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# HOW TO BECOME A PARTY COMMITTEEPERSON OR A LOCAL ELECTION OFFICIAL

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A workshop Presented by the Philadelphia Chapter of the National Organization for Women,  
the Philadelphia Chapter of the Coalition of Labor Union Women and the Office of City  
Commissioner Stephanie Singer

## WOMEN'S VOICES IN GOVERNMENT

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One hundred fifty five years ago (July 19-20, 1848 in Seneca Falls, NY) women launched a campaign to win the right to vote for women in all states in the United States of America. They objected to being governed by laws in which they had no say. It took 72 years of hard work to win the right to vote. Since 1920 women have had the right to vote; however, women have yet to achieve political representation in proportion to their numbers. Although women have made considerable progress, women are under-represented in all parts of government. It is time to make a concerted effort to change that.

### WHERE WE ARE IN PENNSYLVANIA AND PHILADELPHIA:

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Statewide in Pennsylvania (except for judicial)

- No female Governor
- 1 of 3 other statewide elected officials is a woman.
- No US Senator from Pennsylvania has ever been a woman.

Pennsylvania Districts

- PA Senate: 8 of 50 senators are women.
- PA House of Representatives: 37 of 203 representatives are women.
- US Congress: 1 of 18 Congressional Representatives is a woman.

Philadelphia

- No female Mayor ever.
- Philadelphia City Council: 5 women out of 17 council members.
- Ward Leaders: Democratic: 26 women out of 69 positions, Republican: 8 women out of 66 positions.

### WHY SHOULD WOMEN RUN FOR COMMITTEEPERSON?

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To ensure that women's issues are addressed, more women must be actively involved in the political process. Becoming a Committeeperson is a good entry point. It provides an opportunity to develop leadership skills and to learn how the political system works. It is a position of power, since Committeepersons are known to be able to influence voters' choices and Committeepersons elect the Ward Leaders. It is not a difficult or expensive race. To win, you do not need financial resources; rather you need to invest time in building relationships with your neighbors.

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## WHAT IS A COMMITTEEPERSON?

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Philadelphia is divided into 66 wards. Each ward is divided into a number of election divisions; in all, there are about 1,500 divisions. Every four years, the registered voters of each party elect two party members per division to a ward committee. A few of the larger wards are divided into two sections, each with its own ward committee. Between the two major parties there are over 6,000 committee slots in Philadelphia. Many of them go unfilled.

Committeepersons are the first level of elected party officers, and as such are the most closely connected to the voter. Their duties are described below. Basically, they convey grass-roots opinion to the higher officers of the party, work for the party's candidates in elections. In addition, they vote for Ward Leaders and make recommendations on endorsements for candidates for other offices. They can have considerable influence on who gets elected.

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## WHAT IS A DIVISION?

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A *division* (also called an *election division*, *election precinct* or *precinct*) is a geographical area. It is the smallest geographical unit for which election results are tallied and reported. Typical divisions in Philadelphia have between 400 and 1,000 registered voters each. On

Election Day, each division has a table staffed by that division's Election Board, with that division's poll books and that division's voting machines.

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## A NOTE ABOUT GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES AND POLITICS

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Most government employees are severely restricted in the extent to which they can become involved in an election. Restrictions vary considerably and depend primarily on the government agency involved and the position held by the employee. Detailed explanations of the restrictions should be obtained directly from the public agencies involved.

The following general rules apply to many -- but not all -- employees of the federal government, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the City of Philadelphia:

First, many government employees are prohibited from seeking public or party offices in partisan elections. Elections for all officials in Pennsylvania are considered "partisan." This prohibition (as well as the following prohibitions) also applies to all court employees.

Second, many government employees are prohibited from engaging in partisan campaign-related activities, including, soliciting votes, distributing literature, and serving as a candidate's campaign finance chairperson.

A government job does not take away your First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and association. Voting, retaining membership in a political party or body, and expressing personal opinions are permitted.

