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# PDMC New Member Training Guide

## [Section 1.0: Introduction](#)

Ultimately, it's all about votes. Our political and governmental systems run on votes. Who's voting? Where do they live? What do they care about? Answers to those questions is where YOU come in!

Your most important role as a Committee Person is to promote the interests of your friends and neighbors by helping to deliver as many votes as possible in the Democratic column from your District on election day.

Everything in this guidebook is intended to help you fulfill your role.

Based on our experience, the Princeton Municipal Democratic Committee has developed specific responsibilities and tools that will help you become the best Committee Person you can be. Review the Table of Contents (above) and then read each section of the guidebook to get good ideas on how you can meet the different responsibilities of your role as a Municipal Committee Person. And remember, you're not alone. There are plenty of Democrats out there to help you and to answer your questions.

## [Section 2.0: The Mercer County Municipal Committee \(MCDC\)](#)

There are hundreds of Democratic Committee positions in Mercer County. The elective office of Committee Person is provided for under Title 19 of the New Jersey statutes. Each of the [twelve \(12\) municipalities](#) in Mercer County has their own Municipal Committee and district representatives.

The statutes are supplemented by the [Mercer County Democratic Committee](#) Constitution and Bylaws and the Rules of the Mercer County Democratic Committee Nominating Convention.

Basically, the statutes and Mercer County Democratic Party documents provide that election to the Municipal Committee is for a term of two years with voting occurring during the Primary Elections in even numbered years. Each of the 20 election districts in Princeton has the opportunity to elect two Democratic Committee Persons. Being elected as a Municipal Committee Person automatically makes you a member of the Mercer County Democratic Committee as well.

## [Section 3.0 PDMC Annual Responsibilities](#)

As a Committee Person, you represent the Democratic Party to the residents of your election district. Along with the other Committee Person in your district, you are the best link between the municipal, county, state and national democratic organizations and the people of your election district. Your friends and neighbors should be able to look to you for help with problems needing party or governmental action. How do you make this happen? Work with your fellow district Committee Person and follow the suggestions in this training guide.

### **Get to Know Your Party and Elected Officials**

You are part of a great Democratic team. Be sure to call upon those Democrats, who, by virtue of their experience or their political or elective office, can help you do what you need to do as a Committee Person.

You can become acquainted with these officials by attending [Princeton Community Democratic Organization \(PCDO\)](#) club meetings. You can find out when and where by visiting their website at [www.princetondems.org](http://www.princetondems.org). These meetings are a great way to meet and greet your Democratic teammates, and public officials often make it a priority to attend.

## Get to Know Your Neighborhood

In addition to knowing the boundaries, the geography, and the demographics of your district, you should know the people of your district. What are their concerns, their problems, their hopes and their needs? Remember, you are the face of the Democratic Party in your election district. Make sure your neighbors know that face and that they can count on you to be in their corner on a regular basis!

Below are some tips and tricks for getting to **Know Your Neighborhood**:

### Obtain an Election District Map

- Know the streets that make up your district. Get a map of your district and mark important landmarks, like apartment buildings, and the polling place. The Municipal Chair will provide you with a map of your district. The Municipal Clerks' website also has this information as does our [PDMC website](#).

### Obtain a Current List of Registered Voters

- Believe it or not, only 60 – 80% of the people eligible to vote in your district are registered to do so. With a list of registered voters, you'll know who's registered and who's not. You'll be able to tell if they are Democrats, Republicans, or not affiliated with a party. Knowing these facts will make your responsibilities much more straightforward. Your Municipal Chair can provide you with a current list. You can also obtain one from the office of the County Superintendent of Elections.

### Create a File to Track Notes from Your District

- There are many different ways to keep track of the people in an election district and you will have to find the one that works best for you. One thing to remember is that it is important to write things down instead of trying to keep it all in your head. Some people use lists, others use a file card system where there is a separate card for each voter or resident. Still others have computerized their voter contact files. Ask for advice if you need help setting up your own file.

