

# **Republican Party of Virginia**



## **Guide for Unit Chairs**

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## **I. THE REPUBLICAN PARTY OF VIRGINIA CREED**

We Believe:

That the free enterprise system is the most productive supplier of human needs and economic justice,

That all individuals are entitled to equal rights, justice, and opportunities and should assume their responsibilities as citizens in a free society,

That fiscal responsibility and budgetary restraints must be exercised at all levels of government,

That the Federal Government must preserve individual liberty by observing constitutional limitations,

That peace is best preserved through a strong national defense,

That faith in God, as recognized by our Founding Fathers, is essential to the moral fiber of the Nation.

## **II. INTRODUCTION**

The unit committee and the unit chair occupy a position of great responsibility and authority under our State Party Plan -- indeed, they are the backbone of the Republican Party of Virginia. Efforts to win elections at all levels begin at the unit level, and it is here that the Party builds the foundation for success, from the School Board to the White House.

This Guide is designed to help all City and County (Unit) Committee leadership understand the legal requirements and effectively implement the actions that will get our best candidates on the ballot and into office.

In addition to this Guide, Republican leaders should consult several other sources to include:

- The Plan of Organization of the Republican Party of Virginia (the "State Party Plan"), which is the basic document governing the operations of the Republican Party of Virginia
- Bylaws of the Unit Committee and Congressional District Committee.

- Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, which governs the operations of the party where the Party Plan, District or Unit Bylaws are silent. Each chair should obtain a copy for reference and to further understanding of the principles and proper methods of conducting organizational meetings.
- The Republican Party of Virginia Handbook on Mass Meetings, Canvasses, and Conventions which covers the nomination process in greater detail than this guide.

### **III. COMMITTEES OF THE RPV**

The Republican Party of Virginia (RPV) (the "Party") is responsible for conducting the affairs of the Republican Party throughout the state and at every level (unit, legislative, and district) within the Commonwealth of Virginia. To assist in carrying out this responsibility, the Party has adopted a Plan of Organization (the "State Party Plan") which establishes governing committees at each level of operation.

#### **State Central Committee**

The State Party Plan provides for a State Central Committee, elected principally along congressional district lines, to supervise the overall operations of the RPV. Among other things, the State Central Committee determines the method of nomination for statewide candidates, considers and adopts amendments to the State Party Plan, and provides resolution regarding internal operations from the local to the state level.

#### **Congressional District Committees**

Each congressional district is organized with a governing committee, referred to as the District Committee. The District Committee is comprised of the Unit Chairs within the congressional district, plus a set of officers, and elected representatives to the State Central Committee. Similar to the State Central Committee, each District Committee determines the method of nomination for congressional candidates, supervises the operations of the party within the district, and resolves disputes within its jurisdiction.

#### **Legislative District Committees**

The Legislative District Committees are organized by General Assembly districts. For each House of Delegates and State Senate district (140 total), the Unit Chairs (or an appointed representative) serve as members of the Legislative District Committee. The main function of the Legislative District Committee is to determine the method of nomination for General Assembly candidates. Typically, these committees only meet when necessary to make arrangements for a nomination in an election year. Some committees may consist of only one person, while others may include a dozen or more persons.

#### **Unit Committees**

Virginia has 132 cities and counties, and within each city and county, the Unit Committee conducts the business of the party. The Unit Committee determines the method of nomination for candidates for local offices, organizes

precincts and assists with elections. The Unit Committee is the backbone of the entire party structure, comprised of representatives from each precinct within the unit.

## IV. ROLE OF UNIT CHAIRS

The Unit Chair's primary role is to organize people at the local precinct level to accomplish the mission of the Republican Party. The Unit Chair provides leadership to expand the understanding of Republican principles and how those principles will better affect people's lives.

The Unit Chair must:

- Organize the committee to carry out its functions;
- Coordinate with other unit chairs to conduct the affairs of the Party at the congressional and legislative district level as a member of those committees;
- Fulfill the duties imposed by state law in certifying the Party's nominees for public office;
- Communicate and coordinate with public officials, candidates and staff at all levels of the Party and the government to see that the work of the Party is done effectively.

Person by person, group by group, block by block, precinct by precinct, we explain our principles and expand our voter base to accomplish our goal of better government. The unit chair, along with their leadership team, ensures we not only contact and motivate those people who agree with our principles but to engage those who don't yet realize that they too agree with our principles.

Good management principles would require that the unit chair be organized, plan ahead, communicate well, and know how to motivate volunteers. After all, the Republican Party is a voluntary association of like-minded individuals. Where differences do exist, however, the unit chair should be able to resolve differences amicably and encourage constructive action.

### A. Responsibilities

Three distinct duties set forth in the State Party Plan, election laws, and good management principles.

#### Unit Meetings

- The chair calls for meetings of the committee and presides at its meetings. It is the chair's responsibility alone to issue a written notice with an agenda at least seven days prior to each committee meeting.

