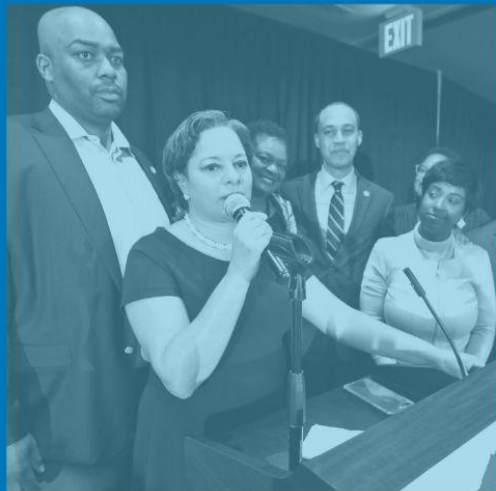


VADEMS



LOCAL CHAIRS' HANDBOOK

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF VIRGINIA 2022

Local Committee Chairs' Handbook

Paid for by the Democratic Party of Virginia

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This information is not intended as legal advice nor is it intended to be a comprehensive summary of your legal obligations. You should seek specific legal advice before acting on any matter discussed herein.

A Letter from the Chairwoman of the Democratic Party of Virginia

Dear Local Party Chair:

It gives me great pleasure to present this DPVA Local Committee Chairs Handbook. Being a Democratic Local Party Chair, especially for the first time, can be a daunting task. But you will also find that leading your Local Democratic Committee is one of the most exciting and rewarding ways to advance the Democratic cause.

Our hope is that this handbook will help you navigate all the different roles and duties of the local chair and local Democratic committee, so that you can focus on the crucial work of the local chair— creating awareness of Democratic values, raising money, recruiting volunteers and candidates, and providing support to all of our elected officials.

This handbook is designed to help you do your job better. It covers everything from setting up your Local Party Committee to raising money to organizing winning campaigns. It is drawn from the knowledge and experience of numerous Local Party Officers and Democratic Party of Virginia Staff and Officers, all of whom have faced the very same challenges you face when running your Local Committee.

It's important to remember that you are not alone. The Democratic Party of Virginia is a clearinghouse of information and training tools for Local Chairs and officers, which it provides at its meetings, via its secure website (<http://www.vademocrats.org>), and by email at Political@VaDemocrats.org.

In addition to providing information and staff support to help with the day-to-day operations of Local Party Committees, the DPVA can put you in touch with other Local Party Committees that may be able to help you with your particular question or problem. You should always feel free to call the DPVA with any questions or concerns.

Virginia is a purple state. It is vital that we turn out our Democratic voters. Your hard work expanding the Democratic network and supporting our Democratic candidates is what turns our Commonwealth blue, so thank you for all that you do.

Sincerely,

Susan R. Swecker

Chairwoman, Democratic Party of Virginia

January 2022

Chairwoman Susan Swecker

A Lifelong Virginia Democrat



A lifelong Virginian, Susan was born and raised on the Swecker family farm in the picturesque Blue Grass Valley in Highland County. Her upbringing was pretty typical of most members of rural middle America of that era, an abiding faith in God, love of country, while questioning our leaders and our direction, and for her family, a deep belief in the Democratic Party.

Those strong political beliefs weren't always well received by everyone, but that was where Susan learned the value of listening to others' opinions, being open-minded as well as developing a tough skin. All three have served her well over the years!

Over the years, she has served the Party in many critical and effective ways. At age 22, she became Chairwoman of the Highland County Democratic Committee. Her first professional paid campaign job was working for the Jimmy Carter 1980 Re-Elect in Virginia. From there she quickly rose through the ranks to several state and national leadership roles, including Executive Director of the Democratic Party of Virginia, a member of the Democratic National Committee, and former Chairwoman of the Southern Caucus.

As a current member of the Democratic National Committee, she serves on the Executive Committee and the Rules and Bylaws Committee. She is widely credited with leading the successful charge to move up the date of Virginia's Presidential Primary in the 2004 cycle, thus placing Virginia in a pivotal position for that cycle and beyond. Susan played a leadership role in the election of Governor Terry McAuliffe and the Democratic ticket in 2013 and served as a member of the McAuliffe Transition Team, advising him on hirings and appointments. Susan is President of Dividing Waters Public Affairs LLC. Susan received her law degree from Washington and Lee University and a B.A. in political science from Mary Baldwin College

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11th CD Chair – Fairfax

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Chair, VA Association of Democratic Chairs

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Chair, Democratic Black Caucus of Virginia

Ms. Linda Brooks, lgb293@gmail.com
Chair, Women's Caucus

Ms. Maggie Sacra, msacra@lgbtva-dem.org
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Chair, Rural Caucus

Mr. Mark Cannady,
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Chair, Small Business Caucus

Democratic Party of Virginia Staff Directory

The staff of the DPVA are the employees of the Central Committee. The DPVA is committed to diversity among its staff, and recognizes that its continued success requires the highest commitment to obtaining and retaining a diverse staff that provides the best quality services to supporters and constituents. The DPVA is an equal opportunity employer and it is our policy to recruit, hire, train, promote and administer any and all personnel actions without regard to sex, race, age, color, creed, national origin, religion, economic status, sexual orientation, veteran status, gender identity or expression, ethnic identity or physical disability, or any other legally protected basis. The DPVA will not tolerate any unlawful discrimination and any such conduct is strictly prohibited. Individuals interested in positions at the DPVA should visit <https://vademocrats.org/your-party/opportunities/>.

Executive Department

Andrew Whitley, Executive Director



About Andrew: Andrew has worked on political campaigns all across the Commonwealth, from Blacksburg and Fairfax to Virginia Beach and Richmond. Most recently he led Virginia's successful coordinated campaign in 2019, Take The Majority, which resulted in flipping both the House and Senate for the first time in nearly two decades, and managed successful campaigns for Delegate Chris Hurst, the Lieutenant Governor of Nevada, Senate Democratic Leader Dick Saslaw, but before that worked across the country for Hillary Clinton, beginning in the Iowa caucuses and ending in Philadelphia. A proud graduate of Virginia Tech, born and raised in Southwest Virginia, he started his career working for President Obama's re-election campaign in 2011.

Responsibilities: The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the DPVA and answers directly to the State Party Chair.

Email: awhitley@vademocrats.org

Phone: (276) 685-1790

Kiana Hamm, Special Projects Director



About Kiana: Kiana is a graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University and got her start in politics as an intern for the DPVA in 2017. She served as a finance assistant in the historic 2017 VA House of Delegates races where she was part of the team that gained 15 Democratic seats in one campaign cycle. Previously, she served as the Operations and PAC Director for the House Democratic Caucus where she was part of the team that won a Democratic majority in the House for the first time in almost 20 years. Kiana also serves on the Richmond City Democratic Committee Executive Board. Outside of work, Kiana likes attending dance workshops with local Richmond dance groups, playing video games, and taking care of her plants.

Services: Managing major projects of the DPVA such as, Chairs Orientation, Campaign Managers Training, DPVA Internship Program, etc.

Email: Kiana@VaDemocrats.org

Political

Services: The Political Department serves as the primary point of contact for local committees and members of the DPVA Central Committee. Political is always ready to assist in methods of nominations, bylaw restructuring and clarification and reorganization needs, as well as various needs by members of the Democratic Party. Feel free to reach out to Political@VaDemocrats.org with any requests.

Shyam Raman, Political Director



About Shyam: Shyam joined the DPVA in June 2015. Shyam's political career has taken him from Iowa to Nebraska to what is now his home here in the Commonwealth of Virginia. He's a die-hard St. Louis Cardinals and Tottenham Hotspur fan and enjoys cooking, watching soccer, playing golf, and playing with his dogs Charlotte and Artoo. Fun fact, he met Charlotte and his fiancée Julie at the dog park. The dogs take all the credit for their meeting.

Email: Shyam@VaDemocrats.org

Phone: (952) 992-0230

Jack Foley, Deputy Political Director



About Jack: Jack is originally from Danville, VA, and most recently served as Deputy Political Director for Western Virginia on Senator Mark Warner's successful campaign for reelection in 2020. Previously, he worked with Virginia's Joint Democratic Caucus in support of Democratic legislators and was a member of the Virginia Senate Democratic Caucus team that took back the Senate in 2019. Jack is a proud Radford University Highlander, an avid NASCAR fan, and a member of the Metro Richmond Area Young Democrats' leadership team.

Email: Jack@VaDemocrats.org

Phone: (434) 728-5672

Communications

Services: The DPVA Communications Team can provide local assistance regarding local media strategy and consulting, talking points, and highlighting local stories and issues facing elected officials.

Gianni Snidle, Press Secretary



About Gianni: Born and raised in Virginia, Gianni graduated from James Madison University and got his start in politics interning on Senator Mark Warner's 2014 re-election campaign. From then on he's worked to elect Democrats across the country. Most recently he served as Kathleen Williams' communications staffer for her bid for Montana's at-large district. In his free time, Gianni enjoys finding the best local breweries and restaurants.

Email: Gianni@VaDemocrats.org

Data

Services: The Data Department is responsible for the administration, servicing, and keeping the DPVA Voter File, Votebuilder, up to date. Resources are available at <https://votebuilder.vademocrats.org/>. The site includes information on how to gain access to Votebuilder for campaigns and local committees, as well as training documents and videos for users.

Brenner Tobe, Deputy Executive Director, CTO



About Brenner: - Brenner has been working to help elect Democrats for the past 20 years. Having served as the State IT Advisor for the DNC, Brenner came to Virginia in 2001 to implement one of the first statewide online voter files in the country for Mark Warner's campaign. Since then, he has continued to bring new, innovative and technological tools to help our candidates meet the changing demands of today's campaigns. Brenner lives in Richmond with his wife Kelly, and daughters Caroline, Isabelle, and Annika.

Email: Brenner@VaDemocrats.org

Katie O'Grady, Data Director:



About Katie: Katie O'Grady grew up in Wisconsin and was drawn into politics during the 2011 attempted recall of Governor Walker. As Quality Control Director for a political consulting firm, she worked on ballot initiatives, voter registration drives, and getting out the vote for Democrats across the country. After moving to Virginia in 2015, she managed a Virginia Senate campaign and went on to work as a legislative aide in both the Senate and the House of Delegates.

Email: Katie@VaDemocrats.org

Digital

Services: DPVA provides assistance with website, social media, and digital improvements to committees and party organizations. The DPVA online statewide calendar can be found at <https://vademocrats.org/> and submissions can be made at digital@vademocrats.org. Please feel free to reach out with any updates as well to your listing on the DPVA website.

Nick Scott, Digital Director:



About Nick: Originally from Milwaukee, Nick got his start in politics taking a semester off of college so he could work as an Organizer for Hillary Clinton in 2016. He moved to the Commonwealth in late 2017 and started as an Intern at the DPVA in January 2018 before joining the staff full-time as a member of the Finance team during the 2018 and 2019 cycles. Nick spends his time cheering for the Green Bay Packers, the Wisconsin Badgers, Arsenal Football Club, and playing FIFA.

Email: Nick@VaDemocrats.org

Rylie Cooper, Deputy Digital Director:



About Rylie: Rylie cut their political teeth in their home state of Pennsylvania during the 2016 election organizing on Penn State's campus for Hillary Clinton and Democrats up and down the ticket. They continued their organizing work in communities across the eastern United States including Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and most recently Virginia where they were Regional Organizing Director for Elizabeth Warren's presidential campaign. They took their organizing experience and the HTML skills they learned to build Tumblr themes in middle school, and dove right into digital work at Authentic to break fundraising records for targeted Senate races across the country in 2020. Rylie enjoys spending their time hunting for the best

cheap tacos or watching reality TV with their cat, Earl Grey.

Email: Rylie@VaDemocrats.org

Finance

Services: DPVA provides resources and training for local committees in the field of fundraising and finance.

Carrie Hamilton, Finance Director



About Carrie: Carrie Hamilton has a track record of successful fundraising and electing Democrats across the Commonwealth that she brings to the DPVA as the Finance Director. Previously, she served as Finance Director for Mayor Levar Stoney's 2020 re-election campaign, which broke fundraising records for cash raised in a Richmond mayoral campaign. Before that she was a part of the team at the Virginia House Democratic Caucus that won the first Democratic majority in 20 years. Carrie is a Richmond native and graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University. When not working to elect Democrats, Carrie can usually be found at one of Virginia's State Parks or local wineries.

Email: Carrie@VaDemocrats.org

Randy Sprinkle, Deputy Finance Director



About Randy: Randy is originally from North Carolina and most recently served as a Regional Political Director for the Jennifer McClellan for Governor campaign. Previously, he worked for State Senator Jennifer Boysko during the 2020 Session and on the 2019 Virginia Coordinated Campaign. Outside of work, Randy balances his love for the Great British Baking Show, reality television, and an ever-growing reading list.

Email: Randy@VaDemocrats.org

Operations

Services: The team at DPVA provides assistance in the submission of finance reporting and compliances standards. The team at DPVA can connect you with legal resources if needed by your Democratic Party organization.

Elise Vess, Chief Operations Officer



About Elise: Elise joined the DPVA in December 2017. A native Virginian, Elise began her political career as an Intern for Obama's reelection campaign on the William and Mary campus. After she graduated in 2013, Elise was a Field Organizer for Terry McAuliffe in her hometown of Chesapeake. She continued to work for progressive candidates, but most recently served as an EMT. Outside of work Elise can be found at the public library, playing with her dog Miss Liddy, or enjoying a friendly game of Scrabble with her wife, Jennifer

Email: Elise@VaDemocrats.org

Kristi Glass, Operations Director



About Kristi: Kristi lives in Chesterfield County, where she was born and raised. She most recently served as Finance Director on the Betsy Carr for Delegate and Elizabeth Guzman for Lt. Governor campaigns. She got her start in politics as Political Director on the Larry Barnett for Delegate campaign after serving for many years in Operations at Capital One. Outside of work, Kristi enjoys spending time with her husband (Jon), two children (Evan and Lila), two giant dogs (Elsa and Gryffin), and her cat (Hermione). She also enjoys traveling and plans to do a lot more of it if this pandemic ever ends.

Email: Kristi@VaDemocrats.org

Training

Services: In-house training and online resources are accessible through the DPVA. Trainings are available for Democratic Party candidates, staff, and volunteers covering Finance, Organizing, Digital, etc. Interested in taking part in future trainings or have suggestions on what DPVA should cover in the future? Please contact Jara@VaDemocrats.org.

Jara Butler, Training Director



About Jara: Jara Butler is a seasoned political strategist. Most recently, she was the National Training and Services Director at the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee in Washington, DC. A proud graduate of the University of Georgia School of Public and International Affairs where she served as Executive Director of Georgia Students for Barack Obama where she successfully organized over 20 chapters across the Peach State. A Native of Dallas, Jara served as National Committeewoman for the Texas Young Democrats and Faith and Values Coordinator for the Young

Democrats of America. After a brief stint in Corporate America, Jara became the District Director, Texas State Representative Victoria Neave. In 2018, she became Operations Director, then later, Political Outreach Director for Beto O'Rourke's historic campaign for the US Senate. There, she focused on outreach in rural and African-American communities.

Email: Jara@VaDemocrats.org

Voter Protection

Services: The DPVA Voter Protection Team is looking for volunteers to help protect the vote for the June Primary and for the November General Elections. As a Poll Observer, Hotline Operator, Voter Protection Locality Liaison, Voter Protection Campus Captain, or a Phone Banker you will help Virginia voters by applying Virginia's election laws. FAQs, as well as webinar training will be provided. If you are Interested in joining the Voter Protection Team, please email voterprotection@vademocrats.org

Ja'Scotta Jefferson, Voter Protection Director



About Ja'Scotta: Ja'Scotta Jefferson is a May graduate from Virginia State University. She began her political career as an intern for Congressman A. Donald McEachin of the 4th District. Most recently, she was a Field Organizer for Take the Majority 2019; more specifically she helped get out the votes for Delegate Danica Roem's re-election and Delegate John Bell for State Senate who flipped the seat. Ja'Scotta truly takes pleasure in giving back to the community and helping others. During her free time she enjoys traveling, dancing Bachata, working out, and learning new languages.

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Introduction

Our local committees are the backbone of the Democratic Party of Virginia.

The purpose of the Democratic Party at the national, state, and local level is to elect Democratic candidates to public office and to expand the Democratic electorate. Our local committees are the backbone of the Democratic Party of Virginia. Democratic candidates rely on local committees for many tasks, including registering voters, contacting voters, getting out the vote and staffing the polls on Election Day. While these grassroots efforts may seem mundane, they are essential to the election of Democrats and expanding our electorate.

All city and county committees are unique. There are 95 counties and 38 cities in Virginia, totaling 133 individual localities. Each locality in Virginia has different laws, political situations, and traditions. Each committee faces different challenges, and those challenges vary from year to year, even day to day. If there is a single fact that characterizes life as part of the party leadership, it is that you never know for sure what will happen on any given day.

The programs and possibilities of committee operations are as limitless as the imaginations of individual Democrats. There is always one more worthwhile thing the committee could and should be doing. And there is also always some way you could do the things you are already doing just a little bit better.

However, all of us have limited time and resources. That means you must have clear priorities and a plan to keep the city/county committee focused on what must be done. Without such a blueprint, you can spend all your time reacting to daily crises and demands.

This handbook is intended to be not only a day-to-day guide for you as a local committee chair, but also to be a “How To” training manual for you and Party Volunteers. **The Democratic Party of Virginia (DPVA)**, in conjunction with its

Virginia Association of Democratic Chairs (VADC), has developed this handbook to help city and county committee leaders understand and fulfill their unique role in the political process. The handbook is designed to help you think through your situation, set priorities, and develop a plan of action for your committee. It is not designed to be read all at once, but rather to be used as a reference throughout your term. You can use the table of contents to find the relevant sections and a brief description of the contents is below. In this handbook you will find sections on:

Chapter 1: Your Role—The Role of the Local Party and Local Party Chair

- Electing Democrats at every level and expanding the Democratic electorate.

Chapter 2: Party Structure and Overview – How Does the Local Party and Chair fit in?

- The roles and responsibilities of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and the Democratic Party of Virginia (DPVA) and their key committees, officers, caucuses, and staff.

Chapter 3: Prioritizing What To Do—Fulfilling Your Committee’s Responsibilities

- What are the legal, State Party Plan, and bylaws responsibilities that must be fulfilled.

Chapter 4: Organizing Your Committee—Creating and Updating Bylaws

- Examples of effective bylaws, ideas for building a better committee, and techniques for holding effective meetings.

Chapter 5: Setting Priorities—Evaluating Your Committee and Developing a Plan

- A step-by-step approach to the planning process for the committee.

Chapter 6: The Nominating Process—Primaries, Caucuses, and Conventions

- An overview of nominating processes, national convention delegate selection, and reorganization.

Chapter 7: Preparing For Elections—Year Round Party Building Activities

- Programs that build the relationships and organization needed to win elections from candidate recruitment to outreach.

Chapter 8: Elections—Getting Out The Vote

- How to make sure we get our Democratic base to the polls and win elections.

Chapter 9: Money—Budgeting, Fundraising, and Reporting

- Everything you need to know for budgeting, fundraising and reporting

Chapter 10: Communications—Moving Your Message While Building Your Committee

- How to use both traditional media and social media to effectively communicate the party message.

As we mentioned before, this handbook does not need to be read all at once. We encourage you to quickly skim the contents so you can familiarize yourself with the resources available. We know that some of the resources in the appendices of each chapter are forms you may want to be able to edit and update, or print separately. Throughout the month of January 2022, DPVA will be reworking and updating its chairs' resources library on the website and will have the forms in the appendices available in an editable format.

We strongly recommend reading Chapters 1-5 when you first get this handbook, especially if you are a new chair. Those chapters will provide you with a solid outline of what is encompassed by your role as chair and the resources that this handbook will provide. Your role as a local Democratic committee chair can be divided into two parts:

1. What you are obligated to do under state and federal law and the party plan;

2. What you may do to strengthen the party structure in your locality.

This handbook will describe both what you are obligated to do and what you may do. Most of your obligations as chair are covered in Chapters 3-4, 6-7, and 10. You can read those chapters right away, or reference them as they become relevant. As your committee strengthens and grows, you can use this handbook to aid you in expanding beyond what you are obligated to do, so you can focus on expanding the Democratic electorate in your city or county.

