



Virginia Republican Precinct Captain Handbook

Revised: August 2021

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What Does a Precinct Captain Do?

The precinct is the fundamental building block for winning elections. A volunteer precinct captain is the central manager for the precinct. As such, your goal is to get the most votes possible for Republican candidates within your precinct. You can best do this by recruiting and managing volunteers to complete the multiple tasks that will turn out the maximum number of voters. This is the most powerful and effective way to win. Key Precinct Captain tasks include:

- Getting People In Your Precinct Involved
- Identifying Voters
- Registering Voters
- Informing Voters
- Turning Out Voters (a.k.a. Getting Out the Vote, a.k.a. GOTV)

In very small precincts (300+ voters) these tasks can be done by one person, in medium precincts they will need a core team (600+), but in large precincts (up to 5,000) the Precinct Captain will need to be the manager of a full team of volunteers.

This precinct-level program can take multiple years to build into a fully functioning level so if you are just starting out, please understand that each year this is implemented (if you are good at retaining volunteers) it will get easier and you will make more progress. Never underestimate the power of a team encouraging each other and all pulling towards the same goal!

John C. Maxwell, in his book Developing the Leaders Around You, notes, “Developing leadership qualities in others is the way to ensure success in today’s competitive world, because the one asset that truly appreciates within any organization is people.... [P]eople can grow, develop, and become more effective if they have a leader who understands their potential value.”

Getting people in your precinct involved. The best way to get people to want your candidates to win is to get them invested in the campaign. Volunteering is a great way to get people invested. Start with a small request and then, as you deepen your relationship with them, encourage them to make a larger commitment. Then the most committed will keep asking you for more things to help with. (If you have the luxury to run out of projects, reach out to other precinct captains in your city/county and see if they need help.) Always be very grateful to your volunteers—they are incredibly valuable, and they need to know it!

Identifying Voters. Get to know the voters in your precinct. A great place to start is to welcome new neighbors and let them know you are their Republican Precinct Captain—this can be a good way to start a conversation which can determine their political leanings. If you live in a large precinct, find an outgoing person to focus on this welcome project. People who are new to a community are usually looking for ways to plug in, make friends, and—when asked—they naturally become some of the most active volunteers.

Ideally, a Precinct Captain (or precinct team) will engage as many voters as possible. First, learn who is a “swing voter” (someone who votes for candidates from both parties) and who is a low propensity voter (someone who rarely votes). Persuading these two categories to support your candidate(s) will often win the election. Second, find people who are not registered, see if they support Republican views, and then help register those who do. Third, know who is consistently a Republican voter and

confirm they are supporting your candidate(s). Finally know who the Democrats are, and if you have extra time, build relationships and have conversations that might change their views—or so that you can leave them alone when it is time to vote.

To make this easier, you can request lists of voters from your local elections office or utilize your Republican unit (county or city) chairman’s “GOP Data Center” (see “Resources,” below) to help you identify the voting propensities of voters (Republican, Democrat, “swing”) in your precinct. Identifying voters and recording this information is also called “canvassing.”

Registering Voters. Anyone (and this should include every Precinct Captain) who orders twenty-five or more voter registration forms must complete State Board of Elections certified training. The certification is valid from July 1 of each year until June 30 of the following year. The training should be done each year to learn of any changes in election law. Information can be found at <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/registration/registration-drives/>.

Training can be completed either via classroom training or online by watching a 20-minute video and taking a certification test. The process is simple and relatively easy, so it is not a burden on any volunteer who is committed to carrying their precinct for their candidate.

Informing Voters. You need to be the political leader in your neighborhood. An easy way to understand key political issues, positions, and candidates relevant to your precinct is to join the email list of the RPV, the local Republican unit in your area, the congressional district Republican email list, and all candidates’ email lists. (If you don’t want to share a personal email, set up a new political email account for this purpose.)

Once you tap into these resources, you can then distribute campaign literature, bumper stickers, yard signs, and other campaign materials directly to precinct voters at their homes or at local events attended by them (e.g., farmers markets, school events, local parades and celebrations, and other gatherings).

One of the authors of this manual has several voters in his neighborhood who wait to see whose yard sign goes up in his yard, and that is the candidate for whom they vote because they know he has done his homework on who the best candidate is. That is a status one earns not by claiming it for oneself but by earning the trust of your neighbors by consistently and positively engaging with your precinct’s voters.

Turning Out Voters. All the prior steps mentioned lead up to this one. This is the most important role. Once you have identified your voters, registered them to vote, and kept them politically informed, it’s time to make all of that count by getting them to the polls to vote Republican!

Now there are three ways that people can vote: Early in-person, absentee by mail, and then on Election Day at the voters’ regular precinct. The most common activities that remind voters to vote are walking door-to-door (“D2D”), making phone calls (“phone banking”), sending text messages and postcards. Assist those needing to vote early by mail (contact your registrar’s office for help). Offer to accompany neighbors to their polling place or drive people that need a ride.

Efforts to turn out voters are often referred to as “Get-Out-The-Vote” efforts or “GOTV.”

Who is Eligible to be a Precinct Captain?