- The chair, acting at the direction of the unit committee, issues the "call" for each mass meeting, canvass and convention. *Note* that the Unit Committee makes the determination of how nominations and other elections are to take place; the chair's role is ministerial in carrying out the committee's wishes and therefore, the chair must not act unilaterally for the committee.

### Mass Meetings

- When the unit holds a mass meeting or convention, the unit chair calls the meeting to order and conducts the election of the officers of the mass meeting or convention. This may include the election of the unit chair to be chair of the mass meeting or convention. The mass meeting or convention is a distinct entity, separate and apart from the unit committee, and as such it may elect its own chair and secretary. Keep in mind that the chair of the mass meeting or convention may be a different person from the chair of the unit committee.
- The role of the chair of the mass meeting or convention is simply to preside for the duration of that particular meeting. He or she has no power or authority (other than, to make certifications) following the mass meeting or convention. In contrast, the unit chair has on-going responsibilities and serves a two-year term.

### **B. Additional Committee Memberships**

Under the State Party Plan, a unit chair automatically becomes a member of his Congressional, State Senate and House of Delegates legislative district committees. These positions require additional coordination, attendance at meetings and possibly administrative responsibilities.

### **C. Candidate Certification and Elections**

#### Candidate Certification

Under both the State Party Plan and Virginia law, the unit chair performs certain functions relating to the nomination of candidates.

- Where a primary has been designated, the unit chair must receive a receipt that the candidate paid the Primary Filing Fee, the Filing Petitions, and a Declaration of Candidacy from candidates for the Republican primary. The unit chair also certifies to the Department of Elections the names of candidates who properly file for the Republican primary.
- When the Party nominates by a method other than a primary, the unit chair certifies to the Department of Elections the name of the Party's nominee.

#### Election Day Operations

Virginia law specifies that poll watchers must be designated in writing by a party chair, normally a unit chair, in order for the election officials to admit them to the polling place.

The General Registrar may call upon the Unit Chair on Election Day to help resolve problems at polling locations, especially when there is a Republican Primary being conducted. The General

Registrar is also an excellent source of information and assistance. In some cases the Registrar may remain available late to help with voter registration issues during your Mass Meeting or a Party Canvass.

### Electoral Board

The unit chair makes recommendations to the Circuit Court for appointment to the city or county electoral board. Each electoral board member serves a three year term. The Party with the second most votes for Governor in the last election will have one electoral board member while the Governor's Party will have two members. The Electoral Board Chair and the Secretary must be from different Parties. Virginia Code (§ 24.2-106) requires the Unit Chair to provide to the Circuit Court at least three names as the Party's nominee to serve on the local electoral board by January 15 of each year depending on the term expiration of the current board members. This is an advisory recommendation only, as the judge is free to make the appointment as he or she sees fit. The recommendation is a function of the unit chair only, and the consent of the unit committee is not required.

It is a good idea to maintain a working relationship with the city or county Electoral Board and Registrar. The unit chair should be invited to observe the testing and sealing of the voting equipment prior to each election. Attendance at Electoral Board meetings and participation in post-election canvasses is an excellent way to keep abreast of actions that may impact the Party and foster a good working relationship.

### Endorsements

The State Party Plan does not prohibit the chair from taking sides in a nomination or a dispute. However, to be an effective leader, the unit chair should strive to be impartial in most instances and able to work with all factions.

### Voter Lists

A unit chair may purchase from the Department of Elections a list of registered voters within their unit. However, most chairs purchase this list from the RPV, because the Party's list has certain added information, such as phone numbers and voting history.

## **V. UNIT COMMITTEE**

The Unit Committee serves an extremely important role in the operation of the Party. After all, it is the Unit Committee that conducts the affairs of the Party closest to the "grassroots."

It is the Unit Committee that determines how to nominate candidates for local offices, how to select delegates to legislative, congressional and state conventions, and is responsible for the

most visible of all organizational activities: getting volunteers to distribute ticket materials at all polling places and to serve as Poll Watchers and Election Officials on Election Day.

The Unit Committee is instrumental in assisting candidates in contacting voters. By assisting with door knocking and phone banks, holding forums and meet and greet functions, committee members educate voters on the principles of the Republican Party and positions of the candidates. They also recruit additional Party members and motivate voters to exercise their voting responsibilities.

### **Responsibilities of the Unit Committee**

The Unit Committee is charged with a number of responsibilities under the State Party Plan. These responsibilities include:

- Determining whether candidates for local and constitutional offices will be nominated by mass meeting, convention, canvass or primary
- Calling for regular and special mass meetings, conventions and canvasses, to elect delegates to district and state conventions, or to elect the Unit Chair and members of the Unit Committee for their regular election in even-numbered years;
- Determining the pre-filing requirements, if any, and registration fee, if any, at all mass meetings, conventions and canvasses.
- Cooperating with the State Central, Congressional and Legislative District Committees in conducting all elections and fundraising activities
- Filling a vacancy in the Unit Chair and precinct and at-large positions on the committee itself.
- Deciding contests and appeals arising within its jurisdiction.

