



**TOMPKINS COUNTY  
DEMOCRATIC  
COMMITTEE**



**COMMITTEE MEMBER'S  
HANDBOOK**



**P.O. Box 6798, Ithaca, NY 14851  
[www.tompkinscountymocrats.org](http://www.tompkinscountymocrats.org)**



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# Letter from the Chair

Dear Democratic Committee Member:

Welcome to the Tompkins County Democratic Committee!

Whether you are a new or continuing committee member, I hope you find this handbook helpful in your getting more involved and immersed in representing the Democratic Party in your town or ward or in Tompkins County as a whole.

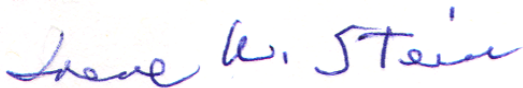
Committee members are elected to serve as a link between the Democrats in their political jurisdictions and their elected officials. They work to find candidates to carry out the Democratic mission and then to get them elected. They keep in touch with their elected officials and report back to them the things they are hearing from their constituents, the voters in their towns and wards.

To carry out those objectives, committee members seek out and interview potential candidates for office, carry petitions to get them on the ballot, and then work to get them elected. Members participate in their town or ward committee meetings and are usually voting members of the County Committee. The Tompkins County Democratic Committee is successful because of the work of its committee members as well as the many volunteers who work in campaigns.

I know you will find your participation in our committee to be an interesting and rewarding experience. The handbook attempts to give an overview of the structure of the Tompkins County Democratic Committee as well as a description of the duties of a Committeeman and Committeewoman. If you have any questions after your review this handbook, please feel free to contact me or your Town or Ward Committee Chair.

Thank you for becoming involved with this very important work that is so fundamental to our democracy. I look forward to working with you!

Sincerely,



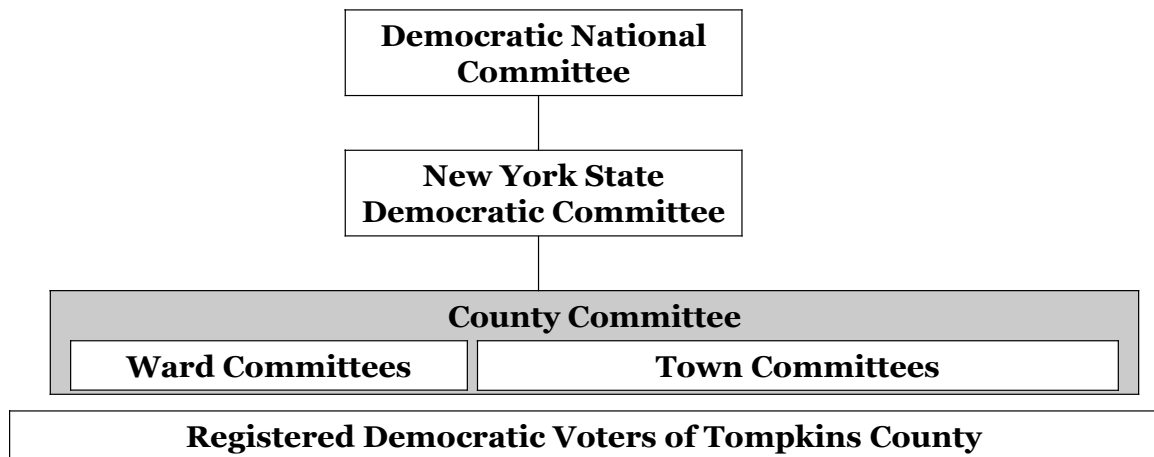
Irene W. Stein

Chair, Tompkins County Democratic Committee

# I. Party Overview

The Tompkins County Democratic Committee helps find candidates and win elections for the Democratic Party. It aims to help Democrats combine their efforts to elect representatives to local, state, and national government. These candidates and elected officials, whatever their views on specific issues, are united in their general Democratic philosophy of striving to benefit the general welfare with special attention to those who need it. The Party, at all levels, is an inclusive one, striving for the greatest possible public participation in our society.

The committee's foundation is the base of registered Democratic voters. Interested voters can join Town and Ward committees, which then unite to form the County Committee. The County Committee then elects members to the New York State Democratic Committee, and the State Committee elects members to the Democratic National Committee.



## Local Committees

Each Democratic committee member represents an election district, and can participate on the committees that include that district at the town, ward, city, or county level. Each election district can elect from two to four committee members, depending on the Democratic share of the vote in the last race for governor.

Within the City of Ithaca, election district representatives (committee members) are combined to form Ward committees. Outside of the City, representatives form Town committees. (Villages are treated as part of their Town for these purposes.)

The election process for committee members involves carrying petitions, following the same process that candidates get on the ballot. The number of signatures required and the potential number of committee members varies by election district. If more people submit valid petitions than there are committee seats for that election district, a primary election will be held to elect the

committee members from that election district. Petitioning for committee seats is done at the same time as petitioning for candidates to get on the ballot.

In between primary elections, committee members may be appointed to vacancies initially by the Town or Ward committee, with the approval of the County Committee, but must be elected every two years.

Each Town and Ward committee has its own complement of officers that can include a Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, and sometimes Vice-Chair. These committees work on the elections specific to their areas, and also combine to form the County Democratic Committee.

## **The County Committee**

The County Committee includes most of the members of the Town and Ward committees, bringing them together to work on countywide, state, and national races as well as on issues. The County Committee also helps coordinate the different local committees, helping raise funds, find candidates, and share their knowledge.