Qualifications to be a Precinct Captain:

- Be a resident of the precinct (if no resident can be found, leaders from a nearby location may be considered)
- Be affiliated with the Republican Party through voting in the Republican primary election, convention, or by oath of affiliation

Methods of Becoming a Precinct Captain:

Recruitment/Appointment: The local Republican committee chairman, political director, or magisterial district chairman recruits Precinct Captains. If more than one person wants the role, a committee election can decide. Hopefully, all interested volunteers will be able to work together for the common goal. This is not about personal ego or fancy titles. This is about getting the job done.

Recommended term: Because of the relationship aspect of this role, it is recommended that you hold at least a two-year term which may be renewed repeatedly. Consistent leadership is important.

Filling a vacancy: Any eligible person may fill a Precinct Captain vacancy. It is recommended to fill vacancies as soon as possible. If more than one person desires the role that also can be decided by a majority vote of the county/city Republican committee.

Organizing Your Precinct:

If you are taking over from a previous precinct captain, ask nicely to make sure you get ALL of their list of volunteers and tips and tricks from your predecessor. Take them to coffee and get them talking. You will learn a lot and save time!

If you are the first Precinct Captain in your area, create and keep updated a Word or Excel document where you add lessons as you learn them so you can easily pass them along to the next precinct captain when you are finished. Include important dates, deadlines, events, what response you got at each one, and all relevant information.

Become aware of the physical boundaries of your precinct. Most counties and cities post maps of their precincts. Make them available to potential volunteers so they understand their areas) of responsibility. If no maps are available, use street names or landmarks to describe your area to potential volunteers.

Next get a list of the number of registered voters in your precinct. Your best resource is GOP Data Center. Your unit chairman or any active candidates should have login information to this. Decide how many volunteers you will need to personally connect with all of the Republicans and swing voters in your precinct.

A Precinct Organization Chart (below) has proved ideal in many precincts, but you will quickly know if this will work for your area or not. Tailor these suggestions to fit your precinct's geography, needs, and availability of volunteers.

Suggested Precinct Organization

Precinct Captain (1 per precinct)
Neighborhood Captains (3-5 in a precinct)
Block Workers (3-5 per sub-division or neighborhood)
Voters (the target of each member of the precinct organization)

Precinct Captain

You are the central manager of the entire precinct.

Neighborhood Captains (3–5 per Precinct)

Break your precinct down into its major subdivisions or neighborhoods. Choose your most capable volunteers to serve as Neighborhood Captains and manage each of these divisions. Neighborhood Captains report directly to the Precinct Captain.

Block Workers (3–5 per subdivision or neighborhood)

Break your subdivisions and neighborhoods down into blocks. Assign (or have your Neighborhood Captains assign) Block Workers to one or a few blocks each. Block Workers report directly to their Neighborhood Captain.

Voters

Voters are the target of each member of the precinct organization. Reach voters in order to get to know them, register them to vote if they are not already (see note), inform them about candidates and issues, then get them out to vote and/or volunteer!

[Note: During a voter registration drive, you are required by law to register anyone who asks to register. However, as you talk one-on-one with your neighbors, you do not have to offer to register someone who is obviously not going to vote for your candidates. You should always offer to register anyone (from your precinct or not) who shares our mutual conservative values.]

Recruiting Volunteers

The most logical place to start recruiting volunteers is with those closest to you — family, friends and close neighbors. Then spread your net a little wider to your church, community and service clubs, PTA, exercise class, retirees and students. (Often times, high school and college Government/Political Science teachers are willing to give their students extra credit for volunteering with a political party.)

You will be surprised at the number of people who want to help, but they just don't know how to get started. That is your job: to ask them to help, to make them feel welcome and important, and to teach them how to do their job. ***The #1 reason people don't volunteer is because no one ever asked them.***

Ask your unit chairman for any lists of past volunteers for the party, previous campaign volunteers, convention delegates, and other relevant contact information the party has. Another source of potential volunteers is from elected officials who are not running for office this election cycle.

You may need to sign a routine non-disclosure agreement (NDA) form to protect such data. Most NDAs require that you not use the data for personal gain or to oppose any Republican candidate.

GOP Data Center is another excellent source of potential volunteers. This data base offers the capability to sort voters by various filters, e.g., precinct, voting propensity, age, ethnic identity, etc. Filtering by “Hard Rs” in your precinct provides a solid list of potential volunteers. GOP Data Center includes home phone numbers and some cell numbers. Data laws do not allow GOP Data Center to include email addresses. Combining data from GOP Data Center with other sources often provides not only a likely list of potential volunteers but their contact information also.

The nonprofit Virginia Public Access Project (VPAP.org) provides useful data about political contributions by voters. Again, a Precinct Captain can use it with other databases to identify Republicans in their precinct who are interested politically and might want to volunteer as well as make donations.

Once you get a solid list of potential volunteers, call, text, and/or email them and ask them to consider volunteering. Be ready to explain your precinct plan briefly and invite them to an upcoming meeting of your precinct volunteers where they can get a full understanding of the various ways that they can volunteer. MOST people on your potential volunteer list will NOT respond the first time you contact them. Be persistent. If you contact 100 people and only 10% respond, you recruited 10 volunteers!

By far the best opportunity for recruiting volunteers is at the polls—on primary day, at in-person absentee voting, and on Election Day. This is when potential volunteers come to you at one place. A good Precinct Captain will have his/her volunteers distribute sample ballots to voters while he/she asks voters exiting the polls if they might be interested in volunteering for Republicans in the precinct. The first time one Precinct Captain in Virginia tried this technique, he signed up 67 potential volunteers and captured their contact information.