**Structure of the Unit Committee**

The Precinct (or Ward) is the basic political organization of voters in a community. Voters in a geographical area with similar community interests express their desire for leadership from the school board to the White House through their vote at the precinct.

The Unit Committee consists of precinct representatives, at-large members, elected officials and committee officers.

Precinct Representatives.

The State Party Plan requires each unit to establish the number of representatives each precinct will have on the Unit Committee. This is done using the Republican votes from the most recent presidential and gubernatorial elections. The raw vote totals are expressed in a formula to determine the number of precinct members. For example, the number of precinct representatives may be equal to one member for each 500 Republican votes for president and governor combined. In a hypothetical example, a Unit with five precincts would have the following number of members based on these election results:

Precinct	President & Governor Election Republican Candidate Votes	# members (1 per 500 GOP)
A	1,200	2
B	1,800	4
C	554	1
D	1,450	3
E	1,075	2

Each precinct must have at least one member. The number of members is rounded to the nearest whole number. The precinct members must live within the precinct that they represent (which means the position is vacated when a member moves to a different precinct).

The notion behind the precinct representation requirement is that the Committee will have representation from throughout the unit, but no one area of the unit can dominate. The Committee truly "represents" the Republican voters based on recent voting history.

At-Large members.

In addition to the precinct members, the committee may have At-Large members, who may live in any precinct within the unit. However, the number of at-large members may not be more than thirty percent of the number of precinct members. The purpose of this requirement is consistent

with the precinct-representation requirement, so that one portion of a city or county does not dominate the committee.

### Associate or Sustaining Members

Some Committee Bylaws provide for Associate or Sustaining memberships. These are non-voting members who may or may not pay dues. In some cases, Committee members who lose their positions for some reason (such as missing three consecutive meetings without a proxy), automatically are moved to the Associate (non-voting) membership rolls. Collecting dues for Associate memberships can be an effective fundraising method.

### Publicly-elected officials.

All publicly-elected Republicans serve *ex-officio* on the unit committee. This only includes persons elected as a Republican and not those persons elected to non-partisan offices (such as many city councils and all school boards).

### Officers.

The Unit Committee is required to have a Chair, one or more Vice Chair(s), a Secretary and a Treasurer. The Unit Chair is elected every even-numbered year at the same time delegates are elected to the Congressional District Convention (whether by a unit mass meeting, convention or canvass). The Unit Chair is elected at a Mass Meeting, Canvass, or Convention, not by the Unit Committee. The Unit Committee will elect only to fill a vacancy for the remainder of a term.

The Unit Committee, through its bylaws, usually establishes the other officers of the Committee. Some units have decided to elect only one Vice Chair, who presides in the absence of the Unit Chair. Other units have decided to elect several vice chairs, each with specific organizational responsibilities (such as finance, membership/recruitment, or programs). This decision rests solely with the Unit Committee.

The Secretary keeps minutes of meetings, maintains the roster of members of the Unit Committee, and certifies organizational documents (such as delegate lists). The Treasurer is custodian of committee funds and has certain critical responsibilities for financial reporting, compliance, and disclosure.

The Unit Vice Chairs, Secretary and Treasurer are elected for a term of two years, and are elected in one of two ways:

- (1) By the mass meeting, convention or canvass that elects the unit chair; or
- (2) By the unit committee at the first meeting following the election of the unit chair.

The State Party Plan charges the Unit Committee with determining which method of election is followed. Most units specify this decision through the unit bylaws.

The Unit Chair is always entitled to a vote on the unit committee. However, the other officers are not entitled to vote, unless they also hold either an at-large or a precinct membership position on the unit committee.

### Auxiliaries.

Although the State Party Plan does not specify that auxiliaries such as Young Republicans and College Republicans are to be represented on the unit committee, many unit committees do provide for auxiliary members. The auxiliaries are not entitled to a vote on the unit committee in their own right, however; they must hold either an at-large or a precinct membership on the unit committee in order to vote.

### **Operation of the Unit Committee**

The Unit Chair is the Chair of the Unit Committee and presides at all of its meetings. The Unit Chair must issue written notice (the "call") to all committee members at least seven days prior to the meeting, and such notice must include an agenda.

### Call and Agenda.

A sample call and agenda might read as follows:

"I, John Smith, Chair of the Richmond Republican Committee, do hereby call for a meeting of the Richmond Republican City Committee at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 1, at the Main Library, 101 Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 22319. The agenda shall be as follows:

- A. Call to order
- B. Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, and RPV Creed
- C. Appointment and Report of Proxy Committee
- D. Roll Call of Members, Quorum Declaration
- E. Approval of Minutes from July 8th meeting
- F. Chair Report
- G. Treasurer's Report
- H. Unfinished Business
  - 1. Amendment to Bylaws, Article IV
- I. New Business
  - 1. Fundraiser on Oct. 10
  - 2. Election Day activities
- J. Adjourn

The exact format and level of detail is more a matter of preference, style and custom than any formal requirement. However, several suggestions are strongly urged:

1. Provide the exact date, time and place of the meeting. The meeting must be in a public facility, such as a library, courthouse or school. Private homes are not permitted to be used for committee

meetings. However, if the unit committee maintains a campaign headquarters, the use of that facility would be permitted.

