

Overview

*"Organize the whole state so that every Whig can be brought to the polls...
Divide the county into small districts and appoint in each a sub-committee,
Make a perfect list of all 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, and on Election Day see that every Whig
is brought to the polls. "*

Abraham Lincoln

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These basic organizational tactics are as successful today as they were in President Lincoln's time. Abraham Lincoln understood the role of the precinct leader. Although we live in a technological age, the best way to identify, persuade and turnout favorable voters is through precinct operations. The task is still to identify our favorable voters, persuade the undecided, and make sure our supporters go to the polls on Election Day. Just as in Abe Lincoln's time, the people who can best do this job of identification and persuasion are found at the local level - in the neighborhood.

Election Day is the "one-day sale" for the precinct leader and the political campaign.

Election Day is the sum total of all your efforts. You might fall behind in other programs (such as Letter to the Editor or a volunteer picnic), but if you don't have a good Election Day operation, everything could be lost.

While other things are important in politics, too often we have neglected the basic truth upon which precinct organizations are built - we may win thousands and even millions of votes for our candidates, but we must win our campaigns one vote at a time.

Elections are won at the local level. That is where the hard work pays off.

In this handbook, we discuss how to maximize turnout with an effective Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) operation. As a precinct leader, you are in the best position to mount an operation to Get-Out-the-Vote at the grassroots level for Election Day. You have a very specific and defined voter audience - the voters of your precinct!

The Job of Precinct Leader

You are the Face of the Local GOP –

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

Politics is Personal –

All politics is personal. As the Party's most direct link with the voter, you are responsible for establishing a neighbor-to-neighbor rapport with the residents in your precinct. These people may often seek your counsel as they make election decisions. A good precinct leader will try to visit every home in the precinct. Studies have shown this personal, one-on-one contact is more persuasive and effective than television advertisements.

You will Make the Difference –

As a precinct leader, you have made a commitment to making a difference. You will share the joy of victory and the agony of defeat. Most important, you will share the final sense of accomplishment that comes with electing good public officials, with making government work effectively.

You should work in conjunction with the GOP campaigns, county and state organizations impact your precinct. You are the on-site representative of these groups and need to be "in the loop" as to their overall goals and operations. For example, if the presidential campaign runs a heavy phone bank turnout operation it will impact the turnout in your precinct on Election Day. You need to know the tactics being used by others so you can coordinate your efforts.

Discover your Best Method - The suggestions contained in this handbook have proven helpful over the years for precinct leaders, but they are suggestions, not rules cast in stone. There is no single formula for success in the political arena.

Good judgment and knowledge of your individual precinct will be your guide in deciding which suggestions work for you. Your goal is to inform voters, identify favorable voters and get them to the polls. How you attain this goal however, will be determined by your own experience and creativity, coupled with the guidelines contained in this handbook.

What do Precinct Leaders Do?

The Party is counting on you, the precinct leader, to accomplish the following activities:

- Identify and register all Republicans.
- Canvass your precinct to identify all favorable voters.
- Recruit and train volunteers.
- Organize your precinct by blocks.
- Distribute literature and information on Republican candidates
- Provide for ballot security on Election Day.
- Get Republican voters to the polls on Election Day.
- Serve as the Republican Party's year round liaison in your neighborhood.
- Identify Republicans in your precinct to participate in Monthly Donor Program.

Good planning is the key to attaining any worthwhile goal. This holds true in business, family life, civic activities and, especially, politics. Your overall goal is to ensure that every voter in your precinct who supports Republican candidates gets to the polls on Election Day. To accomplish this goal, you must first organize your precinct.

Accomplishing these tasks will be much less formidable if you develop a calendar and timetable.