Avoid poaching volunteers from a different precinct to avoid hard feelings between Precinct Captains. If there is a large gap in available volunteers, approach your fellow Precinct Captain and work out an agreement to share.

Brand new volunteers will probably need to be mentored until they become confident. Start out by providing a briefing about your plan for reaching Republicans in your precinct. You might consider inviting them to your house for such a get-acquainted briefing. Such a briefing should include descriptions of the various needs for volunteers in the precinct, e.g., door knockers, campaign literature distributors at events and polls, poll watchers, election officials, etc.

You might then ask them to come with you and watch as you make phone calls and go door-to-door. Then ease them into being more talkative. As the new volunteers watch you, or a seasoned volunteer, it becomes much less scary. The more volunteers you have from the party the more you can pair them up with new volunteers, both for safety and for mentoring fresh volunteers. If you are new to this yourself, ask a campaign staff member or an experienced volunteer in your unit to mentor and shadow you as you become experienced.

Be willing to meet your volunteers’ needs. If one person is a registered babysitter and a young mom is willing to volunteer but would need someone to watch her kids, be flexible to work outside the box to address any concerns that inhibit your volunteers’ availability (within reason).

As you will read in the next section, identifying and canvassing the voters in your precinct will help you learn who will vote Republican. But it is also a great way to learn who you can recruit to be part

of your precinct team. Find out who you can count on to go door-to-door, make phone calls, distribute yard signs, put bumper stickers on their vehicle, write letters to the editor, do social media, or contribute money to the county party.

Connecting with Voters (Canvassing)

Identifying voters and recording that information is called “canvassing.” This can be done by going door-to-door, phone calls, text messaging, during events, and even just whenever you meet someone in your neighborhood. Be sure to keep very good notes about each person’s contact information, political affiliation, and interests. You will likely need to organize “block walks” or “phone banks” in your precinct. As the Precinct Captain, you should maintain the voter data for your entire precinct (or have a trusted volunteer do it).

The first and most important step is to obtain a copy of the records of all registered voters in your precinct. GOP Data Center should have this list or any well-funded candidate that has a phone app program. An alternative option for very small races is to use an Excel file to track the records of each voter and whether or not they have committed to support your candidate.

All the information gained from the following activities should be reported to the person in the precinct who is maintaining the records for your efforts. This is absolutely critical. You **MUST** keep track of the people with whom you talk and who are supportive of the campaign and who need to be encouraged to vote.

Using a canvass sheet is a great way to keep temporary notes until you are able to enter that information into a computer system. There are several phone apps (i.e., i360, Campaign Sidekick, etc. among many others) that can be used while going door-to-door to eliminate the need for data entry later in the day.

Here is a sample script for any precinct worker to use when meeting people:

“Hi, my name is _____. I’m volunteering to do a survey in your neighborhood. Do you have just a couple of moments to help me with this?”

Which party aligns more closely with your views?

- If the person answers “Democrat”, thank them politely and leave. **NEVER MENTION REGISTRATION to a person who is not supporting Republicans.**

[Note: More confident volunteers can ask why and work to find out their “hot-button” issues so that follow up information can be sent to the voter later. **Do not take more than 5 minutes max at each residence.** You have others with whom you need to speak as well. It is better to get necessary information on many people rather than totally in-depth information on only one or two voters who may not even vote for your candidates.]

- If the person answers “Republican,” ask *“Do you plan to vote for (Republican Candidate) for Governor and all other offices?”*
- If the answer is “yes” or “no,” also ask: *“Are there any other voters in their home and do they feel the same way?”*

“Are you registered to vote? Is everyone of legal age in your household registered to vote?”

- If yes, thank them. If no, ask: *“Can I help you (them) register to vote today?”*
- Use their answer to encourage them to consider the Republican Party.

If you have taken the registration certification class and test mentioned earlier in this manual, then you know how to fill out and submit the registration form. If you have not, then you should read the entire form to glean what information you can from the instructions. You also may not collect more than twenty-five forms in the fiscal year (July 1 through June 30) without being certified.

As a reminder, before you turn in the forms you have collected, glean the contact information from each form so you will know whom you have registered and how to contact them for follow-up during campaign season.

DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES COPY OR KEEP A RECORD OF THE VOTER’S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER. THAT IS AGAINST THE LAW!!

If you have collected several forms, you will need an alphabetical list of the names of registrants to turn in with the forms you have collected. You will need one list for each city or county from which you have collected a resident’s registration form.

One of the best resources for voter registration is an independent app called “Turbo Vote.” You can access this program at no cost from The Family Foundation Action (TFFA) by scanning this QR code with your smartphone. Turbo Vote allows a potential voter to register securely online. It also allows a voter to update their address.



<https://familyfoundation.turbovote.org>
Created with My QRCode Generator iOS App

It is more effective than registering online with the Board of Elections for the following four reasons:

1. This app can be used anywhere at any event, tabling at a gun show, churches, knocking doors, or at a voter registration event.
2. It is user friendly and secure. Most people DO NOT want to write their personal information on a form and hand it back to a stranger to turn in.
3. It allows TFFA to capture the voters information and follow up by phone calls to ensure they get out to vote.
4. Turbo Vote will send text or email reminders on WHEN and WHERE people should vote.