2. Include a proxy form either on the back of the agenda or as a separate page in the mailing. This facilitates those members who cannot attend but who wish to recruit someone else to go in their place.

3. Give notice of important votes expected at the meeting. For example, if the bylaws are to be amended, state so in the agenda and include the text of the amendment. If an election to fill a vacancy on the committee, state the position(s) to be filled. If a call for a mass meeting is to be considered, include a draft if possible, but at least put the item on the agenda.

Observing these recommendations will help minimize the possibility that any committee member is caught "off-guard" and surprised when the discussion and voting occur.

### Parliamentary Procedure.

Each unit committee meeting should be conducted in accordance with recognized parliamentary procedure. This protects all members and generally helps move along decisions in an orderly way. While the unit chair does not need to be an expert in parliamentary procedure, it is helpful to be familiar with the basics and perhaps to recruit a lawyer or an expert to advise the chair during meetings. Some units specify that the unit shall have a parliamentarian appointed by the chair, but this is not required by the State Party Plan. The unit chair of a smaller unit may simply wish to have someone he or she can turn to for advice during meetings, and can do so without formal authority in the unit bylaws.

The usual source of parliamentary authority is Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised. This is a widely-available source that will help Republican leaders understand what to do when a question arises where there is no guidance in either the State Party Plan or the Unit's bylaws.

However, keep in mind that the State Party Plan must at all times be observed. The State Party Plan specifies that whenever a conflict exists between the State Party Plan and a unit's bylaws, the State Party Plan shall prevail. The same is true when a mass meeting, convention or canvass adopts a rule that is contrary to the State Party Plan: the State Party Plan must prevail.

### Proxies.

When a voting member cannot attend a unit meeting in person, the member is entitled to send a proxy. The holder of the proxy must be someone who is not already a voting member (because no person may cast more than one vote at a meeting), In addition, if the absent member is a precinct member, the proxy holder must reside in the same precinct.

The form for proxies should be included with every meeting notice. A sample can be found in Appendix A. Proxies are only used for committee meetings. Proxies are not permitted for mass meetings, conventions, canvasses or primaries.

### Quorum.

For a committee to transact business, a quorum of members must be present.

The State Party Plan specifies that a quorum is a majority of the voting members, unless the committee's bylaws specify a different number. In determining a quorum, proxies are counted if the proxy is correctly filled out. A properly completed proxy is signed and witnessed, and if the proxy holder is eligible to cast the proxy (see above).

### Absences.

The State Party Plan specifies that if a committee member is absent for three consecutive meetings without representation by a proxy, the member automatically loses his or her position from the committee. The purpose of the provision is to enable the committee to fill membership slots with active members. It also helps minimize the chances that a committee cannot meet the quorum requirement, and therefore become paralyzed as an organization. It is imperative that the Unit Secretary keep accurate membership rolls and attendance records.

If a member loses his or her position because of excessive absences, the committee may restore the person to the committee. However, keep in mind that a committee with many non-participating members may soon find itself in a downward spiral. It is often better to quietly ease someone off the committee rolls in order to open the way for an interested, active member.

Unit Committees with Associate or Sustaining memberships often vote to transfer Associate members to fill Precinct or At-Large vacancies or to restore voting rights to members who have previously missed three consecutive meetings without a proxy.

### Filling vacancies.

As noted previously, the committee allots a certain number of precinct members and at-large members, usually through a formula or through the bylaws. Many committees do not operate at "full strength." meaning there are unfilled positions once the biennial elections have taken place. The Unit Committee may fill vacancies in the precinct and at-large positions. The exact process varies from unit to unit. However, the State Party Plan requires that the unit chair give notice in the call for the meeting.

Some units have adopted a process whereby the prospective member is a guest at one meeting, and is then invited to the next meeting where the unit committee votes to elect the person to a vacant position. In any case, a majority vote of the unit committee present at a meeting would be required to fill a vacant position. The term of a member so elected would expire at the next mass meeting; convention or canvass called to elect delegates to a district convention.

### Dues.

Some unit committees require payment of dues as a condition of membership. This decision rests entirely with the unit committee. Keep in mind that payment of dues will count towards the various campaign finance thresholds and limits, so accurate records must be maintained.

Application form.

Some unit committees require a prospective member to complete an application form. There is no standard form or procedure that is used; each committee is free to adopt an application form, if any. The advantage is that a written record exists with the new member's address and phone number, voting precinct, and perhaps other personal data. This written record is useful, especially for administering the affairs of a large committee.