(Some Towns and Wards may also allow committee members to serve on their committee without serving on the County Committee. See the Bylaws in Appendix A for more detail.)

## **New York State Democratic Committee**

The New York State Democratic Committee (<http://nydems.org>) is composed of representatives from the county committees. Each county committee gets two representatives—one male and one female—for each Assembly district in the county. Tompkins County has only one Assembly District, so it has only two representatives. County chairs are also invited to State Committee meetings, but they don't have votes unless they are also elected members of the committee.

State Committee members are also selected during the petition process. County Committee members carry petitions for State Committee representatives when they do petitioning for candidates. As with County Committee seats, if multiple valid petitions are submitted, a State Committeeperson will be elected in a primary.

## **II. Responsibilities of the Committee Person**

The political party provides an opportunity for you to influence governmental decision-making at the grassroots level. It also provides a structure through which representatives may be identified, supported, and kept accountable to the public. These functions of the party depend on your taking your committee responsibilities seriously. A committee person has five key responsibilities:

- Active participation on the Committee and in the community
- Registration of voters and recruitment of new committee members and/or candidates
- Circulation of Party nominating petitions
- Involvement in campaign and Election Day turn-out activities
- Financial support of the Party (optional)

### **Committee Participation**

A committee is only as effective as its members are active. You should attend as many meetings as possible, support fundraising efforts if you can, and consider serving on subcommittees or take on other, seasonal assignments. Local meetings occur bi-monthly, but this varies depending on the committee. County meetings take place four times a year. If you cannot attend, send a proxy (see Appendix B). In addition, you should do your best to keep informed of the Party's activities and policies, and you should express your opinions to your Chair or at Party meetings about the Committee's activities, policies, and priorities.

### **Recruitment and Registration**

The Tompkins County Democratic Committee is actively engaged in recruiting new members, with a goal of helping the committee reflect the community's proportions of gender, age, race, ethnicity, income level, and sexual orientation. You can help by encouraging friends and neighbors to register as Democrats and to join the Committee if they are interested in doing so.

### **Circulation of Nominating Petitions**

The petition process is the way most candidates get on the ballot in New York State. It is also a great opportunity for you to make face-to-face contact with Democratic voters in your town or ward. Petitioning generally takes place in June and is the true launch of the election season. As a committee member, you must play an active role in petitioning each year.

Committee leaders and chairs organize the petitioning effort for our Democratic candidates. Your chair will give you a packet of petitions and a list of registered

Democrats in your neighborhood. You will use that list to go door-to-door and obtain the voter signatures that will place candidates on the ballot. The number of signatures you must obtain varies according to your Election District. Usually, each petition holds 20 signatures. See Appendix C for information on the regulations and procedures for obtaining signatures and filling out petition forms.

## **Campaign Activities**

Although it is not a requirement, you are welcome to sign on to any campaign that interests you. Your committee can help you get involved with campaigns at the local, county, state, or national level. Campaign volunteers help with all aspects of a campaign, from stuffing envelopes or putting up signs to hosting fundraisers or writing letters to the editor on behalf of a candidate.

In critical election years, the Committee rents space in Ithaca for a coordinated campaign headquarters. If you are able to, you might help staff that headquarters, answering phones, preparing mailings, and informing voters about the various campaigns.

You will be asked to take part in a coordinated get-out-the-vote (GOTV) effort. The County Committee organizes this effort as part of a coordinated campaign that involves all Democratic candidates from top to bottom. GOTV efforts include telephoning, lit drops (leaving campaign literature at voters' homes), and giving rides to the polls. You may be asked to poll watch or to call in the results to Democratic Headquarters after the polls close.

## **Financial Support**

Contributions to the County Committee support mailings, database services, rent and supplies for campaign headquarters in critical election years, and financial assistance to candidates. Your dues for your town or ward committee and for the County Committee are both voluntary and fairly minimal, and cover only a portion of what is needed. You are encouraged to contribute to the Party as you are able, keeping in mind that such contributions are **not** tax-deductible.

## **III. The Local Committee**

Local committees are the grassroots of the Democratic Party organization, the place where Democrats come together to discuss politics and work to elect Democratic officials.

### **Towns and Wards**

In the City of Ithaca, local committees are organized by wards. Outside the City, every town has a committee. Each committee is made up of two to four members from each election district, enrolled Democrats who are elected by enrolled Democrats. There are five ward committees and nine town committees.

### **Functions**

The local committee has three principal functions:

- To develop a strong and active grassroots party organization, including skilled leaders, dedicated workers (including volunteers beyond the committee), capable candidates, and healthy finances;
- To play the primary role in the planning, financing, and waging of campaigns for local offices;
- To serve as a medium of communications between registered Democrats in the community and elected Democratic officials.

Local committees often sponsor activities and other functions to increase visibility, build a volunteer base, and encourage teamwork among committee members.

### **Organization**

Local committees are free to organize themselves so as to maximize their effectiveness, provided that their by-laws are consistent with the county party's rules and state law.

The local committee is required to meet every two years within fifteen days of the election of its members ( the effective date for the election of committee members is the date of the primary election that is held following the petition process) to choose its leader, the chair. Many local committees also have other officers, including vice-chair, secretary, treasurer, volunteer coordinators, district captains, and subcommittee chairs for special projects like fundraising, committee recruitment, issues, or voter registration.

### **Town and Ward Chairs**

The Town or Ward Chair is elected by the members of the local committee to be the Chief Officer of the local committee, as well as to represent the interests and views of the local committee on the County Party's Executive Committee. The

Chair is responsible for maintaining communications between the local committee members and the Executive Committee. He or she should report frequently to the local committee on what is happening at the county level.

