

The Washington State Democrats
Chairs Organization
WSDCO

Chairs
Handbook

Prepared by the Executive Board
of the WSDCO

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*This publication
Is
Dedicated
To the Chair
Who taught many of us
"How to Be Chairs"*

*In acknowledgement of his many years of service
To the Democratic Party,
The WSDCO
Dedicates this edition
To
Ken Kadlec,
And his committee:
Lois Clement and Paul Fournier*

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Introduction

Welcome all new and returning chairs. We have prepared a guide to assist in your planning and running of both Legislative District and County organizations. The document that follows is a work in progress as we live in an ever-changing world of technology, rules and regulations. The guide is derived from years of experience from current/past chairs and is offered here as a guide for running your respective organizations.

Mission

As the Chair, your primary responsibility is to ensure that your organization's mission is carried out. To do so, you must be clear as to what that mission is:

*To build and/or maintain
an effective grassroots party organization
that can help win local elections and
maximize the Democratic vote in all elections*

District and County organizations are the grassroots level of the Democratic Party in Washington State. Every organization will have various members dedicated to promoting a particular issue or candidate. While your local organization will support candidates and promote positions on issues, your primary responsibility is building and maintaining a strong organization that can affect elections and maximize the Democratic vote.

Part of that mission remains the same from year to year: building and/or maintaining an effective grassroots party organization. How you carry out this part of the mission may vary from year to year. Recruiting and keeping active precinct committee officers is a key to any effective County or District organization. This guide presents many ideas to help make your organization more effective.

Another key element of your organization's mission is to help win local elections. For a County organization, the main focus will be partisan county elections. For a District organization, the main focus will be legislative elections. Accomplishing your mission means playing a role in candidate recruitment and working with the candidates' campaigns. Your campaign work should be used to strengthen your organization.

Bylaws and Standing Rules

County central committees are authorized by State law and by State Democratic Party Bylaws. Legislative District organizations are authorized by the State Bylaws. In large counties, State law implicitly authorizes the bylaws.

The State Bylaws provide that:

- County and District organizations are authorized to operate continuously.
- Each is to reorganize every two years after the election of new PCOs.

Each County or District organization sends two representatives to the State Central Committee and shall have a Chair and Vice-Chair of opposite gender. Each has a role in filling legislative vacancies. County organizations also have a role in filling other local partisan office vacancies.

Beyond those basics, local party organizations can and do vary a great deal. Bylaws are the key document in defining your organization's structure and role. Rather than a burden, they should be an important aid in running your organization. The ultimate authority for your local organization and your bylaws are the elected and appointed PCOs. While the bylaws must be consistent with the Party bylaws, State and Federal law, the membership adopts the bylaws and thereby defines the organization's structure and goals.

Bylaws should be given careful thought when you become chair. If bylaw revisions are needed, establish a rules and/or bylaws committee to review the bylaws and recommend changes. You should serve on or chair this committee, as the chair is the main person who must live with and by the bylaws. When the committee report is presented to the PCOs for adoption, be sure the report is well organized and clearly identifies any significant issues.

Standing Rules can be established for special meetings such as reorganization meetings, nominating conventions, endorsement meetings, and others. The voting members of the County or District organization approve and abide by the standing rules.

See last page of this document for all applicable Washington State Revised Code for Political Parties.

Robert's Rules of Order shall be used at all District and County organizational meetings.

Platform

The platform constitutes the Party values and issues that Democrats will support.

In late spring in even numbered years, the District, County and State organizations conduct caucuses/conventions where platforms are revisited for addition/change. The existing platform is presented to the PCO's first, at precinct caucuses, then again at the Legislative District level. Platform changes are forwarded to the County and to the State organizations. Committees are formed at the County/State levels to address changes and submit to the County/State Conventions. A lot of the committee work is now conducted, collaboratively online. The Legislative Districts within each County attend a County convention to adopt a revised platform.

The State Convention is the last step where the State Platform is discussed and adopted.

Some Districts have also developed their own platforms. To see a State and County platform, visit these websites:

www.wa-democrats.org

www.kcdems.org

Financial Responsibilities

One of the most important volunteers in any political organization at the District and County level is the treasurer. As a chair, you will work very closely with your treasurer in establishing a budget, preparing performance reporting (budget compared to actual expense), and monitoring Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) reporting. After your election as Chair, you should:

- Obtain financial records from the previous chair and treasurer.
- Go to the banking institution your organization uses, and change the signatures for writing checks (normally, chair and treasurer; however, you can have more people authorized to sign checks such as your finance committee chair). Remove all other authorized signatures.

- Ensure that you and your treasurer are signed up for Public Disclosure Commission classes. The commission schedules classes in Olympia on a regular basis and will also work with you in setting up specialized training at a location you select. The PDC law was instituted in Washington State in 1973. The law affects both candidates and political organizations. As chair, you have overall responsibility to ensure that your organization is in compliance with the PDC Rules and Regulations. You and your treasurer should be a team when it comes this area of responsibility. Questions about when to file and on what forms/reports should be directed to the PDC at,

Public Disclosure Commission
 711 Capitol Way, #206
 Post Office Box 40908
 Olympia, WA 98504-0908
 Telephone: 360.753.1111
 Fax: 360.753.1112
 Toll Free: 1.877.601.2828
 Website: <http://www.pdc.wa.gov/default.asp>

- A new C1pc form must be filed after a District or County reorganizes. And if, you change treasurers during the two-year term, another C1pc must be filed with the PDC.
- Assign a Finance Committee to help you and your treasurer plan for fundraising events. If possible, the committee should make a yearly plan that contains a variety of fundraising approaches that will reach all economic levels of the District and/or County and will be appealing to a large segment of the population. This also helps with building the membership and constituency bases.
- Revisit your budget and event plan at least once each year to ensure that you are on target – if not, make revisions and publish to the organization.