## **VI. LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT COMMITTEES**

Each Unit Chair is a member of the House of Delegates and State Senate Legislative District Committees in the District in which they reside. Where a unit encompasses more than one legislative district, the unit chair appoints a representative to the legislative district committee(s) that is (are) not the unit chair's residence. The unit chairs, or their representatives, within each legislative district comprise the legislative district committee.

In some instances, the legislative district may consist of only one person. This occurs where an entire legislative district exists within a unit (such as Fairfax County or Virginia Beach). In other instances, the legislative district may consist of many persons because there are a number of units within the legislative district.

Weighted Vote.

Unlike other committees, voting is weighted according to the "Republican Party Voting Strength" of each unit. This is a formula that uses the most recent election history for Governor and President cast by each unit (or portion of a unit) within the legislative district. The legislative district chair should contact RPV for assistance in locating the official election results (do not use the unofficial newspaper totals published after the election, which may contain errors). The effect is that on some committees, one unit chair may effectively control the outcome of each vote because one unit provides the majority of Republican votes within the district. Even so, legislative district committees must meet in order to coordinate activities among the units, especially if a legislative district convention will be held.

Required Meeting.

The State Party Plan requires each legislative district committee to meet in the month of December preceding each legislative election year. The purpose of this meeting is to elect a chair for the legislative district, who may be one of the unit chairs (but not necessarily so). At this time, one of the members of the legislative district committee should notify RPV so that certain material can be mailed by the Department of Elections. The legislative district chair serves a term of two years for a House district, and four years for a Senate district. The legislative district chair may continue to serve as such, even if he or she steps down as a unit chair. If the legislative district chair is not also a unit chair (or unit representative), however, the legislative district chair

is not entitled to vote. Only unit chairs (or their representatives) are entitled to the unit's weighted vote.

### Nomination Method.

Once the legislative district committee is organized, it should begin making arrangements for the nomination process. The legislative district committee determines the method of nomination. The Code of Virginia has an exception (which may be challenged in court) that provides where the incumbent is a Republican who is seeking re-election, the incumbent may determine the method of nomination. Where the incumbent is either not seeking re-election or is not a Republican, State law provides for a window of time, usually late February to mid-March of the election year, for the committee to notify the Department of Elections of the method of nomination being utilized. The most critical aspect of this provision concerns primaries. Once the March deadline has passed, the committee cannot utilize a primary, although the other three methods are still available. The Department of Elections provides the forms to notify them if a primary or other method will be used; be certain to submit these forms on time.

### Primary Petitions and Declarations.

If a **primary** is held, the legislative district chair will need to receive the petitions and declarations of candidacy from candidates in the primary. The deadline for submission of these materials usually occurs in April of an election year. (The actual deadline can be found at the Department of Elections web site.) By the middle of the following week, the legislative district chair must certify to the Department of Elections the names of all candidates who have properly filed for the primary. Once that task is done, the legislative district chair usually has no further duties since the state and the localities conduct the primary and certify the winner.

### Other Nomination Methods.

If the nomination will take place by a **mass meeting, canvass or convention**, remember that nominations must take place only within the 47 days-preceding the June primaries. The legislative district committee will need to approve a call for the mass meeting, canvass or convention. Once approved, the legislative district chair is responsible for publishing the call for a mass meeting or canvass at least seven days prior to the date of the pre-filing deadline for candidates for the nomination. If there is no pre-filing required for candidates, the call must be published at least seven days prior to the date of the mass meeting (canvasses always use a pre-filing deadline).

In the case of a convention, the legislative district chair is responsible for sending a copy of the call to each included unit chair at least 30 days prior to the convening of the convention. This allows the Units time to determine how delegates will be selected.

### Certification Deadline.

Following the nomination, the legislative district chair will need to certify the nominee to the State Board of Elections. Again, the Board will provide forms for this purpose. The deadline set by state law is six days following the date of the June primaries.

An implicit responsibility of each legislative district committee is recruitment of candidates. The unit chair should consider recruitment a year-round obligation and not wait until the spring of the election year. At that point, it may be too late to find someone willing to take on a well-financed incumbent Democrat or a rising Democratic "star" running in an open seat.

## **VII. CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT COMMITTEES**

For each of the eleven congressional districts, the Party is organized with a District Committee. Representation on the District Committee is by Unit, so that each Unit Chair (or an appointed representative when the Unit Chair lives in a different Congressional District) casts one vote on the District Committee. The District Committee is chaired by the Congressional District Chair, who is elected at the biennial District Convention for a term of two years. Three State Central Representatives are elected at the Quadrennial Convention and serve for four years. The other officers of the District Committee are elected either at the District Convention or by the District Committee, depending upon the committee's bylaws. In addition, members of the State Central Committee for that district may be granted a vote on the District Committee by the District

Convention. Typically, a representative of the Young Republican, College Republican, and Republican Women Affiliates will also have a vote on the District Committee.

