

Members' Guide to the Clarke County Democratic Committee

Introduction

Welcome to the Democratic Party of Clarke County, Georgia. The Clarke County Democratic Committee (CCDC, "the Committee") is the official local organizing body of the Democratic Party of Georgia and therefore carries out both the policies and requirements of the State Party as well as pursuing its own locally generated programs. Membership on the Committee carries with it certain responsibilities and duties. The purpose of this handbook is to outline for its members - new, prospective, or continuing - those roles of the Committee as a whole and of its members individually.

General Duties and Responsibilities of the Committee

Under the umbrella of promoting and fulfilling State Party goals, the Committee sponsors and encourages the development of subsidiary and independent organizations and engages in fund raising. One important role is to seek out and encourage qualified candidates for elective offices and when they have been identified, to support their candidacy. The Committee also elects members to the State Committee.

A continuing goal of the state organization and of the Committee is to support diversity of participation in Democratic Party and community activities. In meeting this goal, we seek to solicit participation from all gender and ethnic groups in our community, as well as populations historically under-represented.

The CCDC has five standing subcommittees, each headed by a vice-chair. The first subcommittee is responsible for affirmative action. It seeks to promote outreach and candidate development from among diverse candidates. The other subcommittees are responsible for communication, special events, membership, and fund raising.

Finally, the Committee fulfills certain legal requirements during elections, both primary and general [see below under Election Activities].

The Committee's Meetings and Other Activities

Committee bylaws call for a regular business meeting at least once each quarter. Currently, regular meetings are held each month, except December, usually on the fourth Thursday of the month, at 6 p.m. in the Clarke County Courthouse or other designated venue. Though informal in character, these meetings are conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order. In addition to ordinary business (e.g., approval of minutes, treasurer's report, announcements, etc.), other matters that commonly arise are recognition of elected public officials, visitors, and candidates for membership, and sometimes the announcement of a candidacy for a public office. Subcommittees report their recent activities, and an opportunity for questions and suggestions is provided. As time allows, there may be discussion of such items as general issues of interest and proposed

Committee resolutions. Candidates for state office also are invited to make presentations to the Committee. The custom is to hold the length of meetings to as close to one hour as possible.

From time to time, the Committee offers educational **community programs** on matters of common interest to the general public. (An example was a program on the efficacy of electronic voting machines.) These programs are sometimes conducted in conjunction with the monthly meetings or may be held at various locations suitable to accommodating a larger audience (e.g., the Athens Library Auditorium).

The Committee also sponsors **special events** for the Committee and all interested Democrats to provide opportunities for socializing and honoring distinguished Democrats. (An example was a sponsored breakfast with the Commissioner of Agriculture as the honored guest and speaker.) These events are frequently the vehicles for fund raising.

Election Activities

During election seasons, the Committee traditionally rents and staffs a headquarters for the purpose of educating the public about Democratic candidates and providing the base for activities aimed at electing Democrats to public office.

The Committee appoints a Democrat to serve on the five-member Board of Elections (also called The Superintendent of Elections), and it nominates Poll Officers for conducting each election.

Members of the Committee may also volunteer as poll watchers during elections; the Committee can designate up to two official poll watchers for each precinct. Because the State applies strict rules to the behavior and procedures of poll watchers, prospective poll watchers must undergo training. Prior to the election, the Clarke County Board of Elections will cooperate with the political parties in carrying out this training.

Activities of the CCDC Subcommittees and Affiliated Groups

As stated earlier, the CCDC has five standing subcommittees that are headed by the vice-chairs. They are Affirmative Action, Communications, Special Events, Membership, and Fundraising.

The Affirmative Action subcommittee is responsible for outreach to all communities of people in Athens-Clarke County. This subcommittee is also responsible for helping to identify potential candidates and working to support their commitment and pathways to become a candidate.

The Communications subcommittee maintains a telephone line for calls of enquiry, publishes the newsletter of the Committee, maintains regular email communication with the Committee and Friends of the Committee, and is the identified liaison with the

Democratic Party of Georgia (DPG) for posting events to the calendar and dissemination of DPG releases.

The Special Events subcommittee arranges the community programs and special events discussed under "meetings."

The Fundraising subcommittee explores and implements strategies for obtaining donations to the Committee for its activities, especially its campaign activities. This subcommittee often works closely with the Special Events subcommittee.