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## THE CORE JOB

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### REGISTRATION

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The Committeeperson is responsible for promoting registration. A Committeeperson should welcome new residents to the division, help them to register, and encourage them to register in her party. The Committeeperson should make sure that every citizen in the division who will be 18 or older on the next election day is registered.

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### PERSUASION

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The Committeeperson is responsible for persuading people to vote for her party's candidates in general elections.

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### GET OUT THE VOTE

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The Committeeperson should make sure that supporters of her party actually vote.

- Find out which neighbors support your party or candidates and get these neighbors to the polls.
- Turn supportive voters into supervoters -- people who vote in every election.

- Turn non-voters who support your party into voters.
- Convince voters to follow your endorsements.
- Measure your performance in each election.

While every generation has new technology and a different culture for achieving these ends, the basic job has remained the same for a long time. Here is some advice from an American political organizer before the Civil War:

"The whole State must be so well organized that every Whig can be brought to the polls. So divide the county into small districts and appoint in each a committee. Make a perfect list of the voters and ascertain with certainty for whom they will vote. . . . Keep a constant watch on the doubtful voters and have them talked to by those in whom they have the most confidence. . . . On election days see that every Whig is brought to the polls." --Abraham Lincoln

Here are some concrete suggestions for getting out your vote:

- Collect contact information from neighbors willing to share it -- phone numbers, email addresses, twitter, facebook, linked-in, etc.
- Let voters know which candidates and issues you favor
- Remind like-minded voters of each upcoming election, the candidates and the issues
- Help arrange child care or transportation for like-minded voters who need it
- On Election Day in the afternoon contact like-minded voters who have not yet voted
- After each election, compare the results in your division with results in similar divisions. Try to find out which of your activities actually influences the outcome.

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## PROTECT THE VOTE

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One duty of a Committeeperson is to ensure that all votes are counted as cast.

- Make sure that there is at least one person from your party among the people actually conducting the election in your division. These are the Judge of Elections, the Inspectors of Election, the Clerk and the Machine Inspector.
- Monitor the official list of registered voters in your division and send corrections to the Board of Elections
- Have someone from your party watch the process of setting up the polls, the voting process, and the poll closing process through the delivery.
- Have someone from your party watch the voting process.
- Have someone from your party watch the poll closing process.
- Get a copy of the results from your poll at the end of the day and check that they match the reported results.
- Report any improper behavior to the appropriate authorities.
- Point out any weaknesses in the security of the election process to the proper authorities.

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## ADVOCATE FOR YOUR CONSTITUENTS

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Part of your job as Committeeperson is to advocate for your neighbors, both within your party and within government.

- Talk with your neighbors to find out what their concerns are and what government should be doing for them
- Represent your neighbors at the Ward Committee meetings, especially at candidate endorsement meetings and elections of ward officers
- Build relationships with your elected officials and government agencies that affect your neighbors

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## THE CORE POWERS

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### WARD LEADER ELECTIONS

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Committeepeople elect the Ward Leader, who has considerable influence. A sufficiently large group of Committeepeople can force an election to oust a Ward Leader.

The Ward Leader represents the ward in the party City Committee, a group of about 70 people (if all positions are filled). The City Committee elects the party officers (Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, etc.), decides endorsements and determines how money donated to the City Committee will be spent. In case of a vacancy on the ballot that occurs between the primary and general elections, the City Committee has the power to nominate a candidate for the general election ballot.

Within the Ward Committee, the Ward Leader has the power to fill vacancies and to decide how to spend the money donated to the Ward. This includes choosing to pay, or not to pay, individual Committeepeople for their work. Traditionally (and informally) the Ward Leader also serves as a local expert on election procedures and arbiter of disputes.

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### PRIMARY ENDORSEMENTS

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Traditionally each party Ward Committee endorses candidates in primary elections. (In general elections the party Ward Committee must back its party's candidates.)