Virginia is a large and varied Commonwealth, we recognize that some things in this handbook may not be appropriate for every committee. We encourage you to pick and choose what is best for your committee as you read this handbook.

Chapter 1: Your Role

The Role of the Local Party and Local Party Chair

In light of the Commonwealth's political trends, it's clear the modern local party (city/county committees) must do much more than run conventions and help elect candidates.

Today's local party must serve as the bridge between grassroots activists and our candidates and officeholders, providing the organizational voice and support it takes to win elections. The role of the party and its leaders has evolved to include helping coordinate our candidates' campaign efforts with the Democratic Party of Virginia – not only during the traditional campaign season, but also through year-round party building and organizational activities and direct candidate services.

The role of the city/county committee includes:

- Local Organization (Precinct/Local/Legislative District Organizing)
- Candidate Recruitment (State, Legislative District, & Local ballots)
- Conventions, Caucuses and Primaries
- Fundraising
- Party building
- Outreach (to traditional Democratic-leaning populations)
- Development and maintenance of Voter I.D. files and targeting data.
- Officer and volunteer training and grassroots education.
- Public relations and external communications.
- Understanding election law, voter rights and campaign finance law that directly affect the election processes in the locality.

I. PURPOSE OF THE LOCAL PARTY AND LOCAL PARTY CHAIR

The purpose of the City/County Democratic Committees is to elect Democratic candidates to public office and to expand the Democratic electorate. Virginia has elections every year, which means our Local Committees and Chairs need to be looking ahead to the next election while getting the candidates in the current cycle elected.

A. Electing Democrats at Every Level of Public Office

At the heart of electing Democrats at every level is having candidates who are ready to run. **Candidate recruitment** and development needs to be an ongoing project. The majority of legislative and statewide candidates start out as members of School Boards, City Councils, Board of Supervisors, or Constitutional Officers. We will discuss candidate recruitment in more depth in Chapter 7.

It is the responsibility of the local committee to **determine and organize, if necessary, nomination processes** for party-nominated candidates. *This is a legal requirement of local parties and the local party chair.* The most common nomination processes are primaries, caucuses, and conventions. We will discuss nomination processes more in Chapter 6.

One of the most important resources a committee can offer a campaign is **grassroots volunteers**. The volunteers who work in election after election are often local committee members, and they have the closest relationships and contacts with voters. We will discuss grassroots operations in detail in Chapter 7, but it is worth noting that they are one of the most important components of any election.

In the age of data-driven campaigns, little is more important than **capturing data on each and every voter and volunteer** your committee has contact with. The tool where local committees can track this information is the voter file or Voter Activation Network (VAN). This database can be used to reach out to voters, recruit volunteers, identify potential members, and contact potential donors. However, the VAN is only as good as the data in it. We cannot impress the importance of entering data into VAN. As many campaigns say, if it's not in VAN it never happened! We will talk more about VAN and how your committee can best make use of all it has to offer in Chapters 7 and 10.

Finally, local committees often engage in **voter protection efforts** on election day—placing volunteers inside and outside of the polls to monitor how the election is going—and sending volunteers to the canvass and provisional ballot meeting after election day. Building a voter protection program will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

B. Expanding the Democratic Electorate

Developing effective **outreach programs** is one of the most challenging aspects of a local committee chair's job. People who are involved simply because they believe in the Democratic Party are already filling the committees, volunteering with campaigns, and attending events. Your job in grassroots party building is to convince

others that the party is relevant to their issues and their involvement matters. Grassroots party building requires enormous amounts of time and energy; the ability to project long-term needs and identify programs to meet those needs; and the stamina to reach out to those who must be given a reason to get involved.

As part of our outreach efforts, the Democratic Party engages in significant **voter expansion** work. Local committees frequently engage in **voter registration** drives at area events, popular locations, and high schools, as well as door to door in areas with a high concentration of transient residents. Another component important component of voter expansion is outreach to individuals who might need their **voting rights restored** due a felony conviction. Voter expansion is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.

In addition to voter expansion efforts, local committees can improve voter turn out through **voter education efforts**—making sure voters know the requirements they have to meet in order to vote and providing them with resources to answer any questions. We will also talk more about how to engage in voter education in Chapter 9.

II. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DPVA AND THE LOCAL PARTY

While elections every year mean that you will have a lot happening in your committee all the time, the DPVA is here to help. We have staff and resources at your disposal and you should feel free to reach out to us when you have questions or need assistance. There is a list of current staff, their contact information, and the topics they can help you with in the Appendix at the end of this handbook.

As with any relationship, there will be some give and take. The DPVA will have certain expectations from local chairs, and there are certain things you should be able to expect from us. In order to ensure that we all start out on the same page, expectations are laid out below:

What Local Chairs can expect from DPVA:

- Training materials and resources to make each local committee across the Commonwealth a success
- Assistance with technological resources like social media and VAN
- Election support through a voter hotline and voter information website
- Providing your local candidates with a menu of resources as they run for office

What DPVA expects from Local Committees:

- Respond to DPVA emails—either the chair should do so or a dedicated DPVA liaison within your committee
- Send us updated lists of party officers and individuals who manage your social media
- Communicate any changes in contact people to DPVA
- Return requested forms, data, and dues on time
- Inform us about upcoming events
- Work with DPVA on candidate recruitment

The DPVA and Local Democratic Committees will work together to pursue the two main purposes of the Democratic Party: elect Democratic candidates to public office and to expand the Democratic electorate.

III. HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE PARTY LEADER

To elect Democrats in today's political environment, local Party Organizations should provide essential election-related services to candidates in addition to maintaining the basic party organization, developing issues platforms, and performing other more traditional party functions.

Continuity of party organization leadership for more than one election cycle is of enormous benefit. Two guidelines can help keep you on track throughout your tenure with the committee:

1. Recognize Your Obligations

There are certain things you are obligated to do to fulfill the duties of your office. Do them well and make sure someone pays attention to the little things that keep the organization running smoothly. Follow the guidelines in your committee Bylaws and DPVA *Party Plan* as well as the State Board of Elections and Federal Election Commission regulations and laws. Pay attention so that disputes over obligations don't limit your opportunities. Your obligations are covered in detail in Chapters 3, 4 and 9.

2. Turn Challenges into Opportunities

There are so many things you are expected to do, “need” to do, and can do — if the resources and commitment are present. You will want to do more than merely meet the basic requirements of your job. But you can't do everything. Faced with a host of

challenges and expectations, you must set priorities and realistic goals to achieve during your leadership of the committee.

Chapter 2: Party Structure and Overview

How does the local party and chair fit in?

Every local committee is part of a much larger, nationwide structure: the Democratic Party of the United States is governed by the Democratic National Committee. Each State Democratic Party falls under the purview of the National Party. The Democratic Party of Virginia is governed by the Party Plan. In addition to local committees, the Plan provides for our Steering and Central Committees, including our state party officers, our Congressional District Committees, and other party organizations. The staff of the Democratic Party of Virginia provide support to all of these committees and organizations. The following sections provide a description of how each of these entities works.

I. THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE (DNC)

The Democratic National Committee (DNC) is the governing body of the national Democratic Party. Members of the DNC are elected by each state. Virginia Democrats elect four members, two men and two women, at the State Convention in each Presidential year who serve four-year terms. These elected DNC members are also called “National Committeemen” and “National Committeewomen.” In addition, the the DNC Chair appoints 75 members of the DNC; those living in Virginia will be counted with the DPVA.

The DNC meets twice a year and is responsible for overseeing the nomination of national candidates, issuing calls to National Conventions, establishing rules, and ensuring that each state complies with the rules. The DNC is governed by its National Charter and Rules. The staff of the DNC provides support to the DNC itself as well as to the state party organizations. To learn more about the DNC, [visit www.democrats.org](http://www.democrats.org).

II. THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF VIRGINIA (DPVA)

The Democratic Party of Virginia is one of fifty-six state parties (including territories). Every resident of the Commonwealth of Virginia who believes in the principles of the Democratic Party of Virginia is considered a member of the Democratic Party of Virginia.

i. DPVA Party Plan

Each state party has a set of state bylaws. Here in Virginia, we call our bylaws “The Party Plan.” [The Democratic Party of Virginia Party Plan](#) is the governing document of the Democratic Party of Virginia. It contains information on the structure and role of the state party. It also contains information concerning nominating procedures for all offices and the conduct of caucuses and conventions. Finally, it contains information on various procedures such as proxy voting, binding delegates, what constitutes a quorum, notice requirements, etc. **Refer often to the Party Plan.**

ii. Central Committee

The governing body of the DPVA is the State Central Committee. The members of the Central Committee are spelled out in the [Party Plan](#), including state officers, DNC representatives, Congressional District Representatives (20 from each of the 11 Congressional District Committees), certain Elected Officials (members of Congress; the Democratic Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General; the President Pro Tempore of the State Senate and the Speaker of the House of Delegates, provided they are Democrats; and, the chairs of the Democratic caucuses of the Senate and the House.

Within the Central Committee are different caucuses and groups, including the Virginia Young Democrats (VAYD), Virginia Democratic Women's Caucus, Democratic Latino Organization of Virginia (DLOV). These are just a few examples – you can refer to the full list with more details later on in this section.

The Central Committee meets at least four times a year, roughly on a quarterly basis, and is responsible for overseeing the nomination of statewide candidates (including determining the method of nomination – either primary or convention), issuing calls to State Conventions, establishing rules and amending the Party Plan, and ensuring that each district and local committee complies with the rules and the Party Plan.

iii. Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is the ‘Executive Committee/Board’ of the Democratic Party of Virginia and is responsible for the operation of the state party between meetings of the Central Committee. In general, the relationship between the State Steering and Central Committees is much like the relationship between a local committee's Executive Board and the local committee. Steering Committee handles all party matters that arise between meetings of the Central Committee.

The officers of the Central Committee are the officers of the Steering Committee. All members of the Steering Committee are members of the Central Committee and

members of their respective congressional district committees. All 11 Congressional District Committee Chairs are on the Steering Committee. A list of Steering Committee Members and their contact information is in the resource section at the end of this handbook.

iv. State Party Officers

State Party Officers are officers of both the Central Committee and Steering Committee. A complete list of party officers is available at the end of this chapter, but the duties of some of those officers are described in detail below:

Chair of the Democratic Party: Also known as the Chair of the Central Committee. The Chair may appoint and dismiss any and all personnel of the staff of the Central Committee, including Sergeant-at-arms; Parliamentarian; and other deputies, assistants, committees, counsel, and staff as are needed to manage the operations for the Democratic Party of Virginia, subject to ratification by the Steering Committee. The State chair oversees the work of the vice chairs and other officers; all vice chairs may be assigned duties and projects by the State chair.

Vice-chair for Organization (First vice-chair): The vice-chair for organization is responsible for strengthening county and city Democratic committees, increasing their membership and activities, perfecting their organization, providing necessary training, and acting as a liaison to congressional district and county and city democratic committees regarding statewide coordinated campaign activities. The vice-chair for organization also presides at meetings when the State chair is absent and serves as "acting" State chair in the event of a vacancy in the position of State chair, or in an extended vacancy of the State chair, pending election by the central committee of a new State chair.

Vice-chair for Rules (Second vice-chair): The vice-chair for rules is responsible for preparing the Party Plan and other rules, and drafting amendments to the Plan, delegate selection plans and calls to convention and advising the State chair and other appropriate entities as to their implementation. The vice-chair for rules also serves as the chair of the standing committee on resolutions (or, in conjunction with the State chair, appoint such a chair for the committee).

Vice-chair for Technology and Communications: The vice-chair for technology and communications is responsible for, and assists congressional district, county & city committees with, implementation of technologies for identifying and mobilizing voters, maintaining records, & communications within party organizations and to the public.

Vice-chair for Finance: The vice-chair for finance is responsible for raising those funds necessary for meeting the annual budget needs of the Party, and, in conjunction with the treasurer, works with the finance director to implement a fundraising plan. The vice-chair for finance also works with congressional district, county and city committees to assist in their fundraising efforts.

Vice-chair for Outreach: The vice-chair for outreach serves as chair of the standing outreach committee, as provided in section 4.21 of the Party Plan, and works with the congressional district, county and city committees to develop outreach plans and strategies for their jurisdictions. The vice chair for outreach is responsible for outreach to the various constituencies of the Democratic Party and serves as liaison with statewide organizations supportive of the Democratic Party. The vice chair for outreach is also responsible for overseeing the Party's voter registration activities.

Secretary of Central Committee: The secretary keeps and makes available to members the minutes of the Central Committee and Steering Committee meetings and formally certifies actions and resolutions of the Central Committee.

Treasurer of the Central Committee: The treasurer safely keeps all funds of the committee and keeps a detailed account of all contributions, other receipts and disbursements. The treasurer submits to the members of the Central Committee an oral financial report at each meeting of the Central Committee and an audited report annually. The treasurer shall work with the vice-chair for finance to prepare the annual budget and to conduct quarterly budget reviews. The treasurer shall be the signatory on Federal Election Commission and State Board of Elections required financial reports.

v. Congressional District Committees

Each of the eleven Congressional Districts in Virginia has a Congressional District Committee. Each District Committee is composed of 20 members nominated by Congressional District Conventions and elected by the State Convention in the gubernatorial year. In addition, members of the Steering Committee and State Party Officers are considered members of their resident congressional district committee. Once the District Committee has been formed, it elects one Democratic member of the General Assembly and three representatives (usually city and county chairs) are elected as members of the District Committee and therefore, are members of the Central Committee.

vi. City and County Committees

There are 95 counties and 38 cities in Virginia, totaling 133 individual localities. There is a local committee in each one of them – again, this is the backbone of the state party. Some chairs also serve on their Congressional District Committee as one of the 20 elected members, or as one of the 3 local committee chair members selected by the CD committee. Serving as a local chair does not mean you are automatically on the Central Committee.

According to the Party Plan, committees must reorganize by caucus or convention sometime between the 1st of the December in odd-numbered years and the 15th of the following January (The next reorganization will begin December 2023.). At that time, members of the committee are elected. If possible, each precinct should be represented by at least one full voting member of the committee who is a resident of that precinct. Officers are elected at the first meeting following reorganization. City and county committees meet on a regular basis, usually monthly. A list of Local Committee Chairs and their contact information is in the resource section at the end of this handbook.

vii. Other Party Organizations

As mentioned above under ‘Central Committee,’ there are ancillary organizations within the Democratic Party of Virginia.

Virginia Association of Democratic Chairs (VADC)

The Virginia Association of Democratic Chairs (VADC) is made up of all the city and county chairs. The VADC was set up to provide a vehicle for the exchange of information between and among chairs. The organization has formed working groups based on region and size of jurisdiction. In addition, the VADC works with DPVA staff to provide training and support to city and county chairs.

The VADC typically meets during the weekends of Central Committee meetings and reorganizes once every two years after local committee reorganization (so, the beginning of every even numbered year).

Virginia Young Democrats

Young Democrats (VAYD or YD) clubs involve our youth in the political process. There are chapters at nearly every major college and university in the state, and at many community colleges. We also have active chapters at many of our high schools and community colleges. There are active clubs involving young professionals. The YD clubs provide an organized way to involve young people between the ages of 13 and 35 in

campaigns and in building the Democratic Party. For more information visit:
<http://www.vayd.org>.

You should do everything you can to involve the YD clubs in your area in your campaigns and committee operations. You will find that they are an excellent source of volunteers with nearly boundless energy. Be careful, however, not to take advantage of them – involve them in planning and strategy meetings. Local committee chairs should view our YDs as important contributors to our electoral success now as well as the future of our party. Train them well!

Internal Party Caucuses

The DPVA recognizes the need to encourage the growth and active participation of important constituency groups in all levels of party activities. **The Democratic Party of Virginia is growing! Across the Commonwealth, Democrats are networking based on common interests and goals. As our constituency organizations and caucuses are expanding, so too are our caucuses.** Each caucus chair also serves on the Steering Committee.

- **Virginia Democratic Women's Caucus:** The purpose of this organization shall be to unite the women of Virginia in support of the women of the Democratic Party and its candidates, encourage full and equal participation of women in the Party, encourage, educate, and finance Democratic women who aspire to public office, and raise awareness of women's issues in the Commonwealth and the Virginia Democratic Party. www.vawomenscaucus.org

- **Democratic Black Caucus of Virginia:** The Democratic Black Caucus of Virginia (DBCV) is an integral part of the Democratic Party of Virginia and Democratic National Committee. Our mission is to educate members of our communities about the value of the Democratic Party and to educate the members and leadership of the Democratic Party of Virginia about the needs of our community. The DBCV consists of members from all corners of the Commonwealth and various economic strata. Our members are committed to advancing Democratic values and electing Democrats from the local grassroots level to the General Assembly, to Congress and to the White House. <https://www.facebook.com/dbcvirginia/>

- **The disAbility Caucus:** The DPVA disAbility Caucus aims to promote the interest of individuals with disabilities in the political process and create awareness of their needs to the community and elected officials. Activities shall include voter registration,

education, employment, outreach, recruitment of members of local Democratic committees and endorsement of candidates for political office.

<https://www.facebook.com/DPVAdisAbilityCaucus/>

- **Rural Caucus:** The mission of the Rural Caucus is to nurture connections between communities of people who may, or may not yet, vote Democratic in Virginia's non-urban areas, to engage local people to determine the issues and priorities that matter to them, and to ensure sustainable rural life and progressive values throughout all of Virginia. <https://www.facebook.com/ruralvadems>
- **Small Business Caucus:** The VADSBC mission and goal is to organize and document the Virginia Democratic small business base through local Democratic Party networking. Our goal is to create a Commonwealth-wide directory of Democratic friendly small businesses. For more information visit: www.vadsbc.com.
- **LGBT Democrats of Virginia:** The LGBT Democrats of Virginia present issues and act as an advocate for LGBT persons within the Democratic Party of Virginia. They help elect Democratic candidates by providing a centralized repository of expertise and a clearinghouse for all LGBT campaign activities through working with various Democratic campaigns. For more information visit: lgbtvadem.org.
- **Democratic Asian Americans of Virginia** The purpose of this organization is to promote the interest of Asian Americans in support of the Democratic Party and encourage participation of Asian Americans at all levels of the Democratic Party. They do voter registration & education, community outreach, recruitment of members of local Democratic committees, fundraising, and endorsements. For more information visit: www.vaasiandemocrats.org
- **Latino Democratic Caucus:** The Democratic Latino Organization of Virginia (DLOV) is a political committee that fosters participation of Latinos with the Democratic Party and supports candidates who embrace policies that benefit the Latino community in Virginia. www.vademlatinos.com
- **Veterans and Military Family Members Caucus:** The Democratic Party of Virginia Veterans and Military Family Members Caucus makes it their mission to inform politicians in office about the needs of veterans, service members, and their families. For more information visit: <https://www.facebook.com/DPVAVMFCaucus/>.
- **Labor Caucus:** The Labor Caucus of the Democratic Party of Virginia is committed to increasing awareness of labor issues and through their actions, support and communications making a positive impact for today's working class.

viii. The State Party Staff

The staff of the DPVA are the employees of the Central Committee. The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the DPVA and answers directly to the State Party Chair. A complete listing of current staff, their contact info, and topics you should reach out to them with questions on is included in at the end of this chapter. The DPVA office is open Monday – Friday from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm (though as many of you know, there is usually someone available beyond 6:00 pm – especially as we approach Election Day).

Additional Resources for Chapter 2

- [The Party Plan](#)
- [Chart: Democratic Party Organization Structure](#)
- [Chart: Democratic Party of Virginia Organization Structure](#)
- [Chart: Democratic Party of Virginia Officer Structure](#)

Chapter 3: Prioritizing What To Do

Focus on what MUST be done first

As a local committee chair, you have certain roles and responsibilities that you *must* fulfill. Fulfilling internal party and administrative obligations is often the last thing on the mind of a new local committee chair. Party leaders must cope with a host of seemingly “mundane” tasks: writing and adopting a Call to Caucus; conducting activities required by Virginia law related to elections; filing campaign finance reports; interpreting Bylaws; and other aspects of party administration.

Especially at first, these activities may not seem as important as the critical tasks of the Coordinated Campaign, delivering the message, party building and organizing, and fundraising. It is essential, however, that the chair takes the necessary time to fully understand basic committee obligations and Virginia and federal law and the DPVA *Party Plan* (state bylaws).