### Walk the District

- Nothing beats getting outside and knocking on doors for learning about your district. Some people find this difficult to start, but it gets easier once you take the first step and find out that you and your neighbors can learn and benefit from each other. All you will seek to do at your first visit is to introduce yourself and let the resident know that you represent the Democratic Party and that you are there to help. If you stop by when no one is home, you can leave a "[Missed You Meet You](#)" door hanger with election info as well as your contact information.
- In some areas though, going door-to-door simply isn't practical. Some examples of this might be districts where homes are widely spaced, where there are gated communities or restricted access to units in multi-family buildings, or assisted living facilities. In those cases, you will have to come up with other ways to introduce yourself to the people of your district. Options to consider could be doing a personalized mailing or making phone calls. In restricted access properties, you might find someone who's a resident with access to take you around and introduce you. *Be sure to observe the properties' rules and regulations.*

The goal is to make the best contact you can and establish some basis for building a relationship with the prospective voters in your district.

## **Attend the Annual County Convention and Endorsement Meeting**

As a Committee Person, you will play an important role in the selection of candidates to run under the Democratic Party banner. Mercer County Democrats have the most open and broad-based convention process for endorsing candidates of any County party organization in New Jersey. Your active participation in the County Convention is sought and welcomed.

You will find that candidates, both incumbents and those newly seeking office, will actively solicit your support in the convention. You play a big role in deciding who the party will endorse in the June Primary Election because each of the hundreds of people entitled to participate in the convention has a single vote, just like you do.

The party nominating convention is usually held between February and April of each year and you will receive an invitation from your Democratic County Chair letting you know where and when the event is to take place.

No candidate who has been endorsed by the County Convention in the past twenty years has failed to secure the Party nomination on Primary day, so you can see how important your participation is to our political process.

## **Attend the Biennial Party Reorganization Meetings**

Every two years, after County Committee elections are held during the June Primary, the Mercer County Democratic Party formally reorganizes itself by conducting two meetings that are important for you to attend.

**At the municipal level**, every Committee Member from your municipality is invited to attend a meeting to select the municipal party officers for the next two years. The annual meeting of each municipal committee shall be held by the third Saturday which follows the certification of results. There are some exceptions to this rule and some towns move the date around to make attending more convenient. The current Municipal Chair will let you know when and where the meeting will be held. He or she will also let you know what business will be conducted at the meeting and usually who is expected to run for party office.

**At the county level**, all the Committee Members from the entire county are expected to attend a meeting where they elect a new County Chair and all the other officers provided for in the [Mercer County Democratic Committee](#) Constitution and Bylaws. This meeting should also take place by the third Saturday which follows the certification of results. You will be notified when and where the meeting is to be held as well as advised of the business is to be conducted at the meeting.

As a new Committee member you are entitled to a copy of the PDMC Constitution and Bylaws. You will find them online at [www.princetondmc.org/history-bylaws](http://www.princetondmc.org/history-bylaws).

## **Attend Periodic Open Leadership Meetings**

Several times a year, the Mercer County Chair will call "Open Leadership Meetings" so that all party members have the opportunity to learn what's going on in the organization. At these meetings, elected officials, party officials, committee people like you and others interested in the Democratic Party are invited to participate in Democratic Party discussions and planning.

## **Encourage People to Work the Polls**

New Jersey needs poll workers. Each polling location requires multiple staff to open, operate, collect voter tallies, and close. Poll workers are compensated for their time and trained by the state of New Jersey. Committee Persons who identify people interested in serving as Poll Workers,

should forward those people directly to the New Jersey Division of Elections website [here](#).

## **Welcome New Residents**

Be one of the first people in the neighborhood to welcome new residents and help them get settled in. Keep an eye out for “For Sale” signs and make a note to visit when they become “Sold” signs. Stop by to introduce yourself and point your new neighbors to [voter registration forms](#) for the household. Leave your phone number with them so they can reach out to you if they have a question about the neighborhood later on. You’ll be making a friend for yourself and one for the Democratic Party! This is another great opportunity to use the “[Missed You Meet You](#)” door hanger.

## **Recruit Some Helpers in the District**

Divide your district into sections of 30-40 homes each. Try to recruit a friend or seek volunteers in each section to keep you informed about new people, births, deaths, local issues, etc. Don’t hesitate to ask people who are already active in your community – church members, PTA participants, or civic-minded individuals. And, don’t forget young people. It’s another opportunity to make friends and to spread your workload around.

## **Help Fill Vacancies in Municipal and County Elected and Party Offices**

When a municipal or county elected official must leave office during their term, you will play an important role in naming their interim successor. In the case of County offices, the Committee People will vote to directly name the interim successor. For municipal offices, the Committee Members will vote on a list of candidates to be presented to the municipal governing body which must then choose one of the names from the list. In the event of a vacancy, your Municipal or County Chair will be in touch with you to explain the process in greater detail and to notify you of when and where the Committee will be meeting.