TFFA will provide training on turbo vote and i360 to your group or organization at no cost . We have found this app along with i360 targeted voter registration lists to be the most effective way to register likely leaning conservative voters . To sign up for training opportunities or any questions please contact: brrritton@familyfoundation.org. Or learn about TFF's coalition efforts at: <https://www.familyfoundation.org/coalitionefforts>.

It is good to also keep a stack of paper voter registration sheets for elderly people who are more comfortable with a paper option. In accordance with the Precinct Organization Chart suggested earlier in this manual, Block Workers should provide copies of their canvass sheets to their Neighborhood Captains, and Neighborhood Captains should provide copies of their canvass sheets and their Block Workers' canvass sheets to the Precinct Captain, so that all the information ends up in one place where it can be organized and maintained. And voter registration cards should be turned in as soon as possible.

You will also use either a phone app or canvass sheets when block walking and phone banking for GOTV (discussed later in this handbook). Canvass sheets should be customized for those needs.

In accordance with the Precinct Organization Chart suggested earlier in this manual, Block Workers should provide copies of their canvass sheets to their Neighborhood Captains, and Neighborhood Captains should provide copies of their canvass sheets and their Block Workers' canvass sheets to the Precinct Captain, so that all the information ends up in one place where it can be organized and maintained.

We recommend Precinct Captains and their volunteers receive training on GOP Data Center and phone apps being used.

Door-to-Door

Door-to-Door is the most effective form of volunteer-to-voter contact. It can take up to several hours of your day but gives voters the opportunity to connect with you face-to-face and ask questions. Voters are oftentimes impressed that you took the time to come visit them in person. (Several voters have commented over the years that they voted for our candidates only because we were the only ones who came by and asked for their votes.)

Volunteer door knockers may want to knock on doors in their neighborhood or block when convenient for them. Or you may want to organize a group, or several groups, to walk door-to-door and remind Republican voters to vote. (**Don't remind Democrats to vote!**). Door-to-Door happens

when you have the volunteers to do it. Ideally, look at what is a reasonable number of voter contacts to make per week and then start at a reasonable time prior to the first day of early voting to contact each voter once to find out their preferred candidate(s) and then again to persuade undecided voters, and if necessary a third time to get them to the polls.

Sometimes local campaigns or city/county parties will arrange block walks and just ask you to recruit volunteers and be a part of it. However, there is no reason you cannot take the initiative to host one on your own. This is a perfect example where the Precinct Organization Chart can be of great help. If you can divide up your precinct into neighborhoods, and then blocks, with volunteers to cover each section, you've got your ground covered. You may join up with other precincts if you like, especially if there are targeted races which cover a few precincts.

Arrange one central location and a time for everyone to meet before and after the walk. You can arrange shifts if you like; two-hour increments are usually appropriate. Assign leaders (preferably Neighborhood Captains or other experienced participants who know your precinct well) to lead each group. Usually the campaign(s) will put together a "walk packet" for each leader. Walk packets should be provided on a clipboard with pen and need to include:

- List (or phone app) of targeted Republican addresses and maps to those houses
- Canvass sheet (or app) to record new information you find out about these voters
- Literature representing each Republican candidate in the general election

Have cars available to drive each group to their walk locations. Consider providing water, coffee and/or snacks before and after the walk. In more rural areas or on long streets, you may want to have a designated driver to accompany those who are actually going to the doors. This save a lot of time instead of having your canvassers have to back-track to where they parked their cars. (It also gives an important job to those volunteers who are just too shy to actually go to the doors.)

Literature with precinct locations and early voting opportunities is an excellent item to distribute to voters when walking. Many times local campaigns or your local election office will have items like these. Otherwise consider creating some yourself. (You can get polling locations and times from your City/County Chairman or local elections office.) Only distribute these items by hand to the voter or leave it at their doorstep.

Clearly instruct your volunteers to NEVER put anything in or on the mailbox—this is illegal.

Here is a sample script for your walkers to use when speaking to voters at the door:

Walk Volunteer: "Hello, are you _____. My name is _____. I live here in (city/county), and I'm volunteering for (candidate's name or county party). I am stopping by to remind you to vote in the _____ election on (dates and times). Your polling location is _____." (Hand them literature.)

Voter: "Oh." "Thank you."

Walk Volunteer: "Do you plan to vote for (candidates' names)?"

Voter: "Yes" or "No"

Walk Volunteer: “Will you need a ride to the polls, or will you want to vote absentee?” (see Note below) -- If their reason for not voting is the lack of transportation to the polls, it is imperative you help them vote.

Voter: “Yes” or “No”

Walk Volunteer: “If you need a ride, we’ll be glad to make arrangements for that. We will also be happy to help you request an absentee ballot and make sure it gets back to the registrar’s office on time.”

Voter: “Might you be willing to put a campaign sign in your yard?” (If yes, provide the sign, or tell the voter you will arrange for delivery.)

Voter: “Thank you.”

Walk Volunteer: “Thank you for your support. Have a great day!”