The Calendar should include:

- Dates fixed by state law (Voter Registration deadline, Absentee Ballot voting deadlines, Election Day, etc)
- Dates of party activities (Lincoln Day Dinner, County Party meetings, etc.).
- Dates of community activities (county fair, major charity events, major school events).
- Target dates for accomplishing each of your precinct tasks

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

How to Organize Your Precinct

Precinct organization is not something you can accomplish in a day, a week or even a month. It takes time to understand your precinct, get some help, train your volunteers, work your precinct, deliver the votes and keep up the good work. Choose your tasks wisely. Work from Election Day backwards. Start with the simplest task, such as a door-to-door effort in one neighborhood, and build on your accomplishments. Focus on what you need to accomplish for Election Day first.

The key to a strong precinct organization is simple - "many hands make less work." Not only do you lighten the load but you also bring more people into the Party by asking people to help. Resist the temptation to do everything by yourself. Build a team - an organization - to work your precinct.

Goals for Precinct Leaders

Simplify the goals for your precinct organization. Do not try to be all things for all people (i.e. do a few things well rather than many things poorly). For example, your local GOP campaign may rely on your precinct organization to do all canvassing and literature drops for their campaign. Even with hard work and many helpers, you may not be able to accomplish this.

Set your priorities with the focus on what you can accomplish to maximize the vote on Election Day. Here are some simple, clear-cut goals for an effective precinct organization:

- **Conduct a Voter ID door-to-door canvass and make phone calls to voters you cannot visit in person**
- **Recruit volunteers to create a neighborhood, "block" organization**
- **72 Hour Get-Out-The-Vote Program**
- **Help your County GOP Chair identify individuals to work the Polls on Election Day and/or serve as Poll Watchers**

Six Steps to Organize Your Precinct

Here are some general guidelines on how to organize your precinct. Keep your goals simple. Focus foremost on Election Day. You will find people to help and you will find people who know what to do. Try to build on the success of previous campaigns and the party organizations in your area. Be sure to work in coordination with the other local GOP groups and clubs, such as Republican women, College Republicans and Young Republicans.

Remember these six steps:

- 1. Understand Your Precinct**
- 2. Get Some Help**
- 3. Train Your Volunteers**
- 4. Work Your Precinct**
- 5. Deliver the Votes**
- 6. Keep Up the Good Work**

STEP ONE: Understand Your Precinct

The first step in becoming an effective Precinct Leader is to arm yourself with the tools and information to do the job. Get out and drive your precinct. Review voter lists and look for people who you may know. The best way to learn your precinct is by canvassing - going door to door. When you walk your precinct, you discover valuable information, such as where to put up signs, meeting locations for volunteers, important intersections. This is not a difficult task. You need to become the "master" of your precinct.

Become familiar with these items of interest:

- **Know the geography** - get a precinct map from the County Clerk's office. Find out the exact boundaries of your precinct as well as the boundaries of the local, state and federal districts that encompass your precinct.
- **Know the people** - discover the Republican officials, activists and party workers who live and work in your precinct. You can often recruit workers if they know they will have access to elected officials who live in their same area.
- **Know the voters** - obtain a user name and password to the State Party's online voter registration database called "Voter Vault." This online tool will enable you to produce lists for door-to-door activities and volunteer phone calls. The State Party has invested a great deal of money and effort to collect voter identification information and lists to better assist you in understanding what issues motivate specific voting households in your precinct. Divide voters into three groups --- favorable, undecided and unfavorable. Focus on locking down the favorables to vote and persuading the undecideds.
- **Know the numbers** - know where your votes are to win! Research the voting patterns of your precinct over the past elections. And remember, not every precinct is a winning precinct for Republican candidates. But it is critically important the Republican Party have a presence in all precincts - the good and the bad - in order to both maximize, and mitigate, margins of victory or defeat.
- **Know the Law** - find someone well versed in Election Law. Know the rules that govern voter registration, absentee ballots, and Election Day procedure and ballot security.

Here is a checklist to help you understand your precinct:

THE PRECINCT DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET:

Republican County Committee Roster - You need to know who you are working with on the committee and how to contact them. Having a roster also enables you to identify blocks that have vacancies when you are out and about "talking up" the Party. It also enables you to tell anyone you meet who their committeemen and committeewomen are and how to contact them.

