

# Ocean County Democratic Committee

## Guidebook for Serving as a Democratic County Committee Member

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### Welcome

Thank you for your interest in serving as a member of the **Ocean County Democratic Committee**. When operating within your municipality, County Committee is sometimes referred to as Municipal Committee. The terms, along with the responsibilities, are interchangeable. County Committee members are the foundation of our local Democratic Party. You represent your voting district and help grow grassroots Democratic leadership throughout Ocean County. This guide explains the role, responsibilities, and the resources available to members.

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### What Is the County Committee?

The County Committee is a democratic body made up of two elected representatives from each voting district in every municipality. A voting district is a defined geographic area where all voters share the same polling location.

The Ocean County Democratic Committee is the official organization that exists to promote the Democratic platform in Ocean County and in municipal governments by growing grassroots support, assisting candidates running for office, and providing a community of like-minded Democrats to enhance our local and national goals.

#### **A County Committee Member:**

- ✓ Represents their voting district
  - ✓ Promotes Democratic values
  - ✓ Assists in recruiting candidates
  - ✓ Helps increase voter turnout
  - ✓ Serves as a bridge between voters and the Party leadership
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### How Do I Become a County Committee Member?

County Committee is an elected position. Vacancies mid-term can be filled by appointment. Democrats vote for County Committee every four years during the Primary Election in early June. There are two seats for each voting district.

If you are interested in running for County Committee, or would like to view vacancies, reach out to us at [info@oceancountydems.org](mailto:info@oceancountydems.org).

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### How the Ocean County Democratic Organization Is Structured

#### **Executive Board:**

The Organization is led by an executive board consisting of a Chair, Vice-Chair, two Secretaries, and a Treasurer. They manage and supervise the daily activities of the organization.

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### **Municipal Chairs:**

Municipal Chairs are elected by County Committee members within each municipality. They serve as the liaison between the county organization and the municipal committee members.

There are thirty-three municipalities in Ocean County, covering 417 voting districts.

Find a list of Municipal Chairs here: [www.oceancountydems.org/committee](http://www.oceancountydems.org/committee)

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## **Understanding the Levels of Government**

Democratic organizing spans federal, state, county, and municipal offices.

### **Federal Offices:**

#### **United States Senators**

- **Cory Booker** – U.S. Senator (Represents all of New Jersey)
- **Andy Kim** – U.S. Senator (Represents all of New Jersey)

#### **United States House of Representatives**

Ocean County includes parts of:

- Congressional District 2: Representative Jeff Van Drew (R)
- Congressional District 4: Representative Chris Smith (R)

### **State Government**

The state capital is **Trenton**. New Jersey has 40 Legislative Districts with State Senators and Assembly members. Ocean County is divided into 4 Legislative Districts: 9, 10, 12, and 30.

### **County Government**

County-level elected offices include:

- County Clerk, Sheriff, Surrogate, and County Commissioners

### **Municipal Government**

Ocean County has thirty-three municipalities governed by elected officials. Municipal offices include:

- Mayor
  - Township Committee
  - Town Council
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## **Recruiting Candidates at the County and Municipal Levels**

One of the objectives of a Political Committee is to find candidates to run for office within their designated level of government and district. County Committees find candidates for congressional, state, and county level offices. Municipal Committees find candidates for political offices that are limited to that municipality.

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Ocean County Democratic Committee	Your Municipal Committee
Congressional Candidates State Senate State Assembly County Clerk County Surrogate County Sheriff County Commissioner (formerly Freeholder)	Mayor Township Committee Town Council

### **How the County Supports Municipal Committees**

The Ocean County Democrats provide tools to Municipal Committees that assist with the recruitment of candidates and voter outreach. The County organization provides:

- Access to the VAN (Voter Activation Network) database.
- Voter contact lists.
- Strategic campaign guidance: fundraising, social media and websites, canvassing, phone banking, texting.
- Messaging support.
- Candidate recruitment assistance.

The Municipal Committee, because it is closest to the voters in a district, is the ideal entity to find candidates for municipal office. Additionally, County Committee Leadership can provide strategic advice on managing a campaign and assist in constructing political messaging.

### **The Sharing of Information**

Information sharing between county and municipal committees strengthens all Democratic campaigns. The County Committee is mostly concerned with County Level offices, whereas the Municipal Committees are mostly concerned with municipal level offices. Each independent committee keeps a pulse on political affairs respective to their level of government. The County Committee and Municipal Committees share this knowledge with one another to help in the elections.

The County Committee shares information on Federal, State and County races to voters, including information about the candidates in each election cycle. In turn, Municipal Committees may know about a local issue that can become an election focal point. The County Committee uses the information provided by the Municipal Committee to better understand local issues and to tailor messaging.

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### **The Three “I”s of County Committee Membership**

We like to say that County Committee members are the “eyes” and “ears” of their district. There are three “I”s that a County Committee member should embody.

#### **1. INFORMED**

You should know:

- How to register voters.
- Where your district votes.
- Who is on the ballot.
- Your federal, state, and municipal representatives.

#### **County Clerk and County Board of Elections:**

Holding an election is a tremendous process that requires cooperation between multiple levels of government.

- The Board of Elections and the Office of the County Clerk work together to conduct elections.
- The County Clerk prepares and distributes the ballots.
- The Board of Elections conducts the elections, including the counting of the ballots.