NOTE: Communicate with the local party or local campaigns about possibilities for rides to the polls before offering this. With early (in-person absentee) voting, the rides do not all have to be available on the same day. Currently, there is a 45-day window during which voters can go to the polls. Some units are encouraging early voting so that others cannot steal your ballot and your vote. There have been limited reports of individuals going to vote on election day and their ballots have already been cast for them. By voting early, people eliminate this opportunity for fraud.

Be prepared to answer basic questions about the candidate(s) or issues you are supporting or being a Republican in general. If voters ask questions you cannot answer, direct them to particular campaigns or to the county party or local election office. If you can make the time, it would be ideal for you to find out the information (so you will have it the next time someone asks) and contact the person who asked so you can give them that answer. The fact that you took the effort to get an answer to their question for them will make you a more trusted source of information, in their eyes, and they will likely give you more attention the next time you contact them. This is all part of the relationship building that was mentioned earlier in this manual.

After the volunteers have completed their walk for the day, they must turn all of their canvass information over to their Precinct Captain (or the organization in charge of the block walk). Reviewing this data can inform the campaign team about whom to stop visiting (wrong addresses or those who will not be supporting your candidate) or who to visit again during your next block walk (anyone who was not home). You may also learn other information like who may be interested in helping your cause in ways other than voting. (They may ask for a yard sign or to walk with you next time.)

Texting

One of the fastest ways to connect with voters and get a response back from them is to send campaign text messages. Legally, this must be done with a volunteer or paid individual who is pressing a key on a computer for each individual text sent so that bulk-text rules do not apply.

Usually only the more organized, and well-funded campaigns/units can do this. There are marketing companies that can find phone numbers for voters, or if you already have a list, they can

automatically sort through a list and tell which numbers are cell phones so you don't waste time attempting to text landlines. (example: <https://Glover.us>) This has been found to be the most effective voter contact method.

Phone Banking

Studies have repeatedly shown that having an informed, motivated volunteer talking with fellow voters over the phone is very effective for reaching many voters in a short amount of time. It's great for those who don't want to walk or don't feel comfortable on the computer, and they can come and go on their own time.

Phone banking involves having a group of volunteers scheduled to arrive at a particular place where phones are set up (either hard lines or mobile phones) and calling lists and phone scripts are available. Often local campaigns or county parties will arrange these and just ask you to recruit volunteers and be a part of it. However, there is no reason you cannot take the initiative to host one on your own.

This will require a few people from your precinct team to prepare for the event and at least one to oversee the activity and be available to answer questions. You may join with other precincts if you like, especially if there are targeted races which cover multiple precincts.

Possible phone bank locations are the city/county party headquarters, campaign headquarters, or local (non-corporate) businesses. Try to use a place that has easy access and parking for volunteers.

Depending on the space you are using, hard lines may be accessible. Mobile phones can often be borrowed from local campaigns.

The best place to pull calling lists is from GOP Data Center or from your own canvassing records. You only want to pull names and phone numbers of those voters that have been identified as Republican voters. Divide the call list up among your volunteers. Create canvassing sheets, or GOP Data Center can create canvass sheets specifically for the call lists you pull) for them to record the results of each call. (Include Name and Phone Number. Did they answer or did you reach a voicemail box? Have the people voted yet? Will they vote for your candidate? Include a space for additional comments.)

Below is a sample phone script for your volunteers to use. Customize this to the election or campaign to which you are referring, and to whether you are calling during Early Voting or the 72-hour period prior to actual election day.

Phone Volunteer: "Hello, Mr./Ms. _____. My name is _____, and I am a volunteer for (candidate's name or city/county party). I am calling to remind you to vote in the _____ election on (dates and times). Your polling location is _____." (See Note below)

Voter: "Thank you."

Phone Volunteer: "Will you need a ride to the polls?" (see note below)

Voter: "Yes" or "No".

Phone Volunteer: “If you need a ride, we’ll be glad to make arrangements with you.”

Voter: “Thank you.”

Phone Volunteer: “Thank you for your support and have a great day.”

NOTE: You can obtain polling locations from your county chairman or local elections office. Communicate with the local party or local campaigns about possibilities for rides to the polls before offering this.

Again, be prepared to answer basic questions about the candidate(s) or issues you are supporting or being a Republican in general. If voters ask questions you cannot answer, direct them to particular campaigns or to the county party or local elections office. (Unlike with door-to-door, most modern phone banking apps do not provide the phone number to the caller so you will not be able to call them back with the information yourself.)

The Precinct Captain (or the organization in charge of the phone bank) should receive all the canvass sheets that each volunteer filled out during the phone bank before the volunteer leaves for the day. Reviewing this data can inform the campaign about whom to stop calling (wrong phone numbers, or those who will not be supporting your candidate) or who to call again during your next phone bank session (anyone you did not reach). You may also learn other information like who may be interested in helping your cause in ways other than voting (they may ask for a yard sign or to come make calls with you next time).

Utilizing the Data

Once you have collected and saved your data—use it! Follow through is critically important to gaining the trust of your community! Be sure to let campaigns know what households want yard signs, bumper stickers or campaign literature (or offer to pick it up and distribute it for them). Follow up with anyone who requested a voter registration card or needed extra time to fill it out. Put those to work who said they would be willing to volunteer - whether as a block worker, neighborhood captain, phone banker, etc. Inform the city/county party if you find any possible donors. Keep in touch with “undecided” voters who you might be able to persuade to vote Republican. All the information you have canvassed is incredibly valuable to Republican campaigns in your city/county and in the state.

