



ILLINOIS GREEN PARTY

P.O. Box 471278 Chicago, IL 60647 312-924-1803 info@ilgp.org www.ilgp.org

ILGP FACT SHEET 2008-009

Guide for Green Party Precinct Committeepersons

Modified on February 12, 2008

This guide is intended to advise newly elected and appointed Green Party Precinct Committeepersons in Illinois about their duties and powers. The information is based mainly on that section of the Illinois Compiled Statutes that is known as the Election Code. The Statutes can be accessed on line at: www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilcs/ilcs.asp.

Throughout this document, "must" and "have to" refer to statutory requirements. "Should" is used for ILGP recommendations. You may find some of the instructions more detailed than you need, but remember that some readers have little experience with this kind of organizing.

This guide has five sections, covering (1) basic definitions; (2) the County Convention – before, during, and after; (3) other meetings of the County Central Committee; (4) the possibility of slating candidates for electoral office; (5) additional functions of the County Central Committee Chairperson; (6) special advice to persons who are the sole Committeeperson in their county; and (7) how to handle situations where there are no Committeepersons in the county.

If you have any questions about anything in this document, if you would like assistance putting together letters, if you would like editable electronic versions of letters, or anything else of the sort, email info@ilgp.org and ask that your questions be forwarded to someone in the Illinois Green Party who can best help you.

1. Definitions

1.1. Precinct

The precinct is the smallest recognized election jurisdiction. In most places, a polling place serves a single precinct. A typical precinct has 300-500 voters, but precincts may have fewer than 100 voters or more than 2,000 voters. In rural areas, townships usually have a single precinct, and the smallest counties have fewer than a dozen precincts. The City of Chicago has over 2,600 precincts.

1.2. Precinct Committeeperson

Precinct Committeeperson (often abbreviated as PCP) is the legal term for an elected position for each established political party in each precinct. The statutes usually refer to "committeeman" but in some places refer to "committeeperson". ILGP generally uses the gender-neutral term, but may use "committeeman" on official correspondence as that is the familiar term for election authorities. Precinct Committeepersons are not elected in Cook County; a separate ILGP Fact

Sheet will cover the slightly different circumstances for Ward and Township Committeepersons in Cook County.

1.3. Term of Office

Precinct Committeepersons of an established political party are generally elected by voters who request that party's ballot in primary elections (starting with 2008, the first Tuesday in February of every even-numbered year). The candidate's petition to be placed on the ballot requires ten signatures of registered voters who live in the precinct. The candidate must be a resident of the precinct in order to be elected.

When the position of Committeeperson is vacant, a person may be appointed to fill the vacancy until the next primary election. Appointments are made by the Chairperson of the County Central Committee. See paragraph 3.2 below for more on this.

1.4. County Central Committee

The County Central Committee is a statutorily-mandated body which consists of the duly elected and appointed Precinct Committeepersons within the county. The County Central Committee is defined in Section 7-8(d) of the Election Code.

1.5. Chairperson

The County Central Committee will elect a Chairperson from among its own ranks. This person may or may not be the same as a Chairperson of an ILGP-affiliated local organization. The Election Code often refers to "county chairman" when it is referring to the Chairperson of the County Central Committee. Because in some counties an ILGP-affiliated local may have a County Chairperson who differs from the Chairperson of the County Central Committee, throughout this document, the Chairperson of the County Central Committee will always be clearly designated as such.

1.6. Green Party Expectations of Precinct Committeepersons

In addition to statutory requirements, the Illinois Green Party strongly recommends that Precinct Committeepersons be ILGP members in good standing; be active in an affiliated ILGP local; vote in the Green Party primary and not in the primary of any other party; establish and maintain contact with voters in the represented precinct; participate in any party candidate endorsement decisions at the local level; inform voters in the represented precinct of Green Party candidates and positions on initiatives; become a deputy registrar and register voters; and Get Out The Vote in the represented precinct.

2. The County Convention

The only required meeting of the County Central Committee, called the "County Convention," is scheduled by law on the 29th day after a general primary election. In 2008, the primary is on Tuesday, February 5, and the County Convention will take place on Wednesday, March 5.