If you disagree with the endorsements of your ward, you may make your own endorsements as a committeeperson. The opinion of the committeeperson often carries great weight with the voters of the division. It is not uncommon that candidates endorsed by an active committeeperson do better than any other candidates in that division. Be aware that this is a public political act that may have consequences. Different wards have different cultures around this issue. You may find it helpful to ask around to see how this has been viewed in the past.

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## MEETINGS

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As a Committeeperson you have the right to be notified of every meeting of the Ward Committee, and to participate in every vote at each meeting you attend. In addition, a sufficiently large group of Committeepople have the power to call a meeting.

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## COMPENSATION

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Compensation to Committeepople for work on Election Day and reimbursement for expenses are at the discretion of the Ward Leader.

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## TIME COMMITMENT

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Being a Committeeperson takes some time each year. It does not have to take a lot of time, but how much time it takes beyond your official duties depends on what kind of a job you want to do. The core job is very intense on the weekends before the Primary Election in May (except for presidential years, when it is held in April) and the General Election in November, and of course on Election Day. You will need to spend a few evenings and a Saturday or two before the election getting information out and talking to people in your division about candidates, issues and where and when to vote. You will be busy the weekend just before an election making sure people have this information.

There are two people in each political party in each division. Therefore you should have a partner with whom you can share the work of canvassing your division and staffing the polls on Election Day.

The term of service is four years. There are no term limits.

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## BEYOND THE CORE JOB

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Some committee people (often retired people who have the time) choose to do more than the basic job outlined above.

Committeepople are volunteers and are not expected to solve problems which are the responsibility of local government. Often, however, constituents go to their committeeperson for advice about which officials or departments they should contact regarding a specific problem. People in your division may look to you for help with problems that the government should deal with-- e.g. street lights, pot holes, abandoned cars or houses. Make a list of government services and contact information so that you can be an effective guide to government services. Many City services are available from 311.



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## POLITICAL OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE TO YOUR DIVISION.

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It is important for you to know how and where to reach your Ward Leader, District Councilperson, State Representative, State Senator, and Congressional Representative, as well as at-large Councilpeople, City Commissioners and your US Senator. Learn which issues are in the purview of which official officials -- e.g., streets and trash are City issues, elections are City Commissioner issues, public assistance is a State issue and immigration is a federal issue. Do not hesitate to call them and get their help in solving problems. Get to know these officials and their office staff when you get a chance. They often come to ward meetings, or go to visit them in their district office. You can use an issue as a chance to meet with them, but you don't have to wait until you have a problem. Go introduce yourself, let them know who you are and that you will be calling on them for help when you or your neighbors need their input.

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## NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS.

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Many neighborhoods have block associations, block captains, senior citizen organizations, parents groups, other community groups, which are not directly political but are concerned about and work to try to solve neighborhood problems. Know who they are and work with them. Get involved but do not try to make them political groups. Combined political and community pressure is often key to getting really sticky problems to move.

Make a list of the organizations, newspapers, and active groups in your neighborhood, and get to know people in those groups. You have a great deal of influence as to how well the political process works in your neighborhood, whether governmental services get used well in your neighborhood, and whether your community gets its share of the resources.

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## RUNNING FOR COMMITTEEPERSON

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### GETTING ON THE BALLOT

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What you need:

- 1) You must be a registered voter in the Democratic or Republican party and must know your ward/division number. To register, or to change your party affiliation, you will need to file a voter registration form with the City Commissioners or the County Board of Election.
- 2) You need a street list for your division. There are electronic street-list websites maintained by third parties (such as VoterWeb.org for Democrats in Philadelphia). Ask Committeepersons or candidates in your party what they use. You can obtain paper street lists from the a City Commissioner or the Philadelphia Board of Elections.

- 3) You need petitions to collect signatures to get your name on the ballot. and must know relevant dates for circulating and filing. Street lists and petitions are available at the City Commissioners' Offices.