Managing Volunteers

Volunteer retention is key to your success. The easiest way to keep track of your precinct’s volunteers, contact information, and their personal needs is to maintain a computerized database of everyone that has ever expressed interest in becoming a volunteer (or anyone that you think would be a good volunteer!)

This is absolutely critical because you will need to retain your volunteers and each year add a significant number of new volunteers. It is normal for there to be about 10-15% attrition of volunteers moving out of your area, etc. If you experience a larger percentage drop off than that, it will be necessary to re-evaluate your program, ask people who decline to be volunteers again what you are doing wrong, try to find a pattern, and fix the problem!

Microsoft Excel© is an excellent program for creating and maintaining data in a spreadsheet. Excel provides the spreadsheet template, and you simply create fields (columns or rows) and enter the data by clicking on a box (“cell”) and typing it in. Keep records of name, email, phone, cell, address, when they are available, what work they like to do, and then if possible any random personal information, like grandkids’ names, etc. so you can ask about them the next time you reach out.

Entering your information in a program like Excel will enable the data to be easily sorted by any column depending on particular needs. Columns can also be easily added at any time in an Excel spreadsheet to include additional data as needs arise to benefit the county party and local campaigns. Rows may also be deleted at any time if information on a particular person will no longer be needed (e.g. if someone moves away). Keep independent information in a different column as much as possible. This enables the following (for example):

- sorting on Column F will produce a list of all people willing to place signs in their yard.
- sorting on Column G will produce a list of those willing to put bumper stickers on their vehicles so that stickers may be distributed.
- sorting on Column C and then D will produce a list of houses that can be walked in numerical order by street, etc...

Maintaining a column such as G (“OCC”) on the occupations of voters will enable you to better know those in your precinct, how much time and at what time of day or night they may be able to volunteer for projects, and learn about which campaigns may be of special interest to them (e.g. a lawyer is likely to be very interested in candidates for Attorney General or clerk of court).

Reserve a column such as L (“Comments”) to enter miscellaneous information that will help you better know your voters.

It is imperative that you backup all of your data files on your computer. Anyone can experience data loss, and chances are good at some point, you will. It is easy to accidentally delete a file; encounter a quirk in a program that results in a “fatal” software error; or you could even fall victim to a hard drive crash and lose everything. Losing all of your data could definitely cause major problems especially if it takes place days or weeks before the election, but by backing up your data, these major problems simply become minor annoyances. There are numerous ways to backup data, but the easiest is by using a recordable CD to create a back-up disk, or an external hard drive or memory stick. Once you back up your data, schedule a regular time (daily, weekly, or monthly) to protect all of your important files.

(If you back up on the “cloud,” make sure that you have a very secure set-up with a very strong password. You do not want your data going to those who do not have the right to access it, and especially not to opponents of your candidates. Hacking is a reality and happens even to the best of us.)

It takes considerable time to assemble a good database. Therefore, it is vital to turn these computer files over to your successor or to the precinct captain when you leave office!

Early Voting (GOTV)

The main difference between communicating with voters during the Early Voting period and the 72-hour GOTV period is urgency. During the Early Voting period, voters usually have from mid-

September to get to any of the nearby polling locations. During the 72-hour period, voters only have one day and one location left where they can make their voice heard. Remember to incorporate this into any scripts you use for your block walkers or phone bankers.

Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV)

GOTV efforts begin right before the Early Voting period and continue through Election Day (especially during the 72-hour count-down period immediately prior to Election Day). The two most common GOTV efforts are block walking and phone banking.

This is the most important aspect of campaigning. This is where all the work leading up to Election Day pays off. To do this effectively, you need to have compiled a list of who your committed voters/supporters are and then have a plan to connect with them personally on Election Day or the 72-hours leading up to Election Day. This can make a difference of between 3% up to 25% higher turnout of your voters in the final election vote tally.

Do not assume that your voters/supporters will automatically vote. Their lives are busy, and they can easily forget or have other priorities or believe that their vote doesn't count. This is where the power of a good GOTV program can make the difference between winning and losing.

Thank Your Volunteers!!!

Be sure to thank your volunteers in person and in writing for their sacrifice of time and resources. Invite them to victory celebrations that campaigns may be putting on, or host one yourself (can be a potluck; it doesn't have to be expensive, but it must be heartfelt!). Without volunteers, the work cannot get done. You (and we) want our volunteers to continue to be involved in future efforts.

Importance of this role

Although the precinct is the smallest political unit of registered voters, organizing it is the most powerful and effective way to win elections. There are many examples where elections in the past have been won or lost by less than one vote per precinct. For example:

- Virginia Republican Delegate David Yancey initially received 13 more votes in District 94, however, a recount showed the race was tied. Candidates had to draw lots and the Republican won. His victory gave Republicans control of the House (51–49) in 2017.
- In District 53, Jim Scott won by a single vote after a recount in 1991.
- In 2005, Attorney General Bob McDonnell won his statewide position with just 323 votes after a recount against Creigh Deeds. That was 0.01663 percent of the votes cast. (That's 1 out of every 10,000 votes!)
- Virginia Republican William Moss won against Democrat Jim Burch by 1 vote for the sixth at-large seat in then-District 19 in 1971. However, judges ruled that one of the ballots was "defaced" even though the voter testified that he tried to vote for the Republican. This ruling created a "tie" and the Democrat won by drawing his name out of a cup.
- Richard Nixon lost the 1960 presidential election to John Kennedy by less than one vote per precinct (average).