You may also be called upon to vote on filling vacancies within your party organization, including the appointment of other Committee Members to fill vacancies in districts in your municipality.

## **Register New Voters**

Voter registration efforts are one of the most fundamental activities you can undertake to ensure your success as a Committee Person and to keep our government responsive to the needs of you and your neighbors. By bringing potential voters into the process of government by registering them to vote, you give them a voice and you give yourself another vote that you can deliver for Democratic candidates on Election Day. You can find resources for voter registration [here](#).

## **[Section 4.0 PDMC Campaign Responsibilities](#)**

Things really start to get exciting for you as a Committee Person around Labor Day each year as candidates and the party organization start to roll out the fall campaign and get energized. In the eight weeks prior to an election, everything about a campaign shifts into a higher gear. The work you have done up to now will begin to pay off as you make that final effort towards Democratic victory. How can you assist the Democratic candidates that you helped select win? Below are some tips and tricks for accomplishing your **Campaign Responsibilities**:

### **[Conduct a District-Wide Canvass](#)**

- The best way you can help elect Democratic candidates is by doing a full-district canvass. A canvass is a direct personal contact between you and the registered voters in your district to ascertain how they intend to vote in the coming election or, if a voter is undecided, the best way to encourage support of our Democratic slate of candidates. You’ll also be doing a few other tasks during the canvass that make your job much easier on Election Day.

### **Walking with the Candidates**

- Another way to really help the Democratic candidates is to offer to personally take them door-to-door in your district. It helps the candidates because they get to make high-quality voter contact. It helps you as a Committee Person, because your neighbors will see you with their elected officials and that reinforces the idea that you have the connections that make you the “go-to-person” for assistance in dealing with local problems and concerns.

### **Reach out to VBM Voters**

- As more and more votes are cast through Vote By Mail (VBM) ballots, be mindful of the VBM mailing dates as you canvass prior to each election. The County Clerk will mail out VBM ballots six (6) weeks prior to election day. As of 2024, approximately half of all votes are cast with VBM ballots in Princeton. Your district list from the Municipal Chair will provide you with details about VBM versus in-person voters to help you follow up most effectively.

### **Host a Home Party (Optional)**

- Hosting a Candidate “Meet and Greet” Party is an excellent way to support our Democratic candidates while having fun with your friends and family. Your party can take whatever form you want. It can be something as simple as some neighbors getting together for coffee or a backyard BBQ, it’s up to you.
- Meet and Greets offer one of the few opportunities for people to feel like they are really getting to know a candidate in a personal way. Hosting a successful event is not difficult; it just takes a little organization and outreach to voters in your district. Be sure to coordinate dates and times with the Municipal Chair. For more information, review [Appendix 1 - How to Conduct a Candidate Meet and Greet](#).

### **Write or Sign a “Letter To The Editor” (Optional)**

- A letter to the editor can be an effective way of showing your support and inspiring others to support Democratic candidates. Elected leaders and other policy makers rely upon the editorials and letters to the editor to gauge the views of the electorate. The PDMC likes to plan letters with the candidates’ campaigns, so please be sure to coordinate with the Municipal Chair to ensure as many voices are heard across the spectrum of voter issues.

## **Section 5.0 PDMC Election Responsibilities**

There will be differences in your election day duties from year to year because each campaign is run a little differently than the last one, but there are some basic tasks common to all elections that you should expect to be responsible for.

### **Keep in Touch with the Municipal Chair**

Unless you’re told otherwise, the Municipal Chair will be your primary point of contact on Election Day. You should expect to get a package of information from the Municipal Chair with polling locations, Challenger Information, and helpful forms to collect and tally election results.

### **Open the Polls**

At least 1 Committee member in your district should arrive at the polling place around 5:45 a.m. to observe the opening of the polls and go over plans for the day. You will want to make sure they are set up properly and that everyone understands their duties.

### **Report Polling Place Problems Promptly**

If there is a delay in opening the polls, report that immediately to the Municipal Chair. Similarly, machine breakdowns or other difficulties that affect voting should be called in if they occur. Your

prompt action will enable the campaign organization to respond quickly to the situation and to provide the assistance needed to resolve the problem.