## **Finances**

The local committee generally will need to raise funds to cover expenses associated with its own activities, including meetings, communications, and candidate support, and sometimes to help maintain the County Party organization.

Election law requires committees to:

- Choose a treasurer;
- File a “Treasurer’s Designation Form” with the Board of Elections; and
- File at least two financial disclosure statements annually with the Board of Elections.

Local committees raise money in all kinds of ways, from membership dues to mail and email requests to parties, garage sales, bake sales, barbecues, and dinners.

## **Voter Registration**

Local Democratic committees often sponsor voter registration drives, sending volunteers door-to-door or to community events. This should be a continuous activity; in some committees it may be the responsibility of a specific officer or subcommittee.

The Board of Elections has information on how to register voters and about the deadlines for voter registration before specific elections.

## **Candidate Development**

Local committees are responsible for finding candidates to run for office in the jurisdictions they serve. In the city, ward committees help select City Council candidates and the Mayor; while outside the city, town committees help select town board members, town supervisors, town justices, as well as some town clerks and town highway superintendents.

Committees should:

- Continuously search for highly qualified Democrats and encourage them to become committee members and to seek public office;
- Set up vehicles to help voters evaluate candidates, such as public forums;
- Establish fair and open processes for deciding which candidates to endorse;

- Circulate petitions for candidates in situations where petitions are used and host caucuses where necessary; and
- Work on campaigns for Democratic candidates.

## **Caucuses, Petitions, and Primary Elections**

Democratic candidates get on the ballot in one of two ways: a petition process followed by a primary, or a caucus.

### **Petitions and Primaries**

County and state offices are always managed by petition, as are elections for delegates to the Democratic Convention. The Towns of Caroline and Ithaca use petitions for town offices as well. (Members of the County Committee must also circulate petitions for their own seats.)

Committee members and possibly other volunteers collect signatures from registered Democrats in the areas represented by a given office. The Board of Elections has details on how many signatures are required for which offices, and any candidate who collects enough signatures is eligible to be on the ballot.

A primary is held only if there are more candidates with valid petitions than there are open seats. Registered Democrats are eligible to vote in a primary election, and the candidate (or candidates, if multiple seats are open) who receives the most votes in the primary will appear on the Democratic line in the general election.

Party committees are not supposed to get involved in campaigning during a primary in their role as members of the committee. They are free to campaign as private individuals for any candidate in a primary election.

The rules for carrying petitions are detailed in Appendix C.

### **Caucuses**

Candidates for some Town and Village offices are selected by caucus. Rather than collecting signatures, the committee posts legal notices announcing a meeting for the caucus. Registered Democrats from the area to be represented gather, and they elect a chair, who then runs a meeting to select candidates.

Caucuses are convenient because they can be held later than petitions have to be submitted, generally require less effort, and can sometimes find candidates from among the people who came to the caucus. However, they can also be ‘packed’ by supporters of a particular candidate, making them less predictable and sometimes less democratic than petitions and primaries.

Caucuses are presently used to select candidates for elected office in the Towns of Danby, Dryden, Enfield, Groton, Lansing, Newfield, and Ulysses. In those towns, candidates are endorsed in a caucus open to all registered Democrats in each town.

It should be noted that any Town Democratic committee can change the way it chooses candidates by adopting, by a two-thirds vote of its sitting committee members, a rule that states that it wants to select its candidates either through the petition process or by caucus. Such change must be evidenced by the filing of certified copy of the rule at least four months prior to the date of the primary election for that year and will stay in place until it is again changed.

## **Non-Partisan Races: School Boards, Some Villages**

The Democratic (and Republican) parties do not participate in some elections. All school boards in Tompkins County have non-partisan elections, using their own mechanisms for putting candidates on the ballot and running races. Some Villages—notably Lansing, Cayuga Heights, and Freeville—also elect their officials without reference to political party.

## **Election Inspectors**

Election inspectors serve the interests of both the Party and the general public. An inspector must be registered to vote with one of the major parties and must be available on Primary Day in September from approximately 11:30 A.M. until 9:30 P.M. and on Election Day in November from approximately 5:30 A.M. until 9:30 P.M. As of 2006, inspectors are paid \$160 for Election Day, \$100 for Primary Day, and \$25 for each annual training session they attend. Hiring and training are overseen by the Board of Elections.

The duties of an election inspector include preparing the assigned polling place for voting, processing and assisting voters, closing down the polling place, and reporting the voting results. Interested committee members can contact the Chair or print out and complete a form from the Board of Elections Web site: <http://www.votetompkins.com> .

## IV. The County Committee

The Tompkins County Democratic Committee is the official governing body of the County Democratic Party. It is made up of the local town and ward committee members—legally, between two and four persons from each Election District in the County.

### Structure and Function of the County Committee

The Tompkins County Democratic Committee has four officers—a Chair, a Vice-Chair, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. These officers serve two-year terms and are elected at the Fall Organization Meeting in odd-numbered years. Candidates for these positions are recruited by members of the Elections Committee, a committee of three members. The Chair presides at meetings and is responsible for coordinating campaigns; the Vice-Chair presides when the Chair is not present. The Secretary takes minutes and reads them to the body. The Treasurer is Chief Financial Officer of the Committee and is responsible for filing reports. All checks must be signed by the Treasurer and either the Chair or Vice-Chair.

The County Committee may adopt and amend its own rules. Current by-laws appear in Appendix A of this handbook.

