



POWERFUL CITIZEN ROLES: **POLITICAL PARTY REPRESENTATIVE**

In New Jersey, there are more than 24,000 neighborhood-level positions, nearly a third of which are vacant and ready for citizens to serve on. All 50 States have political party service opportunities in the Democrat and Republican parties. Follow this step-by-step guide to taking a powerful position which controls candidate endorsement and party platform using New Jersey as an example.

The Citizens Campaign offers free online training for those interested in serving as a Political Party Representative. Visit www.TheCitizensCampaign.org to get started!

How to Run for a Political Party Committee Seat

Why Run?

Being a member of the local political parties is a great entry into politics. Often times, candidates for mayor, council, freeholder, and persons to fill legislative vacancies are chosen from amongst the committee members. Community residents who are simply interested in gaining experience, visibility, and influence over policy making in their town should definitely take advantage of these positions. Note: You must officially declare yourself a party member to run.

New Jersey's Elections website

Elections.nj.gov

Time and Money Requirements:

It is estimated that a properly run campaign for a contested committee seat would take a maximum of 2 hrs a week, for 6 weeks. In other words, 2 hours on a Sunday for 6 Sundays spread out over April and May and June. There is no cost for running. There may be copying costs associated with voter registration lists from the clerk's office. If you want to print up flyers, then consider the cost of a ream of paper. Once elected, you should attend both the County and Municipal party reorganization meetings held approximately a week after the Primary election. For the rest of the year, committee people will meet in your town perhaps once a month (depending upon the content of the bylaws) and come together in the event that a vacancy occurs among the officers or on the town council. There are also candidate-screening meetings. Note that if the seat you are running for in your municipal election district is uncontested, it may simply be a matter of writing your name in and voting for yourself at the polls on Primary election day.

Sample time line for running:

January / February – Background information & “lay-of-the-land”

* Visit your **town clerk** for the following:

1. **A party declaration form**, in case you are not an official party member.
2. Find out what **municipal voting district** (*aka: election district*) you live in.
3. Ask if the **committee seats for your preferred party are up for reelection** this coming Primary.

4. **Request a nominating petition** to run for county committee and **ask how many signatures are required.**

5. Request a **current list of** your town's incumbent **committee people.**

* Visit your **County Superintendent of Elections** for the following:

6. **Request a walking list** of registered party members in your municipal election district. Having them sorted by who voted in the last Primary election. (*Requesting this in electronic format could save you loads of time.*)

7. Request an **election district map.**

February / March - Getting nominated and filing to run.

1. **Gather the required number of signatures** on your nominating petition (*usually around or less than 10*) from registered members of your party in your district.

2. **Submit the notarized nominating petition** to the clerk well before the deadline. (*Many banks & municipal clerks offer notary service for free or low cost.*)

3. The clerk may find some signatures invalid, in which case you have until April 3rd to submit an amended petition.

4. **Follow up** to make sure your name will appear on the Primary ballot.

5. **Request a copy of the local party bylaws**, if any, so you know how the party organization operates.

April / May / June - Meet your constituents.

1. Mark the Primary election day on your calendar.

2. **Announce your candidacy** to run to the incumbent committee person in your district as well as to the municipal or ward chair. This is a sign of respect. You may discover that the incumbent will simply step aside and hand you the seat if they are confident in you. This could save your self a lot of time and energy. There maybe some informal procedures for running in your town so you should consult with existing committee people, or preferably the local party by-laws to find out what they are. For example, you might have to submit a letter and your resume to the municipal chair.

3. Put on your sneakers, put some dog treats in your pocket, and spend about 2 hours for several Sundays **walking door to door to the registered party members in your district** (*using your walking list*). Concentrate on those who voted in the last Primary election.

4. **Introduce yourself** and tell them you would like to represent their interests to the local Democratic/ Republican Party. Explain that you'll be the neighborhood's eyes and ears.

5. **Ask about their neighborhood concerns**, listen, and take notes next to their name. Do not promise to fix things. Some candidates choose to leave a small sheet of paper listing their qualifications, contact information and poll location/voting hours. You cannot leave these flyers in mailboxes.



Week Before Primary Election - Get Out The Vote (G.O.T.V.)

In many cases you need less than 30 votes to win. **Revisit each door you knocked on.** Ask: "Can I count on your support on June 3rd?" Keep track of your "yes's" and "maybes". Take your copy of the sample ballot which you will have received in the mail by then and **show them where your name appears on the sample ballot.** Show your voter list to friends and colleagues in town to see if they know any of these people and wouldn't mind calling them to endorse you and to remind them to vote.

G.O.T.V. on Election Day

Go and vote for yourself. Revisit the "yes's" and "maybes" to ask them if they've been to the polls. If you like, you can go to the polling place when they close to find out the results. If you win or lose, thank those who supported you either through a letter or in person and congratulate your opponent on a good race.