List of Republican County & Republican Clubs' meetings times places and contact person - When you meet someone interested in getting involved in the Republican Party, there is no better way to help them do so than by inviting them to the next meeting. Do not let any opportunity for getting people involved pass by without taking full advantage.

Map of Precinct - A detailed map of the precinct is a must for anyone wishing to effectively organize and work his or her precinct. Precinct maps can be obtained from the Supervisor of Elections office.

List of Registered Voters in Precinct - A list of the registered voters is also a must for anyone wishing to effectively organize and work their precinct. These lists can be obtained from State Party Headquarters, your County Committee, or through Voter Vault (if have been granted a user name and password).

Preparation/Tools/Supplies:

- Cards with your name & phone number
- Voter Registration and Absentee Ballot Application request forms
- Handout materials (brochures, article, petition forms, etc.)
- Location of polling site -- directions from various points in the District, county.

STEP TWO: Get Some Help

In this "virtual" world of politics, there is still one element that cannot be replaced by a machine - volunteers! We have found year after year, survey after survey, that the most powerful tool in any political campaign is person-to-person contact – this is a fundamental principle of the Republican Party of Kentucky's 72 Hour Program. Volunteers are enthusiastic, and their enthusiasm is contagious. Every person you touch with your GOP precinct organization has a circle of at least 50 local contacts. So when you consider doing a task yourself rather than recruiting two people - you have just cut out 100 potential people you could have touched with a personal appeal.

Once you understand your precinct and know what you want to accomplish, consider these points when you get some help:

Know Who to Recruit – In other words, find people and create a talent pool to accomplish the tasks at hand.

Know How to Recruit Volunteers – Find out what makes people want to volunteer in your area. Ask people who have recruited what has worked in the past.

Know Your Needs for Volunteers --- Above all else - keep people busy. There is nothing worse to call people, line them up to work and then have nothing for them to do.

VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT CHECKLIST:

- All politics is personal - encourage people to become a member of your team.
- Volunteers create community connection - create activity - become known in your area.
- Volunteers are critical to create a grassroots organization on neighborhood level.
- **Understand Why People Volunteer:**
 - Devoted to a candidate and/or party
 - Care about an issue or cause
 - Desire to get involved
 - Want to make a difference
 - Personal or professional advancement

KEYS TO RECRUITMENT:

Ask, ask often and ask with a purpose - Be sure to follow-up with volunteers by phone, mail, e-mail, - and don't settle for one contact. People lead busy lives and need to be reminded.

One person - point person for volunteers - Have one person in your organization deal with volunteers on an ongoing basis. This allows relationships and friendships to develop which fosters commitment. People are apt to show up if they know and respect the person who is watching out for them.

Recruit through many sources and lists - personal lists, Republican Party, previous campaigns, and voter lists. Look for people involved in many other organizations: Business, Charity, Civic, Community/Neighborhood, Schools, Churches, Veterans, Youth and Senior organizations

STEP THREE: Train Your Volunteers

Utilize your volunteers by making sure they know exactly what you want them to do. For example, if you recruit people to work outside the polls on Election Day, assign them a specific job. Meet with them in person in advance of Election Day. Often people leave the comfort of their homes and enter a new situation to volunteer. Your job is to make them feel welcome, so they will come back.

Review these training guidelines to help enhance your program:

Know where to recruit and train - Count back from Election Day and set a time and place.

Know how to hold a meeting - Start on time and end early - keep it to an hour.

Know how to train - Involve people, make it interesting, recognize and award volunteers.