Most elections can be won with effective, precinct-level work—it is a proven fact!

Resources for the Precinct Captain

Please do not hesitate to use the many resources that are available to you!

Local Republican Committee Members

Your unit chairman should be the Precinct Captain's main point of contact. If your unit committee has a headquarters staff, they may also be a good resource to answer questions about local issues. If your executive committee has elected officers, they may be good resources for specific inquiries like acquiring copies of minutes and contact information for members in your precinct (Secretary), questions about funds (Treasurer) or legal questions (General Counsel or Chairman).

Registrar's Office: Precinct Maps & Voter Lists

Your local city/county election office can provide you with detailed maps of your precinct and the most recent list of registered voters for your county for a cost. Letting your local Republican committee buy it for the entire area and then split the data out to each precinct in the most cost effective way of getting the information.

GOP Data Center

GOP Data Center is a new system that was developed by a private vendor on contract with the RNC, and the RNC is the national administrator. The data is updated by the RPV to assist grassroots leaders and candidates in contacting voters. The system allows you to access information about registered voters in your area and also to identify voters you have met by Party and issue affiliations. You can request access forms from RPV Headquarters or your local unit chairman.

Republican Party of Virginia Staff

If you have questions regarding statewide issues, RPV staff is available during regular business hours Monday through Friday. www.RPV.org. The RPV website hosts a wealth of information on party news, activities, as well as contact information for elected officials and party leadership.

District and State Central Committees

There are a large number of volunteers at the district and state levels who oversee our party's organization. They are volunteers who can assist your effort in many ways with personal, hands-on attention. You can find the best person to reach at: <https://virginia.gop/state-central-committee/>.

What if I Need to Resign?

We hope you will serve out your full term as Precinct Captain. However, some situations make it necessary to leave early, such as moving out of your precinct or becoming a candidate yourself.

This is why it is important to always keep an eye out for good future leaders and mentor them so that when you may be unable to serve in the future others can step into your shoes and have all the tools they need to be successful. If the situation arises so that you are unable to complete your term, please immediately notify your unit chairman and all local campaigns.

If your unit chairman desires, it can be very helpful to speak with possible replacement(s) and recommend him or her to the party to help relieve the burden on the unit to find a replacement and facilitate a smooth transition for your successor.

Glossary of Political Terms

These are terms either used in this handbook, or that you may hear used by campaigns or other field workers.

BENCHMARK POLL—Conducted early in a campaign to establish name identification, determine areas of demographic strength (and weakness) and identify key issues to be emphasized throughout the effort. This is usually the largest poll of the campaign and will also have the first “ballot test.”

BLOCKWALK (Door-to-Door or “D2D”)—Form of voter contact where supporters are organized and go door-to-door in precincts to visit with voters, collect information about their beliefs and advocate for a candidate or political party. This is considered one of the most effective forms of voter contact when done using informed, enthusiastic volunteers. Some campaigns may hire paid walkers in order to cover more ground, but this should be done only when all efforts to find volunteers are insufficient.

BRUSHFIRE POLL—Conducted in the middle of a campaign to determine progress in establishing name identification and any movement in the ballot test. It is also an opportunity to spot check any new issues that may have arisen.

CAMPAIGN MANAGER—Campaign managers are appointed by political candidates to manage their campaigns. This is a high-level (usually paid) position that has responsibility for the smooth functioning of the candidate’s campaign, leaving the candidate free to ask for votes and for money. Specific responsibilities include: keeping the campaign on track and on plan; management of finances; recruiting volunteers; production and distribution of campaign literature and ads; scheduling appearances and events; fundraising; and providing the candidate with pertinent information on issues.

CAMPAIGN PLAN—This is the most important document in a campaign that creates a detailed, written goal for the strategy, structure, message, budget and timeline. It is the roadmap to victory that focuses the campaign team, keeps them accountable, and demands they stay on the most important

tasks. Every well-run campaign will have way more to do than can possibly get done and this keeps staff and volunteers on track.

CITY/COUNTY ELECTORAL BOARD—A City or County Election Board is a three-person board established in each locality. It is responsible to hire the local registrar and effectively manage every Primary and/or General Election. The Board is made up of two members who are picked by the party that controls the Governor’s office and one member of the opposition party. Each Unit Chairman submits a list of names to a judge who picks the members of the Board. Then this board approves who is qualified to serve as Officers of Election (who actually conduct the election at each precinct) and how they will be assigned to each precinct. Usually, the registrar will do the work to plan personnel assignments, but it has to be approved by this Board. This Board is under the authority of a three-person Virginia Electoral Board which is also made up of two people from the party of the Governor and one from the opposition party. This demonstrates the importance of winning the governor’s seat.

COLLATERAL (LITERATURE or “LIT”)—A term used to describe campaign materials such as push cards, door hangers, signs, bumper stickers, etc. that supports the candidate.

CREED—The Virginia Republican Creed is a statement of party principles and grassroots values. The Creed is officially adopted and governs the core values of the Party.