Strategic Planning

A District or County Strategic Plan is essential for accomplishing your mission goals and objectives. It is a statement, broken down in detail, of the plan of operation for your two-year term. It can also be applied to milestone charts (e.g., list of goals charted by date and percentage complete). An example of a County strategic plan is shown here,

Example of a County Strategic Plan

Objective: Design and develop a CY ---- strategic plan to increase the viability and strength of the County Democrats

Goals: Ensure that the organization remains vital by establishing committees to approach these tasks:

- Educate the general body on organization (including Congressional, County, and District lines)
- Design, develop, test, and implement a fully-integrated, computing system for the group
- Design Voter Registration Drives
- Promote and develop a successful Legislative Action Committee
- Increase Membership and the number of PCOs
- Build cohesive, committed executive board and committees
- Build a better bridge between Districts, County, and State organizations
- Develop new approach to our endorsement process
- Develop Candidate Recruitment Process
- Review and revise By-Laws as needed
- Review and update existing materials, including brochure
- Promote Better Meeting Programs and Events
- Design a County Marketing Approach; one that addresses the diversity of the organization
- Design Community Outreach and Retention Programs
- Do our part to elect Democrats at all levels of government

Introduction:

Our most important function as a Washington State - County organization is to promote Democratic principles, and recruit, support, and elect qualified Democrat candidates. In order to accomplish this, we must *increase* and maintain a strong membership base, and build a good candidate recruitment committee and *turn out the vote*. We must have committed committees with effective plans. We have a great opportunity to revisit recruitment plans; endorsement process and procedures, organizational by-laws, and our charter to ensure that we stay in tune with our communities' issues, concerns, and needs. We need to get the Young Democrats more involved, and form teams to get out to the high schools and colleges in our County. We need to have more and better interaction with the community organizations and clubs. We also need to address the great diversity that exists in the County. Let's take this time to get back to basics:

- Registering voters
- Recruiting new and more elected, appointed, and adoptive PCOs –
- Recruiting more members
- Recruiting new candidates for all levels of government
- Getting the Vote Out (*includes volunteers to drive people to the polls if needed*)
- Solid Follow-up on all plans and actions
- Elect Democrats!

Commitment

1. a. Ensure that the general body understands the Democratic Party principles, structure, and process.
 b. Enhance and update the County brochure or design a second version that can be given to new members. One that addresses:
 - i. How the County fits into the overall scheme of local, state, and National politics.
 - ii. What is our role in deciding who runs where?
 - iii. What is the role of the Board
 - iv. What is our role in elections
 - v. What are the County By-Laws
 - vi. What does the “general membership” include
 - vii. What are the important acronyms to know, etc.

2. Provide appropriate training for members, PCOs and officers. (Note: the State party provides PCO and Campaign Training each year during the Presidents' Day break in Olympia and we have a web-based training approach. We also provide online presentations.)

3. Ensure that all officers fully comprehend the responsibilities of their respective offices and that they have commitment to the goals and objectives, and more importantly, the duties required.
 - i. The officers should be the real core of the County and should promote the strategic plan, be visible, and available to the general membership
 - ii. They should all be familiar with Robert's Rules of Order and the County By-Laws for better conduct of meetings
4. Design and develop a CY 2005 strategic plan to increase the viability and strength of the county organization
 - i. Set priorities and plan a schedule to achieve the goals.
 - ii. Ensure that everyone is onboard with the plan – that they are all on the same page, so to speak – knowing that this is a one-year schedule that will have targets, goals, and activities.
 - iii. Report regularly updated on the status of the strategic plan and priorities.
5. Involve the membership in meetings; there is nothing more boring to people than just sitting through sessions. Insert interaction into the programs. Then, the meetings belong to the people and can go a long way into building this County organization into a team – a real team that is educated, committed, and ready to fire on all cylinders in 2005. This is critically important!
6. Make plans and stick to them; ever-changing plans after decisions have been made by a committee, board, or general body are detrimental to the successful operation of an organization.
7. Set a schedule of meetings and events for the entire calendar year and ensure that the membership is in tune with it. We need to review the list of festivals, events, and fundraisers the group will participate in and conduct in 2005.
8. Encourage members to attend other District, County, and WSDCC meetings. Also encourage reports of various other meetings that members attend (i.e., NARAL, YDs, Lions Club, etc.).

This is a just a beginning and is intended to be a living, breathing document that will be revised and updated as necessary. We have a huge challenge ahead and we must organize and strategize now to prepare for the next election cycle now. ***The R's used the AFL-CIO guidebook to assist them in attaining their victories and now we need to return to our principles and core values and fight back. We can do this and do it well, as a united body – if we stay positive and on course. Let's go!!!!***

Organizational Records

When you were elected chair, you may have received a book or a box of records from your predecessor. It probably contains the historical record of the District or County. You may like it and want to follow suit or design and develop your own system.