In addition to the duties and activities that you saw outlined in Chapter II, the County Committee also recommends a candidate for Commissioner of Elections to the County Legislature. This representative of the Party will serve a two-year term at the Board of Elections.

County Committee meetings are open to any registered Democrat in Tompkins County; however, only members of the committee are authorized to vote.

### Standing Subcommittees of the County Committee

There are at present four standing subcommittees of the Tompkins County Democratic Committee:

1. The **Executive Committee** consists of the officers named above, the two State Committee Members, the Town Chair (if any), the City Chair (if any) and the town and ward chairs and/or their surrogates. In addition, all elected Democratic officials are ex-officio (and non-voting) members of the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee handles business of the Party in the County between meetings of the County Committee. It makes recommendations to the body at County Committee meetings. Any County Committee members may attend any Executive Committee meeting, but they may not vote on business conducted there.

- 2.** The **Finance Committee** consists of the Treasurer and four members chosen by the Chair. This committee prepares an annual budget and financial report. It may also assist with fundraising.
- 3.** The **Elections Committee** recruits candidates for officer positions and presides over the election at the Organization Meeting.
- 4.** The **Issues and Platform Committee** consists of seven members selected by the Chair. This committee may prepare resolutions, conduct polls, present forums, and conduct other duties as designated by the Chair or the County Committee.

The Chair of the County Committee serves as an ex-officio (non-voting) member of all subcommittees. If you are interested in serving on a subcommittee, contact the Chair.

## **County Committee Meetings**

County Committee meetings are held quarterly. Agendas, minutes of the previous meeting, and proxies are mailed to committee members at least one week prior to the meeting. A simple majority (50% + 1) of the committee constitutes a quorum, which allows business to proceed. That majority may be determined by counting proxies as well as by counting actual attendees.

If you cannot attend a meeting and must instead send a proxy (see Appendix B), the person who carries your proxy may vote for you on issues before the committee. You may also declare a specific vote on any agenda topic. Proxy votes are only counted in contested elections or on agenda items if a majority of attendees vote to include proxies on those items.

# Appendices

## Appendix A: By-laws

### ARTICLE I – General Provisions

**Section 1.** The organization of the Democratic Party in Tompkins County shall be known as the “Tompkins County Democratic Committee,” hereafter referred to as “The County Committee” or “The Committee,” whose membership shall be elected under the provisions of Article II herein.

**Section 2.** The purpose of these by-laws is to inspire and encourage the greatest number of Democrats to participate in the affairs of the Democratic Party of Tompkins County, to ensure the continuing success of the Democratic Party of Tompkins County, to provide an orderly and democratic way to carry on the business of the party and to provide the best possible government for the people of Tompkins County.

**Section 3.** The Tompkins County Democratic Party actively seeks committee members who are representative of their constituents with respect to sex, race, religion, ethnic background, and age.

**Section 4.** Except as limited by law or by these by-laws, the affairs of the Tompkins County Democratic Committee shall be vested in the County Committee.

**Section 5.** The officers of the Tompkins County Democratic Committee shall consist of a chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer, who shall be elected as provided in Article VI, Section 1c of these by-laws.

### ARTICLE II – Membership

**Section 1.** The Tompkins County Democratic Committee shall consist of those persons who are so elected biannually in odd-numbered years in the primaries for each election district. There shall be at least two, and not more than four, members of the County Committee elected by each Election District in the County, who shall be residents of Tompkins County and enrolled Democrats at the time of the election and throughout their term of office. Each member shall have one vote.

**Section 2.** The number of authorized members in each election district shall be computed according to the following formula. The total Democratic vote for Governor in the most recent gubernatorial election shall be divided by the number of election districts in the county to find “A”, the average number of votes per election district. If the vote in an election district was less than half of “A”, that district shall be authorized to have two members. If the vote in an election

district is equal to or more than half of “A” and less than “A” that district shall be authorized to have three members. If the vote in an election district is equal to or greater than “A” that district shall be authorized to have four members. In case the boundaries of such districts have been changed or a new district has been created since the last preceding gubernatorial election, the above formula shall be applied to the Democratic vote cast for member of assembly. In case the boundaries of such districts have been changed or a new district has been created since the last assembly election, the same formula shall be applied to the Democratic party enrollment in the last general election. In case the boundaries of such districts have been changed or a new district has been created since the last general election, the same formula shall be applied to the Democratic party enrollment at the time of the change in boundaries and/or creation of a new district.

**Section 3.** The officers of the County Committee shall be ex-officio members of the committee but shall have no vote unless they are also duly elected Committee members.

**Section 4.** Democratic public office holders of elected State, County, City, Town, and Village public offices shall be ex-officio members of the County Committee but shall have no vote unless they are also duly elected Committee members.

**Section 5.** Where a committee person removes his/her voting residence from the County, such removal constitutes a vacancy.

**Section 6.** All vacancies occurring in the Committee for cause (Article 8, Sections 2,3), by death, disqualification, removal from office or otherwise shall be filled by the County Committee as provided by the Election Law, upon the recommendation of the Town or Ward Committee in which the vacancy shall occur.

### **ARTICLE III — Meetings**

**Section 1.** Organization Meeting: the County Committee shall meet biannually within twenty (20) days following the Primary Election at which it was elected, at such time and place as may be designated by the outgoing County Chairperson, to organize, adopt rules and regulations, establish a schedule of quarterly meetings and for such other business as may come before it.

**Section 2.** Regular meetings of the County Committee shall be held quarterly. Special meetings may be called at any time by the Chairperson or shall be called within twenty (20) days upon the request of twenty (20) members, in writing, to the Chairperson or Secretary.