The Membership subcommittee is responsible for identifying and inviting candidates to run for CCDC membership, and encouraging active participation from Committee members.

In addition to these standing subcommittees specified by the bylaws, one other important subcommittee is the Get-Out-The-Vote Committee (GOTV) whose chair is appointed by the Executive Committee. GOTV functions mainly during the election season to mobilize grass-roots support in the wider community for Democratic candidates and specifically to enable and insure a good turnout at the polls on election day.

The members of the Advisory Committee are friends of the Party who, while not necessarily current members of the Committee *per se*, are friends of Democratic ideals and goals and contribute their special talents and knowledge to the Committee's programs.

Finally, the Committee coordinates with independent Democratic organizations in the community such as the University of Georgia Young Democrats, the University of Georgia Law Democrats, and the Athens Area Democrats group.

Structure and Governance of the Committee

The Committee's officers are a Chair, a Chair-elect, five Vice-Chairs (each the chair of one of the standing subcommittees discussed above), a Secretary, a Treasurer, and the Immediate Past Chair. The Executive Committee comprises these officers, designated Past Chairs emeritus/emerita and the appointed liaison to the County Board of Elections. Executive Committee meetings are currently held on the first Thursday of the month at various members' homes, and interested members of the Committee are welcome to attend. The role of these meetings is to set the agenda for the next regular meeting of the CCDC, discuss subcommittee business, take action on matters requiring immediate response, and plan the future activities of the CCDC.

The CCDC is governed by its bylaws and those of the Democratic Party of Georgia. The former are provided to all members and may also be found at the CCDC's website: <http://www.clarkedemocrats.com>. The state party's bylaws are at <http://www.democraticpartyofgeorgia.org/>

Membership in the CCDC

Types of membership. The three categories of membership in the CCDC with voting rights are ex officio, emeritus, and regular. Ex officio members include elected and appointed State Committee members, National Committee members, Congressional district chairs, and Democratic elected officials along with representatives of the affiliated organizations chartered in Clarke County mentioned above. Emeritus members need to be at least 55 years of age with 10 years of continuous active membership in the CCDC. The Executive Committee submits names for emeritus status that must then be confirmed at a regular meeting by a majority of members present. Finally, there is the provision for each district to have up to two alternates who may substitute at a meeting for any absent members subject to the rule that in any given meeting a district can be represented by no more than 7 individuals.

Becoming a member. Regular members of the Committee are chosen in one of two ways: by election on the general primary ballot or by election by the Committee to fill a vacancy. Members filling a vacancy must be confirmed at a subsequent primary election.

To be elected in a primary, a candidate must declare his/her candidacy for a specific post (based on the current apportionment of precincts) by appearing in person at the Board of Elections, 155 E. Washington, Athens, GA and by paying a qualifying fee (currently \$10). For each post the candidate receiving the highest number of votes is elected without a runoff. (See membership list <http://www.clarkedemocrats.com>).

When a vacancy occurs between elections, names of prospective Committee members are submitted for nomination to the Membership Vice Chair. Names of nominees are then read at two meetings before being voted on by the Committee. Nominees have an opportunity to introduce themselves to the assembled attending members at either or both of these meetings. The remaining term of office is that of the specific vacancy being filled.

Duties and expectations of members. All Committee members must be registered to vote in Clarke County. Members are also expected to remain current with membership dues (currently \$12 per year) payable to the Treasurer by January 1 of each year. Members should familiarize themselves with the bylaws.

Attendance of all members at scheduled meetings of the Committee is expected. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, the Secretary should be informed (email is recommended) *in advance* of the meeting of the necessary absence. Chronic unexplained absences, for example more than one third of scheduled meetings, may lead to a request for resignation.

Members are expected to volunteer for at least one of the five standing subcommittees and to participate in the activities of that subcommittee. In addition members are expected to participate in and to promote the special events of the Committee by publicizing them, by selling tickets to them, and by attending them.

While most regular meetings are open to the public, the bylaws provide for meetings to be held in executive session if necessary. The transactions of such meetings are to be kept in confidence by the members.

The bylaws provide that a member may not support publicly a Democratic candidate who has opposition during a primary or Democratic opposition during a special election.

No member of the Committee may support a candidate other than the Democratic nominee in a General Election. In non-partisan elections, endorsements by members of the Committee are unrestricted.

Rev. 10/11/12