(Remember that February 2008 has 29 days!) The county convention must be held in the county, but does not need to be held in the county seat.

2.1. Before the Convention

The Election Code does not specify what individual is responsible for arranging the time and place of the County Convention, so one of the elected Committeepersons in the county must take the initiative to do that. We suggest that *all* elected Committeepersons seek out the information on who their fellow Committeepersons are — if nowhere else, this information is available from the County Clerk; and that *every* Committeeperson get active to arrange the meeting, setting a time and place and informing all members of the committee. One member should volunteer to make a draft of an agenda for the meeting and a draft of bylaws for the Central Committee to consider (if it does not already have bylaws), and to distribute copies to all members *before* the date of the meeting. Appendix A of this Guide is a model agenda, and Appendix B is a model set of bylaws. "Draft" means the committee may modify the text at the meeting. Members should try to read the materials before the meeting.

2.2. At the Convention

The legally prescribed business of the County Convention is (1) to elect the County Central Committee Chairperson and (optionally) other officers of the County Central Committee; (2) to choose Delegates to the State Convention; and (3) in a small number of counties, to select additional committeepersons to serve on Legislative and Representative Committees for certain state legislative districts which are geographically entirely within the county. The Chairperson and any Delegates must be selected at the County Convention. Other officers should also be selected at the County Convention, but may also be selected at later dates. Legislative Committeepersons and Representative Committeepersons do not need to be selected at the County Convention, but if it is feasible to do so, that is likely the best time.

2.2.1. Selecting Officers

In addition to Chairperson, other officers which might be elected include but are not necessarily limited to Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice-Chair(s). The County Central Committee Chairperson elected at the County Convention must be a duly-elected Precinct Committeeperson. The other officers are not required by statute to be Precinct Committeepersons.

2.2.2. Selecting Delegates to the State Convention

For every 500 Green Party ballots cast in the county in the preceding general primary, the county may send one Delegate to the State Convention. In 2008, this means every county except Cook will only send one Delegate. Because of the nature of Illinois Green Party rules, Delegates to the State Convention are essentially just honorary, but they should still be selected. It is recommended that Delegates be selected who are known to be able to attend the State Convention. The Delegates can be any Greens in the county, including but not limited to Committeepersons.

2.2.3. Selecting Legislative and Representative Committeepersons

Outside of Cook County, whenever there is a State Senate (Legislative) district or State Representative district entirely within the geographic boundaries of a single county, the County Central Committee must select members of the Legislative or Representative Committee from within its own ranks. Counties this may apply to include Champaign, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, McLean, Peoria, Sangamon, Will, and Winnebago. This process is described in greater detail in a separate Fact Sheet on slating of legislative candidates.

2.2.4. Recommended Business

In addition to the statutory guidelines, the Illinois Green Party requests the County Central Committee to approve a set of bylaws for the committee and submit it to the state party. This action is not a requirement of the Election Code, and thus it can be started at the County Convention and finished at a later meeting if necessary.

2.2.5. Use of Weighted Votes

State statute requires that in the conduct of business, a Precinct Committeeperson's vote will carry a weight equal to the number of voters who select Green Party ballots in his/her precinct in the preceding general election. In other words, if you were the only voter who participated in the Green primary in your precinct, your vote on the Central Committee will carry a weight of one. If 20 people pulled Green primary ballots in your precinct, your vote on the Central Committee will carry a weight of 20. This means that in order to properly conduct business at the County Convention, Precinct Committeepersons should have available a breakdown of how many votes were cast in each precinct. If the information is not readily available in other ways, it should be available upon request of your County Clerk.

2.3. After the Convention

Within 10 days after the County Convention (in 2008, by Saturday March 15) the County Central Committee Chairperson must send notice to the Illinois State Board of Elections (SBE), informing it of the names and addresses of the officers chosen, the names and addresses of all the Committeepersons in the county, and if applicable, the names and addresses of any Legislative or Representative Committeepersons selected. Appendix C below is a model letter to the SBE for this purpose. For this report on the County Convention, you may notice that the law talks only about sending it to the State Board of Elections. We strongly suggest that you also send a copy to your County Clerk, as a courtesy — or even deliver it in person, to get acquainted with him or her. The model in Appendix C will also work for this purpose — just replace the SBE information with contact information for your County Clerk.