Have a Personal, Positive Approach:

- Offer a Specific Assignment with Set, Time, Date and Location
- Have them fill out a Volunteer Form - Keep It Simple
- Make Them Feel Appreciated
- Call in advance - give them a timetable
- Make them feel part of a bigger picture
- Let them know what is expected of them
- Send a confirmation postcard, follow-up with a phone call, and a reminder email

STEP FOUR: Work Your Precinct

The hard work comes when you conduct your programs. As stated before, keep your goals simple and focused. Try to accomplish four basic goals between now and Election Day:

- Locate likely Republican voters
- See that they are registered

- Make sure they are informed
- See that they go out and vote

You accomplish these goals through various programs. These programs include door-to-door canvassing, list development, e-mail, direct mail and phone banks. A visible show of support such as lit drops, putting up yard signs in strategic locations, calling and writing friends and neighbors can be done effectively on the precinct level in conjunction with other campaigns.

The best way to work your precinct is by building a volunteer organization to touch each of your favorable and undecided voters personally. The more targeted, personal and friendly the appeal, the better. People can see through "canned material". People want to feel we are talking directly to them. The best way to reach people is through neighbors and friends they know and trust.

STEP FIVE: Deliver the Votes

The days leading up to, and including, Election Day are your time to shine. You have your 72 Hour Sale to deliver the votes for the GOP. It is very important to have an effective voter turnout operation. That's how you deliver the votes. In the next section we present a detailed 72 Hour plan for your precinct. In a nutshell, this is what you want to accomplish:

Organize your volunteers - Give your volunteers specific instructions – keep it simple.

Remind your voters - Create activity – attract attention through yard signs, neighborhood walks, phone calls, with loud speakers and music, if you must - use your imagination!

Check your polling places - Know all the nuances and rules that govern your polling place. Work with your County Committee in advance to figure out the rules and how to maximize your advantages.

Round-up your voters - Call, hunt down, offer babysitting, drive, contact family and friends, go to their door an hour before the polls close – make sure your favorable voters vote. Don't forget to follow-up with Republicans who have not yet returned mail-in absentee ballots to the County Clerk's office!

Help keep elections honest - Know how to avert voter fraud before the vote – so that the deceased and out of district people don't vote. Know the laws that govern voting procedures. Be sure you have the numbers of lawyers and government officials who can help you. The State Party typically mounts a ballot integrity program during each and every election. Make certain you obtain contact information for State GOP lawyers in your region.

STEP SIX: Now Keep Up the Good Work

Once you have created an organization - keep it going. Year after year, campaigns and local GOP groups have to recreate a precinct organization. The best thing you can do to serve the cause is to create an on-going, effective precinct organization. Resist the glare of the bright lights and build a grassroots team.

Keep the enthusiasm going - Work to build on your success. Pass on valuable information. Build lists.

There is a lot to do between now and Election Day - Focus on a few tasks and create an organization to do it in the next few weeks.

Your hard work now will pay off in the future - The best reward is a GOP majority of elected officials and voters in your precinct as a result of your efforts!

Election Day Plan

Now that we've covered the basics on how to organize your precinct, let's review how to create an Election Day program for your specific precinct. Election Day activities require a well thought-out plan. First, develop an overall strategy for turning out voters. Be sure you coordinate your efforts with the county GOP, local campaigns and officials. You want to maximize your efforts. Meet personally with people from all these groups as soon as possible. Review these eight guidelines to develop an Election Day program for your precinct.

#1 Election Day Plan

What can you accomplish in your precinct?

Voter identification and turnout goals - know the numbers and voters

What campaign tactics will you use: door to door, phone banks, neighbor to neighbor post cards, absentee ballots, poll watcher program, Election Day coverage, drivers, babysitting?

Timetable - Set deadlines on a calendar

Budget - Estimate costs of handouts, making copies, stakes and other materials (see if your County Committee can produce these materials)

#2 Targeting

Targets -- all or selected voters - Republicans, Swing?

Who are the voters and where do they live?

Coordinate with State/County Republican Party and other campaigns

What are your goals - how many voters in your precinct?

#3 Recruiting Workers

Volunteer lists and recruitment program

Who is in charge – delegate

Recruitment drive - Ask and Ask often

#4 List Inventory and Development

Up-to-date volunteer and voter lists

Inventory type of lists - door-to-door lists, alphabetical, absentee, phone lists

Choose lists for each program – door-to-door for canvassing, alphabetical for poll watching, etc.