Rules and institutional obligations may not be as interesting as political activities, but a thorough knowledge of how the rules and the law work is essential if the chair is to act fairly and consistently. An unfair or inconsistent decision, a “bad call,” or a lack of attention to party obligations can damage your ability to lead the party toward your more important political goals, cause an embarrassing headline in the press, or even result in a legal fine or lawsuit.

This chapter will cover many of those obligations. However, it is not supposed to be an exhaustive list of your legal obligations, nor is anything in this handbook intended to be legal advice. If you need legal advice, you should consult the counsel for your committee or contact the DPVA. As a local democratic committee chair, most of your obligations are governed by three primary sources:

- The **Code of Virginia** (state law, mainly Title 24); and
- The Democratic Party of Virginia **Party Plan** (internal Party document);
- Your Local Committee Bylaws (if your committee does not have bylaws, you must create them. See Chapter 4).

In addition, you will have certain legal obligations that will apply to you due to the activity you are engaging in, rather than your position as chair. The sources

of these obligations include the *Code of Virginia*, relevant case law, and, potentially, federal campaign finance law. This chapter will not delve into campaign finance law. Instead, your obligations under both state and federal campaign finance laws are covered in more detail in Chapter 9.

I. CODE OF VIRGINIA

When you were elected chair of your local committee, you assumed critical legal responsibilities. State law requires that you fulfill the following duties:

Code Section	Requirement
§ 24.2-106. Appointment and terms; vacancies; chairman and secretary; certain prohibitions; training.	Local chairs are responsible for nominating representatives to the local electoral boards. Electoral Boards are made up of three members: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. For appointments, representation will be given to each of the two political parties having the highest and next highest number of votes in the Commonwealth for Governor at the last preceding gubernatorial election. Two electoral board members shall be of the political party that cast the highest number of votes for Governor at that election. The political party entitled to the appointment shall make and file recommendations with the judges for the appointment not later than January 15 of the year of an appointment to a full term or, in the case of an appointment to fill a vacancy, within 30 days of the date of death or notice of resignation of the member being replaced. Its recommendations shall contain the names of at least three qualified voters of the county or city for each appointment. The judges shall promptly make such appointment (i) after receipt of the political party's recommendation or (ii) after January 15 for a full term or after the 30-day period expires for a vacancy appointment, whichever of the events described in clause (i) or (ii) first occurs.
§ 24.2-115. Appointment qualifications, and terms of election officers of election.	The Chair should nominate election officers. If practicable, election officers will be appointed from lists of nominations filed by political parties. The party must file nominations with the secretary of the electoral board at least 10 days before February 1 each year.
§ 24.2-428.2. Return of registered voter to active status and § 24.2-429. Maintenance of accurate registration records by general registrar; notice and hearing before	The Chair should receive from the General Registrar in his or her locality a list of those individuals who will have their voter registration cancelled due to failure to take steps to return to active status from inactive status within the requisite period of time and those who will have their registration cancelled due to being believed to be improperly registered.

cancellation.	
§ 24.2-508. Powers of political parties in general.	Each political party has the power to (i) make its own rules and regulations, (ii) call conventions to proclaim a platform, ratify a nomination, or for any other purpose, (iii) provide for the nomination of its candidates, including the nomination of its candidates for office in case of any vacancy, (iv) provide for the nomination and election of its state, county, city, and district committees, and (v) perform all other functions inherent in political party organizations.
§ 24.2-509. Party to determine method of nominating its candidate for office; exceptions.	As chair, you have the right to determine the method by which party nomination will be made for any offices in your locality. If the office in question overlaps multiple localities, you will work in conjunction with the other chairs of those local committees to determine the method of nomination. The method in which this determination should be made is contained in the party plan. There are certain exceptions in this section of the code that apply to incumbents.
§ 24.2-510. Deadlines for parties to nominate by methods other than primary.	This section lays out a schedule for completing a candidate nomination by means other than a primary. If you plan on nominating a candidate by means other than a primary, you can read the schedule in the <i>Code of Virginia</i> excerpts at the end of this chapter.
§ 24.2-511. Party chairman or official to certify candidates to State Board and secretary of electoral board; failure to certify.	As local committee chair you must certify the name of any candidate who has been nominated by your party by a method other than a primary for any office to be filled within your locality within five days after the last day for nominations to be made.
§ 24.2-516. Party to furnish names of chairmen and notify State Board of adoption of direct primary.	Each chairman of a local committee must file written notice with the Board, not more than 125 days and not less than 105 days before the date set for the primaries, whether or not a primary will be held for each office that is eligible for a primary. In order to satisfy this requirement, the chair must make sure the Board receives by the deadline (i) written notice from the appropriate party chairman or (ii) a copy of the written notice from an incumbent officeholder to his party chairman of the incumbent selection, pursuant to § 24.2-509, of the primary as the method of nomination.

<p>§ 24.2-527. Chairman or official to furnish State Board and local electoral boards with names of candidates and certify petition signature requirements met.</p>	<p>As chair, you are responsible for certifying the candidates for nomination for offices. If the office in question overlaps multiple localities, you will certify in conjunction with the other chairs of those local committees. You must certify the candidates for the Commonwealth at large or of a congressional district or of a General Assembly district to the State Board, and to furnish the name of any candidate for any other office to the State Board and your local electoral boards. Prior to providing the names of the candidates to the State Board and local electoral boards, you must certify that a review of the filed candidate petitions found the required minimum number of signatures of qualified voters for that office to have been met. Signature requirements are found in §24.2-521, which is in the <i>Code of Virginia</i> excerpts at the end of this chapter.</p>
<p>§ 24.2-536 - § 24.2-540</p>	<p>These sections discuss how to handle a candidate dropping or dying, etc. prior to and after a primary. It is unlikely that you will need to use these sections, but in the event that you do it is in the <i>Code of Virginia</i> excerpts at the end of this chapter.</p>
<p>§ 24.2-604. Prohibited activities at polls; notice of prohibited area; electioneering; presence of representatives of parties and candidates; simulated elections; observers; new media; penalties.</p>	<p>Subsection C of this Code section allows the Democratic party to send authorized representatives to observe the election from inside polling location. Those representatives must be registered to vote in Virginia, have proof of that registration, and an authorized representative form signed by the local party chair, a draft of which is in the resources section of this chapter. The DPVA requests that you send a signed copy of the "Authorized Representative Form for Poll Observers" to the DPVA Voter Protection Director no later than 30 days prior to the election.</p>
<p>§ 24.2-633. Notice of final testing of voting system; sealing equipment.</p>	<p>You should receive notification of the final testing of voting or counting machines from your local electoral board and should be allowed to send a representative to observe. Any time you receive these notifications, please pass them on to the DPVA Voter Protection Director.</p>
<p>§ 24.2-653. Voter whose name does not appear on</p>	<p>Subsection B of this Code section allows the Democratic Party to send authorized representatives to observe the provisional ballot meeting. Those representatives</p>

pollbook or who is marked as having voted; handling of provisional ballots; ballots cast after normal close of polls due to court order extending polling hours.	must be registered to vote in Virginia, have proof of that registration, and an authorized representative form signed by the local party chair, a draft of which is in the resources section of this chapter. The DPVA requests that you send a signed copy of the "Authorized Representative Form for Provisional Ballot Meeting Observers" to the DPVA Voter Protection Director no later than 30 days prior to the election.
§ 24.2-655. Representative of political parties and candidates to be present on request.	This section allows the Democratic Party to send authorized representatives to observe the counting of the votes at each polling location and at the central absentee precinct. Those representatives must be registered to vote in Virginia, have proof of that registration, and an authorized representative form signed by the local party chair, a draft of which is in the resources section of this chapter. The DPVA requests that you send a signed copy of the "Authorized Representative Form for Poll Observers" to the DPVA Voter Protection Director no later than 30 days prior to the election.

In addition, **the chair is responsible for ensuring that all required financial reports are submitted on time and are correct when submitted.** Chapter 9 in this document provides detailed information on reporting requirements. This requirement is critical - if you have any questions about your need to report after reading this document, contact the DPVA Chief Operations Officer.

II. REQUIREMENTS OF THE PARTY PLAN

The *Party Plan* is the "set of bylaws" of the DPVA. Requirements and the appropriate section of the *Party Plan* are listed in the following table.

Party Plan Section	Requirement
1.2 Cooperation with DNC	Full cooperation with all rules and requirements promulgated in connection with any Call to the Democratic National Convention or Democratic Party Conference.
3.1 Full Participation	Make efforts to include young people, women, African Americans and other ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities and other constituent groups in all Democratic committees and delegations to Democratic conventions and other party affairs.

3.2 Registration	Support the broadest possible registration of voters without discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age (if of voting age), color, creed, national origin, religion, ethnic identity, sexual orientation, economic status, or disability.
4.15 and 8.14 Dues	Pay city or county committee dues in a timely manner between January 1 and March 15 following notice from the Central Committee treasurer.
7.1-7.5 Nominating Committees	Participate in, or delegate someone to participate in, the nominating committee for each district that is in whole or in part within the locality of the local chair. The nominating committee will determine the method of selecting the Democratic Nominee for Constitutional Officers and General Assembly members.
8.1-8.4 Reorganization	Local committees are required to disband and reorganize every two years in the period between December 1st in odd numbered years and the 15th of the following January. You must determine the date of your reorganization meeting and communicate that information to the State Party by November 15th of each odd numbered year.

8.6 Officers	Each local committee must elect a chair, secretary, treasurer, and such other officers as it deems necessary no later than January 15th. The secretary must submit to State Party headquarters within five (5) days of his or her election the names, addresses, emails and telephone numbers of the officers and members of the committee. The secretary must submit a list of any changes to the committee list every 6 months thereafter until the next committee election.
8.7 and 10.2 Bylaws	Ensure your committee has bylaws and that those bylaws have been submitted to the State Party within 90 days of the chair's election. After any changes to the bylaws, a new copy should be sent to the State Party within 14 days.
8.8 Responsibilities	Seek the registration of voters, to perfect the Democratic organization within the county or city, and to do all within your power to aid in the victory of the Democratic Party's nominee in all elections
8.11 and 9.5 Meetings	Call and publicize, with at least seven days notice, all meetings

9.1 Notice Requirement	When a Democratic committee determines that committee members, delegates and alternates to any convention, or Democratic nominees for any office, are to be selected by any method other than primary, notice of the time, place and method of selection shall be given at least seven (7) days ahead of time. Committees are required to post this notification on either their own committee web site, congressional district web site, or the DPVA web site and provide a press release to all relevant newspapers.
10.8 Party Support	You, and members of your committee, may not publicly support, endorse, or assist any candidate opposed to a Democratic nominee.
10.11 Party Endorsements	Your committee, may not endorse candidates for office in contested races prior to their nomination.
13.2 Encourage Voters	Encourage Democratic voters and voters who may favor Democrats to participate in primary elections.
15.4 Certification of Delegates	Certify a list of the delegates and alternates to the secretary of the committee that called a convention within 5 days of their selection.

In addition, the *Party Plan* requires local committees to choose methods of nomination, accept pre filings for delegates and alternates, and participate in the nominating process for State Legislative candidates. **The local committee chair is responsible for ensuring that all of these requirements are fulfilled properly.** The complete Party Plan is included in the resources at the end of Chapter 2.

III. LOCAL COMMITTEE BYLAWS

Every local committee should have its own bylaws. Since each committee's bylaws are different, you will need to read your bylaws to determine what your obligations are under your local committee's bylaws. If you cannot find your committee's bylaws, check with DPVA to see if we have them on file. If you still cannot find a record of your local committee bylaws, one of your first priorities as Chair will be to create and adopt bylaws. The State Party Plan requires that you submit your committee's bylaws to the State Headquarters within ninety (90)

day of your election as Chair. Chapter 4 will go over local committee by laws in more detail.

IV. SEEKING SOUND LEGAL ADVICE

Your committee should, if possible, have its own legal counsel who is familiar with federal and state election and campaign finance law. Party legal counsel should receive training information from the state counsel, and at a minimum develop a working knowledge of:

- Federal and state campaign finance laws, especially as they relate to the committee's activity.
- Virginia law concerning candidate eligibility and ballot access.
- Federal and Virginia law concerning voter eligibility and registration.
- Virginia law concerning challenged ballots and contested elections.
- Virginia law related to the conduct of elections, including voting procedures such as early voting and mail ballots.

Whether or not your committee has its own legal counsel, you should also let the DPVA know if you have any legal issues within or committee as soon as they develop. Ask DPVA's Voter Protection Director or Executive Director first; if needed they will consult DPVA's Legal Counsel.

V. CALENDAR OF IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

The DPVA has put together a list of calendars of important dates and deadlines for you to use from 2021- 2023. It is included in the resources section at the end of this chapter. We encourage you to reference them frequently. They covers election dates, as well as state and federal reporting deadlines.

Additional Resources for Chapter 3

- [Extra Resources on Legal Responsibilities](#)
- [Relevant sections of the Code of Virginia](#)
- [ELECT 2022 Candidate Reporting Deadlines](#)
- [5 Year Calendar of Elections](#)
- [2022 Deadlines Calendar](#)
- [FEC Dates & Deadlines](#)

Chapter 4: Organizing Your Committee

Creating and Updating Your Bylaws

With an understanding of your legal responsibilities and state party plan requirements described in the previous chapter, it is up to you as the local party chair to organize your committee to best meet these requirements while not losing sight of the fact that your committee's purpose is to elect Democrats and expand the Democratic electorate. Once understood, many of these obligations can be delegated to allow the chair and officers to put more time into other activities. In many cases, you may be able to delegate much of the basic work to committee members, or your Treasurer, but the chair is ultimately responsible for carrying out the Party's obligations. In this chapter we discuss tools and best practices that exist to help you organize your committee.

I. BYLAWS

Each city/county has bylaws or rules that set forth the party plan of organization and govern the committee's operation. As the committee's chief executive officer, the Chair must develop a working knowledge of the bylaws. If you cannot find your committee's bylaws and the State Party does not have them on file, one of your first priorities as Chair will be to create and adopt bylaws. The State Party Plan requires that you submit your committee's bylaws to the State Headquarters within ninety (90) day of your election as Chair.

Recognize that your committee's bylaws are unique. Here are some items that are likely set out in yours:

- How frequently does the full Committee meet?
- What Officer positions exist and what are their roles and responsibilities? Is there flexibility to create additional Officers?
- What Standing Committees exist, what functions do they fulfill, and what is their membership? What guidance exists regarding Ad-Hoc or Special Committees?
- What can the Executive Committee do? What can only the full Committee do?

It is important that you review your bylaws, recognizing that at times it may make sense to modify your existing bylaws. You should also check to ensure your bylaws are in compliance with the State Party Plan.

II. EXECUTIVE OR STEERING COMMITTEE

Each local committee elects Officers who comprise the committee's Executive or Steering Committee.

Article 10.2 of the State Party Plan states that:

"Following the election of its members as provided herein, each new county or city committee shall elect a chair, secretary, treasurer, and such other officers as it deems necessary no later than January 15th."

Local Party Chairs are the glue that hold the local party together. He or she is responsible for calling meetings and ensuring the overall functionality of the local party. The Chair oversees the work of the Officers, volunteers, and any staff hired by the local party. Other responsibilities include overseeing candidate nomination processes, recruiting and developing future candidates, and serving as the local party spokesperson. The Chair also serves as liaison between the state party and the local party.

The treasurer has the job of tracking the contributions to and expenditures of the local party. He or she should provide a regular report of the financial activities to the committee. They are also responsible for filing campaign finance reports as required by state and federal election law.

The secretary's primary role is keeping the minutes of the proceedings of meetings of the local party committee. He or she is also responsible for committee correspondence and serves as custodian of the books, records and papers of the organization with the exception of the documents maintained by the treasurer. The secretary should also be in the habit of communicating to the state party important events so they can be publicized on the state party's website.

The State Party Plan allows local committees the flexibility to create additional officers. Your committee bylaws may state what these positions are or your bylaws may allow the Chair the flexibility to create Officer positions.

Other common Officer positions include:

- Executive Vice Chair – assists the Chair
- Finance – oversees fundraising efforts
- Outreach – develops and implements constituent outreach programs
- Communications – maintains the website, social media, and email system
- Voter Expansion – directs voter registration drives, restoration of rights programs, and voter education

Your Executive or Steering Committee should meet periodically, and a minimum frequency may be set out in your bylaws.

III. BUILDING A BETTER COMMITTEE

There are three major components to building a strong local committee: direction, organization and communication.

Direction

One of the most important tasks for a Chair is to define the committee's goals and objectives for each year. You should work with your Executive or Steering Committee in setting these goals.

A Chair cannot do everything. Running meetings, serving as party spokesperson, making sure things happen when they should and setting overall polity for the local party are more than enough to keep a local chair busy. That is why the most productive organizations put together a strategic plan that incorporates a budget, fundraising plan, communications plan, candidate recruitment plan, and campaign plan. Responsibilities are then delegated across Officers and Committees. See Chapter 5 for more on developing a strategic plan for your local committee.

Organization

The Chair should define the roles and responsibilities of officers and committees. It is important that there is clarity about what is expected in order for officers and committees to be successful.

Take a good look at your committee openings and the demographics of your locality when searching for new members. Be aggressive and enthusiastic when asking people to volunteer.

Communication

Communication among committee members helps ensure a strong and active committee. There are several ways to maintain communication with your committee members:

- Hold **regular meetings**. Meeting on a regular schedule helps your committee members plan to attend.
- Establish an **email distribution list** so the committee can communicate quickly.
- Create and maintain a committee **website** that lists the latest news, upcoming events, and has links to elected Democrats in your locality.
- Establish a presence on **social media**, such as Facebook and Twitter, and post often.

D. RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

Meetings should have an agenda and serve a purpose. They should help you implement your strategic plan. Often, having a speaker or a standard part of the meeting devoted to issues can help draw people.

Ask any group what makes a good meeting and most people will say they want meetings to be on time, stay on agenda and be productive. They want to participate, and they want to be treated fairly. The three essentials to running a good meeting are preparation, moving the agenda and following parliamentary procedure. Generally, if the agenda is followed and people are given a chance to participate, you can manage a meeting without using *Robert's Rules of Order*. However, if you're interested in following *Robert's Rules of Order* there is a cheat sheet for using the rules during meetings in the resources section at the end of this chapter.

Meeting Preparation:

- **Plan the meeting**. Know the purpose of the meeting. Make sure notices and agenda reflect the purpose and are timely sent. If a motion or resolution is to be presented, make sure you have someone to move and second it.
- **Plan for participation**. Prepare handouts and visual. Try to include a training component in all meetings. Save time on the agenda "for the good of the order" to allow local leaders a chance to share their activities, problems

and successes. This time also gives people who have no motion or resolution a chance to speak at the end of the meeting.

- **Check out the meeting space.** People must be able to see and hear the Chair and each other. Seats should be arranged so that someone can leave the meeting without disrupting it. You might want to arrange seating in a hollow square, with name tents so everyone can see who everyone else is. All meeting locations must be ADA compliant, well lit, and have public restrooms. Test audiovisual equipment and hang the party banner. Make sure the physical set-up is compatible with the goals of the meeting.

Moving the Agenda:

- **Prepare an agenda and follow it.** Send out the agenda before the meeting. The agenda should allow for all business items that must be covered and still provide room for new items of business from the floor. Time limits on the agenda will keep the meeting moving along. The Chair should recognize only one speaker at a time.
- **No one has the floor unless recognized.** The Chair must also move on to someone else if a speaker is going on too long. If such a speaker isn't cut off, side conversations and mass distraction occur.
- **Set the tempo.** Very few people come to an Executive Committee or Committee meeting to waste time nit picking the agenda, minutes or treasurer's report. If one of these contains an item of legitimate controversy, the Chair should deal with the issue and move on. Setting the tempo lets people know their time is valuable and trivial rambling is out of place.
- **Be fair; handle disruptions effectively.** In all of the discussions about moving the agenda, don't lose sight of treating people fairly. The Democratic Party is diverse and inclusive and acknowledges that everyone has a seat at the table. When there are legitimate points of view to be heard make sure they are heard. Encourage participation by those who do not usually speak. Be consistent in treatment of all members.