City Commissioners

[www.PhiladelphiaVotes.com](http://www.PhiladelphiaVotes.com)

As of January 2013:

Stephanie Singer (D), Room 132 City Hall, 215-686-3460

Al Schmidt (R), Room 134 City Hall, 215-686-3464

Anthony Clark (D), Room 130 City Hall, 215-686-3462

Philadelphia County Board of Elections

City Hall, Room 142, 215-686-3469

520 N. Delaware Avenue (enter on Spring Garden St.) 5th floor, 215-686-1500

The City Commissioner's Office is the official oversight body for elections in Philadelphia. It is responsible for all of the election processes, voter registration, petitions, validation of signatures, setting up the official ballots, preparing the records for the voting places, voting machines, etc. All official forms (voter registration cards, petitions, street lists, etc.) come from this office. It can also give you the number of your ward and division, Ward Leader's name and number, and answer questions about the election process. The office is answerable to three elected City Commissioners.

An Election Calendar is available from the Pennsylvania Department of State at [www.dos.state.pa.us](http://www.dos.state.pa.us)

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## STREET LISTS

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A street list is the published list of voters in your division. It lists all the voters in a division by name, street, house number, and political party. An electronic street list (also known as a "voter file" can also include "voter history", a list of elections in which the voter voted.

It is a key tool, indicating the registered voters from your party who nominate and elect you. It also lets you know who your potential voters are and who you need to be talking to, not just about your petition but also about voting for you. It also gives you an idea of where there are no registered voters.

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## PETITIONS

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The petition is an official form that you must get, and on which you must collect signatures of other voters from your district registered in your party. Get it notarized and filed by the proper deadline to get your name on the official ballot.

You need at least 10 valid signatures of registered voters from your party in your division It is often wise to get 20 to 25 signatures to make sure that at least 10 are valid.

- Signatures must be exactly as they appear on the street list (as they are registered)

- Signatures must be in blue or black ink
- Each signature must be dated by the person who signed
- No ditto marks may be used
- No one can sign or even fill out information for anyone else
- A person can sign at most two committeeperson petitions, so ask if they have signed other committeeperson petitions. (Signing does not mean they have to vote for you.)

After getting your street list and petitions from the City Commissioner's Office, look over the list to see who you know in your division who is registered in your party. (A Democratic voter can only sign a Democrat's petitions and a Republican sign Republican's petitions). Create a brief document ("literature") introducing yourself. It can be as simple as an 8.5x11 black and white sheet of paper. It should have your name, your picture, contact information and reasons why someone should vote for you, as well as the date of the election. It should explicitly ask for a vote for you for Committeeperson.

Petition circulation checklist:

1. Petitions
2. Street list
3. Several blue or black pens that work well in the cold
4. Appropriate clothes! You'll be mostly outside
5. Your literature
6. Voter registration forms
7. Sign-up sheet for collecting contact info (phone, email, twitter, etc.)
8. A smile

Go to the people you know from the street list and tell them you are running for committeeperson. Ask them to sign your petition (exactly as they are registered). Ask them to tell their friends on the block that you are running for committeeperson. Give them a copy of your literature.

If you need more signatures, go to other people listed in your party and explain who you are, asking them to sign your petition if they have not already signed two committeeperson's petitions. Ask if you may take their contact information to send them election-related information. Many people find that early evening and weekends are the best time to knock on doors.

Once you have finished collecting signatures, complete one affidavit for each individual sheet of a petition or paper that they have circulated. This process includes signing the affidavit under oath before a notary public. In the affidavit you are swearing that, to the best of your knowledge and belief, the signers are qualified voters of the division and are members of your party.

All signatures on nomination petitions must be made within a three-week period which begins on February 18th, 2014 and ends on March 11th, 2014. The deadline for filing petitions is the close of business March 11th, 2014. Petitions and papers for Philadelphia-

based offices must be filed with the County Board of Elections at City Hall Room 142. The office closes at 5 p.m.