**Section 3.** Not less than five (5), nor more than twenty (20), days’ notice of all meetings shall be given by mail by the Secretary and such notice shall include a summary of the minutes of the preceding meeting and an agenda of the proposed meeting. In addition, notice of the Organization Meeting shall include information as to how these by-laws may be obtained.

**Section 4.** The use of proxies at meetings of the County Committee shall be limited as follows:

**Part a.** A proxy holder must be a member of the County Committee.

**Part b.** No individual may hold more than five (5) proxies at any meeting; proxies shall be non-transferable.

**Part c.** All proxies, when submitted, must designate another committee member to vote, or must contain a specific vote for a particular agenda item or items.

**Part d.** Proxies shall be used to determine if a quorum is present.

**Part e.** Proxies shall be used for voting purposes only in contested elections. In addition, proxies shall be used for specific agenda items, provided a simple majority of those present vote in favor of a seconded motion to include proxy voting on that particular issue. In all other cases voting shall be limited to those present.

**Section 5.** The presence and/or proxies of a simple majority of the stated membership of the Committee shall constitute a quorum. Less than a quorum must adjourn the meeting. The membership shall be informed of the lack of a quorum for a meeting in the notice of the following meeting.

**Section 6.** Until the meeting of the County Committee for organization, the officers of the outgoing Committee shall continue in office until the election of their respective successors.

**Section 7.** Order of business. At all meetings of the County Committee, the following shall be the order of business:

- (a) Calling of rolls
- (b) Filling of vacancies on County Committee
- (c) Election of officers
- (d) Unfinished business
- (e) Reports of officers
- (f) Reports of Committees
- (g) New business

**Section 8.** There shall be public notice of all meetings of the County Committee. Any Democrat registered in Tompkins County has the right to attend and speak at all meetings of the County Committee. Non-committee members may be seated separately from Committee members in order to facilitate voting.

**Section 9.** The Committee may choose, by a majority vote at any time, to go into executive session, at which point visitors will be requested to leave.

**Section 10.** At the start of each meeting, the Chairperson shall appoint an individual to serve as Parliamentarian for that meeting.

## **ARTICLE IV — Officers and Duties**

**Section 1.** The officers of the County Committee shall consist of a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer, who shall be elected for two-year terms by the County Committee at each biannual organization meeting in the manner specified in Article VI, Section 1c. The County may elect such other offices as may deem advisable.

**Section 2.** Officers of the County Committee shall be enrolled members of the Democratic Party, but need not be members of the County Committee, as provided by the election law.

**Section 3.** If a vacancy occurs in an office, it shall be filled by the County Committee in the manner specified in article VI, Section 1c.

**Section 4.** The County Chairperson, in addition to the duties conferred by law, shall coordinate all campaigns in the County for Federal, State, County, Town, Village and City offices and exercise any other powers and duties assigned by the County Committee. The County Chairperson presides at all meetings and possesses the general powers of the presiding officer.

**Section 5.** The vice-Chairperson shall perform the duties of the Chairperson in the absence or disability of the Chairperson to act and perform other duties assigned to the office by the County Committee or the County Chairperson.

**Section 6.** The Secretary shall keep a full and accurate account of all proceedings of the Committee and prepare summary minutes for distribution. The Secretary shall file and preserve all written reports of the County Committee, be responsible for the preparation of all reports required by law, except those which have to do with finances, or which by law are required to be filed by some other officer and shall make and reports available for the inspection of any member of the County Committee. The Secretary shall attend to the preparation and distribution of all notices required by these by-laws and perform such other duties as the County Committee or the County Chairperson may require.

**Section 7.** The Treasurer shall be the chief financial officer of the County Committee and shall receive, hold in trust and disburse all funds of the County Committee according to procedures established by the finance Committee. All checks drawn on, or withdrawals made from, accounts of the County Committee shall require two signatures, the Treasurer, County Chairperson and County Vice-Chairperson shall be the authorized signers. The Treasurer shall file all financial reports and statements required by law and, in cooperation with the Finance Committee, perform such other duties as the County Committee or the County Chairperson may require. All records and reports of the Treasurer shall be made available for inspection by any member of the County Committee.

## **ARTICLE V — Town, Ward and City Committees**

**Section 1.** There shall be a Town and Ward Committee in each of the Towns of Tompkins County and in each of the Wards of the City of Ithaca.

**Section 2.** The basic membership of each Town or Ward committee shall be the members of the County Committee representing that Town or Ward. Within (20) days following the primary at which they are elected, these members shall meet to elect a Chairperson and such other officers as they desire.

**Section 3.** The elected membership of each Town or Ward Committee may add to its membership as many registered Democrats who are resident in it's Town or Ward as it desires. All members will have one vote on each issue before the Town or Ward Committee except that only the elected members of the County Committee may vote on the addition of new members or serve as officers of Town or Ward Committees.

**Section 4.** Each Town or Ward Committee may adopt, subject to the approval of the Executive Committee, its own by-laws. In the absence of such by-laws, the majority of the members, including proxies, shall constitute a quorum, but there shall be no proxy voting. Not less than five (5) days notice shall be given to each member in advance of any meeting.

**Section 5.** All members of the Ward Committees shall constitute the City Committee. The total votes cast by any Ward Committee on any decision within the City Committee shall not exceed the number of seated members of that Ward Committee on the County Committee. Within thirty (30) days following the primary at which the County Committee members are elected, the members of the City Committee shall meet to elect a Chairperson of the City Committee, who shall be an enrolled Democratic resident of the City. Subject to the approval of the Executive Committee, the City Committee may adopt its own by-laws.