3. Other Meetings of the County Central Committee

3.1. General Guidelines

There is no particular need for the County Central Committee to meet at regular intervals. Unless the Central Committee chooses to prescribe such regular meetings in its bylaws, all other meetings of the committee are considered "special" meetings. The Election Code says "A special meeting of any central committee may be called by the chairman, or by not less than 25% of the members of such committee, by giving 5 days notice to members of such committee in writing designating the time and place at which such special meeting is to be held and the business which it is proposed to present at such special meeting" (Sec. 7-9-(h)). The use of weighted votes as described above applies at all meetings of the County Central Committee.

3.2. Appointing New Committeepersons

One good reason to schedule a meeting of the County Central Committee for soon after the County Convention is to appoint new Precinct Committeepersons. Section 7-9-(i) of the Election Code gives the County Central Committee Chairperson the power to fill any "vacancy" in the committee by appointing "a qualified resident of the county." The vacancy may exist "because no one was elected to that office or because the precinct committeeman ceases to reside in the precinct or for any other reason." The appointing power is qualified in time: "no such appointment may be made between the general primary election and the 30th day after the general primary election" — in other words, no appointments until after the County Convention. We strongly recommend that County Central Committee Chairpersons consult and respect the views of their colleagues on the Central Committee, and in the model bylaws (Appendix B), we suggest that the appointment power be given to the Central Committee as a whole, with the Central Committee Chairperson empowered to act on the appointments of the Central Committee.

The phrase "qualified resident of the county" has been interpreted by many to mean that an appointed Precinct Committeeperson need not reside in the precinct he/she would represent, only in the county. The SBE has made no ruling on this question one way or another, meaning that the issue tends to be left to the discretion of the individual County Clerks. Many County Clerks around the state have allowed for the appointment of Precinct Committeepersons in precincts outside of those in which they live, and indeed, Green Party Central Committees have in the past had multiple Committeepersons living in the same house.

3.3. Officer Vacancies

Another good reason to hold a "special" meeting of the County Central Committee is if there is a vacancy in the position of County Central Committee Chairperson or some other office. In such an event, make sure that such an item is on the agenda for the meeting when notice goes out to all Precinct Committeepersons. The process is the same as for the County Convention. If it is the County Central Committee Chairperson who has vacated the office for any reason, it is wise to schedule a meeting as soon as is feasible to fill the vacancy.

4. Slating Candidates

Sections 7-60, 7-60.1, and 7-61 of the Election Code deal with filling "vacancies in nomination" for public office. There are two general ways in which such a vacancy might be created. The

first is when no candidate ran in the primary election for the office. The second is when a candidate who has been nominated (usually by winning a primary election) dies or withdraws. The County Central Committee has authority to fill vacancies in nomination, or slate, for countywide partisan office (e.g. County Clerk, Circuit Clerk, State's Attorney, Coroner). Precinct Committeepersons might also be involved in the slating of candidates for other offices, including County Board, State Representative, and State Senator. The slating process for different office types are detailed in separate Fact Sheets available from ILGP.

5. Additional Functions of the County Chairperson

The County Central Committee Chairperson generally serves as the main contact person between the County Clerk and the Green Party in the county. County Clerks occasionally need to inform the parties about election-related events, including the public testing of voting machines, election judge training, and the ballot-placement lottery. Notices of these events are usually sent by the County Clerk to each party's County Central Committee Chairperson, and the Chairperson or other designated Green Party representative is invited to attend.

6. Special Advice to Sole Committeepersons

If you are the only elected Committeeperson in your county, then you have to form a Central Committee of one and carry out single-handed the same actions as the Central Committees of other counties. You should still meet (with yourself) on March 5 and elect a County Central Committee Chairperson (yourself). That is the only officer you are required to elect. Bylaws for your County Central Committee are requested by the Illinois Green Party, but the SBE is not interested in them. Appendix B, below, is a set of model bylaws for County Central Committees prepared by the ILGP to help you write those for your committee.