The District Committee determines the method of nomination for the Republican Congressional Candidate. Typically this is either done at the District Convention or by Primary.

The District Committee has the power to remove a Unit Chair where necessary for neglect of duties. In that case, the District Committee may appoint a new Unit Chair, or establish a method of election for a new chair, and establish a new Unit Committee, although such an event is rare.

The District Committee may fill a vacancy among the district's State Central representatives. Following each congressional and presidential election, if the district carries for the Republican nominee then the District Committee elects an additional State Central member, who serves a term concurrent with the Congressman or the President, respectively.

District Committees must meet at least once quarterly, at the call of the District Chair. One-third of the voting members of the District Committee may call a meeting when the needs of the Party so require.

## VIII. STATE CENTRAL COMMITTEE

The State Central Committee as of 2015 consists of 85 persons. Under the State Party Plan, each congressional district is entitled to three representatives, plus the congressional district chair. Some congressional districts are entitled to "bonus" seats for winning congressional and presidential elections within their district. In addition, the three recognized auxiliaries (the Virginia Federation of Republican Women, the Young Republican Federation of Virginia and the College Republican Federation of Virginia) are entitled to three seats each on the State Central Committee.

The Chair of the State Central Committee is the State Chair, who is elected at the quadrennial (presidential-year) state convention. The National Committeeman and National Committeewoman, also elected by state convention, also serve on the State Central Committee. The other officers of the State Central Committee are elected by the Committee. Most members of State Central are elected for a term of four years. When a vacancy occurs, the appropriate committee (district, auxiliary or State Central itself) fills the vacancy for the remaining portion of the term. The State Central Committee must meet every 4 months but typically meets quarterly, at the call of the State Chair.

The State Central Committee selects the nomination method for statewide offices including Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, along with U.S. Senate and President. The State Central Committee writes and approves the State Party Plan and any amendments thereto. The State Central Committee is the governing authority of the State Party and is the final arbiter of any disputes that may arise through the District Committees.

## IX. THE NOMINATION PROCESS

Determination of the Nominating Method is one of the critical functions of the Committee toward the successful election of Republicans to Office. (More detailed information on the Nomination Process is available in the Republican Party of Virginia Handbook on Mass Meetings, Canvasses, and Conventions.)

The State Party Plan prescribes four methods for nominating candidates and electing party officials (such as delegates to conventions). These methods are:

- **Mass Meeting** -- a meeting of Republicans for a specific election district (such as a city, county, magisterial district or legislative district) called for a specific purpose (such as the nomination of a candidate or an election of delegates). A mass meeting operates under a "one person-one vote" framework and is open to all Republican voters of the election district.

- **Convention** -- an assembly of elected delegates and alternate delegates for a specific purpose. Voting at a convention is weighted. Representation at a convention is by unit (or, at a unit convention, by precinct, ward, or magisterial district). Only elected delegates (or alternates who take the place of an elected delegate) may vote.
- **Canvass** -- also known as a "firehouse primary," it is essentially a party-run primary that is a method of electing or nominating individuals who file in advance for a specific party or public office. A canvass, like a mass meeting, is open to all Republican voters and is conducted as "one person – one vote" (i.e., no weighted voting). Unlike the previous two methods, voting takes place over a period of several hours and may occur at more than one location.
- **Primary** -- an election conducted by state and local officials to determine the Party's nominee for a public office. A primary requires submission of petitions and other paperwork by strict deadlines in order to be listed on the primary ballot.

The winner, as certified by the proper election officials, automatically is placed on the general election ballot.

**More information on these four methods may be found in the state Party's Handbook for Mass Meetings, Canvasses and Conventions.**

Under Virginia law, in an incumbent Republican elected official who was last nominated by primary and who is running for re-election as a Republican may insist on holding a primary. Otherwise, the unit committee determines the method of nomination of candidates and election of party offices.

In each even-numbered year, a congressional district convention will be held to elect a congressional district chair and, in presidential election years, to elect members of the State Central Committee, national convention delegates and a presidential elector. The delegates to the district convention are chosen by either a unit mass meeting, canvass, or convention. At the same time, the Unit Chair and members of the Unit Committee are elected by the mass meeting, canvass, or convention.

In years in which a state convention will be held, the State Central Committee may specify that the delegates and alternates must be elected within a certain time frame. Likewise, the congressional, legislative or unit committee may specify when delegates to a convention are to be elected

An important difference occurs when the mass meeting, canvass or convention is to nominate a candidate for public office. Virginia law specifies that nominations must take place in the forty seven days preceding the June primary. Therefore, the nomination cannot be made earlier, even if this necessitates mass meetings, canvasses, or conventions separate from the election of convention delegates. When planning your local nominations, check for the dates permitted under Virginia law and coordinate these with your other conventions.