**Section 6.** The Chairpersons of the Town Committees may form a Committee of the Towns and elect a Chairperson of the Towns, who shall be an enrolled Democratic resident of a Town in Tompkins County. Subject to the approval of the Executive Committee, the Committee of the Towns may adopt its own by-laws.

**Section 7.** Each Town and Ward Committee shall attempt to make known to the registered Democrats in its district the process by which membership in the County Committee may be obtained. When there is a vacancy on the County Committee from its jurisdiction, the Town or Ward Committee shall vote on the nomination of a candidate to the County Committee to fill the vacancy.

**Section 8.** The endorsement of Democratic candidate for public office, including designation or nomination made to fill a vacancy in any elected public office, shall be the responsibility of those committee members who represent the population eligible to vote for that office.

**Section 9.** Party nominations for town offices shall be by caucus or by primary election. All such nominations of candidates for Village offices shall be made by party caucus and executed in accordance with State Election Law.

## **ARTICLE VI – Committees of the County Democratic Committee**

**Section 1.** The standing committees of the County Committee shall be the Executive Committee, the Finance Committee, the Elections Committee and the Issues and Platform Committee.

**Part a.** The Executive Committee shall consist of all the officers of the County Committee, the Chairperson of each Town and Ward Committee, the Chairperson of the City Committee and the Chairperson of the Towns. In addition, the members of the County Committee representing any County Representative District in which no Town Chairperson resides may elect from among themselves a member of the Executive Committee. All Democratic elected public office holders and the members of the State Committee in Tompkins County shall be ex-officio members, without vote unless already voting members. Any member of the County Committee may attend meetings of the Executive Committee. Each voting member shall have one vote. There shall be no proxies. A majority of the actual voting membership will constitute a quorum. The Executive Committee shall recommend actions to the County Committee and be empowered to take such actions as are necessary to carry out the work of the County Committee between meetings of the County Committee. The record of actions taken at meetings of the Executive Committee shall be reported at the next meeting of the County Committee. The officers of the County Committee shall be the officers of the Executive Committee.

**Part b.** The Finance Committee shall consist of five (5) members designated by the County Chairperson, one of whom shall be the Treasurer. The terms of the members will expire at the bi-annual Organizational Meeting. The Committee shall elect its own chairperson from among its members. The Committee shall establish procedures for disbursement of funds, prepare an annual budget and an annual financial report to the County Committee, and shall perform such other functions as are delegated to it by the County Chairperson or the County Committee.

**Part c.** The Elections Committee shall preside over and conduct the election of officers of the County Committee at the Organization Meeting or when a vacancy occurs. The Committee shall consist of three (3) members elected by the outgoing Executive Committee, none of whom may be candidates for any of the officer positions. The Committee shall elect its own chairperson. The Executive Committee has the power to fill vacancies on the Elections Committee. The Committee shall inform each member of the County Committee of the procedures and time-table of the forthcoming election. The committee is encouraged to recruit at least two (2) candidates for each office and shall schedule a forum at which all potential candidates shall be offered the opportunity to speak and/or have others speak for them. There shall be opportunity for discussion but no votes shall be taken. The forum shall take place at least seven (7) days before the

County Committee meeting at which the elections will take place. If only one candidate comes forward for each office, the forum will not take place, unless requested in writing by three (3) members of the committee. Following the forum all members of the County Committee shall be informed of the names of all those who were identified as candidates for any of the officer positions. At the election there shall be opportunity for nominations from the floor. The order of election shall be Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. Any persons nominated for one office, but not elected to that office, shall be eligible for nomination for any remaining office.

**Part d.** The Platform and Issues Committee shall consist of seven (7) members designated by the County Chairperson. The terms of all members shall expire at the organizational meeting. The Committee shall prepare resolutions for presentation to the County Committee and perform such other duties as are delegated to it by the County Chairperson or the County Committee

**Section 2.** Except as otherwise provided herein, the Chairperson and all members of committees shall be designated by the County Chairperson, who shall be an ex-officio member of all committees.

**Section 3.** The County Committee, the Executive Committee and/or the County Chairperson may create and terminate ad hoc committees. In the absence of specific instructions in the establishing motion, the County Chairperson shall designate committee members.

**Section 4.** The committees provided for in this article have the power to appoint subcommittees.

## **ARTICLE VII — Miscellaneous**

**Section 1.** A copy of the adopted by-laws shall be made available by the Secretary to any member of the County Committee requesting it.

**Section 2.** A member or officer of the County Committee will be removed, upon two-thirds (2/3) vote of the County Committee for corruption in office, or for publicly supporting the opponent of a duly nominated Democratic candidate for public office after notice and charges to be brought by the Executive Committee to be heard by the full County Committee.

**Section 3.** Roberts Rules of Order, as last revised, shall govern the proceedings of all meetings of the County Committee and its standing committees in all cases to which they are applicable and where they are not inconsistent with the law, these by-laws or any special rules of order adopted by the County Committee.

**Section 4.** These rules shall become effective immediately upon their adoption.

**Section 5.** If any clause, sentence, paragraph, subdivision, section, article or part thereof of these rules shall be adjudged by any court or body of competent jurisdiction to be invalid, such judgment shall not affect, impair or invalidate the

remainder thereof, but shall be confined in its operation to the part directly involved in the controversy in which such judgment shall have been rendered.

**Section 6.** When changes to the platform are proposed by the Issues and Platform Committee all members of the County Committee shall be given an opportunity to see and study them at least seven (7) days prior to their being taken up by the County Committee for action.