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## CAMPAIGNING

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A campaign for Committeeperson has the same basic elements as a Presidential campaign or any other campaign: registration, persuasion and GOTV (get out the vote).

- **Registration:** Encourage unregistered neighbors who are likely to support you to register in your party and to vote for you. In addition, voter registration is a way to build a relationship with neighbors. In Pennsylvania, registration closes four weeks before each election.
- **Persuasion:** Convince voters registered in your party in your division to vote for you.
- **GOTV:** Make sure your eligible supporters actually vote.

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## DOOR TO DOOR CANVASSING

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Once you are on the ballot you can continue to make contact with the voters in your division as well as to register new voters. With your street list, voter registration forms and your literature, get out in the neighborhood and talk to people.

Canvassing checklist:

1. Street list
2. Literature
3. Voter registration forms
4. Absentee/Alternative ballot request forms
5. Pens
6. Sign-up sheet for contact information
7. Appropriate clothes for outdoors

You might start with something like:

"Hello, Ms. \_\_ I'm\_\_. I live around the corner/in the next block. We are both in the same division and I'm running for committeewoman. Have you got a minute?"

If she says no, politely ask if you can leave some information. Mark on your street list she is not interested and move on. If she says yes, tell her briefly: who you are, why you are running, and why you want the job. Ask her what concerns she has for the neighborhood. LISTEN. Mark her as a potential voter. Ask if you may take down her contact information so that you can share election-related information with her.

If she is very interested, ask her to talk to her neighbors about you, and/or to introduce you to her friends. If any voter wants help with a problem, write down the information and get back to them quickly with contact information about the government agency that can address the problem.

Ask if there is anyone in the house who will be 18 or over on the next election who is not registered to vote. Offer to register them to vote or come back when they are home to register them.

Ask whether any registered voter in the house will be absent from Philadelphia on Election Day. Such voters are entitled to an absentee ballot, so provide an absentee ballot request form and encourage the voter to fill it out and send it in as soon as possible. You can offer to help the voter fill out the form. The ballot itself will be mailed from the Board of Election directly to the voter.

Ask whether any voter in the house is physically handicapped or aged 65 or over. If so, the voter may vote an "alternative ballot", which resembles an absentee ballot in many ways and can be requested using the same form as the absentee ballot.

Ask if any voter in the house would need help on Election Day in order to vote, such as a ride to the polls or child care. Make a note on your street list.

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### PHONE, LETTERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

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Apartment buildings can sometimes offer a challenge, because you may not have access to them. Phone numbers are not on the street list, but you can try looking them up online or in a phone book. If you call, take an approach similar to the door-to-door conversations. See if you can find someone who will distribute your literature to others in the building, or talk to their friends, or take you around to introduce you, or invite people to their apartment to meet you. If you can't make personal contact you might try writing a letter. Or, since you have names, you may be able to locate neighbors on social media sites (such as Facebook or LinkedIn) and make contact that way. Make a note of any social media handles on your street list.

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### PREPARING FOR ELECTION DAY

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As a candidate, you have the right to be present (or have a helper present) in the polling place during the voting time and during the closing of the polls. You (and your helper) will need a Poll Watcher Certificate from any City Commissioner's office or from the Board of Election. To avoid the last-minute rush, make your request three weeks before the election. The Poll Watcher Certificate must be shown to the Judge of Election if she asks for it. You have the right to request two Poll Watcher Certificates for two different people.

Campaign for yourself. Introduce yourself, leave something with your name and number on it, tell people why they should vote for you. If you are running with a partner you should each encourage people to vote for both of you. Keep track on your street list of people who say they will vote or you; you want to make sure they get to the polls.

If possible, arrange for rides or child care for supporters who need that help in order to get to the polls.

On the last weekend before the election, remind your supporters when and where to vote. Ask them what time they plan to vote, and ask them to remind others to vote for you.