When a mass meeting, canvass or convention is to elect delegates who will then nominate a candidate for public office, the election of delegates is not controlled by Virginia law; only the actual date of the nomination. Therefore, delegates to a May legislative district convention may have been elected in March, for example.

## X. POLITICAL RESOURCES

A unit chair may find the need to consult a variety of resources in the course of an election. This section is devoted to helping the reader understand a few of the resources available, especially those unique to Virginia and the Republican Party.

1. **Republican Party of Virginia Plan of Organization (State Party Plan)** -- Downloadable from the internet (<http://www.rpv.org/>). In effect, this document establishes and governs the Republican Party of Virginia including all State, District and Unit Committee Operations.
2. **General Counsel Opinions** -- these are official interpretations of the State Party Plan issued by the Party's General Counsel in response to a request from the chair of a unit, legislative, or congressional district, or the State Chair. General Counsel Opinions are also available at the RPV web site (<http://www.rpv.org/>).
3. **Code of Virginia, Title 24.2** -- the election law statutes of the Commonwealth of Virginia. These laws include the requirements for state and local elections, candidates, party officials (including Unit Chairs) campaign finance disclosure, and election offenses. The Code of Virginia is also available at the Department of Elections website (<http://elections.virginia.gov/>) and the General Assembly Legislative Information System website (<https://lis.virginia.gov/>)
4. **The Virginia Department of Elections** -- The Department of Elections implements the laws and regulations governing the election of public officials. They maintain a centralized voter registration system; official lists of candidates; official election results; and campaign finance reports for all PACs, statewide candidates, and General Assembly candidates. The website includes the laws and regulations concerning political parties and elections including candidate filing forms, election schedules and deadlines. ([http://elections.virginia.gov /](http://elections.virginia.gov/)).
5. **Your local Electoral Board and Registrar** -- maintain voter registration forms and records; the training and assignment of Precinct Election Officials; a list of persons who have applied for absentee ballots; official election results; maps showing precinct lines and election district boundaries; and campaign finance reports for local candidates. It may be beneficial for Unit

Chairs to attend local Electoral Board meetings to keep apprised of, and possibly have input to changes, in local election procedures.

6. **Virginia Public Access Project** (<http://www.vpap.org/>) has extensive information on campaign contributions and donors. You can find who and what organizations have donated (and amounts) to each candidate for public office. This can be very helpful in determining who supports the principles of the Republican Party and Republican candidates.

7. **General Assembly Legislative Information System (LIS)** has extensive information on current members of the General Assembly, committee memberships, and all legislation proposed and passed including the recorded votes both in committee and on the floor of the House and Senate (<https://lis.virginia.gov/>).

8. **Your local library** -- may have additional legal resources, such as the Opinions of the Attorney General, legislative journals (with floor votes cast by General Assembly members), and legislative bills. Many of these materials are also available on-line (see the State Party's World Wide Web site for links).

9. **Your local newspaper** -- may have clips on particular persons, issues and elections, which may also be available through the local library.

10. **Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia** -- publishes a number of reference materials relating to local government, politics and elections. Their excellent publications include the Virginia Statistical Abstract (published every other year), the University of Virginia News Letter, and Larry Sabato's Virginia Votes series.

11. **Your post office** -- information on bulk mailing requirements. Local party committees may mail at regular third-class bulk ("standard mail") rates by paying an annual fee and meeting certain preparation requirements.

**Appendix A**  
**PROXY FORM**

**PROXY**

"KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS, That I \_\_\_\_\_  
of \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby constitute and appoint  
\_\_\_\_\_ my true and lawful attorney, to vote as my proxy (with full  
power of substitution)\* at a meeting of the Republican \_\_\_\_\_  
Committee on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_, or at any adjourned meeting  
thereof and for me and in my name, place and stead to vote upon any question that properly may  
come before such meeting, with all the power I should possess if personally present, hereby  
revoking all previous proxies.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal, this \_\_\_\_\_ day  
of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Seal)

WITNESS

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Seal)

\* Inclusion of the power of Substitution is discretionary with the member. Its omission shall  
preclude substitution.

## Appendix B

### Four Year Checklist and Timeline for Unit Chairs

The Unit Committees and Unit Chairs are elected for a two year term at a Mass Meeting usually in March or April of even numbered years. This Checklist and Timeline will cover the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the Unit Chairs term. Since the duties of the Chair is slightly different in the two year period of Presidential Election years, a separate line will be included each time the quadrennial requirements are different.

**Monthly** (or at least quarterly) The Unit Chair must issue the Call, including the meeting agenda, at least 7 days before regular meetings, Executive Committee meetings and for any special meetings.

#### **March and April** – *Even* Numbered Years

##### Unit Mass Meetings

- Election of Unit Chair
- Re-establishment of Unit Committees
- Election of Delegates to District Conventions
- Election of Delegates to State Convention

Immediately following election (if not before) Unit Chairs should:

- Review the RPV Plan of Organization (Party Plan), paying close attention to the duties of the Unit Chair.
- Review the unit committee bylaws paying close attention to the duties of the Chair and each of the additional officers and sub-committees.
- Become familiar with Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised.