### **Report Turnout Figures Periodically**

The Municipal Chair may ask you to check on voter turnout numbers in your polling place and report them back at various times during the day. How you should report these numbers will change from year to year, so check with the Municipal Chair for information on how, and when, to report.

### **“Pull” Known Supporters to the Polls**

You won't be the only person trying to get people out to vote on Election Day, but if you've done your homework before Election Day, you can be the most effective one out there.

Some campaigns may operate “banks” of telephones to help get voters out to the polls. The Municipal Chair or the campaign headquarters will advise you of any plans for pulling voters from your district. You may even want to consider setting up your own mini-bank or phone tree to get the voters out to the polls. This is a great opportunity for shut-ins who want to help you with the campaign, but can't go door-to-door for you.

You may be asked to make a sweep through your district to encourage people to get to the polls. The Municipal Chair will alert you to this and the process if necessary.

### **Leave the Republicans Alone**

Your job is to encourage Democratic supporters to come out and vote. Concentrate your efforts on those individuals and ignore Republican households. In some campaigns, there may be a strategy to pull people who are believed to be undecided or unaffiliated voters to the polls as well. Check with the Municipal Chair to learn what types of potential voters you should be targeting.

### **Call In Election Results**

At least 1 Committee member in your district should be present to observe closing procedures and the reading of the election results from the machines in your polling location when the polls close at 8:00 p.m. The Municipal Chair will provide you with a tally sheet on which to record the results and a contact number to phone them into a central location. Make sure you record results for ALL candidates and then promptly get your numbers to headquarters.

### **Join the Party!**

After the polls close, there is always gathering as members of the Democratic Team come together to watch the election returns and celebrate the results of their hard work. Your Municipal Chair will tell you where the party will be and you should try to attend...after all, you've earned it!

### **The Day After**

It is important to thank those people who helped you on Election Day, such as volunteers and known Democratic supporters. A pleasant written note or a phone call lets them know they are appreciated and prepares the ground for next year when you will call on them again for support and help.



## [Appendix 1 - How to Conduct a Successful “Candidate Meet and Greet”](#)

One popular method of local advocacy is to host a “meet-and-greet” event. This is a gathering of your friends, neighbors, and colleagues at your home to meet a political candidate, ask questions, and discuss issues. This appendix addresses only meet-and-greets for state legislative and local political contests.

Meet-and-greets for congressional races are governed by a different and more complex set of rules. The PDMC partners with federal candidates and their staff to ensure meet and greets for federal candidates comply with FEC rules and regulations.

### **Planning the Event**

1. Confirm the Date (with the candidate, municipal chair, and other Democratic officials) and then draft the invitation and cover note. The invitation should include:
  - A personal note about why you believe it is important to meet this candidate (secure approval from the candidate before sending out!);
  - Some issues the candidate might address (current legislative efforts or campaign platform talking points);
  - Event Date and Time (typically 90 minutes to 2 hours); and
  - RSVP contact information.

**■ *The address of the event should only be sent upon receipt of RSVP***

Meet-and-greets should last approximately 90 minutes and be flexible enough to accommodate the candidate arriving after it starts and departing prior to the end time. Candidates do most of their campaigning between Labor Day and Election Day. Events held prior to Labor Day often allow candidates to spend more time with the members of your district.

2. Pick a location
  - Private homes are the most popular locations for meet-and-greets. Be sure to plan for the possibility of inclement weather.
3. Craft an invitation list
  - Invite opinion leaders and other people who are active in community affairs and are in a position to influence the opinions of others. This doesn't mean that your invitation list needs to be drawn exclusively from Who's Who, but it does mean that you should try to invite at least a few people of prominence in your community. Invite your friends, neighbors, colleagues, personal professionals (accountants, doctors, lawyers, etc.) . . . the list is limited only by your imagination and the boundaries of your electoral district.
  - Invite people who are receptive to intelligent discussion of public policy. This will often be registered Democrats and unaffiliated voters.
  - A group of 15 to 30 is usually a good goal, provided your home can comfortably accommodate that many guests. You may have to borrow or rent chairs, but make sure people have a place to sit and that at least one area of your house is large enough so that the entire gathering can see and hear the candidate during the



presentation and Q&A.

- The purpose is to give everyone a chance to meet the candidate, and an overly large group may hinder that goal. As a rule of thumb, you should invite twice as many people as you want to attend. If you want 20 people to show up, plan on sending out at least 40 invitations and ask for an RSVP.