You may want to keep a book that contains platform, bylaws, meeting minutes, financial reports, and event information to take to meetings and you may elect to have your secretary keep these records as well.

Your treasurer should keep the financials and maintain a two-year history, broken down by month, for the organization.

Maps

For a nominal fee, maps of Legislative (broken down by Precinct), County, and Congressional Districts are available at the Elections Department of the County Administration Offices. Some counties have websites where the maps are available for viewing and printing. Every chair should be familiar with the District/County boundaries and understand the many situations where multiple County/Congressional lines exist. Current maps are very helpful to the membership and outreach communities, too. Maps and Election History are available online at county elections sites as well as the WSDCO website.

Precincts

The precinct is the most important voting and organizational unit within the Democratic Party. Precincts contain anywhere from 300 to 1,000 registered voters geographically and characteristically similar. The County government sets precinct boundaries and they change as often as once each year (in July of each calendar year, County Governments also review and make additional changes to precincts – make sure that you stay updated on these changes). In an effort to equalize or level each precinct so that each voter has about the same representation, redistricting reflects population shifts.

Legislative and Congressional redistricting is done by the Legislature once every 10 years. The precinct organization, whether it is the legislative district or the county organization, is the most important vehicle for communicating with precinct workers and thus the precinct voter. The organization should provide education on current issues that the Party deems important, provide support necessary to keep the PCOs working and it must provide the consistency of message through the District/County.

Responsibilities of the Precinct Committee Officers (PCO)

Finding Democratic precinct committee officers for your precincts is one of the prime responsibilities of the legislative and county organizations. The PCO is the Democratic Party's representative to the neighborhood and the neighborhood's representative to the Party. For many voters, the PCOs are the only real presence of the Democratic Party they see and meet. Please reference the Washington State Democrats' newly revised PCO Hand guide for additional information. You may also want to access another PCO Training course at this website, www.kcdems.org that can be customized to fit the needs of your organization.

Recruiting Precinct Committee Officers

As Chair, finding others to help you in organizing the precincts cannot be overstated. Like constituency building, you must list possible people that have some time and energy to go into the precincts to represent the Party, and willingness to attend meetings, to keep up with Party activities and issues. Your list should include campaign workers (legislative campaigns, mayoral, local school board campaigns, etc.), special interest group representatives, community council members, chamber of commerce activists, caucus attendees, etc. An ad hoc committee might be formed to undertake recruitment.

Each District and County Chair should have a large map of the District as noted in the Maps Section previously. The map should contain designations of precincts that have elected PCOs, appointed PCOs or acting PCOs.

- Elected PCO. – is one elected by precinct voters on Primary Election Day, must be a resident of said precinct.
- Appointed PCO. – is one elected by the voting membership of the District, must be a resident of said precinct.
- Acting PCO. – is one appointed by the Chair from outside the precinct when no volunteer from the precinct is available, and then approved by the District.

Map designations can be made with “dots” so that they can be changed as situations change. You will at a glance, always know which precinct is filled and which ones are empty. Spreadsheets and databases are also useful tools for keeping track of filled/unfilled PCO positions.

Once you have identified possible precinct workers, either talk to them yourself about joining the Party, or have another Party member that has a liaison with the person (or special interest) talk with them. Explain the responsibilities of the PCO so that they are well aware of the Party’s expectations. Whomever you have talking with potential Party workers about becoming PCOs, please ensure that follow-up is completed. There is no easier way to lose a good worker than by ignoring them after encouraging their participation. The following section explains PCO training workshops that your organization could produce for new PCOs. If your list research does not produce a PCO for empty precincts, the next approach may be door-to-door. You need to go into the precinct talking about the Party, issues of importance to the neighborhood, and the need for representation. This is similar to the door-to-door canvassing (material available in the campaign section of this handbook). You may be fortunate and find someone just waiting for the right organization to join, or the right person to ask him or her to help.

Election Board Workers (as of 2009, applicable only to Pierce County)

The major political parties in Washington State have the responsibility of making appointments of election board inspectors and judges at each voting location. These people have a very important job of preserving the integrity of the voting booth and, at the same time,

protecting the Democratic Party's interest during the election. For these reasons, the appointment of election board workers is of great interest to the Party.

The State law relating to the appointment of election board workers:

RCW 29A.44.410 Appointment of judges and inspector. - (1) At least ten days prior to any primary or election, general or special, the county auditor shall appoint one inspector and two judges of election for each precinct (or each combination of precincts temporarily consolidated as a single precinct for that primary or election), other than those precincts designated as vote-by-mail precincts pursuant to RCW [29A.48.010](#). Except as provided in subsection (3) of this section, the persons appointed shall be among those whose names are contained on the lists furnished under RCW [29A.44.430](#) by the chairpersons of the county central committees of the political parties entitled to representation thereon. Such precinct election officers, whenever possible, should be residents of the precinct in which they serve.

(2) The county auditor may delete from the lists of names submitted to the auditor by the chairpersons of the county central committees under RCW [29A.44.430](#): (a) The names of those persons who indicate to the auditor that they cannot or do not wish to serve as precinct election officers for the primary or election or who otherwise cannot so serve; and (b) the names of those persons who lack the ability to conduct properly the duties of an inspector or judge of election after training in that proper conduct has been made available to them by the auditor. The lists which are submitted to the auditor in a timely manner under RCW [29A.44.430](#), less the deletions authorized by this subsection, constitute the official nomination lists for inspectors and judges of election.

