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How do you join your “County Committee” in NJ

What is “County Committee”?

Each of New Jersey's 21 counties has a "Democrat County Committee" and a "Republican County Committee." Each is headed by a Chairperson, who oversees the political party committee at the county level. Every municipality *can* have a “municipal political party committee,” but not all do.

At the state level, the two primary political parties (Democrat, Republican) are separately incorporated, independent special interest groups, but they hold special authority by action of the NJ Legislature which allows them to raise and spend money in ways that no other groups can do.

At the county level, these “county committee” organizations set policy and procedure for how their political party will operate in that county. They are affiliated with the state and national political party, but operate semi-autonomously (mostly on their own). Representatives (members) are elected or appointed from each municipality to represent their political party from their town and local voting district. Once elected or appointed, these representatives are known in NJ as members of their municipal "County Committee." (*The terminology admittedly is confusing.*) But note: *this* “county committee,” even at the municipal level, is NOT the governing body of the town or county. Instead, it is a group of elected or appointed individuals who belong to either the Republican or Democrat party, and serve within this structure to represent that political party locally.

In each municipality, there are about two people who serve to represent each voting district. By law, a voting district represents between 250 and 750 voters, so about 500 homes would exist in each geographic voting district.

What does a member of County Committee do?

No special skill or experience is necessary to seek election/appointment to your municipal "county committee." State laws (N.J.S.A. Title 19) establish how county committees can operate.

Your local committee might go by the name, "Hanover Township Municipal Republican Committee," or something similar. The structure and number of representatives will vary between the Republicans and the Democrats, but they generally work in a similar manner.

Depending on the practices in your county and municipality, members of the municipal county committee might be asked to:

- Visit the homes in their district to encourage voter registration, to solicit affiliation and voter registration with their political party, to distribute literature about candidates and to encourage residents to vote at election time
- Help a candidate's campaign or possibly work for the political party in some other way, such as preparing candidate literature, handing literature out, or calling voters to encourage them to vote
- Serve as an election “Challenger,” representing your municipal political party committee

Another responsibility is to recommend candidates to fill unexpected vacancies on your elected municipal council or committee, or to elected county positions. Members may also recommend candidates to fill unexpected vacancies in state or federal elected positions.

Periodically, your town political party committee representatives will meet together as the full "County Committee" with the representatives from all the other towns in your county. At such a meeting, they could vote for County or State Representatives/delegates of the political party, or vote to endorse certain candidates for election.

How do you become a member of the County Committee?

Your municipal clerk can give you contact information for the person in charge of your municipal Republican or Democratic committee or for the County chairperson for your political party, and may be able to give you the names of others who are already serving from your town.

To seek election to the County Committee, state law dictates that you obtain a Nominating Petition from your municipal Clerk, have others from your political party sign the petition, have the petition verified by a Notary Public, and file the petition with your Municipal Clerk by the deadline established by law prior to the Primary Election in which members of your county committee are elected (election cycles vary by county).

How else might I become a member of the County Committee?

Sometimes not enough registered voters seek election to fill all available “seats” on the county committee, or a serving member may move out of district. When vacancies occur, you can request appointment to fill that vacancy. The request would typically be made to your municipal county committee chairperson, who would then nominate you (or others) to fill the vacancy. The full municipal committee would vote to elect a candidate to fill the vacancy.

If you were appointed to represent your particular voting district in your town, you would have full voting authority on issues affecting your voting district. You could also seek appointment to represent one of the other voting districts in your town, but in this case, you would not have voting authority but could still fulfill all other functions in serving your political party.

Other questions? You should feel free to contact your municipal or county chairperson to ask them questions about County Committee and what it does in your county and town.