##### **❖ Office of the County Clerk**

118 Washington St. Toms River, NJ 08753

Phone: 732-929-2018

Website: <https://oceancountyclerk.com/FrmElectionServices>

##### **❖ Ocean County Board of Elections**

101 Hooper Ave. Toms River, NJ 08753

Phone: 732-929-2167

Website: <https://www.co.ocean.nj.us/OC/Elections/>

You can find most answers to questions that voters in your district might have on the County Clerk’s Website. Below are some of the forms and services that can be found on the website:

Drop Box Locations for Vote By Mail

Early Voting Locations and Hours

Sample Ballots

Vote by Mail Ballot Applications

Vote by Mail Opt Out Form

Election Dates

Live and Historical Election Results

Polling Locations and Hours

### **Ways to Vote in New Jersey**

#### **1. Vote-by-Mail**

- Must be postmarked by 8:00 PM on Election Day.
- May be returned via secure drop box.
- Cannot be returned to a polling place.

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### 2. Early In-Person Voting

- Available at designated locations throughout the County.

### 3. Election Day Voting

- 6:00 AM – 8:00 PM at your assigned polling location.
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## 2. INVOLVED

County Committee members should:

- ✓ Maintain a strong voting record.
  - ✓ Attend county meetings and events.
  - ✓ Participate in caucuses, which are groups of Democrats with common interests that work within the County Organization.
    - **LGBTQ+ Caucus.** Supports the recruitment and application of resources for LGBTQ+ candidates running for office. Works to enhance and protect the rights of LGBTQ+ people in our county, state, and country.
    - **Women’s Caucus.** Recruits and trains women candidates and works to get them elected. Protects and enhances women’s rights, including the right to choose.
    - **Hispanic Caucus.** Works on outreach and organization with Latino voters and candidates. Supports the recruitment of and provides resources for Hispanic candidates at all levels.
    - **Young Dems Caucus.** Representing voters age 16 – 40, but all are welcome.
  - ✓ Participate in local Democratic clubs.
    - Democrats in the local clubs discuss developments in our municipalities, county, and country. Please reach out to [info@oceancountydems.org](mailto:info@oceancountydems.org) for information on connecting with your local Democratic club.
  - ✓ Volunteer for campaigns. Here are ways you can volunteer:

Phone banking	Fundraising
Texting	Host meet and greet events for candidates
Door-to-door canvassing	Distribute campaign literature
  - ✓ Organize and attend local rallies.
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## 3. INFLUENTIAL

### Mini-Convention

The Mini-Convention is an annual meeting (usually in March) where the County Committee gathers to consider **official endorsements** for:

- County-level candidates
- State-level candidates.
- Congressional primary candidates.

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### What Happens at the Convention

- Candidates give speeches to the County Committee.
- They explain their platform, priorities, and why they deserve endorsement.
- Committee members may ask questions.
- Members vote on which candidate to recommend for endorsement.

### Recruit Candidates

One of the most powerful ways a County Committee member can shape the future of the Democratic Party is **recruiting strong candidates**. Who decides to run in the first place can shape elections for years.

Here is how a County Committee person can effectively find and inspire Democrats to run:

- ✓ Identify Potential Candidates in Your Community. Often, the best candidates do not see themselves as “qualified” or “political.”
- ✓ Work with your Municipal Chair, local Democratic Club, and County Organization to recruit candidates to run for office.
- ✓ Have “The Ask” Conversation. Many candidates run because someone they trust asked them.
- ✓ Provide Ongoing Support: Retention of good candidates is as important as recruitment.

### Represent Local Issues

As a local representative for your district, you know the issues that are important to the voters. You will be able to bring those issues to the attention of local officials, party leaders, and candidates.

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### Frequently Asked Questions

#### How do I register to vote?

Online: [voter.svrs.nj.gov/register](https://voter.svrs.nj.gov/register)

Forms available at town halls, post offices, and motor vehicle agencies.

Register online: <https://voter.svrs.nj.gov/register/eligibility>

#### I didn't receive my mail-in ballot.

Take down voter information and contact the County Clerk at 732-929-2018.

#### How do I change my party?

Declare at the polls during a Primary Election

Submit a Party Affiliation Declaration Form

Use a Voter Registration Form and select “Change Party Affiliation.”

Change online at <https://voter.svrs.nj.gov/register/eligibility>

#### How do I become a poll worker?

Contact your Municipal Chair or [info@oceancountydems.org](mailto:info@oceancountydems.org).

Register online: <https://nj.gov/state/elections/pollworker.shtml>

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### TOOLS:

Links to resources to help keep you informed:

- Find my representatives: <https://whoaremyrepresentatives.org/>
  - Find my polling location: <https://voter.svrs.nj.gov/polling-place-search>
  - Register to Vote: [voter.svrs.nj.gov/register](https://voter.svrs.nj.gov/register)
  - Sample Ballot: [oceancountyclerk.com/frmElectionServices](https://oceancountyclerk.com/frmElectionServices)
  - Election Calendar: [oceancountyclerk.com/frmElectionServices](https://oceancountyclerk.com/frmElectionServices)
  - NJ Voter Portal: [nj.gov/state/elections/vote.shtml](https://nj.gov/state/elections/vote.shtml)
  - Track My Ballot, NJ Voter Portal: [nj.gov/state/elections/vote.shtml](https://nj.gov/state/elections/vote.shtml)
  - Ocean County Democratic Committee website: <https://www.oceancountydems.org/>
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### CLOSING MESSAGE

As a County Committee Member, you are the eyes and ears of your district.

Your leadership:

- ✓ Protects voting rights.
- ✓ Build Democratic turnout
- ✓ Strengthens candidate recruitment
- ✓ Advances Democratic values
- ✓ Facilitates communication between voters in your district and the county party

Thank you for your interest in serving the Democratic Party and the residents of Ocean County.

*Wyatt Earp*

Chair, Ocean County Democratic Committee

For more information, visit our website:

<https://www.oceancountydems.org/>

Or send us an email:

[info@oceancountydems.org](mailto:info@oceancountydems.org)