(3) If the number of persons whose names are on the official nomination list for a political party is not sufficient to satisfy the requirements of subsection (4) of this section as it applies to that political party or is otherwise insufficient to provide the number of precinct election officials required from that political party, the auditor shall notify the chair of the party's county central committee regarding the deficiency. The chair may, within five business days of being notified by the auditor, add to the party's nomination list the names of additional persons belonging to that political party who are qualified to serve on the election boards. To the extent that, following this procedure, the number of persons whose names appear on the official nomination lists of the political parties is insufficient to provide the number of election inspectors and judges required for a primary or election, the auditor may appoint a properly trained person whose name does not appear on such a list as an inspector or judge of election for a precinct.

(4) The county auditor shall designate the inspector and one judge in each precinct from that political party which polled the highest number of votes in the county for its candidate for president at the last preceding presidential election and one judge from that political party polling the next highest number of votes in the county for its candidate for president at the same election. The provisions of this subsection apply only if the number of names on the official nomination list for inspectors and judges of election for a political party is sufficient to satisfy the requirements imposed by this subsection.

(5) Except as provided in RCW [29A.44.440](#) for the filling of vacancies, this shall be the exclusive method for the appointment of inspectors and judges to serve as precinct election

officers at any primary or election, general or special, and shall supersede the provisions of any and all other statutes, whether general or special in nature, having different requirements.

The Party, whether it is the precinct committee officer or the county chair, has the right and responsibility to identify and then appoint election board workers. This is the only opportunity we have to give patronage jobs out.

In some counties, the PCOs submit to the county chairs, names of potential election board workers. The county chair then collects all the names for all precincts, and then submits those names to the county election department (or county auditor) for official appointment. This is a big job for the county chair, but well worth the effort. In some of the larger counties, they have election vice-chairs who conduct this effort. The county will have additional names of Democrats in the precincts that represent the Party to the precinct voters. If the election board workers were not PCOs or members of the local organization, this would be a good prospective list of Party contributors, whether it is time, money, or effort.

In other counties, the county auditor appoints the election board workers. This should be checked out. The Party has that responsibility. If, however, you opt to have the auditor do the appointing, ensure that the county auditor election is high on your list of priority elections.

Please review the requirements of election board workers and how your organization could implement a system of appointing good Democrats that will protect our interest at the polling places.

PLEASE NOTE: Since July 1, 2004, the Washington State Legislature authorized each county to conduct elections via all-mail balloting. Please refer to RCW Code 29A.48 for rules and regulations. Thirty-eight of the thirty-nine counties have elected to vote by mail balloting.

Executive Board

Each District or County organization elects a new board of officers at the beginning of odd-numbered years. How the board is structured and operates is based on the local set of bylaws. The board should meet on a regular basis and in special sessions as situations dictate. Many of the larger legislative district organizations have multiple vice-chairs in charge of standing committees (e.g., 1st vice chair of membership, etc.). The chair also has the right to appoint standing and ad hoc committee chairs and committees who are not vice chairs. They may or may not be voting members of the board, based on local bylaws.

When you decide to run for chair, you may want to think about potential board members and putting together a slate of candidates – people that you feel comfortable with and people that you trust. It is important that board members as well as the chair understand the duties and responsibilities of the position and make a firm commitment to serve. The job of chair and of some board members, too, takes up more than 1-2 hours a week and at some points of the year, is all encompassing. This really needs to be understood before people take on the jobs.

Executive board meetings generally are used for setting the direction of the group, based on local issues and campaigns. They are mostly informal sessions where conversation is free form and include brainstorming activities.

Each organization should have a vice chair, secretary, treasurer, representatives to the county and State party organizations. Optional positions include: parliamentarian, sergeant-at-arms, bylaws/procedures chair, program chair, legislative action committee chair, communications chair, membership/volunteers chair, candidate recruitment chair, endorsement chair, and independent auditor.

The vice chair should be a complement to the chair. In some organizations, this position is one of “training to become the next chair.” The chair should advise and share information with the vice chair to ensuring that their jobs are made easier. The vice chair should keep abreast of all activities and duties of the chair in the event that chair would be unable to fulfill the job (e.g., illness or personal schedule conflict, etc.). The vice chair can also assume the unofficial position of a certain committee chair or a specific project such as: fundraising, newsletter editor, program chair, etc. The vice chair may also represent the organization at Party meetings and events.

The executive board may also want to brainstorm about the general meetings – how, why, when, and where. Organizational business must be conducted, however, we must also consider informational sessions and having guest speakers that will draw in new and more members – remembering that our major thrust is the search for good Democratic candidates, and promoting and electing them to serve.

Effective Meetings

Have you ever sat through a meeting and wondered why you came to the meeting? The executive board can play a major role in the conduct of timely and interesting sessions. A program chair and committee can certainly help with this process as most members are involved in other community activities that may be relevant to Democrat meetings.

Location, location, location ... consider where meetings are conducted and if there is ample parking, disabled access, and if the site is the right one for your group. And, are you meeting on the right evening?