Your letter to the State Board of Elections may be a little awkward to write, you being a committee of one, but it is still what you have to do. Appendix D below is a model letter for that purpose.

Once you are County Central Committee Chairperson, you have the power to appoint other Precinct Committeepersons in the county as specified above.

7. Counties Without Committeepersons

If a given has no elected or appointed Precinct Committeepersons, one or more Precinct Committeeperson(s) may be appointed by the State Central Committee. Requests for such appointment should, if at all possible, come from an affiliated local organization of the Illinois Green Party, and should be directed to the Chairperson and Secretary of the State Central Committee. Contact information for these individuals is available on ilgp.org. If such an appointment is made, then the new Committeeperson(s) should convene a special meeting of the County Central Committee as soon as possible for the purpose of electing officers along similar lines as described above.

Appendix A — Model Agenda Draft for County Convention

1. Introductions — who's here?
2. Choose a facilitator.
3. Choose a note-taker.
4. Election of officers.
 - 4.1. Choose a Central Committee Chairperson. There's no requirement that the chairperson facilitate the meeting.
 - 4.2. Does the group want a Vice-Chair? A Secretary? Any other officers?
5. Select Delegate(s) to the State Convention.
6. Discuss draft of bylaws. Revise as needed. Either approve the revised version at this meeting, or set time and place of a "special" meeting to finish that action.
7. If applicable, select Legislative and/or Representative Committeepersons.
8. If necessary, either for the slating of candidates or for the appointment of new Precinct Committeepersons, schedule a subsequent meeting of the County Central Committee.

Appendix B — Model Bylaws for County Central Committee

BYLAWS OF THE [SOMETHING] COUNTY GREEN PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE

ARTICLE I - Name and Purposes

A. Name. The name of this entity shall be the [Something] County Green Party Central Committee, hereinafter called “the Central Committee.”

B. Purposes. The purposes of the Committee are:

1. to nominate candidates for county office as stipulated in Section 7-7 of the Illinois Election Code;

2. to promote, in [Something] County, Illinois, the election of Green Party candidates to public offices generally; and

3. to uphold the Ten Key Values of the Green Party, as described in the Platform of the Illinois Green Party: Ecological Wisdom, Social Justice, Grassroots Democracy, Nonviolence, Decentralization, Community-Based Economics, Feminism, Respect for Diversity, Personal and Global Responsibility, and Future Focus.

ARTICLE II - Membership

The Central Committee shall be composed of all duly elected and/or appointed Precinct Committeepersons within [Something] County.

ARTICLE III - Officers

A. The Central Committee shall have officers charged with specific duties and responsibilities and elected by the members at the County Convention.

B. General Requirements. In addition to any requirements as specified under statute, all officers of the Central Committee must be members in good standing of the Illinois Green Party.

C. Chairperson. There shall be a Chairperson, who will (1) plan an agenda in advance of each meeting, (2) appoint a Facilitator for each meeting, (3) be the Central Committee's primary spokesperson for authorized communication with the general public, (4) be responsible for maintaining the basic functioning of the organization and seeing that its decisions are carried out, and (5) appoint - with the advice and consent of the existing members - new Precinct Committeepersons for precincts with vacancies.

D. Secretary. There shall be a Secretary, who will (1) see that minutes of meetings are recorded and disseminated to the members, (2) act as the Committee's official correspondent, and (3)

maintain an updated roster of committeepersons and their contact information. The Secretary is not required to be a Precinct Committeeperson.

E. Other Officers. The Central Committee may select other officers as it deems appropriate.

F. Vacancies. If a vacancy occurs in the position of any of the Officers, that vacancy will be filled for the remainder of the term by a special election at a meeting called for the purpose. Notice of the special election shall accompany the announcement of the meeting.

G. Recall. Any officer of the Central Committee may be removed from such office by a two-thirds weighted vote of the Central Committee, and only at a meeting where such a recall motion was on a previously distributed agenda for the meeting.