General Best Practices:

- Meetings should have a single focus. Don't try to discuss everything.
- Inform participants in advance about the purpose of the meeting and all topics that will be discussed.
- Start and end meetings on time.

- Keep minutes of all committee or subcommittee meetings.
- Restate the purpose of the meeting before you begin.
- Appoint a competent, trusted parliamentarian to guide you, especially if *Roberts Rules of Order* are not your strong suit.
- Provide a written agenda. Consider presenting a timed agenda that indicates the amount time to be spent on each topic. Also consider creating a Chair's agenda for yourself that includes notes on each topic area for your personal use during the meeting.
- Keep control of the meeting and stick to the agenda. Unresolved details can be worked out later in smaller groups.
- Restate the key decisions, next steps, and assignments at the end of the meeting.
- Schedule the next meeting, if a follow-up meeting will be necessary.

Order of a Standard Agenda:

- Call the meeting to order.
- Roll call of officers and members.
- Minutes of the previous meeting.
- Reports of the officers:
 - o Chair
 - o Vice-Chair
 - o Treasurer (financial report)
 - o Secretary (correspondence)
- Standing committee reports.
- Unfinished business.
- Postponed business.
- New business.
- Speaker or Program.
- Adjournment.

Structure of Standard Minutes:

Minutes are not a verbatim report of everything said. They should reflect action taken at the meeting. The minutes should contain the following information:

- Kind of meeting, regular or special (or specify if, for example, by

conference call).

- Name of the organization.
- Date and place of the meeting.
- Presence of officers and members.
- Approval of previous minutes.
- All reports and action taken.
- All main motions carried or lost and the name of the maker of the motion (omit those withdrawn).
- All other motions carried which contain information needed at a future meeting.
- All points of order and appeals, whether sustained or not, together with the reasons given by the chair for his/her ruling.
- Adjournment.
- Signature.

Treasurer's Report: There should be a Treasurer's Report at every meeting detailing all the financial activities since the last meeting. A sample report is provided in Chapter 9 under 'Money,' but the report should reflect each organization's own budget

Conflict Resolution

As the committee's chief executive officer, the Chair must develop a working knowledge of the State Party Plan and the local committee's bylaws in order to conduct business in a fair and orderly manner. As boring as bylaws and rules often seem, they provide a way to resolve disputes and determine policy fairly and openly.

However, as with any group, it is natural to have some disputes or conflicts as you're trying to make decisions. These disputes can be resolved, but it is important to remember you should only begin a conversation about a conflict in order to learn something new, express your views and feelings, or to problem-solve. You should also make certain that you note areas of agreement as well as areas of disagreement. Reaching a resolution will come from understanding, not from convincing them you are right. There is a tip sheet for resolving conflicts in the resources at the end of this chapter.

Regional differences

What works in one part of the state will not always work in another part. As Virginians, we know there are distinct areas that party leaders and campaigns need to recognize when conducting party activity: Northern Virginia, Southwest Virginia and the Valley, Southside, Tidewater/Hampton Roads, Central Virginia, the Northern Neck, the Eastern Shore, rural v. urban v. suburban. There are definite differences economically, socially, and politically between regions. Always take these differences under consideration when developing plans and projects.

IV. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Does our committee have to have bylaws?

Answer: Yes. Article 10.2 of the State Party Plan states that:

“All Democratic committees shall adopt bylaws, rules or regulations deemed necessary for the proper operation of such committee. Such bylaws, rules or regulations when not in conflict with law or this Plan, shall be considered valid and binding. Such bylaws, rules or regulations shall be mailed to state headquarters within fourteen (14) days of approval by any Democratic committee and shall be kept on permanent file and made available for public viewing.”

A copy of your bylaws, once adopted, should be sent to the state headquarters ASAP. If you don't know if the State Party has a copy on hand, check with the Party Affairs Manager.

2. Why do we have to pay dues assessments?

Answer: Your dues help to underwrite the cost of operating the party office, its quarterly meetings and its services. These assessments are based on a formula that utilizes the number of delegates apportioned to each county and city in the most recent State Democratic Convention.

Article 8.14 of the State Party Plan states that:

“Every county and city committee shall be responsible for paying to the treasurer of the Central Committee in a timely manner the annual dues provided for under Section 4.15 under this Plan.”

Examples of such service are the training workshops and this handbook that are prepared and distributed to all chairs in all 133 jurisdictions. In 2015, a permanent toll-free number voter hotline was established that can be used by voters across the Commonwealth year after year. These are just a few examples of how your dues help the party to provide needed services back to you.

Additional Resources for Chapter 4

- [Robert's Rules of Order Summary](#)
- [Robert's Rules of Order Cheat Sheet](#)
- [Robert's Rules for Dummies Cheat Sheet](#)
- [Conflict Resolution Guide](#)
- [Sample Local Committee Bylaws 1](#)
- [Sample Local Committee Bylaws 2](#)

Chapter 5: Setting Priorities

Evaluating Your Committee and Developing a Plan

Before you can develop a strategy and set priorities for a plan of action, you must first understand the expectations 'key' Democrats have for the Party; assess the status of Party operations; determine what kind of political and financial resources are available to you; and begin building a consensus of support for your program.

Many of the questions you will face are covered on the following pages. If you ask yourself these questions, give them some hard, honest thought, and write down your answers, you will be well on your way to establishing your priorities and your plan.

The process involves three basic steps:

1. Evaluating your role and situation within the party, including the status of existing party operations, the political environment, and others' expectations;
2. Setting your long term agenda; and
3. Writing a plan to serve as a basis for accomplishing your goals.

I. EVALUATING YOUR ROLE AND SITUATION

The first step in developing and setting priorities for an effective plan of action is to evaluate your role and situation. You must understand your responsibilities to and the expectations of key political players, including both those responsible for your being selected as local Chair and others who are critical to your success. This evaluation will help you determine how you fit into the "big picture" and how you define both your personal role as Chair and the roles of other party officers, and members.

Who Are You Responsible To?

- Were you elected due to your relationships with party leaders in order to set an agenda for the party?
- Were you selected because of your extensive campaign experience in order

to help the party upgrade candidate support and services?

- Were you selected to use your contacts to help raise funds and provide financial stability for the party?
- Were you selected to use your public relations talents to enhance the party's image and serve as its spokesperson?
- Was a combination of these factors involved in your becoming Chair?

What Are the Factors under which You Will Operate?

- Is your committee deeply in debt? Do committee finances or financial potential allow you to fund new plans of action?
- Do you plan to enhance existing programs or must you also make major changes and plot a whole new agenda for the committee?

What Will Your Role Be?

- Are you a hands-on leader or will someone else handle daily details?
- Will you be a highly visible spokesperson or behind the scenes?
- How much time can you devote to your duties?
- What are your personal assets and limitations: physical, financial, talent, etc.?

Your situation is unique. No other party organization is exactly like yours. No individual is exactly like you. In most cases, city/county committee chairs can write their own job descriptions and those of committee officers, provided they stay within the guidelines of local bylaws and the DPVA *Party Plan*, and election law requirements. The challenges, possibilities, and opportunities are immense. Choose your agenda and plan carefully to make sure your efforts are manageable and successful.

II. SETTING PRIORITIES FOR YOUR AGENDA

Many of your agenda items may already be set by established policies, priorities, and political circumstance, so you may not have to start from scratch (always be ready to re-evaluate as you go along, however). Limit yourself. Do

not try to do everything alone. In addition to the obligations you must perform, select three or four activities or projects you can do well. Take on additional projects only when you are sure you have involved everyone it takes to secure the funding and people required to carry out the project.

The following set of questions can assist in the planning process. You may want to ask major supporters, party officers, and elected leaders to help develop your agenda, or you may want to involve all these people in a special planning committee. Your plan is more likely to succeed if you involve key players “up front” and give them a sense of ownership in the party agenda.

- **Why do we exist?** (To get Democrats elected to public office!) Identify problems or goals.
- **What should we do?** Identify possible solutions or objectives.
- **What does it take to do the job?** Identify people and financial resources.
- **What must be done to do the job?** Identify specific tasks and activities.
- **When should this be done?** Develop a schedule or time line.
- **What might stop us?** Identify potential obstacles.
- **Did we do it well?** Provide for an honest evaluation.

III. DEVELOPING YOUR PLAN

Well-run programs don't just happen. Although you may not actually submit a written plan to anyone, write down your plan so that you can refer to it. A plan is not a plan unless it is in writing. An unwritten plan is just an idea.

Any plan for an item on your agenda should have the basic components listed below. In the end you will have many small plans that make up your complete agenda for the party. At that point you must look at the overall “big picture” to set priorities, establish individual responsibilities, coordinate schedules and timelines, and allocate resources.

EIGHT BASIC PLANNING STEPS

1. Description of Problem
2. Possible Solutions
3. Goals and Objectives
4. Description of Activities
5. Available Resources
6. Anticipated Obstacles
7. A Timeline
8. Evaluation

A series of worksheets have been included in the resources section at the end of the Chapter for you to use as you work through the steps outlined in this Chapter. These worksheets include:

- Party Organization Assessment—you can use this worksheet as part of “Step 1. Evaluating your role and situation.” It will help you determine where your committee stands.
- Political Brainstorming—you can use this worksheet as part of “Step 2. Setting your long term agenda.” It will help you develop new ideas and goals.
- Step-by-Step Planning Worksheet—you can use this worksheet as part of “Step 3. Writing a plan.” It will help you draft a plan to accomplish the goals you’ve outlined in Step 2.

Additional Resources for Chapter 5

- [Party Organization Assessment](#)
- [Political Brainstorming](#)
- [Step-by-Step Planning Worksheet](#)
- [Sample Plan](#)
- [Sample Strategic Plan Template](#)

Chapter 6: Nominating Process

Primaries, Caucuses, and Conventions

One of the key duties of a chair is to coordinate nominating processes in your locality. Year to year, the purpose might change but the basic process stays the same. For statewide offices and federal candidates, the determination of the method for nominating candidates will either be made by the State Party, in the case of statewide offices, or the Congressional District Committee for U.S. House of Representative Candidates. However, you may have other obligations if a caucus and/or convention process is selected.

As a local committee chair, you and your committee have the right to determine the method by which a party nomination will be made for any other offices in your locality. If the office in question overlaps multiple localities, you or your designee(s) will work in conjunction with the other chairs of those local committees to determine the method of nomination as party of a nominating committee. Whether nominating a candidate, electing delegates to a congressional district convention, electing committee members in a committee reorganization – the options on how to accomplish those goals stay the same:

I. PRIMARY

Primaries are covered by the *Code of Virginia* (Chapter 5, Article 4 of the 2015 edition of Virginia Election Law) as well as by the Party Plan (Article 13). The State Board of Elections sets the date for primaries and conducts them in conjunction with the local electoral board and registrar. The only requirement is that the chair must notify both the State Board of Elections and the State Party that a primary has been selected (i.e., as the method of nomination for a candidate). The requirements for this notification are covered in Chapter 3. This is the most common form of nominating a democratic candidate in general elections. The Chair receives the forms from the persons who file to be candidates in the primary and then submits the list of candidates who qualify for the primary to the SBE and/or registrar.

II. CAUCUS

The conduct of caucuses is entirely governed by the *Party Plan*. Caucuses can either be held on their own or in conjunction with a Convention. A caucus typically occurs in one of three situations: when it is selected as a form of nominating a candidate, when committee reorganization occurs, and when it is used to select delegates to send to a Convention, such as during presidential years when it is used to select delegates to send to the State and CD Conventions. The only requirements imposed by the Commonwealth of Virginia on this process are on the forms to be filed, and the period during which the caucus may take place and certification by the chair of the candidate selected in this process, if the caucus is held to nominate a candidate.

A. Assembled v. Unassembled Caucuses

There are two types of caucuses:

- Assembled (also known as a mass meeting), and
- Unassembled (sometimes called a firehouse primary).

Each has merits and the type of caucus you choose is largely a matter of local preference and tradition.

The Assembled Caucus is highly structured. There is a definite starting time. Everyone meets in the same room at the same time. Doors are locked and no one is admitted after the caucus begins. Those who leave during the caucus may not be allowed to return. Persons standing in line at the time the caucus is to begin are allowed to participate. We have attached sample rules for an Assembled Caucus that you may use as a guide.

The Unassembled Caucus is much looser in its operation. Voting takes place over a period of time and people are allowed to come in, vote, and leave – similar to a polling place on Election Day. This type of caucus usually runs for a few hours. Sample rules for an Unassembled Caucus are attached.

B. The Call To Caucus

The first task of the committee, once a caucus has been chosen as the method to conduct whatever party business needs to take place, is the drafting of a document called the Call to Caucus.

- As per Section 14.2 of the *Party Plan*, any committee issuing a Call to a

Caucus:

- Shall specify the time, place, and purpose of the convention or caucus;
- May restrict the convention or caucus to the purpose stated in the call notice;
- Shall make all convention and caucus arrangements; and
- Shall state the conditions for cancellation of the caucus or convention, if so desired;
- Shall state that all conventions or caucuses shall be held in a location that is ADA accessible; and
- Shall ensure that the convention or caucus is held in accordance with the Plan.

Each Call to a Caucus should also include:

- Specification of assembled (mass meeting) or unassembled caucus (firehouse primary);
- Pre-filing requirements, including fees, if any;
- The basis of allocation of votes, if appropriate;
- Notice requirements;
- A description of caucus committees, if any;
- A statement about affirmative action;
- Specification of the method of distribution of the call;
- Candidate filing fees and deadlines.

The Call to Caucus is drafted, adopted, and distributed by the committee. Rules for the conduct of the caucus must also be adopted.

C. Notice Requirements

Every Democratic caucus or convention must be publicized least seven (7) days prior to the date of such selection. Where a caucus/convention process is used and the initial notice provides information as to the time and place of the convention, a second notice is not required. Committees must

post this notification using channels of communication typically used by the committee, and which shall provide the widest possible dissemination within its jurisdiction. Committees are required to post this notification on either their own committee web site or the DPVA web site and provide a press release to all relevant newspapers of general circulation. See Section 9.1 of the Party Plan for the specific requirements.

D. Fees

No fee of any kind may be charged to attend and vote at a caucus.

E. Caucus Participation

Participants in a caucus are required to sign a Caucus Declaration form certifying that the participant:

- i. is a Democrat;
- ii. is a registered voter within the jurisdiction for which the caucus is held;
- iii. believes in the principles of the Democratic Party; and
- iv. does not intend to support any candidate who is opposed to a Democratic nominee in the next ensuing election.

This is a required statement and **must** be signed by every caucus participant. See Section 18.3 of the Party Plan for this requirement. We strongly urge you to add the names of caucus participants to VAN with a specially created activist code.

F. General Caucus Considerations

As you plan your caucus, you should consider the following:

- Do you want an Observers' area for people who want to watch but not participate? If so, it should be separated from the actual caucus area so that when voting occurs, only caucus participants are actually voting.
- Do you want a Press area? If you are going to have cameras there, you may have some special needs (electrical outlets) that must be met.

Make sure that any cords are taped to the floor so that participants don't trip. The press area should also be separate from the actual caucus area.

- Do you want to prohibit campaign material inside the caucus? You may also restrict distribution of such material to the registration area only. Any restrictions should be noted in the rules for the caucus.
- You will need an official device by which time is kept. Make sure that it is visible and can't be tampered with.
- As for all Democratic Party functions, the caucus location should be accessible to persons with disabilities, in compliance with guidance set forth under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

G. Caucuses in Statewide Convention Years

In Statewide Convention years, caucuses held in localities across the Commonwealth will elect roughly 2,000 State Delegates and 500 Alternates (these numbers vary from year to year) who will attend their Congressional District Convention and the State Convention. If it is a presidential year, those state delegates will elect the National Convention Delegates, both at the Congressional District Convention and at the State Convention.

The State Delegates are apportioned among Virginia's cities and counties using a formula based on Democratic votes in recent elections, and sometimes population. The specific numbers of the allocation will be included in the DPVA Call to Convention.

Often, these types of caucuses are canceled because the number of individuals filing to be delegates and alternates does not exceed the number of delegates to be elected. The Call to Caucus must clearly state that the Caucus may be canceled if the maximum number or fewer delegates/alternates file. If the conditions for cancellation occur, the chair of the nominating committee shall be responsible for deciding whether to cancel or conduct the caucus, making public notice of such decision, and advising those individuals who filed of their election.

III. CONVENTION

The conduct of a Convention is actually a two-step process, caucus then convention. First, delegates and alternates are elected at local caucuses. Then, these delegates and alternates attend the Convention, which may be used for nominating candidates for state and federal offices. The delegate selection caucuses must be held before the Convention but may be held on the same day as the Convention. The conduct of Conventions is governed by the *Party Plan* and the committees convened for that purpose. The only requirements imposed by the Commonwealth of Virginia on this method of nomination are on the forms to be filed and the period during which the convention may take place (if nominating a candidate). The chair must also certify any candidate nominated by this process to the State Board of Elections.

As per Section 14.2 of the *Party Plan*, any committee issuing a Call to Convention:

- Shall specify the time, place, and purpose of the convention or caucus;
- May restrict the convention or caucus to the purpose stated in the call notice;
- Shall make all convention and caucus arrangements; and
- Shall state the conditions for cancellation of the caucus or convention, if so desired;
- Shall ensure that all conventions or caucuses shall be held in a location that is ADA accessible; and
- Shall ensure that the convention or caucus is held in accordance with the Plan.

The first task of the committee, once a Convention has been chosen as the method to conduct whatever party business needs to take place, is the drafting of the Call to Convention. The Call to Convention is drafted, adopted, and distributed by the committee. Note that this process is more complicated than a caucus in that you must first decide how you will allocate delegates,

how you will elect delegates and alternates, and credentialing delegates at the Convention. DPVA staff provides the detailed documents when needed.

IV. REORGANIZATION

Every two years, as required by the Party Plan, new City and County committees are elected or reorganized between December 1st of odd numbered years and January 15th of even numbered years. This is an opportunity for you and your committee to broaden your base and to include new members. Those of you who have been involved in local committees for a long time know that reorganization sounds much worse than it really is. Put simply, reorganization is a caucus held for the purpose of electing members to the Democratic committee.

A. Rules

Rules that apply to caucuses in general also apply to the reorganization caucus. In addition, there are some specific rules that apply:

- Caucuses for the purpose of the election of such committees shall be held on Saturday or, if provided by county or city committee bylaws, on any other weekday evening. Any waiver of this requirement as to the time for elections must be granted by the State Party Chair or the Steering Committee
- **Soon after the caucus**, each new City and County committee must elect a chair, secretary and any other officers deemed necessary by the committee (section 8.6 of the *Party Plan*). Your committee may choose to elect officers at the reorganization meeting after a new committee has been formed (i.e., you adjourn the caucus and convene the committee meeting – only the newly elected members participate).
- Should you choose to require filing for candidates for membership on the committee, your filing deadline cannot be more than 10 days before your election. The filing deadline has the same notice requirements as the caucus.
- Each person participating in your election must certify that he or she: is a Democrat; is a registered voter within the jurisdiction for which the caucus is held; believes in the principles of the Democratic Party; and does not intend to support any candidate who is opposed to a Democratic nominee in the next ensuing election. (Section 18.3 of the

Party Plan). We've provided you with a sample Caucus Participation Form in the resources section at the end of this chapter.

- **Temporary rules, prepared by the chair of the local committee, are required for the election.** They must be prepared and available to any interested Democrat **at least one week before** the caucus. If you hold an assembled caucus, the caucus will adopt the rules; if you hold an unassembled caucus, your current committee must meet to adopt the rules prior to the date of your election.

B. Requirements

After your committee has reorganized, **the chair is required to submit a copy of the committee bylaws to the State Party** (section 8.7 of the *Party Plan*). In addition, **the secretary should submit the names, addresses, e-mail address and phone numbers (home, office, and mobile, if applicable) of the officers and members of the committee** (section 8.6 of the *Party Plan*).

It is extremely important for you (or possibly the new chair if they are elected immediately following the reorganization) **to provide the State Party with your bylaws and to make sure that a complete list** (including addresses, emails, and phone numbers) **of your new committee has been forwarded.** We routinely receive requests for committee lists from candidates and campaigns.

C. Suggestions for Expanding Participation

Democrats have an opportunity this year to expand our ranks, recruit new volunteers, and change the demographics of our local committees.