Involve your membership in the meeting – make them live participants – give people voice and vote -- the ability to speak up and out on topics – and, give them tasks. There is nothing more boring to members than to just sit and listen to the chair or just one voice. The organization belongs to the members. US Congressman Adam Smith recently delivered a speech that included the topic of District membership growth; he stated that the quickest and most successful method of building an organization was to give jobs to people.

The executive board may also help with putting on workshops. Special interest subjects, PCO training, PDC training, initiatives, just to name a few. Some of the districts have taken to agendas that have one hour of business, and a second hour dedicated to workshops on special topics.

Standing Committees

Every organization has two types of committees: Standing committees and ad hoc committees, usually appointed by the Chair. Standing committees are ongoing committees usually chartered in the organizational bylaws. These committees also have long-term responsibilities. Examples of standing committees used by many organizations include:

Finance Committee

The finance committee is usually the fundraising committee. The membership would include people who have had experience putting fundraising events together, could make those “heavy hitter” solicitation phone calls or have set up a direct mail solicitation campaign. Of

course, there is also room for those who have had little experience with fundraising, but would like to help. The committee should initially draw up the organization’s fundraising plan once the chair has developed the budget for the year. If at all possible, the campaign should contain a variety of fundraising approaches that will reach all economic levels of the district and appeal to a large segment of the population.

Membership/Constituent Building

It is always a good idea to have at least one set of members who are responsible for welcoming people into the Party, recruiting new members and PCOs, maintaining the membership lists, and developing PCO training. Very often, the chair is the official funnel of this type of information; however, it is also important to delegate responsibility. This does not serve to undermine the importance of the chair’s responsibility to get to know PCOs and to develop loyalty among the group. The membership committee may only need to be made up two or three people willing to spend time on the phone and at the regular meetings making sure that new members feel wanted. The committee chair is the one who will collect and present new PCO applications that will come between elections.

Communications Committee

The responsibility of a communications chair and committee are both internal and external to the organization. Internal communications, usually a newsletter, are a vital tool for the organization as a whole. This committee should be the focal point for “guest editors” that need to be included in the internal loop. The external communication responsibilities include preparing and sending out to the local media/press information, fundraising event notices and special District event notices such as caucuses. This committee should develop and maintain a distribution list for the external announcements, which could include neighborhood newspapers, union newsletters, community bulletins, radio stations covering your district, etc.

Volunteer Committee

This committee should primarily be responsible for active volunteer recruitment and deployment. This committee would identify volunteers and take requests from the chair and other committees for specific task accomplishment.

Tasks may include:

- Mailings
- Phone canvass
- Fundraising help
- Follow-up phoning
- Newsletter article writing
- Letter writing campaigns

If worked properly, this committee would be an asset to the Chair. Again, without active volunteers, an organization could go nowhere quickly.

Ad Hoc Committees

Ad hoc committees are exactly the opposite of standing committees: they are short-term in nature and not defined in the bylaws (except to say that the chair may appoint committee chairs), and usually focus on specific area of concern. Examples of ad hoc committees include:

- Bylaws review
- Festivals
- Candidate Search
- Issue Campaigns

Communication and Outreach

Very important to the success of any organization is the ability to communicate the Party message and reach out into the community. Getting the Party message out to the community helps with electing more Democrats and may result in increased membership. Many of the larger organizations have communications and/or outreach directors who develop a group plan and are tasked with the implementation. The plan includes targeting audience(s), designing and developing the tools and resources necessary to deliver the message. A timeline can then be set for each of the elements. There are many methods that may be used:

- Attending/Joining other district/county meetings and events
- Attending/Joining community club meetings and events
- Brochures in English and other languages
- Palm Cards

- Newsletters
- Websites
- E-Mail Networks
- BLOGS
- Festival/Fair Booths
- Voter Registration
- Doorbelling where voters are identified as potential Democrats and/or members
- Literature Drops

Party Building

Party building is one of the biggest and most important tasks a Chair has to accomplish during his/her term. The Chair must work in concert with the membership chair and committee to design goals and objectives for the organizations on how to build membership and the number of PCOs. Communication and Outreach committees play an important role here as well.

Form a committee, set up meeting schedule to develop and execute plan, and do fact-finding along the way, too.

- Familiarize all with the District/County Map
- Mark where you have current PCOs and strong members
- Break the map into sections: (i.e., Northeast, Northwest, Southeast and Southwest)
- Assign captains for the sections
- Determine growth factors: Projection of growth in each section
- Review the District plan and schedule for meetings/events
- Determine how you can work in new membership events
- Develop a plan of ‘how to’ – for example:
 - Develop a message – who, what, when, where --
 - Letters/e-mail to previous caucus members (you may want to do some test marketing by selecting one section and reviewing the results)
 - Telephoning
 - Doorbelling
 - Attending other community club meetings/events
 - Making presentations at your meetings and at other community club meetings/events
 - Festivals
 - Surveys
- Set a date for kickoff of the project and go for it! This could be a scheduled event for the organization, a rally of sorts where you have a morning event with coffee/rolls – invite everyone you can think of in the area that may be interested and pitch your plan – send the message: The Democrats are in town and intend to make an impact.