ELECTION (OR BALLOT) INTEGRITY—Election integrity efforts ensure that proper voting rules and fair, legal procedures are maintained at polling places. In order to prevent fraudulent voting, election integrity committees are often put together at the state and local levels with volunteers sent to monitor polling places. In large areas (or under particularly hostile registrars), we recommend that there be a committee, with each member focusing on one of the following areas: managing Officers of Election, managing poll watchers for Mail-In Voting, managing poll watchers for Early In-Person Voting, Managing Election-Day poll watchers, and where possible a Registered Voter List Maintenance Manager. With an area-appropriate number of volunteers under each manager who recruits, trains volunteers independently of the local registrar, and personally thanks each volunteer in an effort to retain them for the following year.

GENERAL ELECTION—General elections are held as the final contest between the nominees from each party. General elections are held on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November. Nominees for these positions are chosen in the spring in Party conventions or primaries.

GET OUT THE VOTE (or “GOTV”)—A program devoted to increasing Republican voter turnout during the voting process. The term is used to describe the massive voter mobilization of our previously identified supporters during Early Voting and on Election Day. An effective GOTV program should be the most intense period of the campaign for grassroots activities and should continue right up until the polls close on Election Day. This effort should focus on turning out all identified supporters through mail, phones, block walking, etc.

GRASSROOTS—This is a common term used especially in Republican politics to refer to local party leaders, activists, and volunteers. These individuals are the building blocks of the Party.

GREETERS (LITERATURE DISTRIBUTORS)—These are the volunteers who stand outside a polling location on Election Day and greet people coming to vote and offer them literature about each candidate.

GUBERNATORIAL—This word means of or relating to a governor. A “gubernatorial election” is the election in which the Governor is elected.

MICROTARGETING—Micro Targeting is a tool for candidates and campaigns that allows them to reach certain voters with tailored messaging using a combination of consumer data, advanced marketing techniques and traditional political targeting.

NOMINEE—A nominee is the candidate selected by voters in a Republican or Democratic party nomination process (primary election, convention, or other method) to seek election in the general election.

OFFICERS OF ELECTION (ELECTION OFFICIALS)—Officers of election are the individuals who actually conduct the election at each precinct polling place. Officers must be registered voters within the Commonwealth of Virginia, although they do not need to be registered in the locality where they serve. Officers may be nominated by the chairmen of the two major political parties. The Unit Chairman should submit the list of his Party’s selections as election workers for each year no later than January 15 each year, although in areas where there is a shortage of election officials, names may be accepted at any time throughout the year.

OVERVOTE—A ballot showing the selection of more candidates or choices than are allowed in a given race or referendum.

PHONE BANK—An organized phone center where volunteers gather to make calls to potential voters to identify their political beliefs, advocate for a candidate or party or turn out the vote. Phone banks can be done by a paid vendor or by supporters from home, but they are most effective when done using informed, enthusiastic volunteers at a central location and supervised by the campaign.

POLL OBSERVERS—These are non-partisan volunteers who are monitoring the election process. They cannot object to anything that is happening but can only be present and both learn and report to others what is happening inside that polling location. Their presence is approved prior to the election by the Electoral Board.

POLL WATCHERS—These are the party representatives who are ensuring election integrity inside the regular precincts and central absentee precinct (CAP, which is usually at the registrar’s office). They have the right to bring objections to the precinct chief if a ballot is improperly handled. They are approved by the unit chairman and must provide a letter from their Republican Chairman to have access inside the precinct.

POLL WORKERS—This is a confusing term that can be used for a wide number of roles and is best avoided and replaced with a title specific to the role a person is fulfilling, such as election official, poll watcher, greeter, GOTV volunteer, etc.

PRECINCT (PCT)—The voting precinct is the smallest political subdivision within a city or county.

PRIMARY ELECTION—Primary elections are one means of selecting nominees. They are organized, conducted, and funded by the state government. In Virginia, a candidate can win the nomination by plurality. That means they only need the most votes of all the candidates seeking the nomination; they do not need a majority of votes (if more than two candidates are running).

REPUBLICAN—Virginia has no voter registration by party preference. A person affiliates with the Republican Party most often by voting in a Republican Primary Election. Affiliation may also be accomplished by being certified as a delegate to a Republican district or state convention or by joining a local Republican committee.

SWING VOTER—A voter who does not commit to voting for one Party, but is swayed by different candidates and issues. Each Party works to have these voters “swing” in their direction during elections.

TRACKING POLL—These are conducted near the end of the campaign. They will measure the ballot test and determine if the money being spent on media and campaign activities is working and getting the desired effect.

UNDERVOTE—A ballot that has been cast, but in one or more races/ballot question shows no legally valid selection in a given race or referendum.

UNIT CHAIRMAN—The Chairman for a city’s or county’s Republican Committee.

UNIVERSE—The group of voters that you are targeting for various mail or grassroots activities when pulling a list from the voter file. (ex. The universe of female voters; the universe of voters under age 35, etc.)

This manual was contributed to by the work of the Republican Party of Texas: Party Organization Committee, by Amber Haskew of the Lynchburg Republican City Committee (LRCC), and by Tim Hannigan of Fairfax precinct organization efforts, Steve “Doc” Troxel of the LRCC and Virginia’s Republican State Central Committee, Virginia Delegate Wendell Walker, and Patsy Walker, Secretary for the LRCC.