

Central Committee Basics

Materials adapted from the 2003
Washington State Republican Party
Precinct Committee Officer Manual

Revised 2025

Materials adapted from the 2003 Washington State Republican Party PCO Manual. These suggestions are not meant to replace your county's approved procedures or by-laws.

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STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

We are Republicans because...

We believe the strength of our nation lies with the individual and that each person's dignity, freedom, ability and responsibility must be honored.

We believe in equal rights, equal justice, and equal opportunity for all, regardless of race, creed, sex, age or disability.

We believe free enterprise and encouraging individual initiative have brought this nation opportunity, economic growth and prosperity.

We believe government must practice fiscal responsibility and allow individuals to keep more of the money they earn.

We believe the most effective, responsible and responsive government is the government closest to the people.

We believe Americans value and should preserve our national strength and pride while working to extend peace, freedom and human rights throughout the world.

We believe the Republican Party is the best vehicle for translating these ideals into positive and successful principles of government.

We believe the proper role of government is to provide for the people only those critical functions that cannot be performed by individuals or private organizations and that the best government is that which governs least.

We believe Americans must retain the principles that have made us strong while developing new and innovative ideas to meet the challenges of changing times.

INTRODUCTION

The Republican Party exists because of a common belief in the strength of the individual. We espouse and practice respect for the right of the individual to determine his or her own destiny. Party members work to ensure that governments do not fall prey to collectivism as they administer our democratic principles.

Our Constitution guarantees that the rights and freedoms of each individual are protected and not lost to the bureaucracy of government. If we are to maintain our vigilance in protecting these constitutional rights, we must begin with the individual.

Central Committee members, elected to serve their Republican neighbors as representatives to the party, are the first building block in the foundation of the Republican Party. Creating a strong grassroots organization the Republican Party can open doors to people within many local communities.

“You don’t win elections on Election Day. You win them by what you do all year round, by the day-to-day goodwill you generate in each precinct.”

-Jake Avery, Chicago political boss

You are Important!

Your job as a Republican Central Committee member is an extremely important one. In many respects, you are the Republican Party within your neighborhood. You represent the Republican voters in your precinct. You play a pivotal role in selecting and electing Republican candidates for a wide variety of responsible positions, ranging from United States Congress to city council to school board. You are the first and in many ways the most important link in the chain that makes up our representative form of government.

You Can Make a Difference

By becoming a Central Committee member, you have made a commitment to making a difference. You will share the ups and downs, the joy of victory and the agony of defeat. Most important of all, you will share the final sense of accomplishment that comes with electing good public officials, with making our Republic work effectively and with making a difference.

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Be Flexible

There is no single formula for success in the political arena. Your good judgment and knowledge of your individual precinct should be your guide in deciding which suggestions will work for you. Your goal is to inform the voters, identify favorable voters and get them to the polls. How you attain this goal, however, will be determined by your own experience and creativity, coupled with guidelines contained in this handbook and the advice of your local party Chair. Each county party chairman may manage their counties differently.

ROLES AND DUTIES OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBER

The Central Committee member is the representative of the Republican Party at the grassroots level.

At a minimum, Central Committee members should:

- Distribute candidate information to neighbors;
- Engage in Get-Out-The-Vote activities in preparation for each election;
- Select officers of the county's Central Committee;
- Attend county party meetings to vote on matters important to the running of the party.

A strong and effective party looks to its Central Committee members to perform at least the above tasks. These duties may take a minimum of ten hours per year. Accomplishing additional tasks will make all our efforts more effective. This manual will describe the “nuts and bolts” of how to create a successful precinct organization. Although there are things you can do in every month of the year each task takes very little time.

A few hours a month is all it takes to create a strong precinct. These few hours will allow you to build a rapport with your neighbors such that they will come to you for advice on political issues and candidates, whether they are preparing to vote or writing to their representative in government or to the local newspaper.