Here are some ideas for recruiting for your committee.

- Work the voter file. From your committee's VAN account for the Registered Voter List, use the Party ID fields to identify potential recruits to the cause: SD/Strong Democrats is the list to use.
- Post notices at coffee shops, libraries, churches, union halls, community centers, and laundromats. Use every device you can think of to publicize your reorganization, including social media tools like Facebook and Twitter.
- Contact members of local unions and teachers' associations.
- Adopt an "each one, reach one" program that encourages each of your current committee members to bring a new face with them to reorganization.

- Many local committees combine reorganization with a celebration of some kind. Have a volunteer appreciation potluck dinner or celebrate the victories of local candidates in this year's election. A social hour or meet and greet immediately following is easy.

Additional Resources for Chapter 6

- [Caucus Checklist](#)
- [Sample Rules For An Assembled Caucus](#)
- [Suggested Agenda For An Assembled Caucus \(Mass Meeting\)](#)
- [Sample Rules For An Unassembled Caucus \(Firehouse Primary\)](#)
- [Sample Declaration Of Candidacy For Democratic Nomination](#)
- [Sample Ballots](#)
- [Delegate or Alternate Pre-filing Form](#)
- [Sample Henrico Caucus Participation Form](#)

Chapter 7: Preparing for Elections

Year Round Party Building Activities

Committee planning means *always* looking ahead to the next election and planning activities that will help get Democratic candidates elected. That's it. That's why we exist as a Party. Period. If you don't remember anything else from this handbook, remember our overall and constant goal: **electing Democratic candidates to public office and expanding the Democratic electorate.**

How do you plan ahead? Follow the election calendar provided by the State Board of Elections included in the resources section at the end of this chapter. Every year there is an election in Virginia (sometimes multiple)! We are only one of two states in the country with a non-stop round of election cycles (New Jersey is the other one).

Nearly every Democrat has heard the term "Coordinated Campaign" a thousand times over. Although Coordinated Campaigns vary from election to election and from county to county, the term describes the basic ticket-wide general election campaign to identify, motivate, and turn out the Democratic vote. The "year-round Coordinated Campaign" concept simply assumes that Democrats cannot wait until election time to coordinate and plan mutually beneficial activities that involve committee officers, office holders, donors and key constituency groups.

The key to this effort is simple in concept, but not always easy to achieve: **All Democrats must feel they have a stake in the program.** The effort requires the committee Chair to work not only with the Democratic Party of Virginia officers and staff, but also with local officeholders, key constituency organizations, and Democratic contributors. The goal is to involve everyone year-round in the planning, funding and execution of party building programs, instead of waiting until 90 days before the general election to start a Coordinated Campaign. Waiting until after the primary election to start working together won't win elections and won't build a strong committee.

The kinds of programs that benefit from year-round coordination and attention include:

- Candidate recruitment and development for Candidates and Committee Leaders with assistance from the House/Senate Caucuses or

DPVA staff

- Voter File & I.D. development and maintenance with assistance from the DPVA
- Outreach programs to build local Democratic-friendly Coalitions
- Voter Expansion activities to grow our Democratic electorate, including voter registration, restoration of rights, and voter education.
- Fundraising and Event Planning (covered in Chapter 9)
- Communications (external & internal) and Message Delivery (Covered in Chapter 10)

I. CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Candidate recruitment and development is a key role for local committees. It not only allows you to develop strong candidates for local offices, but also helps to build the bench for legislative and statewide elections. Candidate recruitment should be an ongoing activity for you and your committee, as the more time that can be put into vetting and developing your potential candidates the stronger they will be when they run for office.

The nomination process must be open to any qualified Democrat who wants to run. There will often be cases where there are several qualified candidates and a contested primary may be healthy for the Party. Nevertheless, candidate recruitment can be a delicate and potentially divisive activity, but there are some things you can do to avoid causing problems:

- Very early on form a committee or an ad hoc group to recruit and assess candidates. The group should include representatives from key funding and allied organizations, legislative campaign committees, and Democratic Party of Virginia leaders.
- Analyze and assess the districts and offices that are “in play” for partisan challenges. Agree on recruitment targets.
- Create and maintain a list of strong prospective candidates regardless of the office. This is an important role for committees to fill, since you are best placed to know what talent is out there locally. Community leaders, current elected who may be interested in higher office, past candidates, local activists – keep a database of names that you can pull from should any vacancy arise, be it anticipated or unanticipated.
- Have group members check with their contacts in the districts and around

the county to determine who is running or considering a race, whether or not they have the resources and ability to win, and problems or attributes they have that will affect their electability.

- Have influential community figures contact them about making the race, possible commitments of resources, etc.
- Be clear with each prospective candidate with regards to what they can expect in terms of support from the committee, and giving them a realistic sense of the expectations on their timing and the effort that is required to run a successful campaign.
- Assume that the Republicans are recruiting, too, and use the groups' contacts and information to alert your incumbents who may be facing serious challenges.

A. Candidate Recruitment

Long before the campaign season begins, city or county committee officers should be evaluating potential candidates for future election. Even in those districts where long-term Democrat incumbents hold office, city or committee officers should be preparing for the day their elected official decides not to seek re-election (or accepts a job which requires him/her to resign the seat). It is important to constantly be thinking about the bench. Keep a database of qualified prospective candidates that you can pull from as/when vacancies arise. Keep in mind the following ideas when developing a list of possible candidates:

- School boards, town boards, city councils and county commissions are excellent proving grounds for future legislators. Your district should consider whether you should begin endorsing selected candidates for these offices; some local party organizations currently endorse for "non-partisan" offices, which permits those candidates to start developing a base within the DPVA Party. If you choose not to endorse, you should consider playing a role in finding candidates for these offices – once elected they can begin to develop their reputation in the community.
- Activism in a popular community issue or event is an important quality for a candidate. The president of a youth athletic or civic association, the leader of a recycling campaign, or a community activist or attorney who helped save park land, brings to a campaign a built-in base of supporters and volunteers separate from the party organization.

- A person does not need to be a popular community leader or elected official to be a good candidate. Analyze these factors about your district:

what issues tend to be important to your district

what outside factors will impact your race (such as national economic change or a statewide candidate who will have a strong impact in your area)

what are the weaknesses of the most likely Republican candidate in the race

- Finding a candidate who can take advantage of these factors can be as important as finding a “name” candidate.

Often candidates need to run more than once before they are successful. Rather than being a handicap, an initial loss often provides seasoning for a campaign:

- o candidates can build on their new name recognition

- o candidates can learn from earlier mistakes

Your role in selecting a future candidate will be determined by the conditions surrounding the vacancy, as well as the mood of the Democratic community. In some districts, party chairs are expected to play an active role in candidate recruitment and selection; in other areas, the Democratic activists prefer that all potential candidates come to a meeting for scrutiny.

There is a wealth of additional information – regarding timelines, rules and myriad other topics – on the State Board of Elections website:

<http://elections.virginia.gov/candidatepac-info/becoming-a-candidate/index.html>

B. Candidate And Campaign Staff Training

Training is an important service the committee can provide for local and constitutional office candidates and campaign staffs. Many candidates, campaign managers, and staff do not always know what to expect about the time commitment it will take to run for office and have little or no experience in campaign “basics”: using the voter file, targeting, polling, message delivery (paid and earned), GOTV, and the advantages of coordinating with other local campaigns.

Even experienced candidates and campaign staff need to keep abreast of changes in campaign technologies and techniques, as well as campaign finance and reporting laws. These also provide an opportunity for staff and candidates from different campaigns to come together, and for the committee to learn more about what the local infrastructure and the wider DPVA can do to support these individual efforts. (The Democratic House and Senate Caucuses train for General Assembly races. The national Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee trains for races for the U.S. House of Representatives, and the national Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee trains for races for the U.S. Senate.)

Training programs help develop relationships that establish the committee's credibility and role in the Coordinated Campaign and beyond. Every candidate you help get into office is a potential ally of the committee when you need their help down the road.

For successful candidate training programs, you should:

- Involve experienced campaign managers, consultants, and DPVA staff to prepare training materials and conduct workshop sessions and help identify additional resources.
- Involve key players and high-profile community leaders in planning and promoting the training.
- Set a budget and a timeline for preparation of materials, securing locations, sending invitations, and scheduling trainers and facilitators.
- Invite and encourage experienced current and past candidates to attend, too. Old dogs must occasionally learn new tricks to survive in politics. Additionally, they will have valuable local knowledge that they may be willing to share with other candidates.
- In larger cities or counties, consider holding regional training sessions in order to involve and include more campaigns.
- Look to groups and individuals who normally fund campaigns to sponsor training sessions. Donors have an obvious interest in providing funds to pay for training programs.

C. Schedule of Office Election Years

Here's a quick list of the different elections in Virginia:

Local Offices: Varies widely for length of terms and when staggered. You have to know your locality.

- County Board of Supervisors
- City and Town Councils
- City and Town Mayors
- City and County School Boards
- City and County Soil and Water Conservation Directors

Constitutional Offices

- Clerk of Court: Every eight years, staggered between city and county by four years

- o City Clerks: (2027, 2035, etc.)
- o County Clerks: (2023, 2031 etc.)

Note: If a city shares these offices with a county, the city elects at the same time as the county.

- Commonwealth's Attorney, Commissioner of Revenue, Sheriff, Treasurer:

- o Counties: Every four years in odd years (2023, 2027, etc.)
- o Cities: Every four years in odd years (2025, 2029, etc.)

Note: If a city shares these offices with a county, the city elects the same time as the county. **General Assembly**

- House of Delegates: Every two years in odd years (2023, 2025, etc.)
- Senate of Virginia: Every four years in odd years (2023, 2027, etc.)

This means that every fourth year the entire General Assembly is up for reelection. **Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Attorney**

General (Gubernatorial years) ▪ All three at the same time: Every four years in odd years (2025, 2029, 2033, etc.) **United States**

Congress

- U.S. House of Representatives: Every two years in even years (2016, 2018, 2020, etc.)
- U.S. Senate: Every six years in even years, staggered (2024, 2026,

2030, 2032 etc.)

United States President and Vice President

- Every four years in even years (2024, 2028, etc.)

The State Board of Elections website has a wealth of information available on election calendars, district maps, ballot issues, voter registration – everything relating to elections in Virginia.

D. Winning Elections

DPVA has been very successful in helping its nominated candidates win elections. Local party leaders can play an important role in protecting this success rate by:

- Having a contribution ready for first-time or cash-poor candidates immediately after the nomination; even \$500 goes a long way at the beginning of a campaign.
- Recruiting party officers and caucus attendees for a summer campaign event, to get a “leg-up” on possible opponents (and perhaps deter them from filing).

Whenever possible, holding early nominations. Make sure that unsuccessful nominations candidates and their volunteers are welcome on your team.

II. VOTER FILE & I.D. DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE

The statewide voter file of all the registered voters in Virginia and all the information you can record for each voter, is essential for planning, budgeting, and executing any successful campaign effort to target, contact, identify (whether they are D, R or I), and turn out voters. A voter file can also be helpful in small donor fundraising efforts, polling, and a number of other year-round and campaign related activities.

A. VAN

VAN, one of the most valuable services offered by the Democratic Party of Virginia, is the online database which holds the voter file (all of the registered voters in Virginia). In other words, this database contains the names and other important information about registered voters – information that we can use to target likely voters for Democratic campaigns. Using VAN is an essential part of any winning campaign. It is an important resource tool because of its ability to

target and locate specific voters.

VAN users, campaigns and local committees can find information about individual voters, identify groups of likely voters and turn those groups into walk or call lists, and enter the data from those completed lists. Through a separate section called “My Campaign,” VAN can be used to track and manage volunteers and committee member activities.

VAN is operated by the Democratic Party of Virginia in partnership with the Democratic National Committee (DNC). From President to Dog Catcher nearly every Democratic Campaign in Virginia for the past 10 years has helped to build one of the largest and most reliable voter file programs in the country. This unique and robust repository of historical voter ID in Virginia enables better targeting, higher certainty and better decision making.

The Virginia VAN is available to all Democratic Candidates and committees through the State Party. If your committee does not have access to VAN, you should email votebuilder@vademocrats.org. **Please be aware that the file is maintained by the state party. Local committees are required to sign a contract to purchase the file and must adhere to the contract in regard to use of the information in the file. The contract is available in the Resources section at the end of this chapter.**

B. Voter File Development and Maintenance

Unlike many other States, voters in Virginia do not declare a party. The list of registered voters provided by the state tells us only that a voter voted – not for which candidate. For this reason, consistent candidate participation, data management and ID collection in VAN over time has allowed us to provide every registered voter a Likely Party Score. This indicator is a “real-time” algorithm that calculates partisan leaning by analyzing the voter voting history as well as every response recorded by every campaign who has contacted that voter. To date over 19 million individual survey responses have been collected in the DPVA VAN database. In addition to Likely Party, with our national partnerships with the DNC and OFA, there are more than 50 targeting models and other demographic data to further increase a campaigns efficiency and save money.

Contact DPVA for more information on developing and using VAN. The voter file may be the most valuable resource the Democratic Party of Virginia owns, so make sure you carefully discuss all the factors involved in assisting the

Democratic Party of Virginia in developing and managing your respective committee file. Enhancing and maintaining VAN Voter File for your city or county requires:

- **Enhancing the basic file:** Adding or matching additional information, such as telephone numbers or emails. Identifying more voters through I.D. phone banks, door-to-door canvasses, or direct mailings are also encouraged to help target future voter contact.
- **Maintaining the file:** The Democratic Party of Virginia undertakes all efforts and costs in negotiating, building, and maintaining VAN. All committees will sign contracts with the DPVA Information Technology Director to obtain access to and update their respective committee's VAN voter file.

For questions on how to use VAN, visit our training site at www.votebuilder.vademocrats.org or email your questions to data@vademocrats.org.

III. OUTREACH

One of the greatest challenges facing committees is finding the troops needed to carry out the Party's program and Campaigns in the field. For many people who are busy with family, work, and household responsibilities, political activity is simply not a priority. **To attract volunteers and workers in this busy age, the Party has to be relevant to their lives and active and visible in the community.**

Aggressive outreach is central to any good Democratic organizational program. Each campaign brings new people into the Democratic Party, people who are drawn to the campaign by a particular candidate or issue. We must not only keep those people involved, but also reach out to others who usually support Democratic issues, causes, and candidates but who have not been active in Party organizational campaigns. In 2010, the DPVA Outreach Committee, led by the Vice-Chair for Outreach, compiled an Outreach Plan for local committees. That plan is included in the resources section at the end of this chapter.

In 2010, the DPVA Outreach Committee, led by the Vice-Chair for Outreach, compiled an Outreach Plan for local committees. That plan calls for local committees to establish an Outreach Committee and to elect a Vice Chair for Outreach or appoint an Outreach Committee Chair. This committee should be charged with developing partnerships with key constituent groups and

connecting with Democrats in the locality. The 2010 Outreach plan is included in the resources section at the end of this chapter.

An aggressive outreach program should involve young people and retired people, teachers and farmers, environmentalists, labor and business leaders, African-Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and other minorities, women's organizations, the LGBT community, people with disabilities, pro-choice activists, community leaders, and all the others it takes to win year after year.

A successful outreach effort involves:

- **Re-establishing** our relationship with the traditional Democratic voters.
- **Demonstrating** to our "natural" constituencies that the best way to advance their issues, causes, and concerns is to work through and with the Democratic Party of Virginia staff and the committee organization.
- **Working** year-round. We cannot simply show up in the last month before the election.

We have three basic resources: people, time, and money. The more we use our time year-round to involve more people in our efforts, the more we can do with less money. The more active and visible we are as a Party, the more people we can attract and involve.

A. Traditional Democrats

It's a political fact of life that candidates must spend time and resources courting independent or "swing" voters, but the voters who make up the Democratic Party's base need to be wooed as well. Democratic outreach efforts should focus on two groups of people:

- **Traditional Democrats in core precincts**, many of whom were once active in organizational efforts but have not been as involved in recent campaigns; and
- **New recruits**, especially young people and members of Democratic-leaning constituency groups who have never been involved in organizational efforts.

Getting traditional Democrats involved again is critical. Far too often, Democrats in core precincts (precincts that vote at least 65 percent Democratic) feel taken for granted. They have seen campaigns and

candidates come into their communities late in the campaign and disappear until the next election.

Last-minute programs are no substitute for the year-round attention needed to establish a solid organizational presence, a dependable volunteer base, and the good will it takes to turn out the vote margins we need from our core precincts. There are some basic steps committee leaders can take to reach out to Democrats in core precincts to start rebuilding our organizational base.

- **Hear what our voters have to say** about organizing their communities. Bring in Precinct Captains or Neighborhood Team Leaders (both discussed in Chapter 8) and key organizers long before the election for one-on-one and small group meetings to discuss their needs.
- Work with the Precinct Captain and key organizers in the precinct to **set up a precinct meeting** – a coffee or luncheon at someone's house, for example – that will bring together people from the precinct. Include caucus and convention participants, volunteers from candidate lists, members of community organizations, and regular primary voters.
- If you don't have a Precinct Captain or a Precinct Captain cannot perform necessary organizational work because of time constraints or poor health, **involve "precinct coordinators"** and clubs to make sure there is an active worker in that precinct. This is a way to involve energetic new recruits identified in your outreach effort.
- **Form a precinct committee** or divide the precinct among block or area captains and develop a plan to canvass the precinct to identify and register voters. Schedule some future events, such as a rally or neighborhood barbecue or party, to reward your workers and establish a presence for the Party.
- **Recognize those who do the work.** The committee leaders should communicate regularly with them. Invite Precinct Captains, active precinct committee members and block captains to events to give them a chance to meet the people they help elect. Organize special events to honor their work.
- **Provide lists and materials** needed for precinct canvassing and voter registration. Ask to have these lists returned with updated phone numbers, yard sign locations, volunteers, etc. noted so that you can continue to build your organization.

B. “Natural” Constituencies

Many groups regularly support or endorse individual Democratic candidates and causes, but do not know how or why to get involved in the city or county Democratic committee – or have never been asked. Lateral organizing efforts focus on letting members of community and issues-oriented groups know that the Democratic Party and its candidates care about their concerns, and that we need their help in order to elect people who will further our mutual interests.

There is no limit to the kinds of organizations you can approach to assist your committee with resources: social, issue-oriented, professional, civic, and ethnic and cultural groups. There are good Democrats and potential Democratic Party activists in almost every organization. In planning an outreach program, you may want to consider these basic suggestions:

- Identify receptive groups. Find a local Democrat who is a member or has an established contact in the group to provide you with an entry (i.e. Farmers, Peace organizations, Sierra Club, and ACLU).
- Find articulate, credible spokespersons to represent the committee: an officeholder with a positive record of supporting the group’s interests, a Democrat with expertise in the issues that concern the organization, or a committee officer with recognized standing in the community.
- Do your homework before addressing a group on behalf of the committee. Find out what issues or concerns are fundamental to the organization and know the record of the committee and its officeholders on those issues. Also find out the Republicans’ record. Our record may not be perfect in the eyes of an organization – but theirs may be worse.
- Respect the organization’s rules and customary operating procedures. Some groups are sensitive about direct partisan pitches, although they are glad to have a partisan come and speak with conviction about an issue that matters to them.
- Give out a business card, and get an organizational membership list to use in a follow-up recruitment effort for the committee. Always try to get a list of the people you talked to for thank you notes and follow-ups.
- Acknowledge that Democrats are unlikely to be 100-percent “pure” on every issue of concern to the group. New recruits can become disillusioned when

a Democratic officeholder or candidate does not fully meet their expectations.

Finally, **make an extra effort to involve young people**. Go to high school and college campuses, speak to classes, and meet with Young Democrats and College Democrats. Young people have energy, ideas, and the abilities to play many helpful roles, including helping the committee as an intern or volunteer. Given the Republican agenda, young people are much more likely to be aligned with the Democratic platform. You can find ideas on how to do outreach to specific constituency groups in the resources section at the end of this chapter.

C. Values in Action: Community Visibility

Personal communication has long been the reason and basis for grassroots precinct organization. No matter how strong a candidate's appeal may be through the mass media, an individual or cause will always enjoy stronger and broader support when people in the community are talking about the candidates and the issues to the folks they see when going about their normal daily activities.

