



ILLINOIS GREEN PARTY

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

ILGP FACT SHEET 2008-010

Guide for Green Party Ward & Township Committeepersons

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This guide is intended to advise newly elected and appointed Green Party Ward and Township Committeepersons in Cook County 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. Note that this guide does not apply for Greens outside of Cook County.

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; and (6) special advice to persons who are the sole Committeeperson in their 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. Wards in the City of Chicago

The City of Chicago is divided into 50 wards. Each ward is supposed to have about the same number of residents, and consists of numerous precincts (an average of over 50 per ward). The ward is the essential political jurisdiction within Chicago, from which Committeepersons (and Aldermen) are elected.

1.3. Townships in Suburban Cook County

Cook County outside of the City of Chicago is divided into 30 townships. Each township consists of numerous precincts, but the townships vary in geographic size and population. Township boundaries are sometimes congruous with city/village boundaries (Oak Park and Evanston are good examples), but in many cases, municipal boundaries cross township lines. Outside of the City of Chicago, the township is the essential political jurisdiction from which Committeepersons are elected.

1.4. Ward and Township Committeepersons

Ward Committeeperson is the legal term for an elected position for each established political party in each ward in Chicago. Township Committeeperson is the legal term for an elected position for each established political party in suburban Cook County townships. 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.

1.5. Terms of Office

Ward and Township Committeepersons of established political parties are elected to four-year terms by voters who request that party's ballot in primary elections. Ward Committeepersons are elected at the general primary in the year of Presidential elections, and Township Committeepersons are elected at the general primary in the year of Gubernatorial elections. The candidate's petition to be placed on the ballot requires a number of signatures from registered voters of the ward/township equal to 5% of the number of people who voted for the candidate of the party who polled the highest number of votes in the ward/township in the preceding general election. The candidate must be a resident of the ward/township in order to be elected.

When the position of Committeeperson is vacant, a person may be appointed to fill the remainder of the term of the office. Appointments are made by the Cook County Central Committee per the current Bylaws of the Cook County Central Committee.

1.6. Cook 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. The Cook County Central Committee is considered a standing committee of the Cook County Green Party.

1.7. Chairperson

The County Central Committee will elect a Chairperson from among its own ranks. The Election Code often refers to "county chairman" when it is referring to the Chairperson of the County Central Committee. This person may or may not be the same as the Chairperson of the Cook County Green Party. Throughout this document, the Chairperson of the County Central Committee will always be clearly designated as such.

1.8. Green Party Expectations of Ward and Township Committeepersons

In addition to statutory requirements, the Illinois Green Party strongly recommends that 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 ward/township; participate in any party candidate endorsement decisions at the local level; inform voters in the represented ward/township of Green Party candidates and positions on initiatives; become a deputy registrar and register voters; and Get Out The Vote in the represented ward/township.

2. The County Convention

The only required meeting of the Cook 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 Chicago.

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, but it is customary for the outgoing officers to do so. It is recommended that *all* elected Committeepersons seek out the information on who their fellow Committeepersons are — if nowhere else, this information is available from the Cook County Clerk and/or Chicago Board of Elections.

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; and (2) to choose Delegates to the State Convention. 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.

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 Cook County Central Committee Chairperson elected at the County Convention must be a Ward or Township Committeeperson as of the date of the County Convention. The other officers are not required by statute to be 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. Unless there are more than 80 delegates to be assigned, no two delegates should be from the same ward/township. In 2008, Cook County is able to send three Delegates. 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. Use of Weighted Votes

State statute requires that in the conduct of business, a Committeeperson's vote will carry a weight equal to the number of voters who select Green Party ballots in his/her ward/township in the preceding general election. In other words, if 20 people pulled Green primary ballots in your ward, 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, Committeepersons should have available a breakdown of how many votes were cast in each ward/township. If the information is not readily available in other ways, it should be available upon request of the Cook County Clerk and/or Chicago Board of Elections.

2.3. After the Convention

Within 10 days after the County Convention, 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 the names and addresses of all Delegates to the State Convention from the county. It is also strongly suggested to send copies of the notice to the Cook County Clerk and Chicago Board of Elections.

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 Committeepersons in wards/townships where the position

is vacant. 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 Election Code does not specifically address situations like this in Cook County, but the Bylaws of the Cook County Green Party Central Committee clarify that the appointment power rests with the Central Committee as a whole. It is strongly recommended that the County Central Committee consult and respect the views of Greens residing within the affected wards/townships.

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 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 Cook 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). The Ward and Township 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 Cook County Central Committee Chairperson generally serves as the main contact person between the party and the offices of the Cook County Clerk and Chicago Board of Elections. Both offices will occasionally 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 to each party's County Central Committee Chairperson, and the Chairperson or other designated Green Party representative is invited to attend.

Appendix B — Bylaws of the Cook County Green Party Central Committee

Bylaws of the Cook County Green Party Central Committee As Adopted January 26, 2008

ARTICLE I - Name and Purpose

A. Name. The name of this entity shall be the Cook 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 Cook 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

A. The Central Committee shall be composed of all duly elected and/or appointed Ward and Township Committeepersons within Cook County, hereinafter called "Committeepersons".

B. Vacancies in Ward or Township Committeeperson positions may be filled by a vote of the Central Committee. Such appointments shall be done in consult with the members of the Illinois Green Party within the jurisdiction, or with the relevant local organization of the Illinois Green Party. Only members in good standing of the Illinois Green Party may be considered for filling such vacancies.

ARTICLE III - Officers

A. Convention. The Central Committee shall have officers charged with specific duties and responsibilities and elected by the members at the County Convention (which is scheduled by statute "[o]n the 29th day next succeeding the primary at which [committeepersons] are elected", to meet "within the county").

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) insure that appointments of new Committeepersons for wards or townships with

vacancies occur according to the process defined in 2-B. Unless the Chairperson has separately been elected to such position, he/she shall not be considered the Chairperson of the Cook County Green Party.

D. Secretary. There shall be a Secretary, who will (1) see that minutes of meetings are recorded and disseminated to the members, and (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 Committeeperson. Unless the Secretary has separately been elected to such position, he/she shall not be considered the Secretary of the Cook County Green Party.

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

E. 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 equal to or greater than one half of the sitting committee.

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

C. Weight. The weight of a Committeeperson's vote shall be equal to the number of persons who took Green Party ballots within the Ward or Township that such Committeeperson represents in the preceding general primary election.

D. 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 shall, 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 of the Cook County Green Party or a 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.