There are a number of things a good Central Committee member will do:

- Represent the precinct voters to the Republican Party; and represent the party and its candidates and officers to the precinct voters.
- Attend County Party meetings, help formulate policy, and recruit party candidates and volunteers.
- Help register voters, update the voter list, urge voters to turnout, pass out absentee ballots to those who need them, and stress the importance of each vote. **Please note: Registration and Absentee Ballot procedures are set by the state and may change. Always verify these procedures before proceeding.**
- Support all Republican candidates after the Primary Election.
- Attend meetings of your county or legislative district and stay informed of issues in your area.
- Assist with fund-raising events when possible.
- Volunteer to help on various campaigns.
- Doorbell your precinct before each election with literature on candidates and issues.

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- Stay involved in the community in which you live. In addition you will be part of the county or district volunteer force. You will be notified of meetings and political activities, including doorbelling in various precincts. Participate to the extent your time permits.

This may seem like a long list, but the tasks of the Central Committee member are spread out over the year, meaning that you should never be overwhelmed by work. If, however, you put some things off, you may find that activities pile up. Trying to accomplish all of these tasks within a few weeks is both agonizing and discouraging. It helps to have a long-term plan-making your job easier and much more effective. Furthermore, many of the events, such as fund-raisers and meetings, can be enjoyable. Volunteers from your precinct will be happy to work with you in making your precinct solidly Republican.

BUILDING YOUR PRECINCT

How then do we know who the Republicans are?

Many people in our county consider themselves Republicans, vote regularly, but are never identified by party. Helping to identify Republicans in every precinct and getting them to the polls is the most important job of the Central Committee member.

Plan for Success

Good planning is the key to attaining any worthwhile goal. This holds true in business, family life, civic activities and especially politics. Your overall goal is to ensure that every voter in your precinct who supports Republican candidates votes for them. To accomplish this goal, you must first accomplish the tasks mentioned in the role of the Central Committee member. Accomplishing these tasks will be much less formidable if you develop a calendar and timetables.

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The Calendar Should Include:

- Dates fixed by state law (Registration deadlines, Primaries, Early Voting Dates, Election Day, etc.)
- Dates of party activities
- Target dates for accomplishing each of your precinct tasks (voter registration, volunteer recruitment, literature drops, etc.)

In developing your timetable, start with the date of a particular activity and determine the tasks that must be accomplished to make the activity a success. Now, simply work backwards from the date and determine what needs to be done, the time it takes to do it and how many people are needed to get it done. Once you have developed the steps necessary to accomplish your task, mark the day you need to begin work.

MAPPING YOUR PRECINCT

A precinct map showing every address in your precinct is very useful when organizing your precinct. This map will show you where the precinct boundaries are and help you identify your Republican constituents.

Resources Available on the county Board of Elections website and the Secretary of State's website:

- Precinct maps, including precinct boundaries and streets
- List of registered voters in your precinct
- Walking lists with name, address, and party affiliation (if known) for all addresses in your precinct*

*Keep in mind, voters in Ohio do not “register” with political parties. Party affiliation is determined when a voter votes in a Primary election and requests a ballot for a particular party.

PRECINCT CANVASSING

Canvassing your precinct will allow you to turn out the largest vote during the election because you will know who the Republicans in your precinct are. Often elections depend not on how many Democrats or Republicans there are, but who does a better job of getting their supporters to the polls. A precinct canvass will help you maximize the number of people you get to the polls.

Purpose

- Identify voters in your precinct by party affiliation
- Encourage unregistered Republicans to register before the deadline
- Recruit Republican volunteers

Things you must do:

- Be brief, and a good listener.
- Be friendly – this person is a neighbor regardless of party affiliation.
- If you cannot answer a question, admit it, but promise to get the information and call back again. Leave an appropriate piece of literature, if possible.
- Be sure to emphasize that the Republican party is at the service of each voter, leaving your name and contact information.

Things you must not do:

- Never begin the conversation, “Are you a Republican or Democrat?”
- Never be argumentative. Even disagreements can be cordial.
- Never make derogatory remarks about any Republican organization, candidate or Republican officer holder.
- Do not make any statements about opposition candidates that you cannot prove.

Typical Questions from Voters

Know the answers to these questions that you may be asked by voters when you are canvassing your precinct, or have a source handy where you can find the information:

Where do I vote?