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## ELECTION DAY

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The polls open for voting at 7:00A.M. and close at 8:00P.M. If your race is contested you or your helper(s) should, if possible:

1. Monitor the opening of the polls, usually from about 6am to 7am
2. Canvass outside the polling place at peak times (usually 7-9am and 5-8pm)
  - a. ask voters entering the polling place to vote for you
  - b. give your literature to voters entering the polling place
  - c. do not enter the polling place or even go within 10 feet of the door of the polling place while you are canvassing or wearing buttons for a candidate
3. Monitor the voting process inside the polling place
  - a. you must obey the Judge of Election
  - b. if you witness improper behavior, first ask the Judge of Election to stop the behavior; if the Judge of Election allows the improper behavior, call the District Attorney
4. Vote!
5. Get your supporters out to vote
  - a. provide rides or child care as promised
  - b. if there are no voters in the polling place, you have the right to examine the poll books
  - c. on your list of supporters strike off all who have voted and contact the others to remind them
6. Monitor the closing of the polls, from 8pm usually until about 9pm
  - a. long tape from each voting machine should show all counters zero at the beginning of the tape (which corresponds to the beginning of the day)
  - b. look on the long tape for write-in votes in your race and make note of them
  - c. make sure that the cassettes and long tapes from all voting machines are turned over to the police for transport to the Board of Election
  - d. make sure that one tape from each machine is posted on the door of the polling place. Write down the results in your race from that tape.
  - e. if challenged you will need to show your Poll Watcher Certificate

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## ELECTION DAY CHECKLIST

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1. Poll Watcher Certificate
2. Literature (could include your button number)
3. Cell phone and important phone numbers, including the District Attorney, City Commissioners, your helper(s)
4. Street list for your division
5. List of your supporters, in alphabetical order by last name, with contact information
6. Pens
7. Appropriate clothes for outdoors
8. Food (or money for food)

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## AFTER ELECTION DAY

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Party Ward Committees meet to elect Ward Committee officers, including the Ward Leaders, on the 3rd Monday after Election Day (unless certificates of nomination have not been delivered, in which case the meeting is postponed to the first Monday after the delivery of certificates of nomination).

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## RUNNING FOR ELECTION BOARD

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In Pennsylvania three poll workers in each election division are elected by their neighbors for a four year term. There are about 1,700 election divisions in Philadelphia and thus there are about 5,100 elected positions for poll workers city-wide. These poll workers are elected in the year following the US Presidential election (e.g., 2017, 2021, etc.)

Judges and Inspectors of Election must meet the following qualifications:

- must reside and be registered within the division;
- must be at least eighteen years old;
- must resign from any city, county, state, or federal position at least two (2) months before any election in which they serve.

Election officials are paid, albeit modestly, for their work on Election Day. As of 2014 in Philadelphia the Judge of Election is paid \$100; Inspectors, Clerks, and Machine Inspectors are paid \$95. Active election officials can also earn up to \$20 each election for training

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## JOB DESCRIPTIONS

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### JUDGE OF ELECTION (ELECTED)

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The Judge of Election is responsible for the overseeing of the entire election process and voter activities for his or her division. Each Judge is charged with conducting the Polling place in accordance with Federal and State Election laws.

The Judge of Election is the ultimate authority in the polling place, and must be prepared to act on that authority. The Judge of Elections must understand the election laws well enough to recognize and stop illegal behavior. The Voter ID law has drawn attention to the importance of this position. In each division, the Judge of Elections resolves disputes and makes determinations about voter eligibility in areas where the law is ambiguous.

The Judge of Elections gets paid slightly more than the Inspectors, and has more responsibility, including picking up and dropping off election day materials at the Board of Elections.

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### MAJORITY INSPECTOR (ELECTED)

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The leading vote getter in the Election for Inspector, the Majority Inspector helps prepare the Polling place for 7AM opening, receives assignments from the Judge of Elections, instructs voters in the use of the voting machines, enforces voting regulations at the polls, and signs all printed copies of the election results printed by the voting machines.