"Values in Action" involves sponsoring or leading community projects and activities that will attract citizen interest and positive publicity. When you put "values in action," you bring the Democratic message to life and give people a reason to work with us. The following are **examples** of possible "Values in Action" projects:

- Democrats believe in educational opportunity, so the committee sponsors a tutoring project, or an essay-writing contest about the democratic process that results in a small scholarship for the winner.
- Democrats believe in the environment and fighting crime, so the committee organizes an effort to clean up a run-down park, drawing attention to the need for clean, safe places where families can play and picnic. Or the committee can sponsor a local youth sports team, or hire a kid from one of the summer jobs programs, to spotlight Republican cuts in programs for youth jobs and recreation programs.
- To call attention to the issue of poverty and hunger in our communities, the committee can host a food drive for and/or a volunteer day at a local food bank.

In this way, we deliver a message, build organization, and combat cynicism. “Values in Action” activity can help in all neighborhoods: **It connects to the people who feel taken for granted in core Democratic precincts where we need turnout, and it establishes us as “neighbors” in swing and marginal precincts.** Finally, it can help the committee better understand what voters are worried about and what they expect from us and our candidates.

D. Outreach FAQs

1. My committee does not reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of my community. How can we improve our outreach efforts?

Answer: The Democratic Party Plan states in Article 3.1: “Every Democratic committee shall adopt and implement an outreach program to encourage Democrats to participate in all organizations at every level and in all delegate selection processes.”

The State Party has a number of Caucuses that work to encourage the growth and active participation of important constituency groups in all levels of party activities. Your committee should work with the Caucuses that represent the underrepresented constituents of your community to develop a plan to increase outreach efforts to these groups.

Your Democratic Party of Virginia staff is always willing to assist you in any way possible to help you to be more effective in your communities. Whether you represent a large or small, rural or urban, established or revived committee, there will always be someone available to provide you with information or material that we hope will be useful to you. And while we may not always have ready answers for all your questions or problems – please be assured that we will make every effort to give you the best answers and advice possible or refer you to the appropriate resources. Please see the Staff contact list that identifies our present staff and their areas of responsibility. It is located in the resources at the end of Chapter 3.

2. I live in a heavily Republican district. My committee is small and we have a hard time finding Democrats. What should I do?

Answer: First, the DPVA has a tool for manipulating the information (data) in the Registered Voter File (the statewide list of every registered voter). The name of this tool is **Votebuilder or VAN** and it can give you access to the list of voters for your locality, updated on a monthly basis with any newly registered residents or changes of address. The information provided is an invaluable resource, not

only for candidates seeking office in your locality, but for you as a chair, because it provides you with one central place to see all available info on a voter, including precinct, contact info, physical address, age, sex, and identification. Also included for each voter is a detailed voting history, as well as a Likely Party rating system allowing you to sort voters by potential Democratic voting performance. If people are historically voting for Democrats, then some of them may be good candidates for *recruitment by you to join your committee*. The same holds true for consistent campaign volunteers. Invite them to an activity or a committee meeting if the meeting agenda includes an interesting speaker or program. Example: Hold an ice cream social and invite all the people who voted in the Democratic Primary – free of charge or for a small donation. Or your committee can send a Welcome to the Neighborhood informational packet (when and where the committee meets, location of the polls, etc.) to newly registered voters.

Identify one or a couple of people on your committee who will serve in the capacity of the **Welcome Committee**. Make your committee members aware that they must make special efforts at greeting guests and making them feel welcome and appreciated. Establish a buddy system so that one established committee member will be responsible for letting new people know what it is you do as Democratic committee members. Don't ever assume they know! There should be some form of orientation provided for new committee members and guests. This could be accomplished via a handout or in an informal workshop. For example, at the end of each meeting an Officer can provide an orientation for new members and guests that discuss the purpose of the committee and how the meeting's program fits in with that purpose.

IV. VOTER EXPANSION

Voter Expansion is a component of the DPVA Voter Protection Program. While Voter Protection is an important part of GOTV issues, voter expansion is also active throughout the year on such issue areas as voter registration, restoration of rights, redistricting, election law education, voter education, and tracking and influencing legislative and administrative decisions.

A. DPVA Voter Protection Council

The Virginia voter expansion and protection programs are organized by the DPVA's landmark Voter Protection Council (VPC). The VPC is one of the first

volunteer run councils devoted to voter expansion and protection in the nation. The VPC was formed at DPVA's March 2015 State Central Meeting. They work to ensure free, fair, and accessible elections for every citizen of the Commonwealth. Some of our efforts are non-partisan, but we are a Democratic organization.

B. Voter Registration

Voter registration is one of the most important activities that a committee can engage in. Through voter registration, the Democratic Party can expand the electorate and incorporate new voters into the party. Voter registration has a lot of requirements in Virginia. It is very important that you make sure that you are following the rules when registering voters. There is some guidance on voter registration in the resources section at the end of this chapter.

C. Restoration of Rights

Virginia does not automatically restore voter registration to felons—nonviolent felons have to fill out a simple form and violent felons have a more extensive application process. As part of their voter expansion efforts, DPVA encourages local committees to do outreach to spread the word about this process. A fact sheet on the Restoration of Rights process is included in the resources at the end of this chapter.

D. Voter Education

While turning out our voters is very important, we also have to make sure the voters we are turning out are educated. The VPC provides materials on frequently asked voter questions, a photo ID guidance document, absentee voting information, and other important voter education materials. Some of those guidance documents are available in resources section at the end of this chapter.

E. Legislation

Lobbying for or against changes in laws that benefit our election efforts is becoming an important role for Virginia Democratic Party and its local party organizations. Legislative activity is important because it has long-lasting effects on the election process in Virginia. In a close election, the laws governing the election process can literally be a factor in determining who wins and who loses.

V. RELATIONSHIPS WITH DEMOCRATIC ELECTED OFFICIALS

Another key aspect of elections is developing and maintaining positive working relations with current Democratic Electeds. As local committee chair, you should maintain a list of all of the Democratic local elected officials in your area and their contact information. Such elected officials should be encouraged to attend as many city or county committee meetings as possible. They can be called upon to pass on information regarding pending legislation and coordinate efforts within the city or county to build community support for the legislation.

Additional Resources for Chapter 7

- [VAN For Local Committee Chairs & Admins](#)
- [DPVA Votebuilder Help Website](#)
- [Voter Registration Information](#)
- [Restoration of Rights Guidance](#)
- [Voter FAQ](#)

Chapter 8: Elections

Getting Out The Vote

The city or county is the primary level of organization for the Democratic Party of Virginia. Because of this, committee members are a main source of volunteers and support for political campaigns. Strong committees can have a significant impact on the success of an election. Therefore, it is extremely important for city or county chairs and other party leaders to establish positive working relations with their slate of Democratic-nominated candidates and campaigns.

City or county chairs have demanding roles during an election. There is constant pressure to play lead roles in the campaigns of city, county, state legislative and congressional candidates. All of this comes on top of the responsibility of organizing party unit functions such as meetings, fundraisers, door-to door canvasses and phone banks.

The task can be overwhelming. The most effective party leaders avoid becoming too involved in any one particular campaign, focusing instead on maintaining the party unit, running a coordinated campaign and recruiting volunteers. However, some members of your committee should be closely involved in specific campaigns to keep the lines of communication open between the party and its candidates.

I. ENDORSEMENTS IN NONPARTISAN RACES

Candidates who must or who choose to run as Independents: In Virginia, many localities have passed ordinances making all local elections non-partisan – every candidate has to run as an Independent. Sometimes, in areas where one party is significantly stronger than the other a candidate may choose to run as an Independent rather than seek a party nomination. In either of these instances, the committee can decide to endorse an Independent candidate.

This should only be done when there is no doubt that candidate is truly a Democrat and a supporter of our party. If you do choose to endorse nonpartisan candidates, please send those names to the DPVA by **September 1st** of that election year.

II. PRECINCT ORGANIZATION

The character of the precinct makes it a natural political unit for organization by the political party of each committee. When precincts are organized, the Democratic vote is maximized and our candidates win elections. However, precinct level organization may not be feasible in your committee locality. Sometimes there are areas in your locality where there are only a small number of Democrats and it is impossible to organize in that area. In other areas, precinct boundaries may not make sense with neighborhood growth and development. In such situations you may prefer to use the neighborhood team model instead. The neighborhood team model consists of groups of volunteers who work a specific area, which could be multiple precincts or a combination of sections from two or more precincts. For the sake of simplicity, this section will use the term “precinct,” but you can also substitute in “neighborhood team” for the term “precinct.”

A. Precinct Captains

The Precinct Captain can aid campaigns in finding existing volunteers for campaigns who will talk with voters in the precinct through canvassing (contacting by door-to-door) or phone-banking, arranging meet and greets or house parties, recruiting new volunteers, and training and directing those volunteers.

The Precinct Captain gets the party's message to the individual and carries out the party's program to get the voters to the polls on Election Day. An active, effective Precinct Captain makes a huge difference in the success of the party and our candidates. What follows is a very brief review of what a Precinct Captain can and should do to make a real difference in electing Democrats. *A Precinct Captain plays an essential role in our formula for success:*

- 1. Organize and Canvass your Precinct:** Get a list of UNIDENTIFIED voters in your precinct from the VAN database. Design a program to involve friends or other strong Democrats to act as volunteers to hold “block parties,” to recruit volunteers, to do door-to-door or phone-bank, and to carry out the precinct canvassing/organizational program.
- 2. Know the Law and the Rules:** Learn the Virginia Election Law, like photo ID requirements and Absentee Voting rules, and the DPVA *Party Plan* (our state bylaws).

The Precinct Captain's task should be clearly defined. Further, the individual who agrees to become the Precinct Captain should understand the minimum duties expected of him or her. (Party Chairs should have a job description that lists basic specific duties the Precinct Captain will be asked to do.) Here are some basic duties a Precinct Captain could accomplish:

- Know their precinct.
- Coordinate campaign activities within the precinct—at minimum maintain a list of volunteers.
- Represent and attend committee meetings.
- Register Democratic voters.
- Reach out to newly registered voters.
- Coordinate the schedule for Outside Poll Observers/Poll Greeters on Election Day

The above tasks can be done alone, but it is a lot easier if the Precinct Captain has help. Gather around you two to five talented workers in your precinct. The best way to recruit these workers is to personally contact Democrats that have attended your committee caucuses or other events, or you and the committee have identified as Democrats in the voter file.

Know the precinct. Maps of your area are generally available online. This important task is to show the boundaries and the streets or highways in the precinct. (It is a good idea for the committee Chair to drive around their city or county, acquainting him/herself with the various areas and visiting the Precinct Captains.)

Campaign Coordinator. The Precinct Captain can be the most useful person a city or county has in assisting a candidate during the election campaign. The Precinct Captain should be willing to recruit volunteers for voter identification and get-out-the-vote phone banks, literature dropping and door knocking. If the Precinct Captain is not interested in taking the lead on campaign volunteer activities, he or she should maintain a list of those volunteers in the area who are interested in participating to pass on to campaign.

Represent Your Precinct. The Precinct Captain is the precinct's representative on the committee. The Precinct Captain should attend the city or county committee meetings, thereby making sure the precinct is represented. Some city or county committees meet once a month, while others meet less frequently. (Committees are encouraged to meet once per month – there is

work to do all year and getting it done requires planning and communication.)

Register all Democratic Voters. One of the most important tasks of a Precinct Captain is to make sure that all Democratic voters are registered. Setting up a registration project for one evening/Saturday every three months, in the precinct would be a wonderful social project for Democrats in the precinct. *Note: You want to target areas that are more likely to have Democratic voters.*

Reach out to newly registered voters. A newly registered voter program lets you contact voters with your message after they register to vote. You can find newly registered voters in VAN after each month's new update. The volunteer can then immediately send a pre-written note from the candidate and your palm card to every voter on the list. This is one more voter contact method and one more opportunity to share your name and message before a voter casts a ballot.

Coordinate Outside Poll Observers/Poll Greeters. The Precinct Captain should compile a schedule of volunteers to stand outside the precinct polling location on Election Day. These volunteers will hand out sample ballots, answer simple voting related questions, report to the voter protection boiler room any issues with the polling location, and assist voters in contacting the voter hotline if they have issues voting.

III. TRAINING LOCAL PARTY LEADERS AND ACTIVISTS

A key component of activating and involving activists in your area is providing them with the proper training. You should think about holding trainings, or encourage your committee members to take trainings, on topics such as:

- Using VAN
- Building an effective Precinct Organization or Neighborhood Team
- Direct Voter Contact
- Voter Protection and Election Law issues you should know
- Organizing and Outreach
- Using media effectively
- How to host a successful fundraiser or house party

Local training efforts will be more successful if you:

1. Prepare materials for Precinct Captains and organizers. Contact the DPVA Headquarters office to get examples of materials prepared by other local committees.
2. Schedule a high-profile speaker for each event to emphasize the importance of local activity and boost attendance.
3. Prepare your schedule and budget in advance to allow yourself time to locate trainers, speakers, and sponsors, and to make other arrangements.
4. Be inclusive. Invite all local Precinct Captains, officeholders and their staffs, members of allied campaign and constituency groups. Even if they do not attend, they will know there is an active committee with an active program that involves local leaders.
5. Keep lists of all attendees for committee files and small donor prospecting. Thank the attendees for participating.

IV. VOTER CONTACT

Typically, the campaigns working in your locality will run the field program for that area. However, you can be enormously helpful to them by having an energized and active group of volunteers ready to go. We encourage you to compile a list of committee members who are interested in volunteering with campaign field programs that you can provide to campaigns. You should also familiarize yourself with how voter contact works.

Voter contact can be **direct** or **indirect**. **Direct voter contact** is any voter contact done by a volunteer or paid worker; for example, door-to-door canvassing and phone calling. **Indirect voter contact** does not use a person to deliver the message; for example, yard signs and bumpers stickers. The difference is in the persuasiveness of the delivery of the message. If you have, and we all do, a finite amount of resources (including time), you want to use the most effective methods available.

The following information focuses on two key elements of any field program:

- **door-to-door canvassing, and**
- **phone banking.**

A. DoorToDoor Canvassing

The doortodoor canvass is the single most effective direct voter contact tool. No amount of television, radio or direct mail can influence a persuadable voter the way that oneonone, facetoface voter contact can. Even the best media consultants cannot produce a mailing or radio spot that will move that voter as well as another human being can. Doortodoor canvassing serves four specific purposes:

1. Identify voter preferences (voter identification, 'I.D.')
2. Increase the candidate's name identification
3. Locate campaign volunteers or donors
4. Establish the credibility of the campaign in the community

A basic volunteer doortodoor program should persuade and identify (ID) voters in the most persuadable precincts that can be canvassed by foot. Volunteers should be given a script and trained to talk to voters about the candidate. Canvassers are the candidate's/party's surrogate for every voter they meet, and it is important that they make a good impression.

Volunteers should distribute literature to voters. All voter preference information gathered during canvassing should be added to the committee's or campaign's VoterBuilder file for use in fundraising, volunteer coordination and, ultimately, GOTV.

The more times you convey your message to the undecided voter, the better chance you have of winning them over and getting them out to vote on Election Day.

B. Telephone Program

Local races and state legislative campaigns are often won or lost by a small number of votes. Even a difference of 5% in such an election may translate into a few hundred votes. If you have a reliable phone match on your voter file, phones are the most appropriate tool for:

- Finding undecided voters who are likely to vote and determining the most significant issue that influences them.
- Persuading those undecided voters, using their issues.
- Getting all known supporters to the polls.

V. GOTV PLANNING

'Committee planning' means *always* looking ahead to the next election and planning activities that will help to get Democratic candidates elected. Each member of the city or county committee should be willing to work for the benefit of our candidates – right down to the precinct level, house by house and voter by voter. Each member of a Precinct Team has basic responsibilities:

- a) **Voter records.** Local committees should maintain their own registered voter files. Each Precinct Team should be responsible for entering updated information (people who move, deaths, party ID's) on to VAN.
- b) **Voter identification.** This is a task critical to Get Out the Vote (GOTV) efforts. It consists of individual identification of favorable voters and every committee member should be involved in this identification process.
- c) **Get Out the Vote.** This is the reason you identified all those voters. GOTV implementation begins the last three to four weeks before the election, and becomes intense during the final week. Calling back your identified supporters and reminding them to vote is the most important component. If you are well organized, you will have poll workers inside checking off names of your "good guys" as they vote, so calls can be made to those who haven't.
- d) **Election Day.** Your polls should be covered inside and outside. If it is cold, try to bring hot coffee to share with your volunteers. Organize rides to the polls. Have flushers go into high density, Democratic neighborhoods. And, make sure everyone knows where the victory party is in the evening!
- e) **Voter registration.** Watch for new housing developments in your precinct and report them to the chair. Get a few folks together, pick up some mail-in registration forms from your Registrar, and go visit your new neighbors. Of course, take some campaign literature with you!

VI. ABSENTEE VOTING PROGRAM

In close races, an absentee ballot program can be the deciding factor. Determine whether you should send an absentee ballot request form mail piece. Then implement your voter contact strategies with absentee voters earlier than with Election Day voters: ID them earlier, persuade them earlier, and encourage them to apply for an absentee ballot, fill it out, and return it to the election office.

Virginia also has an absentee in person voting program. You can also put together mailings on absentee in person voting in your area to spread the word about this option. Things you should include in any mailing are: 1. Dates, times, and locations for absentee in person voting; 2. What you need to bring with you in order to vote—this is the same as what you would bring to vote on Election Day; 3. A list of the Democratic candidates that will appear on the voter's ballot.

VII. VOTER PROTECTION

Virginia has a very active and successful voter protection program and it is one we are hoping to grow even larger in the coming years. Here are ways you can participate in and assist the voter protection program.

Designate a point person and an election counsel. This can be an elected position or an informal one. This person can coordinate all your voter protection activities. This person does not need to be a lawyer. It is also helpful to have someone (it can be the same person) to act as counsel on Election Day. This person would need to be available throughout election day to run to the local courthouse and file and court documents needed at the request of DPVA or the campaigns. This person will need to be a lawyer and licensed to practice in Virginia.

Recruit inside and outside poll observers. If you don't have the resources to cover all your polling locations on Election Day, you should at least try to cover your most important polls. The DPVA will provide training to the inside poll observers if you send their names and contact information to the Voter Protection Director. Inside Poll Observers need a signed authorized representative form. You can find a copy of the form at the end of this chapter.

Report problems on Election Day. As Chair of your local Democratic Committee, you are one of our best resources for learning about Election Day issues. If you see any problems that you feel should be reported, please call the legal boiler room number. You will be provided with a contact number ahead of each election.

Share our resources. The DPVA has a permanent voter hotline number. It is 1-844-4VA-VOTE ([1- 844-482-8683](tel:1-844-482-8683)). This is a number you can use year after year on any literature you print and we will have it staffed with volunteers who can answer any voting related questions. We will also have a permanent voter information page on our website at www.vademocrats.org/vote. This page will have information on voting in Virginia and a polling place locator. Please spread the word about both of these resources.

After Election Day—Canvass and Provisional Ballot Meeting. In Virginia, often the election does not end on election day. We frequently have very close race and so it is a good idea for you to prepare for a potential recount ahead of time. You should designate people ahead of time to cover the canvass (one for every table—you can call your local registrar to find the number of tables) and the provisional ballot meeting (one observer and, if possible, one individual to act as a voter advocate). The Canvass and Provisional Ballot Meeting start the day after Election Day. You can get a schedule of the meetings by calling your local registrar. The DPVA will provide training to those individuals if you send their names and contact information to the Voter Protection Director. Provisional Ballot Meeting Observers need a signed authorized representative form. You can find a copy of the form at the end of this chapter.

If you would like to get more involved in or learn more about voter protection in Virginia, you can join the DPVA Voter Protection Council by emailing voterprotection@vademocrats.org.

Additional Resources for Chapter 8

- [Sample Ballot Format](#)
- [Sample Volunteer Sign Up Form](#)
- [Canvassing Guidelines](#)
- [Voters' Bill of Rights](#)
- [Authorized Representative Form for Inside Poll Observers](#)
- [Authorized Representative Form for Provisional Ballot Meeting Observers](#)

Chapter 9: The Money

Budgeting, Fundraising, and Reporting

Money is the mother's milk of American politics, and the subject of money has come up numerous times in this handbook. This section provides a brief overview of budgeting, fundraising, and reporting considerations.