The Washington State Democrats maintain an online, voter file application called VoteBuilder. The file is a great tool for Party building. The technical department updates the file 3-4 times per year with revised information on registered voters from the Democratic National Headquarters. The data is formatted into a database and a front-end application was developed that allows you to retrieve the data, sorted the way you want it. You have many options: Congressional, County, District, City, Precinct, and then you can select on voter grades (i.e., SD – Solid Democrat, etc.), and much more. Each County and District chair is given access to their respective area and can establish accounts/passwords for each PCO to do their own retrievals. You may print/save the data in multiple formats: HTML, PDF, and Excel for walking lists and/or telephone lists. The State organization provides training several times each year and there is a document at their website that you may consult online or print. If you do not have access, please contact the State Party at 206.583.0664. The State Party website is:

<http://www.wa-democrats.org>

Fundraising

Without the financial and human resources, an organization cannot exist. Therefore, each chair, with the help of the finance committee, should develop a plan and budget that includes how to raise the funding necessary. First, the chair must determine the operational expense of the organization (e.g., monthly expense for meeting hall rental, newsletter costs, call for membership expense and event expense, etc.), and then apply the “extras” that come up during the year. The chair will then have an idea of what it takes to run the organization.

Then you determine how you will raise the funds: Call for Membership/Sponsorship, Sale of Products, Events (e.g., dinners, brunches, silent auctions), Festivals, etc. Make a plan, budget, and schedule and stick to it. And, more importantly, visit the documents at each board meeting, revising elements as needed. At the end of the first year of your term, each chair should have a sense of what works and what doesn't.

The Call for Membership/Sponsorship can be accomplished in different ways: 1) A letter to a list of past contributors, PCOs and members, previous caucus attendees, and electeds; 2) A cutout, membership form in your newsletter for the first 3-4 months of the year with a self-addressed envelope in the first mailing; 3) Presenting and providing membership forms at monthly meetings; and 4) Providing membership forms at special events and festivals.

Some of the larger organizations have Merchant Accounts through their banking services; this option allows you to process credit card payments. Contact your banking establishment and inquire about a Merchant Account. Another method of payment is through online transaction processing; the services are many and varied. This is another option for credit card processing and one that many people use today for purchasing items online via the Internet. PAYPAL and ACTEVA are just two examples. Do a search on the Internet and find the one that suits your organization.

Sale of Products is another avenue for providing funds. You may want to think about design of tee shirts, pens, notebooks, calendars, buttons, and stickers. This requires some up-front funding by the organization. You should order from union shops and there are many.

Every organization should have at least one special event during the year: Brunch, luncheon, dinner, or holiday party, for example. Many organizations have “signature” events such as the oldest political event in the state, The Pacific County Democrats Crab Feed. The Chair can captain the event or name an event chair. You should make a list of the tasks involved:

- Find a suitable location and negotiate a price, if necessary
- Determine date/time – could be tied to a holiday or special occasion within your community
- Form a committee – the following elements require a chair and subcommittee
 - Program including keynote speaker
 - Finance committee should be involved to help determine monetary goals and objectives and to provide budgeting
 - Decide on whether the event is catered, supplied by organization, or donations from Members
 - Advertise to the membership, community, and press
 - Decorate, if desired
 - Include a silent auction, live auction, and/or door prizes (a great method, as all items are donated)
 - Sell items (tee shirts, etc.)
 - Provide tables for candidates/issues, newsletters, brochures, etc.
 - Setup and cleanup crews
 - Kitchen crew, if you are preparing the food internally
 - Registration/sign in

Festival booths are both a method of reaching out in the community as well as fundraisers. *A note to the wise:* check out the festival information on the Internet, newspapers, and other publications, as some require early registration, fees, and insurance coverage. You may want to consider buying a canopy, tables, and chairs, as some festivals do not provide this equipment. If you decide on participating, make your booth festive and attractive to the public – red, white, and blue decorations are easy to find around Memorial Day or the Fourth of the July. US Flags help dress up the booth, too. At most festivals, you can display candidate/issue signs, written materials, and brochures along with your District materials. You may also want to offer products at these events, too. A few years ago, at Renton River Days, we had a PCO who painted a very cute and simple donkey on the faces of children. The organization chair should captain the event or select another leader to form a committee to setup/take down the booth, prepare staffing schedule, determine theme, and presentation of materials. When preparing the staffing schedule, ensure that you have telephone numbers for all volunteers.

You may also want to consider partnership with other Districts and/or Counties on events. This requires setting up a committee made of members from all the organizations to determine requirements/procedures, meetings, and good coordination. For instance, in one

county, there are two groups that have worked together over the years – the Eastside Democrats and the South County Democrats – and they put on dinners every year that are quite successful.

After each fundraising event, you should do a fact-finding meeting to determine if the event was successful or was it simply a party. If an event does not make money – change direction and find a new method. Do not keep doing the same event each year if it is not successful and does not meet your goals.

Insurance Coverage

The State and County offices have liability insurance policies. Insurance coverage becomes an issue when festivals and/or fairs request proof of insurance from the legislative district(s). More importantly, when we conduct the precinct/legislative district caucuses, and county/state conventions, many of the school districts and community halls that are used for the gatherings, require proof of insurance.

This liability coverage is easily attainable by asking that the State or County chair request a special rider to their respective policy for each specific location. For instance, the 5th LD Democrats purchase a booth at the Salmon Days in Issaquah. The festival committee requires proof of liability insurance. The County Chair filed a request with their insurance provider to allow this coverage. The insurance company sends the necessary paperwork to the 5th LD Democrats to attach to their festival application. The County Democrats act as an umbrella organization for the 17 LD's within the county, for purposes such as this. Please check with your County Chair to determine coverage for your District.