#### 4. Plan the Refreshments

- Entertain in a style that works for you and is mindful of any “Social Host” laws that could impose liability on you if an alcohol-related incident occurs.
- State campaign laws discourage using lavish gifts or food to entice people to attend a political event. In general, free refreshments may be provided at a political gathering only if they are “incidental” to the event. Check with your Municipal Chair if you have any questions or concerns.

#### 5. Send out the Invitations

- Ideally, invitations should be sent at least three weeks prior to the event. Email is efficient, but keep in mind that emails are also easy to overlook. For best results, supplement emails with a telephone call, or personal contact for maximum effectiveness.

#### 6. Create an Agenda

- Secure the candidate’s bio and discuss the agenda with the candidate’s campaign office prior to the event. Use the bio to prepare your introduction and rehearse it in advance.

- Here’s a sample Agenda:

**5:30 – 6:00 PM:** Meeting and greeting

**6:00 – 6:15 PM:** Candidate introduction and remarks

**6:15 – 6:45 PM:** Questions and Answers

**6:45 – 7:00 PM:** Wrap-up

- Prepare some questions in advance to get the ball rolling for the Q&A session. Q&As may take a little time to build momentum, but once they start, they are often hard to stop. A candidate may have several events scheduled on any particular day, so be mindful of the time and stick to the agenda.

#### 7. Send Reminders!

- Never assume that someone will attend just because they accepted your first invitation. A reminder email, phone call or text the day before the event is a good practice for securing attendance.

#### 8. Event Day

- Have name tags for everyone and extras for guests to write out themselves as they arrive. Sharpies are good for this because they don’t smear and have bold ink that is easily read from a distance.

- Help the candidate circulate through the crowd and avoid being monopolized by just a few people. Your job as host is to encourage involvement from all of your guests.

#### 9. Keep the entertainment simple

- Simple refreshments at a neighborhood meet-and-greet are perfectly legal and acceptable, although they might have to be disclosed as an in-kind contribution. To be safe, keep the refreshments modest and do not advertise what you are serving.
- Aside from any legal ramifications, you are far more likely to attract people to your event if you make it clear that the purpose of the gathering is to discuss issues and ask questions — not hit people up for money.

#### 10. Thank everyone who attended or helped with your event

- Immediately after your event has concluded, be sure to send thank-you notes to all of your guests. Your note to guests can be simple and short:
  - This is just a note to thank you for coming to the meet-and-greet for [Democratic Candidate] last Tuesday. It was great seeing you, and I hope you enjoyed the conversation. Let's talk again soon!

## Appendix 2 - SAMPLE: 'Missed You Meet You' Door Hanger



☐ Sorry I Missed You!  
☐ Nice to Meet You!

Do you have questions about the Democratic candidates for the **2024 Primary Election**? Would you like to get more involved in or learn more about our elections?

I'm your **Princeton Democratic Municipal Committee (PDMC)** district representative and I can help! Here's what's on the ballot for the **June 4, 2024 Democratic Primary Election**:

### **FEDERAL Election Candidates in New Jersey 12th Congressional District (CD-12)**

President of the United States–1 seat  
United States House of Representatives–1 seat  
United States Senate–1 seat

### **COUNTY Election Candidates for Mercer**

County Commissioner–3 seats

### **MUNICIPAL Election Candidates for Princeton**

Town Council–2 seats  
Mayor–1 seat

## 2024 Democratic Primary Candidates

### **President of the United States CD-12 (1 seat)**

1. Joseph R. Biden (*incumbent*)

### **US House of Representatives CD-12 (1 seat)**

1. Bonnie Watson Coleman (*incumbent*)
2. Daniel Dart

### **US Senate CD-12 (1 seat)**

1. Patricia Campos-Medina
2. Lawrence Hamm
3. Andy Kim
4. Tammy Murphy

### **Mercer County – County Commissioner (3 seats)**

1. Samuel T. Frisby, Sr. (*incumbent*)
2. Kristin McLaughlin (*incumbent*)
3. Terrance Stokes (*incumbent*)

### **Princeton Mayor (1 seat)**

1. Mark Freda (*incumbent*)

### **Princeton Town Council (2 seats)**

1. Leighton Newlin (*incumbent*)
2. Brian McDonald



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