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### MINORITY INSPECTOR (ELECTED)

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The second leading vote getter in the Election for Inspector, the Minority Inspector has the same duties as the Majority Inspector. The Minority Inspector has the right to appoint a Clerk. Also, the Minority Inspector must take home and preserve important election materials in case of a challenge to the election.

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### CLERK (APPOINTED)

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The Clerk assists in the duties of the Majority and Minority Inspectors. The clerk is appointed by the Minority Inspector

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### MACHINE INSPECTOR (APPOINTED)

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The Machine Inspector is responsible for preparing the voting machines so that the voter may cast their ballot. The Machine Inspector is appointed by the City Commissioners, usually on the advice of local community leaders such as committeepople.

More information is available from the Pennsylvania Department of State at [http://www.dos.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/poll\\_worker\\_training/12373](http://www.dos.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/poll_worker_training/12373)

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### WHY RUN FOR ELECTION BOARD?

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There are many great reasons to run for these jobs. You can defend democracy by ensuring that elections in your neighborhood are fair and honest. You can spend a day getting to know your neighbors better, which makes your neighborhood stronger. You can earn a small amount of money. You can discharge your civic duty. You can see how American democracy works, up close and personal.

Note that members of the Election Board can not engage in partisan politics on Election Day. If you are interested in working on political campaigns, then this is probably not the job for you. There is much truth to the old adage that election are won and lost on Election Day and if are involved in a campaign, you will want to be free that day to work for your candidate or your Party.

Once elected, these officials are encouraged to complete a short training program on the operation of voting machines and the general requirements of running a polling place on Election Day. Officials, clerks and machine inspectors are paid \$20 for attending these sessions, but only if they work at the next election.



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## TIME COMMITMENT

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Make sure you really want the job. You are committing to work at least eight long days over the course of four years -- four primary and four general elections, as well as any special elections (e.g., if a sitting State Representative resigns or passes away in the middle of a term). For each election you must be at the polls from 6:30 AM until the voting stops and all the post-voting processes are completed, typically around 8:30 or 9:00 PM. In rare cases, e.g., if there is a long line at closing time, you may have to stay even later.

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## HOW TO RUN

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These elections are held in the odd-numbered years that directly follow presidential election years: 2013, 2017 and so on. Unlike the committeeperson races which are for officials of a political party and are decided in the Spring primary election, Election Board members are state officials and are elected in November. There are three ways to run in November:

- Win the nomination of the Democratic or Republican party in the primary election (most common)
- If you are not registered as a Democrat or a Republican, get your name on the November election ballot by passing nomination papers over the summer
- Run a write-in campaign

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## MEMBERS OF MAJOR PARTIES

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If you are registered in the Republican or Democratic party, you should run in and win that party's primary election in the spring. The Republican and Democratic parties will nominate one person for Judge of Elections and one for Inspector and that person will be on the ballot for general election.

The general election for Judges and Inspectors of Election is held in November. In order to win a term as Judge, you must get the highest number of votes for Judge in the November general election. In order to win a term as Inspector, you must get one of the top two highest numbers of votes in that election. The process is in most ways similar to running for committeeperson.

You can get petitions from City Commissioners' office to run in the Democratic or Republican primary. You must get signatures from voters in your division registered in your party. To appear on the ballot in the primary election, you are required to get at least 10 signatures for Judge of Election and 5 signatures for Inspector. The period for obtaining signatures runs for three weeks starting in mid-February.

The winner of the Democratic primary and the winner of the Republican primary will proceed to the general election.

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## MEMBERS OF MINOR POLITICAL PARTIES

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You can run for Judge of Election and for Inspector of Election as an independent or as a minor political party candidate (for example, as a Green or Libertarian) in the November General Election.