#5 Work Your Precinct

Obtain campaign materials from campaigns and/or state and local party committees

Locate likely GOP voters and verify their location

Prepare materials for volunteers for all programs

Fact sheets for volunteers - list exact instructions and duties

#6 - Train Workers

Train volunteers to: Prepare voter lists; Telephone; Poll watch;

Designate volunteers to be: Runners; Drivers; Baby sitters

Assign each volunteer a specific Job and deadline

Hold a meeting - make it simple

Encourage workers

Award workers

#7 - Conduct Programs

Work Backwards from Election Day

Fill Needs on Election Day first, then canvass

Call all workers and get a commitment for Election Day - three shifts, outside workers first, then inside poll watchers - poll workers on outside, poll watchers on inside of poll

Follow-up with workers

Track voters and turn-out on Election Day

Sample Ballot Programs

Victory Party - all invited and where – fliers

#8 Wrap-Up

Compile results

Thank all volunteers and workers

What Can You Do to Get Out the Vote on Election Day?

Let's examine in detail the types of activities you can do to maximize the vote on the days leading up to and including Election Day.

1. **Absentee Voting Program**

Absentee ballots should be provided for prospective Republican voters unable to go to the polls on Election Day. Approximately ten percent or more of registered voters are unable to get to the polls. This means you need to contact likely absentee voters in advance of Election Day.

Absentee ballots account for a crucial margin in many races. Coordinate with your county and state party to follow-up on absentee voter mailings.

Persons requesting absentee ballots are:

- Out of town for vacation or work
- Military personnel
- College students
- Seniors

A Well Organized Absentee Ballot Program Requires:

1. An absentee ballot chairman
2. A review of absentee ballot laws
2. A plan to identify and locate persons who need absentee ballots
3. Appropriate follow-up by:
 - providing applications
 - maintaining a list of requests
 - calling
 - mailing letters and literature
 - notifying voter of deadlines

Procedure for Absentee Voter Drive

Step One

After the canvass, make a list of Republicans and Republican-leaning Independents who have indicated that they will need an absentee ballot. You should also create a list of every registered Republican over the age of sixty.

Step Two

Contact the above by call, visit or letter with instructions on absentee balloting.

Step Three

Maintain a master list of names and phone numbers of every one contacted, and prior to the deadline for application, make a final telephone call. Lists are available from the County Clerk's office that indicate people who have requested absentee ballots and whether, or not, they have returned the mail-in ballot. This list is critical to following up with your voters electing to utilize an absentee ballot.

2. Voter Identification Phone Bank

During the last several days before Election Day, your volunteers should call on all the registered Republicans in your precinct. They should identify themselves as volunteer Republican precinct workers; remind the voters that next Tuesday is Election Day and ask the following questions:

"Will you need a ride to the polling place?"

If the answer is yes, make a note of what time they would like to be picked up and assign someone to take them.

"Do you know the address of your polling place?"

Make sure they have the correct address.

"Have you applied for an absentee ballot?"

If yes, make sure they have filled it out and mailed it to the proper authorities in time to be received on or before Election Day.

"Can you help us get out the Republican vote by serving as a precinct worker on Election Day?"

If so, arrange for them to help work your precinct, or, if you already have enough Election Day workers, give their names and telephone numbers to the county headquarters or county chairman. They may then be assigned to help in other areas.

3. POLL WATCHER and BALLOT SECURITY PLAN LOGISTICS

Laws Regarding Poll Watchers May Vary Among The States

Election Day is the climax of all your political activities for the year. Therefore, it is important to implement a detailed training program for poll watchers.

Poll watchers perform two critical roles:

1. They help ensure the maximum Republican turnout
2. They ensure that all votes cast are legal. Every political party is entitled to have one poll

watcher present at all times when the polls are open and to remain through the count and certification of the vote. The watcher must be a registered elector residing within the county and must be certified by the county chairman. Poll watchers are also required by law to attend mandatory training offered by the County Clerk.