## **ARTICLE VIII Amendments to the By-laws**

**Section 1.** These by-laws may be amended by a majority vote of those present at any meeting of the County Committee provided that a quorum as herein defined is present at the meeting and provided that notice of consideration of such amendments, together with a copy of the current and proposed sections concerned, is mailed to each member of the Committee not less than five (5) and not more than fifteen (15) days before the said meeting.

**Section 2.** Any member of the County Committee may propose an amendment to these by-laws by presenting said amendment, in writing, signed by at least ten (10) members of the County Committee to the County Chairperson or Secretary of the County Committee at least twenty (20) days before any scheduled meeting of the County Committee, in order to meet the requirements of Article VIII, Section 1.

## **ARTICLE IX Code of Ethics (effective 1 January 1989)**

The Tompkins County Democratic Committee adopts the following Code of Ethics, based on the Model Code of Ethics passed by the Executive Committee of the New York State Democratic Party:

**Conflict of Interest:** An officer of the County Committee, i.e., Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, City Chair or Towns Chair (who serves as liaison among the Towns), or a firm or corporation controlled by an officer, shall not receive any compensation for services relating to matters before a legislative body or a state or local agency in connection with the purchase, sale or lease of goods, property and services, licensing, rate-making, and the adoption or repeal of rules and regulations having the force of law; however, an officer may render services in a matter before a legislative body or agency if the identity of the officer and the source of compensation is disclosed to the Ethics Commission in writing; the compensation must not be contingent on the success of any proceeding and the proceeding must be subject to public notice and competitive bidding where applicable. An officer cannot sell or contract to provide any goods or services with a value greater than \$25 to any state or local agency, unless such goods or services are provided after public notice and competitive bidding. However, an officer may sell or contract to provide goods or services to any state or local agency, if the officer makes full disclosure of the same to the Ethics Commission prior thereto. An officer cannot accept directly or indirectly for personal gain anything of value greater than \$100 from any entity having a financial interest in

the outcome of any pending county committee decision and an officer cannot use his or her position to obtain any benefits or privileges not generally available to members of the public.

**Dual Office Holding:** No party leader, i.e., County Chair, City Chair or Towns Chair (who serves as liaison among the Towns), while in office shall simultaneously hold any appointive office of a policy making nature in the executive branch of the state or federal government, seek or hold statewide elective public office, or seek or hold office as state senator, member of the Assembly, county administrator, county comptroller, member of the county Board of Representatives, member of City Council, mayor or Town Supervisor, or serve as judge of any court of record, attorney general, assistant attorney general, district attorney, or assistant district attorney, or serve as election commissioner.

**County Committee Ethics Commission:** The Chair of the County Committee, with the approval of the County committee or its Executive committee, shall appoint an Ethics Commission of five (5) enrolled Democrats; no party leader and no more than one voting member of the Executive Committee shall serve as a member of the Commission. The County Chair will designate a Commission Chair, and will act promptly to fill any vacancies. Members may be removed from the Commission by the County Chair for neglect, misconduct or violation of this code, after written notice and opportunity to reply.

**Complaints:** Any enrolled Democrat may submit to the Ethics Commission a written complaint of a specific violation of this code or the Commission may independently institute a complaint. Procedure: When a complaint is received the Commission will give a copy to the individual complained of (to be referred to as “the respondent”), who may reply in writing within fifteen (15) days. Within thirty (30) days after the expiration of the fifteen (15) day period, the Commission may, by majority vote, dismiss the complaint, reprimand the respondent, or schedule a hearing on the complaint. If the respondent requests, the Commission must schedule a hearing. The complainant and the respondent must be notified of the time, date and place of the hearing fifteen (15) days in advance and a quorum of four Commission members must be present, The hearing will be private unless the respondent requests otherwise; however, all reprimands or penalties shall be made public. The Commission and the respondent are entitled to have counsel present at the hearing. Any decision of the Commission may be appealed to the County Committee or to the Executive Committee by the respondent. The Commission shall review the Code of Ethics and may recommend to the County Committee any changes it considers desirable.

**Penalties:** If a party leader or officer is charged with a criminal offense, the Commission shall hold a hearing to determine whether the offense comes under the scope of the Code of Ethics; if so, the party leader or officer is automatically suspended from party office pending final judgment of the case. A party office automatically becomes vacant if the party leader or officer is convicted of a

felony. If the Commission determines that a party leader or officer has violated the Code of Ethics, the party leader or officer may be reprimanded, suspended or removed from party office. A party leader or officer who is removed from office for violation of this Code may not hold party office for five (5) years after removal or—if later—from the date of expiration of his or her sentence.

**Certification:** When a party leader or officer is elected or appointed, the Ethics Commission shall provide him or her with a copy of the Code of Ethics and any other relevant materials. Within ten (10) days the party leader or officer must file with the Commission a certificate stating that he or she has received the materials, has read them and agrees to abide by them.

**Appendix B: Sample Proxy**

Town or Ward \_\_\_\_\_

Election District \_\_\_\_\_

**PROXY**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, residing at \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, a duly elected member of the  
TOMPKINS COUNTY DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE, Tompkins  
County, New York, do hereby constitute and appoint  
\_\_\_\_\_ to act and vote as my proxy at the  
\_\_\_\_\_ meeting of the TOMPKINS COUNTY  
DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE in any vote in which proxies are  
counted, and to have all privileges and powers I should personally be  
entitled to if present.