The Pennsylvania Election Code defines two classes of political parties: major political parties and minor political parties. A "major" political party is a party whose statewide registration is fifteen percent or more of the total registered voters in the State. In Pennsylvania as of 2014 there are only two major political parties: the Democratic and Republican parties. A "minor" political party is a party whose statewide registration is less than fifteen percent of the total registered voters in the State. Two examples of minor political parties are the Green Party and the Libertarian Party.

To run as a nominee of a minor political party, a candidate must be selected by that party (e.g., the Green Party) to appear on the November ballot and then must obtain nominating signatures from registered voters in the division. A minority party candidate such as a Green Party candidate is not restricted to getting signatures from other members of the Green Party. The signatures can be from voters in the division from any political party or from voters registered as independents. The number of valid signatures for nominees of a minor political party is fixed by a formula in the Election Code. The formula requires that you gather signatures equal to at least two percent of the largest vote cast for any candidate elected from the same area for any office (except judge). The candidate should contact the County Board of Elections to learn the specific number of required signatures based upon the official returns.

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## NON-PARTISANS

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A non-partisan candidate can secure a position on the November ballot by filing a properly completed nomination paper. Nomination papers may be signed by members of any party, as well as voters who are registered non-partisan. [Note: A nomination *petition* is the form used by Democrats and Republicans to secure a ballot position in a primary election. A Nomination *paper* is the form used by independent candidates to secure a ballot position in the November election.] The number of valid signatures for nominees of a minor political party is fixed by a formula in the Election Code. The formula requires that you gather signatures equal to at least two percent of the largest vote cast for any candidate elected from the same area for any office (except judge). The candidate should contact the County Board of Elections to learn the specific number of required signatures based upon the official returns.

A non-partisan candidate must certify that the candidate did not run for the designated office in the primary and was not a registered member of any political party within 30 days prior to the primary. (The intent here is to prevent a losing candidate in the Democratic or Republican primary from running for the same office in the general election -- the so-called "sore loser" provision.)

Non-partisan and minor party candidates may begin collecting signatures on the tenth Wednesday before the primary which in 2014 falls on March 12; no signatures may be collected before then. Nomination papers must be filed on or before August 1.

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### WRITE-IN CANDIDATES

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This is an option if you make the decision to run after the deadline for getting on the ballot. Although write-in candidacies can sometimes win in small local elections, there are major disadvantages to conducting a write-in campaign. Write-in candidates face a daunting task in educating voters about how to "write-in" their votes. Operating the voting machine buttons confuses many voters; to write in a vote, voters must push the write-in button for the office for which they want to write in a vote, and then press the red write-in button at the top of the machine, which will cause the write-in window to open, and the voter can then write or stamp the candidate's name on the exposed paper and finally pull the window shut to record the vote.

In a primary election a write-in candidate should note that to win the party nomination, he or she must not only outpoll all opponents, but also receive a number of votes at least equal to the number of signatures required on a nominating petition for that office.

Write-in candidates are invited (though not required) to notify the Board of Election of their candidacy and to give the Board of Election contact information in case of any issue with their election.

Write-in candidates may wish to pay particular attention at the closing of the polls to ensure that the long tapes with the write-in votes are given to the police for delivery to the Philadelphia Board of Election.

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### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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While there are many sources of information about elections, there is also much misinformation. The most reliable source of information about elections comes from the government agencies responsible for the conduct of elections.

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### PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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The Pennsylvania Department of State, Bureau of Elections, is located at North Office Building, Room 304, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120. The phone number is 717-787-5280 and the websites are [www.dos.state.pa.us](http://www.dos.state.pa.us) and [www.votespa.com](http://www.votespa.com).

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### PHILADELPHIA COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTION

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The County Board of Election is located in City Hall, Room 142, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107, (215) 686-3469. Materials and information are also available at the Voter Registration Division, 520 N. Delaware Ave, 5th Floor (entrance on Spring Garden St.), 215-686-1500.