ARTICLE IV - Meetings

A. Statutory Convention. Per Illinois statute, the Central Committee shall hold the statutory county convention on the 29th day next succeeding a general primary election.

B. Regular Meetings. The Central Committee, at any duly convened meeting, may set a schedule of regular meetings. Committeepersons must be given five days notice in writing of any such meeting.

C. Special Meetings. The Chairperson, or any 25% of the members of the Central Committee, can call a special meeting of the Central Committee, provided that all members of the Central Committee are given five days notice in writing, and are provided with the time and place of the meeting and the business which is to be conducted at the meeting.

D. Announcement. Meetings must be announced at least five days in advance, and there must be a good faith effort to notify all Central Committee members of the meeting.

E. Teleconference. Meetings of the Central Committee may be held by teleconference except when otherwise specified by statute.

F. Notice. Whenever these Bylaws refer to providing notice "in writing," appropriate forms of communication shall include postal mail, email, and fax.

ARTICLE V - Decision-Making

A. Quorum. Decisions by the Central Committee may be made only at an appropriately called meeting at which a quorum is present. A quorum for this purpose shall be defined as any number that is greater than one half of the active members of the committee.

B. Active Members. Active members will initially be defined as those elected and appointed members who attend the county convention. Members will cease to be active either with absence at the county convention or with absence at two consecutive regularly scheduled meetings. Members will return to active status with attendance at a regular or special meeting of the

committee. Inactive members will continue to have all privileges of membership, but will not count towards quorum.

C. Consensus. For decisions other than internal elections and nominations of candidates, the Central Committee shall strive to reach consensus in all decisions. If consensus cannot be reached, then a vote will be taken.

D. Weight. The weight of a central committee person's vote shall be equal to the number of persons who took Green Party ballots within the precinct that such committee person represents in the preceding general primary election.

E. Officer Elections. A weighted vote shall be taken for each officer position at the beginning of a term or, in the event of a vacancy, in the middle of a term. If no candidate should receive an outright majority of votes cast, then the seat will be declared vacant and subject to a new vote.

ARTICLE VI - Nomination of Candidates for Public Office

A. Guidance. When a vacancy in nomination for public office occurs that may be filled by an action of the Central Committee, the Central Committee should, as regards filling such a vacancy, and to the extent possible, follow the direction of those members of the Illinois Green Party residing in the relevant jurisdiction or the relevant local organization of the Illinois Green Party.

B. Eligibility. The Central Committee may only nominate a candidate to fill a vacancy in nomination for public office if such candidate is a member in good standing of the Illinois Green Party.

ARTICLE VII - Amendment

These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds supermajority of the votes cast at a meeting attended by a quorum as defined in these Bylaws, provided that any proposed amendment was presented at a preceding meeting and that notice of the proposed amendment accompanied the notice of the meeting at which the proposed amendment is to be considered.

Appendix C — Model Letter to State Board of Elections to Report County Convention

[Your return address here]

March 6, 2008

Illinois State Board of Elections
1020 S. Spring St.
Springfield, IL 62704

The [name] County Central Committee of the Green Party held its County Convention at [place] on March 5, 2008, for the purpose of electing officers.

Officers elected, and their postal addresses, are the following:

[...].

Committeepersons forming the committee, and their postal addresses, are the following:

[...].

This letter will serve to report the actions of the committee, in accordance with Section 7-9 of the Illinois Election Code.

Sincerely,

[name]

Chair

[name] County Central Committee of the Green Party

Appendix D — Model Letter to State Board of Elections for Sole Committeepersons

Using the same header as the letter in Appendix C, replace the body of the letter as follows:

The [name] County Central Committee of the Green Party, consisting of myself, the only elected precinct committeeperson in the county, held its County Convention on March 5, 2008, at [your address]. The committee elected its chairman, myself. The [name] County Central Committee Chairperson is:

[your name]

[your mailing address]

This letter will serve to notify the State Board of Elections of the formation of the [name] County Central Committee of the Green Party and its election of a chairperson, in accordance with Section 7-9 of the Illinois Election Code.

Sincerely,