I. BUDGETING THE NECESSARY FUNDS

To develop a budget, you must have your plan* outlined in full detail, so that you can set priorities, project costs, and establish fundraising goals. This is your personal blueprint for action. The budget should be clear, straightforward and on paper.

A. Annual Budget

Every committee which incurs expenses needs a means to cover these expenses. Revenue anticipated for the year should be projected at the same time as an annual budget of expenses is adopted. The projected revenue should equal or exceed the projected expenses.

Annual income projections should include member dues, delegate and alternate pre-filing fees (in convention years), interest from bank accounts or investments and any other regular, anticipated revenue. The bulk of your annual income will most likely be generated from active fundraising. An overall fundraising plan should be prepared each year in conjunction with the budget cycle. Each fundraising activity should be itemized in the projected revenue, with actual income goals listed.

1. **Keeping Accurate Financial Records.** It is important to have accurate financial records as your positive proof that all committee funds have been handled appropriately. The role of the committee Treasurer is to keep all financial records including records of all contributions and disbursements.
2. **Adopt a realistic budget:** Adopt the actual amount your committee has for its expenditures each year. The following is a list of items most commonly used. Please modify these recommendations as you see fit.

Operational Expenses:

- Printing
- Postage and mailing expenses
- Office supplies
- Equipment: a copier and/or printer, laptop, etc.
- Rent
- Utilities
- Telephones
- Voter file purchase
- GOTV expenses
- Miscellaneous

Fundraising Expenses—It takes money to make money:

- Advertising and Promotion: Invitations, Announcements, Fliers, Balloons, Newspaper Ads.
- Postage
- Facility rental
- Equipment rental: microphone, audio visual equipment, stage, electrical hookups • Catering
- Wine, beer, and/or liquor and an ABC license
- Entertainment
- Decorations
- Security
- Phone: calls to increase turn out
- Thank you letters

Note: a donor can purchase items for your operations or fundraising events. In this event, your committee needs to track the in-kind donation like any other monetary contribution for campaign finance reporting.

B. Treasurer's Report

There should be a Treasurer's Report at every meeting detailing all the financial activities since the last meeting. A standard report would have the following items, but the report should reflect each organization's own budget:

Balance last report - \$		
	This Period Year to Date Budget	Disbursements:
Receipts:		Newsletter
Membership		Fundraiser
Direct Mail		Tickets
Fundraiser		Meetings
Contributions		Contributions
Special Events		Training
Other		Other
		Total - \$
Total - \$		Ending Balance - \$

II. FUNDRAISING

A. Fundraising Plan

A successful fundraising plan will include a mixture of activities and will target high as well as low dollar contributors. This chapter will highlight two types of activities recommended for the local committees – individual solicitations and special events. Other types of fundraising, such as direct mail and telemarketing, are usually not cost-effective when attempted in relatively small numbers most local committees can supply.

A fundraising plan should include the following:

- A goal stated in quantifiable terms (make realistic projections of income to be received from each activity). Revenue from each fundraising activity should be projected. These financial goals should be realistic and attainable. The amount raised in previous years and projections on how to increase the revenues should be considered.
- Time frame (e.g., when the event will be held, when the solicitations will occur). We suggest that a committee have at least one annual special event and an annual solicitation drive for individual contributions. These two activities should be planned at such times as to maximize the income from each one. Consideration should be given to other activities in the community such as parades, festivals, and fundraising drives/events of other organizations. Also to be considered when determining the timing of events and solicitations should be campaigns, voter registration drives, and other

political events held by local and statewide elected officials. Determining the appropriate timing of fundraising events and solicitation drives is critical and should be carefully considered.

- Strategies outlining steps to be taken, responsible persons, targeted audience, follow up, etc. Each fundraising activity should have an individual plan of action or strategy. A committee may be assigned responsibility of developing such a strategy. Included in a successful strategy are:

Steps to be taken to accomplish the goal;

Time frame when each step is to be completed; and

Person(s) identified who will take responsibility for each step.

Every local committee is unique and its fundraising plan should be appropriate to the interests, size and characteristics of the locality. For the purposes of this chapter, it is necessary to present general guidelines which must be adapted to each committee. Also, it is easier to raise money for specific projects or items such as voter registration drive, a computer or other equipment, or a building for an office. Any specific need can be incorporated into a fundraising plan.

B. Individual Solicitations

Individual solicitation is an important way to build a continuing, sustaining donor base. Although it may be more difficult to find volunteers to help with this type of fundraising, individual contributions are a cost effective way to support your operating budget (your 'bread and butter' money).

There are many people who are able and willing to make contributions to the Democratic Party if they are asked. Most people allocate a certain amount of their income for charitable or political donations. These people should be given the opportunity to participate in and support the Party through their contribution.

Your committee may want to consider creating a sustaining donor program. They are often predicated on having members, as well as other community members, make annual or monthly contributions in excess of their annual dues. They can be set up where there are levels of giving for the sustaining donor to

choose from. For example:

- \$5 per month or \$60 per year
- \$10 per month or \$120 per year
- \$20 per month or \$240 per year
- \$50 per month or \$600 per year
- \$100 per month or \$1200 per year

Sustaining donors may receive benefits such as discounted or free admission to committee events, and benefits may be tiered based on the level of support.

With online fundraising sites such as ActBlue, it is easy for sustaining donors to make monthly contributions to your committee via credit card.

All written solicitations should include the following disclaimer, either in its own paragraph or the first sentence of the paragraph that it is in: “Contributions or gifts to [insert name of party committee] are not tax deductible.”

C. Events

It is important to have fundraising events not only during campaign season, but also throughout the year. Fundraising events provide Party members with an opportunity to socialize and maintain contact with other party activists. It also provides an opportunity to recruit new volunteers, recognize Party faithful and local elected officials, and gain publicity for the local committee. A good annual revenue-generating event is to have a ‘staple’ event that happens every year that people can look forward to and give money to and plan their personal budgets accordingly every year to contribute to the committee.

Every local committee should have at least one **annual** fundraising event.

Some ideas for annual fundraising events include:

- Cocktail reception
- Dinner or banquet
- Picnic, barbeque or pig roast
- Holiday party
- Celebrity roast

- Formal ball
- Auction
- Pancake breakfast or ice cream social

Please keep in mind that there are legal restrictions on how a federal office holder or candidate may be listed on materials for your event. Moreover, additional signage must be included at such events. Likewise, there are legal restrictions on the ability of state officeholders to solicit funds during regular legislative session. Please consult your lawyer or call the DPVA for additional information.

III. CAMPAIGN FINANCE REPORTING/COMPLIANCE

As with any campaign or political entity, local committees are subject to state and federal campaign finance laws. A summary of the state laws as of October 2014 and federal laws as of January 2015 are below. These laws are subject to change.*

* For full details and the latest updates on state law, please visit the Department of Elections website:

<http://elections.virginia.gov/candidatepac-info/regulation-and-policies/index.html> and click on the link for Political Party Committee Summary. For full details and the latest updates on federal law, please visit the Federal Election Commission website:
<http://www.fec.gov/pages/brochures/locparty.shtml>.

A. Virginia Department of Elections Requirements

Do I need to register and file with the Department of Elections? Virginia Code exempts county and city political party committees in counties and cities which have a population less than 100,000 (2010 Census) from registering and reporting as a Political Party committee until such time that they receive contributions totaling \$15,000 in a calendar year or make contributions and expenditures which total more than \$15,000 in a calendar year. Upon meeting the threshold, the committee must register and report all receipts and expenditures back to January 1 of that year.

For all other local committees, registration with the Department of Elections and quarterly reporting of all receipts and expenditures is required.

What types of reports are required and when are they due? Local committees are required to file three types of reports:

1. **Quarterly reports** that include information on all contributions received and all expenditures made.
 - Due the 15th of the month after each quarter (ex: April 15th for January – March)
 - **Contributions must not be anonymous.**
 - Committees are required to report the name, address, occupation (individuals) or principal type of business (organizations), and date received for all contributions in aggregate of \$100 each calendar year. It is best practice to collect this information for all contributors.
2. **Large Contribution Reports** are required for all contributions (monetary or in-kind) of \$10,000 or greater.
 - Each large contribution must be reported within three (3) business days of receipt of the contribution.
3. **Independent Expenditure Reports** are required if the committee makes independent expenditures in excess of \$1,000 or more to a candidate for statewide office or in excess of \$200 or more to any other candidate in the aggregate during an election cycle.
 - Independent Expenditure reports are due **within 24 hours** after the committee has made the expenditure or when the advertisement supporting or opposing the clearly identified candidate is disseminated, whichever is first.

Are there contribution limitations? There are NO contribution limits on nonfederal contributions in Virginia. However, federal law prohibits any political organization from accepting contributions from a foreign national or foreign corporation. Individuals who are permanent residents and have a valid green card are not considered “foreign nationals” and may contribute.

Can contributions be anonymous? No. **Virginia law prohibits anonymous contributions.** Further, committees are required to report the name, address, occupation (individuals) or principal type of business (organizations), and date received for all contributions in aggregate of \$100 each calendar year. It is best practice to collect this information for all contributions, since the

contributor may exceed \$100 in the future.

What are the disclaimer requirements for local committees?

- The disclaimer criteria are different for television, radio, and telephone calls. For details on the disclaimers required for these communications, refer to the Department of Election's Political Party Committee Summary and the "Disclaimers Handout" at the end of this chapter for more details.

For more information on how to file a Statement of Organization and file quarterly campaign finance reports can be found on the Department of Elections website:

<http://elections.virginia.gov/candidatepac-info/regulation-and-policies/index.html> and click on the link for Political Party Committee Summary. In addition, we provide a list of frequently asked questions at the end of this chapter.

The DPVA Operations Director is available to provide guidance to local party chairs and officers on campaign finance reporting.

B. Federal Election Commission Requirements

If your local committee does not already have a federally registered committee, you are subject to FEC limitations that if exceeded would necessitate registering and filing with the FEC.

What is the threshold for Direct Contributions made to federal candidates? The threshold for direct contributions to federal candidates is **\$1,000 per calendar year**. Direct contributions in excess of \$1,000 would necessitate registering and filing with the FEC. Please note the following:

- The \$1,000 limit on direct contributions and expenses is in the aggregate to **ALL** federal candidates and is per calendar year.
- Direct contributions include money and in-kind contributions.
- When there are two or fewer candidates listed on the materials, sample ballots or slate cards featuring federal candidates are considered an in-kind contribution if distributed within a certain proximity of the election and coordinated with the candidate.
- If a local committee is paying for the phones being used for a phone bank that is doing candidate IDs, this is considered an in-kind contribution.

- If a local committee is paying to participate in a community fair or parade in which it does not usually participate in order to promote a federal candidate, then the costs associated with the event are considered a direct contribution.
- Allocation of in-kind contributions is determined by a "time or space" ratio. In the case of sample ballots when there are two races, the direct in-kind contribution would be 50% of the cost of the sample ballots for each candidate (e.g. for a \$1,000 printing expenditure \$500 for a US Senate candidate and \$500 for a US House of Representatives Candidate).

What is the threshold for Exempt Party Activities expenditures? There is a \$5,000 threshold for exempt party activities that refer to federal candidates. These activities include:

- When there are three or more races listed, sample ballots or slate cards are considered exempt party activities. In 2016, jurisdictions with local or special elections in November or that are represented by two or more Congressional districts but only produce one sample ballot may meet this condition.
- Campaign materials (bumper stickers, yard signs, etc.) are considered exempt party activities.

What if the threshold for federal contributions received? The "contributions received" threshold is \$5,000 for local party committees. Funds specifically solicited or donated for the purpose of influencing federal elections count against this threshold, as do funds received in response to a solicitation that indicates any portion of the receipts will be used to support or oppose a clearly identified federal candidate.

What are the disclaimer requirements for federal elections?

- Disclaimers are required on materials that expressly advocate the election or defeat of a clearly identified federal candidate.
- The disclaimer must identify who paid for a communication and must state whether it was authorized by a candidate or candidate's campaign committee. For example, "Paid for by the [Locality] Democratic Committee and authorized by [Candidate Committee]." Or "Paid for by the [Locality] Democratic Committee, [committee's website, street address, or phone number] and not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee."

- Disclaimers for fundraising invitations for federal candidates are subject to FEC regulations which are different than Virginia's Department of Elections regulations. Please defer to the appropriate campaign for the required language.

Are there federal limitations for Volunteer Activities? Yes. Common examples are below:

- Volunteers who host house parties and fundraisers in their home can spend up to \$2000 per calendar year on food, beverages, and invitations without it being an in-kind contribution. If someone pays for an event somewhere other than their home, then it is an in-kind contribution.
- Phone banks where volunteers use their own cell phones are not part of a committee's direct contributions or exempt party activities.
- Individuals may use their homes or the recreation room of their apartment complex to conduct volunteer activities. Individuals may also use a church or community room for volunteer activities, as long as the room is used on a regular basis by members of the community without regard to political affiliation. Nominal fees paid to use these rooms are not contributions or expenditures.

For more information on federal election limitations, please visit the Federal Election Commission website:

<http://www.fec.gov/pages/brochures/locparty.shtml>.

If your committee plans to exceed any of these federal limits in 2016 and does not already file with the FEC, please speak with the DPVA Operations Director for further guidance. The DPVA Operations Director is also available to provide advice to local party chairs and officers on campaign finance reporting.

Additional Resources for Chapter 9

- [Tips on Successful Special Events](#)
- [Tips on Successful Individual Solicitation](#)
- [Fundraising Event Planning Sheet](#)
- [Post Event Checklist](#)
- [Event Timeline Checklist](#)
- [Disclaimer Rules](#)
- [Memorandum on Local Party Federal Campaign Finance Activity](#)
- [Department of Elections Summary of Laws and Policies for Political Party Committees](#)

Chapter 10: Communications

Moving Your Message While Building Your Committee

I. DEVELOPING GOOD PRESS RELATIONS

The committee should have one person who is responsible for press relations and who is skilled in dealing with the media. More often than not, this person is the Chair. The Communications Director at DPVA is always available to assist you and the best practice is to keep him or her looped in on all reporter requests and inquiries to ensure we are all speaking with one, focused message. In addition, you should make sure to:

- Be available. Make sure reporters know where and how to get in touch with you – include contact information on your website and/or social media pages.
- Know your information. Don't make something up if you're unsure and never, ever lie. Most of the time, a skilled press person will ask what information they are looking for, say you'll get back to the reporter, and return the call later. You are not responsible or expected to know how to respond to every question right away.
- Let any relevant folks at your party and the DPVA Communications Director know about the inquiry.
- Worth repeating: never, ever lie to the press.
- Do not play favorites. Be fair when releasing information. Try to release information at the same time to all media sources except when it doing otherwise may ensure a story.
- Maintain your contacts. Call reporters often, know them by name, and talk about their stories. Grab a drink or coffee with them to connect with them personally.
- Catchy quotes get used in print stories and headlines, but remember that core messaging always trumps being too cute.
- Know and beat media deadlines if you want your side in the story.
- Know the best days and times for getting coverage.
- Follow local reporters, papers, and TV stations on twitter to stay ahead of

the coverage.

- Prepare and make available radio actualities – when putting out a press release with a quote, record the quote from the person being quoted and send the attachment to radio stations.
- Plan news events. Contact the media well in advance if appropriate and possible.
- Develop media kits with photos for print and slides for TV to promote events.
- TV coverage needs visuals. Think about interesting pictures, human interest impact, locations, etc.
- Follow up all press conferences with written texts or radio actualities for reporters who cannot attend press conferences.

If you get calls from the press regarding your reaction to various issues, our Communications Director is available to help you prepare press releases as well as suggesting how or if you should respond to certain press requests. Don't allow reporters to force you to say something about which you're not certain or prepared to discuss. Gathering information and calling back later is a common and good practice. Always assume you are talking on the record at all times with reporters.

If you are surprised by a reporter's call, do not hesitate to ask questions, get a phone number where the reporter can be reached, the reporter's deadline, and say you'll call back once you are fully informed. Most reporters appreciate a source who wants to give them as much accurate information as possible.

It is extremely helpful to the State Party office if you would let the Communications Director know - as soon as possible - when a representative of any news media attends a local committee meeting, or if you are contacted by the media about goings-on with your committee, candidates, or anything related to the party.

Please make your committee officers aware of this policy so that if you go on vacation or are otherwise unavailable and appoint someone else to handle press, they will call us.

A. Press 101: Dealing With The Press

City and county committee chairs can boost the committee's visibility by working with media outlets (newspapers, television and radio stations) in the city or county.

i. Know Who Covers You

As Chair, you should:

- Find out what reporters cover politics for the news organizations in your locality. Get their extension or direct line and email address.
- Let those reporters know who you are and how you can be reached. It is important that reporters know who the local chair is and how to contact you so they can talk with the local authority on Democratic Party matters when the need arises.
- If you're comfortable, offer to meet them for an off the record, informal chat to get to know each other. It's mutually beneficial – they'll begin to see you as a trusted source and you'll begin to know the issues they care about and develop a level of trust.

Finding out who covers politics is important because now you know who to contact when you have news. News for most committees involves the following:

- Regular committee meetings.
- Committee events, i.e. a fundraising event or caucuses/conventions.
- Communicating campaign talking points to reinforce party/candidate efforts.

The press can usually be notified about these events through news releases, though nothing beats a quick personal call or email to the reporter you know tends to cover these items.

ii. The Rules

There are three basic categories to speak with a reporter:

- a. On the record: Everything you say can be quoted and will be sourced to you.
- b. Off the record: This is typically background information for the reporter that they cannot use in the story. Generally, it's great to start by speaking off the record so you can speak to the truth of the story without worrying about

sound bites.

- c. On background: Every reporter has a different definition for this but generally it means they can use the information in the story but it won't be directly quoted and potentially not directly sourced to you.

These are the most common definitions but they are not magic words and every person seems to have slightly different ideas of what they mean.

Always assume you are speaking *on the record*.

If you stray from staying on the record, be certain you and the reporter are using the *same* definitions (for example: on background, no direct quotes but you can be named) **You must ask and receive confirmation from a reporter about what way you are speaking and clarify exactly what that means.**

For example, ensure if you're speaking on background that you won't be named in the story and only appear as a "democratic party source." No matter what, remember that once you say something, you can't unsay it. Never say anything "off the record" that you couldn't handle if it ended up in a story.

If you have any questions, please let the DPVA Communications Director know who can help sort through this.

iii. Keep the State Party Informed

Our Communications Director is available to help you prepare news releases as well as suggesting how or if you should respond to certain press requests. You can email or call the Communications Director.

It is extremely helpful to the State Party office if you would let the Communications Director know - as soon as possible - when a representative of any news media attends a local committee meeting, or if you are contacted by the media about goings-on with your committee, candidates, or anything related to the party.

This helps the State Party in a number of ways, but, first and foremost, it keeps us informed so the Communications Director and Press Secretary can speak knowledgeably with members of the media who may eventually call headquarters for comment. In addition, it helps us keep the Chair informed, since she is often the first person to receive a call from a reporter. More information is always better than no information.

Also importantly, it helps us stay focused with a message. A worst-case scenario is if the state party and local party accidentally contradict each other on an issue. A quick email could prevent an embarrassing story in the press.

Please make your committee officers aware of this policy so that if you go on vacation or are otherwise unavailable and appoint someone else to handle press, they will call us.

B. News Releases

A news release is one of the easiest ways to disseminate news. It must be written exactly as a news article would be written. It should reflect favorably on the committee and its event, but must be accurate.

The form for a news release is standard. The first page should bear the logo or otherwise accurately reflect the source. At the top, state that the document is a news release. Also, list the date, a contact person and a telephone number, and whether the document is for immediate release or embargoed until a specific date and time. There should be a short headline at the top. The first paragraph should begin with a dateline – the city/town of origin for the statement or event described in the release. (Sample releases appear at the end of this section.)

Keep releases short and to the point. Write clearly, simply, and directly.

The first paragraph should include the essentials: who, what, when, where and why. Generally, the first paragraph is a single sentence or two. As with any news story, this should be a synopsis of the most important element(s) of the story.

The second most important facts should be in the second paragraph and so on. The least important part of the release should be at the end.

