

COMMITTEE MEMBER GUIDE



PRESENTED BY
THE SUFFOLK COUNTY
DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE
RICH SCHAFFER, CHAIRMAN

This manual is intended to serve as a guide for those individuals who are thinking about becoming Committee Members as well as those who are already members of the Suffolk County Democratic Committee. Suffolk County is divided into 10 towns: Babylon, Brookhaven, East Hampton, Huntington, Islip, Riverhead, Shelter Island, Smithtown, Southampton, and Southold. Each Town has a finite number of election districts referred to as EDs. Each ED has two Committee Members who are elected by the registered Democratic voters in the ED in which the Committee Members run.

How do I become a Committee Member?

To be eligible for election to the Suffolk County Democratic Committee (SCDC), the candidate must be an enrolled Democrat who is eligible to vote as a Democrat in the County and the Assembly District which contains the Election District.

Members of the SCDC are elected bi-annually for a term of two years. In order to become a candidate, a petition is obtained from county headquarters and distributed through the Town Chair. This petition should have your name written in as the candidate and should be circulated in the ED in which you wish to be a Committee Member. When you have at least 5% of the enrolled Democrats in that ED sign their names in support of the candidate, the petition is witnessed by you and turned in to the Town Committee. Once all petitions are turned in to the Town Committee, they will hand in completed petitions to SCDC which then files the petitions with the Suffolk County Board of Elections on or before a date specified by law.

If more than two people qualify (file a petition) for the same ED, the names of the qualified candidates will appear on the primary ballot. Registered Democrats who reside in that ED elect the Committee Members they wish to have represent them on Primary Day. If only two people have qualified for a given ED, no primary will take place in that district. The Suffolk County Board

of Elections will certify both candidates' elections and send them certificates verifying that they have been elected.

The Town Chair may appoint someone as a Committee Member in a district where a vacancy exists. When that person is approved and then appointed by the County Chair, they become a member of the County Committee.

What does a Committee Member do?

A Committee Member acts as the democratic representative for the ED. They should do whatever they can to ensure the election of our Democratic candidates.

Petitioning

Initially, they circulate petitions on behalf of the Democratic candidates so that each of them "qualify" to appear on the ballot. Each candidate needs to obtain a specific number of signatures on his/her petition to qualify to appear on the ballot.

In an effort to simplify the petition process, the Committee Member is given materials that will contain the names of the registered voters in that district along with addresses in street and house number order and the voter's party registration. The materials described could be anything the Town Committee decides to provide like, an ED book, a map, turf, etc.

Step 1: Check that you have the correct petitions for your ED

To make sure you have the right petitions, compare the Legislative District, Assembly District, and Town listed on the bottom left corner of each petition with the districts listed on the front cover or top of your ED book/walk list.

Step 2: Have your materials ready

To start gathering signatures, you will need the following materials:

- 1) A copy of your petitions with the top section completed in advance
- 2) Blue or Black Pens
- 3) A “walking list” (names and addresses of registered voters)
- 4) Clipboard or stiff material to write on
- 5) Literature from the campaign (if available)

Step 3: Know your rules for gathering signatures

- Be courteous and friendly at all times. You represent the campaign and anything you do will reflect on the campaign. If a person refuses to sign, do not be too forceful and respect people’s decisions with a smile.
- Petition carriers must be residents of and registered to vote in the State of New York, and in the district they are signing.
- Petition signers cannot have signed anyone else’s petition.
- Petition carriers must actually see the petition being signed by the voter. No one may sign for another person (wife cannot sign for husband, parent must not sign for son/daughter, etc.)
- All signatures must be in blue or black ink. Never use pencil.
- Persons should sign the petitions with the same name that they used when registering to vote. Everyone must sign his or her name and not initials. Do not use titles (Mr., Mrs., Dr., etc.).
- The only thing the voter must fill out on the petition is his/her signature. If collecting signatures door-to-door, it’s recommended that the petition carrier fill in all remaining information – date & voter’s address.
- Do not abbreviate names or addresses. Never use ditto marks.
- Never use whiteout to correct a mistake. Cross out the information with a single line and initial any change made. The initials should match those of the name printed in the “Statement of Witness.”

- Petition carriers cannot sign a petition sheet that they are carrying. You may sign a different petition if it is gathered and witnessed by a different person.

Step 4: After you are finished gathering signatures, complete the “Statement of Witness” on the bottom of the petition.

Voter Registration

As a Democratic Committee Member, one of your responsibilities is to register Democrats. This serves as a building block for a more viable Democratic Party and the future election of Democratic candidates. To that end, it is always a good idea that you have a supply of mail-in voter registration forms on hand at home and in your car. Voter registration forms can be obtained by your Town Chair. You can also register to vote online at: <https://voterreg.dmv.ny.gov/MotorVoter>. When you go door to door while carrying petitions, you should ask if there are any unregistered voters living there. Since you are going to the homes with registered Democrats, the chances are good for turning an unregistered person into a registered Democrat. You should take the completed registration form with you so you can turn it in to the Town Chair or mail it to the Suffolk County Board of Elections (PO Box 700, Yaphank, NY 11980).

Campaign Activities

In any given year, the Democratic Party may have as many 50 or more different candidates running for various levels of government offices in Suffolk County. Each of these candidates rely on the help they can get from the Committee Members in their District or Town. We understand that it is not possible for Committee Members to do all things for the candidates. Therefore,

we suggest you select a candidate who is running in your district and offer to help. If you're unsure on how you can help the committee or campaign best, ask your Town Chair or other leaders in the committee for advice and they will be sure to steer you in the right direction.

Below represents some suggestions as to how you can help:

Canvassing

“Walking your district” is one of the most important contributions you can make to any campaign. Even though television, social media, and direct mail figure so prominently in today's campaigns, there is little that can replace walking door to door with or without the candidate. Personal contacts within your ED continues to be remembered and valued by voters. You will be responsible for identifying all the voters in your ED who support the Democratic candidates and are encouraged to visit the voters several times during the campaign to assure they are supporters. Remember, most people are pleasant when you come to their door - that is not the same as support for your candidate. On Election Day, you sure ensure these people come out and vote.

Phone Banking

If you are unable to physically knock-on doors, today's campaigns often require telephone polling to test the candidates strengths and weaknesses, areas of support, etc. Frequently, it is done by volunteers who are given a script to follow. Results can be tallied and help structure the campaign effort that is being made. Telephoning is not limited to polling. Calls are also made to get additional volunteers, and most importantly to get out the vote on Election Day.

Contributions

Campaigns are expensive. Printing, postages, signs, office space, and in particular, media are a tremendous burden on the candidate and the Party. If

you are fortunate enough to have the ability to contribute, please consider financially supporting where you can.

Friend to Friend

Many campaigns are utilizing friend-to-friend letter writing, email, and/or texting campaigns. You will give the campaign a list of names and addresses of your friends and a letter/email/text will be generated from you endorsing the candidate.

Election Day

Many elections are won or lost based upon the strength of their Election Day **Get Out The Vote** operations. Even if your candidate is ahead in the polls, if your voters stay at home your candidate will lose. You must get your voters to the polls!

A Message from the Chairman

Thank you for all your hard work. As a Committee Member, you represent the foundation and core of the Democratic Party. You should be proud of the commitment and effort that you put forth election after election. Your participation helps to ensure the continuance of the democratic process in our society.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'P. White' or similar, written in a cursive style.