It is understood that this proxy is to continue in force for a period of  
sixty days from the date hereof and that the same may not be revoked  
by the undersigned unless the undersigned shall personally appear at  
said meeting and expressly revoke the same.

Voting Directions \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Member

## **Appendix C: How to Carry Petitions**

A petition is a legal document that enables a candidate to obtain the Democratic Party line on an election ballot for a given office in a given geographic location. Usually, a Democratic candidate must obtain signatures from 5 percent of the registered Democrats in his or her district. To be safe, most candidates double this number to 10 percent. This accomplishes two things: It shows the strength of the candidate, and it protects him or her against disqualified signatures or pages.

### **Rules for Carrying Petitions**

1. You must be a registered Democrat in Tompkins County.
2. If you have signed a petition for a candidate, you may not circulate a petition for another candidate for that same office.
3. You may only collect signatures during the time period specified by the Board of Elections. Your Chair will announce that time frame when petitions are distributed.
4. You must return petitions to your town or ward chair or to the County Chair by the date announced by the Chair.
5. You must physically witness every signature. In other words, you cannot circulate the petition out of your sight or post it somewhere for signing.
6. Signatures must be in blue or black ink.

### **Rules for Signing Petitions**

1. Signers must be registered Democrats. Use your voter lists to confirm.
2. Signers must be eligible to vote for the candidate for whom they are signing a petition. In other words, they must live in a location where that candidate will appear on the ballot.
3. Signers may sign only one petition per office. That means one petition for Sheriff, one petition for Congressperson, and so on—even if the position is subject to a primary.
4. Signers should sign their names as they signed their name when they registered to vote.
5. As the witness to the petition, you may complete the date and address next to each signature. Dates should run in consecutive order. Use the voter list to confirm addresses.
6. Do not fill in the “Sheet No.” That information will be completed when the petitions are bound prior to filing.

## Completing the Witness Statement

The Witness Statement is a legal oath. When you sign it, you are affirming that you physically witnessed each signature and that the information given is correct. If you did not witness the signatures, and you sign the statement, you are committing fraud. The information should be completed as follows:

1. Print your full name and address as they appear on the voter list.
2. Fill in the number of signatures on the page. This number must be correct, or the entire page may be disqualified.
3. Write the date. At this point, you must stop collecting signatures on that page. The date you write cannot be earlier than any of the dates next to signatures on the petition.
4. Sign the statement with your signature as it appears on your voter registration form.
5. Use blue or black ink.

## Do's and Don'ts of Petitioning

**Don't** let someone take the petition out of your sight to sign it. The witness statement says "and before me signed."

**Don't** let a husband sign for a wife, a mother sign for a daughter, and so on. Each person must sign for himself or herself.

**Do** fill out all of the information on the petition.

**Do** use blue or black ink.

**Do** try to complete each page of the petition with signatures—your candidates need your help to get the numbers they need.

**Do** sign the witness statement legibly.

**Do** be neat. A clean petition is less likely to attract attention and raise red flags that might lead to disqualification.

**Do** remember that you are a representative of the Party and of your candidates as you carry petitions. Be polite, efficient, and quick. Offer to come back if this is not a good time for the signer. Have a pen ready. Do not engage the signer in a lengthy conversation, but be prepared to answer questions about the candidates or to listen to voters' concerns about issues in your town, ward, or county.

## The County Committee's Responsibilities

Except in the case of a primary, the County Committee will take care of preparing and reproducing petitions for you to circulate. They will collect, review, compile,

and submit completed petitions. They will let you know if any of your petitions need correcting.

## **Appendix D: How to Poll Watch**

Poll watchers are designated by political parties, committees, or candidates to oversee election sites on Election Day. As the name indicates, the job of a poll watcher is to observe, with the goal of ensuring an honest and fair election.

### **Certification**

Poll watchers must be certified by a candidate or committee. In Tompkins County, poll watchers are qualified voters who receive signed certificates from the County Committee Chair. That certificate must be presented to the election inspectors on entering the election site. If there are multiple election districts at the polling site, you must present a poll watcher's certificate to election inspectors in each election district.

### **Poll Watchers' Rights**

Poll watchers may arrive at the polls as early as 15 minutes prior to opening. They have a right to see whether votes have been cast prior to opening and to observe the sign-in poll books. They have a right to challenge the qualification of any voter to vote. (Such challenges must be made to the election inspectors.) They may compare paper ballots to the voting machine to make sure that they match. They may remain at the election site after the polls have closed to oversee the final tallies.

In Tompkins County, poll watchers rarely spend the day at a polling site. They may return a few times over the course of a day to pick up voter lists for GOTV purposes. They may return just before the polls close to get the final tally and report it to the Party.

### **Challenging a Voter**

Poll watchers are not law enforcement officials. However, they may report concerns to election inspectors or to the Board of Elections, and they may challenge voters who seem to violate any of these rules:

- Voter signatures must match those of previous years.
- Voter residency must be provable.
- Voters may not vote more than once per election.
- Voters must be 18 and citizens of the United States.
- No one may electioneer within the boundaries set by election inspectors.

### **Poll Watcher Don'ts**

Poll watchers may not electioneer, carry signs, or wear buttons or shirts supporting a candidate or position. They may not interfere with voting or with the job of the election workers. They may not accompany a voter into the voting

booth, even if that voter requests assistance. If the election inspectors overrule a poll watcher's challenge, the poll watcher has no right to argue that ruling. (The election inspectors present must make a formal ruling by majority vote. Tie votes favor the voter.) If a poll watcher believes that the election inspectors are doing something wrong, he or she should immediately bring it to the attention of the Commissioner of Elections.