What precinct am I in?

When is the next election and what are the early voting dates, if applicable?

What does the Party stand for? *You may be able to furnish the voter with literature available from your county headquarters or State Party office.*

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Who are the candidates and what is their background? *Any additional information regarding a candidate should be directed to the candidate or the campaign.*

What can I do to help the Party?

Where do I get yard signs, bumper stickers, buttons and campaign literature?

Who is the county chairman, state and federal representatives?

How do I find out if I am registered to vote?

How do I register to vote?

Where do I register to vote?

Please note: Registration and Absentee Ballot procedures are set by the state and may change. Always verify these procedures before proceeding.

DOORBELLING

Many voters don't receive much candidate information on races other than the most visible (President, Governor, Congress, etc.). Distributing a candidate's brochure may be the most effective thing you can do to increase the number of Republican votes in your precinct.

One of the best ways to affect the outcome of the election is to doorbell your precinct with candidate literature before voting begins. You can obtain this literature from the candidate or county/district party organization.

You will want to doorbell the precinct three to ten days before early voting begins. Take your walking list or map with you as you go out doorbelling. You can update your list or map as you go along, if necessary.

Ring the doorbell and introduce yourself as the Republican Central Committee member for your precinct. Give the voter Republican party and candidate literature relevant for that election. Remind the voter where his/her polling place is and when the election will occur.

If the voter is not home, or does not like being doorbelled, you can just leave the literature on the doorstep or in the newspaper box (but not the mail box). If you know that a person is an independent-leaning Democrat, you might choose to mention only the candidates you think will be attractive to that voter. If you can swing a few votes here and there it will make a difference overall.

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Make sure that you are courteous and brief. Discuss candidate and ballot issues if you are inclined, but never argue. Remember that the purpose of doorbelling is to distribute literature so that the candidates can speak for themselves. Your time is better spent talking to favorable voters and making sure that they vote and know whom to vote for. If you don't know the answer to a question, do not be afraid to say so. If you can find an answer to a question and get back to someone with that answer, they will appreciate it and you may get a vote.

Your effectiveness will depend on time available. The most effective doorbelling includes personal, face-to-face contact and the request "I hope you'll vote for candidate X." Less effective, but still useful, is leaving literature on the doorstep with a signed note saying, "Sorry I missed you." If all you can do is to "door drop" or leave the literature at each door, that's still helpful and will produce a few extra votes for our candidates.

GET-OUT-THE-VOTE

Without votes even the best Republican candidate can't win. Therefore, the Get-Out-The-Vote effort is one of the most important jobs you have as a Central Committee member. The best GOTV drives involve Central Committee members, Executive committee members, and volunteers.

Every county will have different procedures and GOTV plans for each election. The following activities may or may not be used in your county. Always check with your county party Chair for directions on GOTV efforts.

- **Phone calls** - Personal phone calls a day or two before the election are the most effective device for increasing voter turnout. Simply call the voters you have identified as Republicans, identify yourself, remind them of the election and urge them to vote.
- **Rides** – Some counties engage in GOTV ride programs. Check with your county Chair.
- **Last-minute voter encouragement** - Getting out the vote consists of comparing the list of voters who have voted to the identified Republicans in your precinct. You then call any Republicans who have not yet voted and remind them to turn out.

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- **Thank your workers** - Remember to thank all the people who have worked with you to turn out the Republican vote. See to it that they are invited to victory celebrations.

AFTER THE ELECTION

You have had many people in your precinct helping you, and whether we win or lose, be sure to write every one of them a thank you note. It is important to recognize and appreciate everyone's hard work and dedication. Encourage them to remain active in the Republican Party, to build for the future of the community and our country.

Think through what worked well in your precinct and which efforts didn't go as planned. These reflections can be very helpful when debriefing with your fellow Central and Executive Committee members and Chair after the election. Ask any volunteers who worked with you for their opinions as well.

As you move into the non-election year, remember you are still the Central Committee member. Continue to participate in the County Central Committee, and other Republican Party activities. Your input is important. Keep in touch with neighbors – you and the Republican Party will need them in the next election.