[The Associated Press Stylebook](#) is helpful in writing your news releases in the style that reporters are accustomed to reading.

Follow through when issuing news releases, especially to TV stations. After emailed, a follow up call is the best way to ensure your release was read.

News releases have a value that diminishes as the volume increases. Send releases that are newsworthy; if too many releases are sent, all your releases will soon be tossed. Again, the Communications Director of the State Party will be happy to help you with any news releases.

And a release that concerns anything other than committee business should always be discussed with the Communications Director. There is a sample press release at the end of this chapter.

C. Summary: Five Points To Remember When Working With Reporters

- Always be truthful.
- Assume you are speaking on-the-record.
- Focus your pitch on the question “why is this news?” Realize that everything the committee tries to publicize is not news to those who report it.
- Keep the number of news releases to a minimum and always proofread them.
- Try not to favor one reporter over another.

II. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: SPEAK OUT

Letters to the editor serve two purposes: They encourage and further community dialogue, and they affect the thinking of the editor. Moreover, a letter to the editor can benefit the Democratic Party immensely. Letters supporting Democratic candidates, elected officials and policies constitute a great, free form of political advertising. Here are some tips on writing effective letters: ▪ Before putting pen to paper, think carefully about what your letter should say. ▪ When writing the letter, keep to one point. Remember, the editor has the privilege of abbreviating your remarks.

- The shorter the letter, the more likely it is to be published. Always try to keep letters shorter than 250 words but each publication has their own length requirements you should be aware of. ▪ After you have finished writing, let a friend read the letter to see if your point is easily grasped. ▪ If possible, put the letter away for at least 24 hours. Sometimes it is necessary to re-think the contents and purpose of a letter before mailing.
- Read the letter again. If you still feel your letter successfully conveys your point, send it in.

And some tips to avoid:

- Avoid grammatical errors. Don't give them a non-content reason to reject the letter. ▪ Do not make open-ended statements. A good letter is concise

and its main points are strongly supported.

- Do not say anything in your letter that you would not say to a small group of people. Remember, all letters to the editor must be signed.
- Do not write an overly emotional letter.

Every newspaper prints guidelines for their letter section. If you hold a public or party office (county supervisor, committee secretary, etc.) put the title below your signature. If the editor sees that you are a spokesperson for a group, your letter has a better chance of being published.

III. POSTCARDS

You can keep in contact with the Democrats in your area very inexpensively through the use of postcards. These are most effective for brief messages and to announce special events and activities such as:

- Caucuses and conventions.
- Fundraising events (picnics, dinners).
- Candidate rallies.
- Get Out the Vote/Rides to the polls.
- Committee meetings.
- Thank you note after the election.

IV. COMMUNICATIONS AND MESSAGE DELIVERY

Communicating the Democratic message means not only getting press coverage in a campaign context, but also using state and national party messages to define the values for which our Party stands. One of the most important roles of the and Democratic Party of Virginia staff and its local committee organizations is delivering the message about our candidates' and officeholders' accomplishments and countering the opposition's message.

A. State And National Message And Articulation

Democrats develop an overriding message into which we can fit locality-specific rallying themes that define specific issue differences between us and the Republicans. If we don't, Republicans will define us by lifting and distorting "extreme" examples from issues and concerns raised by our various

constituencies.

- A message usually involves a theme that is broader than a single issue, no matter how important an issue may be. A successful message provides a framework and slogan that allows voters concerned about a variety of issues to coalesce behind a candidate, campaign, or party.
- Successful messages are amplified through the use of meaningful issues that are important to voters in their day-to-day lives.
- Messages and issues must be supported by sound research, facts and message testing. In a sophisticated campaign, message testing is done by polling and focus groups. Local grassroots efforts more often must rely on anecdotal, personal feedback. In other words, listen to what people are saying and what they respond to.
- Messages can be tailored without compromising principles. How you state a message can determine whether people will agree with you. For example, the “property rights movement” is fighting to weaken environmental regulations, but most landowners would gladly use those same regulations to protect their property from degradation by a neighboring landowner, a pipeline, or a waste dump.
- Attacking an opposition message can be an effective message. “Negative messages,” although distasteful to some people, are essential unless you want to enter battle with one hand tied behind your back.
- An opponent's message can be successfully attacked by discrediting and disproving the facts that are its foundation. So-called “wedge issues” can also literally tear apart the fabric of the opponent's message. For example, in 1988, when Mike Dukakis ran on a message of restoring a sense of community, the Republicans tore that message apart by saying he let Willie Horton out of prison to terrorize our communities.

B. Delivering The Message: “Earned” Media, Paid Media, And Rapid Response Networks

Message development is incomplete without effective, coordinated message delivery systems and adequate resources. Democrats must do a better job of coordinating message and message delivery with allied and sympathetic nonpartisan groups, as well as with our officeholders and candidate

campaigns.

Democratic officeholders and campaigns must devote sufficient resources, or perhaps pool resources with the Party, to allow designated staff to focus on message delivery. Democrats must also be willing to devote resources to communications technologies such as radio actualities, email, and social media.

V. “EARNED” MEDIA

The and Democratic Party of Virginia staff and city or county committees face a tough job when it comes to getting media coverage. Approaches and access to the media vary depending on the medium and the size of the media markets, but whether your city or county is large or small, urban or rural, some of the same principles apply if you want to get press.

- “Work” the media. Get to know editors and let them know who to work with: the city or county Chair, the DPVA Communications Director, or DPVA Chair or Executive Director.
- Identify all media outlets, what they’ll cover, and how they cover it.
- Tailor the nature--not the substance--of your message to fit the medium.

A. NEWSPAPERS AND PRINT MEDIA

- Find out whether the newspaper will run press releases or guest op-ed columns, cover events, or publish regular columns by Democrats.
- Find out publication deadlines and formats for submitting press releases or articles. Does the paper accept camera-ready copy for a column?
- Keep press releases short and to the point. Include a local angle. Get your press releases out early enough to beat deadlines.

B. RADIO

Radio is the most underused political advertising medium (especially in Southside and Southwest Virginia) and often the most accessible. Radio also

provides the most immediate means for rapid response to Republican attacks.

- Find out which radio stations do call-in interviews or have local talk shows. Make key Democrats (Committee officers, issues spokespersons, officeholders) available for radio. You don't have to be pretty for radio.
- Identify talk radio programs and their biases. Organize Democrats to call into talk shops with "the rest of the story."
- Find out how and when each radio station assigns reporters to cover events. Get names of news editors or assignment editors and call them enough in advance to allow them to cover your events.

C. TELEVISION

In large media markets, it's hard to get on TV without a celebrity, a disaster, a controversy, or a local angle with a good visual setting. TV needs pictures, and you need a star or other visual hook to get TV coverage. In smaller markets, however, you may be able to get coverage as a local "Democratic official" who can comment on the major state or national issue of the day or provide a local angle on an important story.

- A visual "hook" is essential: a visiting candidate or celebrity, or a local impact or human interest angle on a major state or national issue is more likely to get the camera's attention.
- Learn the names of news or assignment editors who make the reporters' assignments. Personal relationships can help.
- Learn the deadlines for getting a story on the air or time big events for live remote coverage. Accommodate the reporters' and editors' needs.
- Keep your sound bites tight, brief and on the message.

D. PAID MEDIA AND POLITICAL ADVERTISING

Paid advertising has become such a part of the American political process that most campaign money today goes toward paid TV, radio, and newspaper advertising. Paid media efforts by city or county committees are usually coordinated with the Democratic Party of Virginia staff and complement our candidates' own campaign advertising.

VI. RAPID RESPONSE NETWORKS

One of the strengths of a good campaign is a 'rapid response' effort that works to make sure that there is an effective message in every media market on a daily basis. The network reaches into every level and every type of media. **The goals of a rapid response effort are to:**

- **Repeat** the Democratic message in every type of media in every area of the state;
- **Respond** to all Republican attacks on Democratic candidates and their records; and
- **Recruit** local leaders and spokespersons to validate the message locally by delivering it to local media.

The frontline of any rapid response effort is made up of **Monitors** and **Messengers**. Rapid response **Monitors**, designated by the committee Chair, Coordinated Campaign director, or another local coordinator, monitor and report back to the committee or Democratic Party of Virginia staff what is being said in the local media. Monitors are assigned to:

- Review all local newspapers to report any unfavorable news stories, editorials, op-ed columns or letters-to-the-editor campaigns so they can be responded to immediately.
- Listen to radio news reports, editorial comments, and talk show programs. Selected programs, such as interviews with our Republican opposition, should be recorded.
- Watch and tape local TV news and commentary programs in every media market, and report back any unfavorable coverage or other "surprises" to headquarters.
- Monitor opposition publications, including newsletters, leaflets distributed at churches and rallies, etc.

Messengers are local leaders who serve as surrogates to help get out the message provided by the committee or the campaign on a regular basis. Messengers may receive information for distribution or background in several

formats:

- “Talking points” on campaign themes or responses to be distributed to appropriate surrogates.
- Press releases to be delivered to press outlets.
- Sample Letters to the Editor.
- “Message Alerts” for information about what the candidates are saying and doing on a particular day.

The keys to a successful rapid response effort and to winning the message war are speed, accuracy, and persistence.

Be Quick. Messages, particularly those responding to charges, need to be distributed to the media in a timely fashion before they lose their effectiveness.

Be Accurate. Rapid response teams must have accurate information from the field. Mistakes and misinformation can lead to embarrassment for everyone.

Be Aggressive. Don’t give up, and don’t be shy about voicing your displeasure with a print or broadcast report. Call the management and let them know your objections.

VII. DIGITAL OUTREACH FOR COMMITTEES: INTERNET USE BY COMMITTEES

Twenty-first century political operatives, candidates, and organizations have come to the realization that a successful campaign **must include an Internet strategy**—a mere website address is not enough. An Internet strategy is critical to the success of our candidates, campaigns, and organizations. In a world where people with the same values can come together in the digital space, it is key to incorporate digital into your political activity. The digital space also creates a unique opportunity to create your own media and create innovative ways to move messages used through traditional channels. It is important to note that local committees should create a program that does not expand beyond their capacity to maintain and update digital assets.

In this portion of the handbook, we will review key components, a strong digital program and fun additions to ramp up your online outreach.

A. Website

Your website should energize and augment your offline campaign with a virtual campaign. The website should introduce and educate visitors about the city or county committee, officers and candidates as well as providing them a way to take action.

Think of your website like city hall it should house all of the critical information and resources necessary for activists to get involved and learn about your committee. You can utilize your website to integrate outreach, fundraising, social media and email list building. Before creating a website make sure that you pick a url that is easy to find and ensure it is SEO (Search Engine Optimized) friendly, this will help identify your committees site easily in web searches.

Here are the basic functions of your website

- **Introduce.** Your homepage should be an introduction of the committee to visitors. It should include your logo and color scheme.

Your homepage serves as your website's table of contents, with icons and hyperlinks that represent the major sections of your website. It should be clean and easy to read so visitors can see what is available on your website and where to find it. If you have a mechanism for receiving contributions online it is important that a link to contribute STANDS OUT on your website homepage.

Your homepage also serves as the "welcome mat" into the website. Therefore, a brief welcome message from the County Chair or local elected official should appear on this page. This could be in text or in a multimedia presentation format.

- **Educate.** These sections should educate and inform voters about the committee.

About: This section could feature key information about the city or county committee including history, county leadership, local elected officials, accomplishments, and TV/radio commercials. Also, this page could include photographs.

Press Center: This section could feature all media releases, newspaper articles, op-eds, and speeches. Corresponding pictures/multimedia presentations can be juxtaposed with speeches and articles. This area can

also house a blog; blogs are a great way to create content that has a local focus that moves your message. A blog also allows you to move your message when traditional media outlets do not pick up stories about your committee.

Issues: This section could feature the committee's position on campaign issues. Position papers and links can also be listed on this page.

- **Contact.** This page could feature a list of the contacts and address information, including headquarters, leadership, and coordinators. Additionally, email addresses of any officer can be added to these lists, and visitors can have the option of emailing directly from the campaign website. A picture of the headquarters or any of the committee leadership can also be displayed next to the contact information as well.

Calendar: This section could feature upcoming events including date, time, location, and event details. This page will not only list where events are today and in the future, but also where previous events were held.

- **Take Action.** These sections should help organize and mobilize voters to take action on behalf of the committee.

Fundraising: The Internet's appeal as a new mechanism for soliciting contributions stems from many sources, including the ability to access more people in a faster, less expensive manner than the party has been able to.

Probably the most common reason for disappointing results in online fundraising is the lack of awareness among donors of your website. Almost no one is going to wander across your website by accident. They will typically find you because either:

- They already know about your existence;
- They find a link to your website on a page created by some related organization, or one that otherwise supports your activities;
- They receive an intriguing e-mail message from you that describes your mission and ask them to visit your site;
- They read about your organization in some online or off-line newsletter or other informational article created by a third-party, and includes your committee's website address;
- They are using an Internet search engine to find websites address some

topic or issue, and your page has the right keywords to match their search; or

- They see a banner advertisement you have placed on another organization's website.

If your committee doesn't use at least one and preferably several of these methods to attract visitors to your website, you will get few or no contributions there. At the very least, every one of your marketing and solicitation texts should include a reference to your website's address.

Involvement Corner: This section could feature an online database supported form in which users can submit their name, address, phone, e-mail, demographic information, political involvement interests, and comments. This form will give the committee the ability to communicate and organize your supporters. The committee can deliver email updates and literature to friends and family, rapidly respond to opponent's remarks, make phone calls, get out the vote, and help at the nearest satellite office.

Links Page: This page could allow your campaign to link to other "friendly" sites including the Democratic Party of Virginia, the Democratic National Committee, online voter resources or organizations, candidates for office and local newspapers. Make sure you checkout the pages you link to, to ensure that there is nothing objectionable or controversial on them.

ALL WEBSITES MUST INCLUDE A "PAID FOR BY" DISCLAIMER!

- **Administrative.** These sections talk about other issues your website might encounter.

Bilingual Website: Depending on your city or county, this feature will allow your website to be read in other languages, as English is not the primary language for all Americans.

Privacy Policy: All websites should have a solid, up-to-date privacy policy.

B. Email:

An email program allows you to connect with voters and activists. A successful email program fundraises, moves your supporters to action, is a mechanism for rapid response to breaking news, and keeps your audience involved with committee activity. Email remains the primary form of online communication.

i. Email Management Program

Running an email program will require a supporter management system. The state party uses Blue State Digital to manage our email program. There are many free and low cost options including Mailchimp, Constant Contact, and the Action Network. These programs allow you to track and manage supporters and analyze how activists interact with the emails you send. This is important so that you have data that allows you to better tailor your emails to your audience.

If you need assistance on finding the right application for your program, please contact the state party digital team at digital@vademocrats.org.

ii. Building Your Email List

Make sure you have an easy identifiable way for people to opt-in to your emails. Committees want to ensure you have email sign-ups at events and a way to sign up on your website and social media accounts. Actions and petitions are a great way to develop your list, and organize your supporters.

Advanced email programs will segment their supporters based on location, issues, volunteer frequency, and contribution amounts.

iii. Fundraising

Fundraising via email is a low cost way to raise funds for your committee. When creating an email program and drafting fundraising emails it's important that you make sure the following questions are answered in your email and program: Why now? Why me? Will it help? How much?

C. Social Media:

Social media is becoming a driving force in moving messages and creating communities in the online space. It is important that you remember social media needs to be as interactive as possible. Simply having a Facebook or twitter account is not enough, you want to make sure you are sharing content that engages your audience. There are many social networks out there and it is important you pick the platforms BEST FOR YOUR AUDIENCE. To start a good program, using Facebook is a good start.

Facebook is the largest and most used social network. Facebook can be used in a lot of ways. You can create groups for internal committee communications for messaging to your supporters if you want to create a Facebook Page not a Profile account for your committee.

D. Text (SMS) Messaging:

Mass text messaging services have great potential to be used in grassroots community organizing in a way that can greatly benefit your mission and your committee in the end. Text message programs are beneficial because they are a direct access point to supporters. Most people use smart phones and with a text program, you can reach supporters wherever they are. Before you consider creating a SMS programs make sure you identify clear goals because you could easily annoy your supporters and have a drastic failure of a program.

Make sure you have the consent of the user to send SMS messages; just like email, you want people to organically sign up for your list. An easy way to gather numbers for a text program is to have an opt in number where supporters can directly sign up for the messages and also ensure there is an option on your event and volunteer sign up forms that explicitly ask, *"Would you like to receive text message updates from the committee/campaign?"* A few tips for SMS

- Make sure you let subscribers know that you are being careful with their information.
- Be aware of the frequency of your messages.
- Make sure you are using a tone that does not alienate your audience.

E. Tips and Tricks

- Be strategic – Do not post for the sake of posting make sure your content provides some sort of connection to your offline activity. Also, make sure you integrate all of your digital programming into the larger communications plan and field activity of your committee.
- Don't over extend – The world of digital media is new and exciting and with all of the available avenues to reach out to people sometimes committees and campaigns have too many channels to update and leave the risk of leaving some of your accounts inactive.
- Coordinate – Work with allies and campaigns to create joint actions, share content, and fundraise. This is a great way to work with like-minded organizations and grow your digital program in the process.
- Be Data Driven – Track your pages, supporters, clicks, open rates, etc. This allows you to better tailor your program for your audience.
- Have Fun – The digital space is an area that allows for innovation and exploration, try new things experiment.

Additional Resources for Chapter 10

- [Social Media Resources](#)
- [Sample Press Release](#)

Appendix

Additional Resources for Chapter 2

- [The Party Plan](#)
- [Chart: Democratic Party Organization Structure](#)
- [Chart: Democratic Party of Virginia Organization Structure](#)
- [Chart: Democratic Party of Virginia Officer Structure](#)

Additional Resources for Chapter 3

- [Extra Resources on Legal Responsibilities](#)
- [Relevant sections of the Code of Virginia](#)
- [ELECT 2022 Candidate Reporting Deadlines](#)
- [5 Year Calendar of Elections](#)
- [2022 Deadlines Calendar](#)
- [FEC Dates & Deadlines](#)

Additional Resources for Chapter 4

- [Robert's Rules of Order Summary](#)
- [Robert's Rules of Order Cheat Sheet](#)
- [Robert's Rules for Dummies Cheat Sheet](#)
- [Conflict Resolution Guide](#)
- [Sample Local Committee Bylaws 1](#)
- [Sample Local Committee Bylaws 2](#)

Additional Resources for Chapter 5

- [Party Organization Assessment](#)
- [Political Brainstorming](#)
- [Step-by-Step Planning Worksheet](#)
- [Sample Plan](#)
- [Sample Strategic Plan Template](#)

Additional Resources for Chapter 6

- [Caucus Checklist](#)
- [Sample Rules For An Assembled Caucus](#)
- [Suggested Agenda For An Assembled Caucus \(Mass Meeting\)](#)
- [Sample Rules For An Unassembled Caucus \(Firehouse Primary\)](#)
- [Sample Declaration Of Candidacy For Democratic Nomination](#)
- [Sample Ballots](#)
- [Delegate or Alternate Pre-filing Form](#)
- [Sample Henrico Caucus Participation Form](#)

Additional Resources for Chapter 7

- [VAN For Local Committee Chairs & Admins](#)
- [DPVA Votebuilder Help Website](#)
- [Voter Registration Information](#)
- [Restoration of Rights Guidance](#)
- [Voter FAQ](#)

Additional Resources for Chapter 8

- [Sample Ballot Format](#)
- [Sample Volunteer Sign Up Form](#)
- [Canvassing Guidelines](#)
- [Voters' Bill of Rights](#)
- [Authorized Representative Form for Inside Poll Observers](#)
- [Authorized Representative Form for Provisional Ballot Meeting Observers](#)

Additional Resources for Chapter 9

- [Tips on Successful Special Events](#)
- [Tips on Successful Individual Solicitation](#)
- [Fundraising Event Planning Sheet](#)
- [Post Event Checklist](#)
- [Event Timeline Checklist](#)
- [Disclaimer Rules](#)

- [Memorandum on Local Party Federal Campaign Finance Activity](#)
- [Department of Elections Summary of Laws and Policies for Political Party Committees](#)

Additional Resources for Chapter 10

- [Social Media Resources](#)
- [Sample Press Release](#)