Endorsements

Every year, your organization may conduct candidate forums and an endorsement meeting for local, State and Federal campaigns as well as Initiatives. This may also result in the organization's donation to candidates and issue campaigns as well as design and development of sample ballots for identified Democrats in the District. District/County Bylaws and standing rules dictate the planning and conduct of such events. Most are covered by an endorsement procedure which is a clear, concise statement concerning who can vote, how to vote, and more.

In one county, for simplicity, they adopt a general questionnaire and a judicial questionnaire for all 17 Districts' use. The blank forms are made available at the County website for Democratic candidates (all but judicial candidates must answer YES to being a Democrat). This method benefits the candidates who only have to fill out one form and brings standards to the 17 Districts. The completed forms are posted at the website and copies are made for endorsement meetings. Letters of invitation to forums/endorsement meetings are sent to each candidate/issue campaign asking for endorsement. Meetings are scheduled and conducted with ballots. When a candidate/issue campaign is endorsed, they have the right to use the name of the organization and the chair in all advertisements.

Caucuses and Conventions

The Democratic Party has a four-tier precinct caucus/convention process for State party activities, culminating in the State Convention in June of even-numbered years.

Precinct Caucus

Anyone who will be 18 years or older by the Caucus date can attend the precinct caucus. They must be willing to sign in as a Democrat, and must attend the caucus for the precinct in which they live. The precinct caucus is a neighborhood town meeting. It is the first step in the endorsement process of candidates for President of the United States. Precinct caucus attendees elect delegates to county and legislative district conventions. The caucus also begins the platform process that determines the issues that Democrats will support. Rules and procedures for these caucuses and conventions are provided by the State Democratic Party and must be adhered to. All precinct caucuses are held on the same date/time in March, statewide. Most precinct caucuses are held in public buildings such as schools, town halls, community centers, etc. You will be required as the Chair to provide the County Auditor with a list of caucus locations in a timely fashion to allow for publicizing the locations in your county or district. The rules as provided by the State organization are reviewed every two years.

The following checklists are guides to assist you in preparing for your caucuses and conventions:

Precinct Caucus Checklist

- Form a Caucus Committee to help you with the tasks
- Find precinct caucus locations; make reservations and arrangements with each facility.
- Visit the facilities to ensure that there is adequate space, appropriate seating, and are handicapped accessible.
- Arrange for a convener for each precinct caucus.
- Send list of precinct caucus locations to the County Auditor and the State Democratic Headquarters
- Obtain precinct caucus kit packets for the County
- Review precinct caucus lists to see if every precinct has one and the delegate count is accurate. Contact the State Party about discrepancies.
- Prepare and enclose any materials your county wishes to include such as:
 - County convention call
 - County delegate/alternate reporting form
 - Blank paper for balloting; pens and tablets are useful, too
 - Precinct maps
 - Fundraising appeal for caucus expense
 - Recruitment materials for new members
 - Others
- Fill out appropriate information on the front of each precinct caucus kit

- Arrange meeting of precinct caucus conveners; mail out notice to conveners; hold caucus training sessions
- Prepare press releases for local media announcing location and times of caucuses
- Arrange for phone banks, public information announcements, etc., that encourage public participation.
- Collect materials from conveners at an established depot (central to the District, perhaps your general meeting location)
- Tabulate caucus results for delegates to the County and Legislative District Conventions
- Report results to County and State organizations

Legislative District and County Convention Checklist

- Again, form a committee to help you with the tasks and prepare a plan and timeline.
- Arrange location, date/time for convention, remembering the advice from above.
- Arrange location for pre-convention committee meetings: rules, resolutions, credentials, nominations and others.
- Place convention and pre-convention committee meeting dates, times and locations on precinct caucus kits.
- Notify delegates and alternates elected at precinct caucuses of time and place of the next caucuses and conventions by mail within 10 days of the convention date. Websites and newsletters also help in this regard.
- Obtain all precinct caucus delegate sheets (report forms) and other documents as soon as possible after the caucus from caucus chairs/conveners. Note: set up a depot location on convention day for conveners to return with their results. Again, e-mail, websites, and newsletters all help to communicate results.
- Prepare rosters of the pre-convention committee members elected by each precinct caucus.
- Prepare materials needed for pre-convention committee meetings: former convention rules and agenda, current county unit bylaws and platform, delegate/alternate precinct caucus sheets, resolutions adopted at caucuses, etc.
- Begin making arrangement for convention site: seating, registration, sound system, refreshments, signage, etc.
- Notify all current elected officials, prospective candidates for public office of the date, time, and location of the convention.
- Look through documents/reports received from the State office to ensure that all items of business will be handled at the convention.

- Make up a convention arrangements checklist and double and triple-check everything.
- Prepare press releases and get them to all media outlets in advance.
- Send all reports and resolutions to the State office immediately following the convention.
- Helpful hint: Copy all attendee and delegate/alternate forms and/or enter in database/spreadsheet before turning over to the County or State party. This can be an invaluable source for future mailings. The 11th LD Democrats in 2004 used the original list of precinct caucus attendees to create and load a database, used at the legislative district caucus to provide check-in by exception card, and their Legislatives Reps also used the data during the campaign season.

