. Examples (in each case, 5% of party enrollment or the number shown, whichever is less):

County or Town of Hempstead office - 2,000 Town of North Hempstead and Oyster Bay - 1,500

Congress or National Convention Delegate - 1,250 State Senate - 1,000

Assembly, State Committee member, or Judicial Convention Delegates - 500

Committee member - 5% of enrolled Democrats in E.D.

Cities in Nassau - 1,000 (Long Beach and Glen Cove)

Statewide office (received less than 25% of State Committee vote) 15,000

County Legislature - 5% of enrolled Democrats or 500 whichever is less

National and Judicial Conventions

Delegates and alternates to these conventions are party officers who are elected in the Primary after having been designated on petitions.

National Conventions - The method of selecting delegates and alternates to the National Convention is established every four years by the National and State Committees.

The total number of Delegate votes to which each state is entitled is set by the Democratic National Committee.

Judicial Conventions - These conventions are called in any year in which one or more nominations are to be made for Justice of the State Supreme Court in a given Judicial District. There are 11 Judicial Districts in New York State with Nassau and Suffolk comprising District 10.

Delegates and alternates are elected from each Assembly District within the Judicial District, in proportion to the last Democratic vote for Governor, as provided in the State Committee's By-Laws.

Nominations for State Offices

The party organization's candidates for state office are designated by the State Committee (using a weighted vote based on the party's last vote for Governor in each Assembly District). Anyone receiving 25% or more of such vote but not designated may contest in the Primary merely by notifying the Secretary of State. Any other party enrollee who wishes to contest may enter the Primary by filing a petition with 15,000 signatures (with at least 100 from each of one-half of the Congressional Districts).

Presidential Electors

New York's members of the Electoral College are selected by the State Committee of each party. Technically, when you vote, you are voting for your party's slate of Presidential Electors' rather than directly for President, though the Electors' names do not appear on the machine. The State Committee nominates one elector from each Congressional District, and two at large.

If the Democratic Presidential candidate carries New York whether by one vote or a million votes - all New York Electoral votes go to the Democrat; if the Republican candidate carries, all votes go to the Republican.

THE FUTURE

As this revision of the Committee person's handbook goes to press, Nassau County voters have approved a referendum on the November ballot which would abolish the Board of Supervisors in favor of a 19 member county legislature comprised of equal single member districts. We Democrats have long championed the value of a county legislature. The new plan for a county legislature is set to take effect January 1996.

A legislative form of County government will create new challenges and new opportunities for Democrats. A legislature composed of smaller community based districts will bring government closer to the people. It will also reduce the advantage of the once invincible GOP machine, making Nassau political campaigns the most competitive ever.

Whatever changes transform our political landscape, the future success of the Nassau Democratic Party begins with the strength and efficiency of our county committee members.

Thank you for your help! Good Luck!

Notes

How Can We Improve This Booklet?

Send Suggestions To:
Handbook@RVC-Dems.com