##### First Regular Meeting after the Mass Meeting

- Election of Unit Officers (Vice Chairs, Secretary, and Treasurer)
- Appoint Sub-Committee members
- Appoint Legislative District Representatives (for Districts where the Chair does not reside)
- Ensure all members have a copy of the unit bylaws, Party Plan, and proxy form
- Identify Precinct Captains, Neighborhood Captains and volunteers willing to make phone calls, work festivals and door knock.
- Identify volunteers to be Officers of Elections, Inside Poll Watchers, and Outside Poll Workers.

#### **March and April** – *Odd* Numbered Years

## Certification of Nominees for Public Office

- If the Method of Nomination is to be a June Primary, the Legislative District Chairs must:
  - Receive and validate the petition signatures for House and Senate Offices
  - Notify the Department of Elections the Names of the Candidates (as they should appear on the Ballot)
  - Order in which the Names are to appear on the Primary Ballot.
- If the Method of Nomination is other than a Primary, the Legislative District Chair must provide the Department of Elections the name of the Nominee to be placed on the November Ballot.

Unit Chairs must receive the petitions and validate the signatures for local offices. They must then certify the candidates to the Department of Elections to place the names on the Ballot.

### **May – June** each Year

Formalize Precinct Operations in support of candidates for the Primary or other Methods of Nomination. Committees shall not endorse one Republican nominee over another, but individual members may volunteer for individual campaigns.

After Primaries are over, meet with campaign staff.

Communicate to committee members and other volunteers the locations of victory centers and hours of operation.

### **June – November** each Year

Precinct Operations in support of Republican nominees to include door knocking, phone banking, manning of Victory Offices, etc. Prepare for the heart of campaign season and Election Day Operations such as scheduling debate parties, prepping for weekly communications on candidate rallies and appearances

### **September**

Call your local Registrar's office and ask for a copy of the November ballot

Begin meetings in Magisterial Districts and/or Precincts for the purposes of organization and understanding of Election Day Operations

### **October**

Make sure all precincts have volunteers for each shift

Begin putting together precinct materials (check Precinct Operations Manual for details)

Vote on approval of your precincts' sample ballots

## **November**

Election Day! - Unit Chairs should attempt to visit as many precincts as possible to thank volunteers. Be prepared to respond to Poll Watcher and Poll Worker problems or concerns. If budgets allow, provide for coffee, drinks, doughnuts, or other snacks especially for Outside Poll Workers.

The Republican Party of Virginia Advance is typically held in November. This conference generally provides a forum for candidates and elected officials along with hospitality suites and educational sessions. Breakfasts, lunches, and a banquet provides opportunities to hear from great speakers and leaders. This is a great event for Unit Chairs to meet and exchange ideas.

## **December**

Set membership meeting schedule for upcoming year; (publish on your website and send to RPV for publication on their website)

### **December** – *Even* Numbered Years

- Each House Legislative District Committee must meet to elect a House Legislative District Chair and select the nomination method for that House Seat.
- Every four years the Senate Legislative District Committee will meet in December to elect a Chair and select the nomination method for that State Senate Seat.

## **January**

The unit may adopt an annual budget. A look towards annual fundraising along with Party and candidate awareness projects is always good at this time of year. Identify potential candidates for leadership positions in your unit.

By January 15, one of the Unit Chairs (Democrat or Republican) will nominate at least three persons to the Circuit Court for appointment to the local Electoral Board. There are 3 members of the board with two of the Party of the Governor and one of the Party receiving the 2<sup>nd</sup> most votes for Governor in the last election. Each Electoral Board member serves a term of 3 years. Begin identification of potential candidates several months prior to deadline.

## **February**

*Odd* Numbered Years: Each Legislative District Chair must notify the Department of Elections the Method of Nomination selected for the upcoming November election for that District.

If local Constitutional Officer elections are scheduled the Unit Committee must select the Method of Nomination.

If Board of Supervisor or City Council elections are Partisan, Unit Committees must select the Method of Nomination.

Develop Delegate/Member Filing Form. This form should include options for applying for membership in the committee and to become a delegate at unit, district and/or state conventions

If any method is chosen other than primary, publish the Calls (Note, Calls must be published on your website and sent to RPV for publication on their website. **Calls must also be published in a newspaper of general circulation UNLESS newspaper publication is specifically waived by 2/3 vote of your official committee.**)

Report to Department of Elections on all methods of election for your unit. Note: If you are not the Legislative District Committee Chair for certain State Senate or House of Delegate seats insure that the LDC chairs have completed the paperwork.

Begin preparation for any District Conventions (in even years)

The local General Registrar may also ask for a list of Republican Election Officials to work in the Precincts.