Applicable Charter Provisions and State Law

National Democratic Party Charter - Article Nine, Section 16

“The membership of the Democratic National Committee, the Executive Committee, Democratic State Central Committees, and all National Official Party Conventions, Committees, Commissions, and like bodies shall be equally divided between men and women. State Parties shall take provable, positive steps to achieve legislative Changes to bring the law into compliance with this provision wherever this provision conflicts with State Statutes.”

Charter of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington - Article V "Organizations or Officials Authorized to Function Continuously"

Precinct Committee Persons. – Precinct committee persons shall be elected, appointed, or recalled according to State law. Vacancies in the office of precinct committee person that exist because of failure to elect at state primary elections shall not be filled until after the organization of the county central committee and/or legislative district organization. Vacancies that occur in this office by reason of death, resignation, permanent change of residence, change of voter registration from the precinct, by recall of the incumbent, or because of failure to elect, shall be filled by appointment according to a procedure that affords every Democrat fair and equal opportunity.

Legislative District Organizations. – Legislative district organizations shall be organized in accordance with rules passed by the county central committee in those counties in which there are two or more complete legislative districts. Their function shall be similar to the county organization. In any legislative district organization, only elected precinct committee persons and precinct committee persons appointed after the organizational meeting shall vote for district chairperson, vice-chairperson, and any representative the legislative district organization is authorized to send to other party organizations.

Legislative district organization shall be constituted and shall conduct business according to State law and the Charter. In legislative districts where counties have not provided for legislative district organization meetings, the State chairperson shall do so.

Legislative district organizations shall have a minimum of four meetings per year. Any legislative district may organize for purposes consistent with the Charter.

County Central Committee. – The county central committee shall be the governing body of the county Democratic Party and shall have the responsibility for conduct party affairs at the county level. It shall be composed of all elected and appointed precinct committee persons. Each county central committee shall be organized according to State law. At its organizational meeting, the committee shall elect a chairperson and a vice chairperson; it shall elect any representatives it is authorized to send to other party organizations; and, it shall adopt bylaws. The county central committee shall have a minimum of four regular meetings a year

unless there are legislative district organizations within the county. The national, state, and county platforms shall serve as policy standards for the county central committee. The county bylaws shall establish a quorum and provide for calling special meetings by executive action or by petition of members. In counties with legislative district organizations, the county central committee may establish a county executive board. Such board shall be fairly apportioned.

Article Seven- "Basic Principles" -

Open Party. – The Democratic Party of the State of Washington shall be open to all who support the Party and wish to be known as Democrats. All members of the party shall enjoy equal rights, protections, and opportunities in governing documents and in all proceedings of the party at all levels.

Discrimination on the basis of sex, race, sexual orientation, age (except where state and federal law precludes participation), economic status, or ethnic origin is prohibited in the conduct of Party affairs at all levels.

To the greatest extent possible, all representatives shall be chosen from elected members. The time, the place and a description of the legal and practical procedures of all delegate selection and policy-making or governance meetings shall be publicized fully and in a manner to assure timely notice to all interested persons.

Fair Representation. – In elections, at all levels of the Party in which Party policy is determined or in which delegates, officers, other party officials and nominees for public office are to be selected, procedures shall:

- Provide full, equal, timely participation
- Assure fair, proportional representation of preference
- Prohibit the unit rule; not require delegates to vote as a majority determines
- Prohibit winner take all selections until the highest possible level of selection
- Not deny participation for failure to pay a cost or fee

- Provide whenever possible for direct and not secondary elections.

The Democratic Party organization which is closest to the electorate and which encompasses the constituency of a public office shall select the nominees to fill a vacancy in the public office. Democratic nominees and delegates should be selected by Democrats.

Article Eight – General Provisions” –

This Charter is intended to conform to the State and Federal statutes and to applicable parts of the Charter of the Democratic Party of the United States. If parts of this Charter are found to be in conflict with such statutes or the National Charter, the applicable statute or provision of the National Charter shall govern.

Article Nine – “Amendments, Bylaws and Rules” –

Rule. – Each official body of the Democratic party of the State of Washington shall adopt its own written rules (including bylaws, if applicable) for the conduct of its affairs. These rules shall be consistent with this Charter, the bylaws of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington, State and Federal laws and all provisions pursuant to the authority of this Charter.

Each official body of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington shall maintain copies of its own current rules and make them available on request. The state central committee shall maintain copies of current rules of each official body of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington make them available on request.

Washington State Law and Washington State Democratic Party Bylaws. – There are many circumstances which are covered by applicable statute, the Washington State Constitution, and the Democratic Party of Washington State. In brief, what follows is a list of many of the provisions covered by statute, Constitution, and bylaws:

- Vacancies in Legislature – State Constitution, Article 11, Section 15
- Vacancies in Partisan County Office – State Constitution, Article 11, Section 15
- Vacancies Caused by No Filing – RCW 29A.28.011
- Political Parties – RCW 29A.80
- Rule-Making Authority – RCW 29A.80.010
- Authority – Generally – 29A.80.011
- State Committee – 29A.80.020

- County Central Committee – Organization Meetings, 29A.80.30
- Precinct Committee Officers – RCW 29A.80.041 and RCW 29A.80.051
- Filling PCO Vacancies – RCW 29A.28.011
- Legislative District Organization – RCW 29A.80.061
- Mail Ballots – RCW 29A.48