

**ACTION TOGETHER TAMPA BAY**  
**CALL FOR ACTION:**  
**POLITICAL ADVOCACY**



**ENGAGEMENT WITH THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN THE STATE OF FLORIDA  
AND THE HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY DEMOCRATIC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (HCDEC):**

**EXERCISING VOTING RIGHTS IN THE HCDEC AS PRECINCT COMMITTEEPERSONS  
AND ORGANIZING DEMOCRATIC VOTERS ON THE PRECINCT LEVEL**

## The Democratic Party Organization in Florida

BY DESIGN the Democratic Party is supposed to be built from the bottom up, i.e., a grassroots effort. The Democratic Party organizes itself on the County level within each State, asking men and women to serve jointly on the precinct level within each County – in other words, the Precinct Committeeperson is the basic building block of the party! Amazingly, in many counties vacancy rates for the position are 50% or more across all precincts, which means that fewer votes are needed to elect candidates, and many of the same candidates have been in their positions, unchallenged, for cycle after cycle, making alliances with other candidates in other counties to control their State apparatus... and thus they control Florida's representation within the Democratic National Committee itself. The only way to break the cycle is to ENGAGE.

The entity that operates on the County level is called the Democratic Executive Committee (DEC); see the by-laws that govern its operation: [http://000e4gp.myregisteredwp.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2010/2016/04/hcd\\_bylaws.pdf](http://000e4gp.myregisteredwp.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2010/2016/04/hcd_bylaws.pdf) The board of the DEC, which is comprised of several Officers, is elected each December in Federal Congressional election years (except the DEC's representatives on the State level, who are elected each December in Presidential election years and help run the Democratic Party statewide, and thus State Committeeman and State Committeewoman both serve a four year term). You must be a Precinct Committeeperson just as the Democratic Primary concludes in a Federal Congressional election year (the "cut off date") in order to run for DEC Officer positions that same year. If you do not meet the cut-off date AND if your precinct has a slot available for you, then you can be voted in by the Board and DEC members on a rolling basis, at which point you will be eligible to exercise voting rights as DEC members, including the reorganization of the DEC in the next Federal Congressional election year (or you can run for positions that become vacant on a rolling basis, which have to be filled in accordance with the by-laws). If your precinct (which is determined by your actual place of residence!) does NOT have a vacancy, you can still be APPOINTED into an empty precinct for the remainder of the two-year cycle and exercise voting rights generally, however, the by-laws say that you CANNOT run for Officer positions as an appointee and you have a 60 day waiting period for your voting rights to become active.

To effect change within the party, you have to accept and understand that *your priority has to be fighting for your beliefs articulately and fairly within the confines of the DEC, as well as supporting candidates and priorities that emerge from that consensus and DEC votes taken*. In other words, expect to put in time and effort to learn about important issues affecting the county and the party, as well as networking hard and meeting objectives that have been set out for you. Each member of the DEC must take and abide by the loyalty oath prescribed by the State Democratic Party prior to admission to the DEC and therefore prior to serving as Precinct Committeeperson. This particular form of activism and political engagement is not for everyone, but it is absolutely critical, and it has therefore been identified as a priority by the steering committee of Action Together Tampa Bay (ATTB).

**The Precinct Committeeperson is the official elected or appointed representative of the County Democratic Party in that precinct. Responsibilities include:**

- **Contacting Democrats in your precinct with information about voting and candidates, and taking questions or concerns back to the DEC. This is especially crucial in municipal and 'non-partisan' elections where candidates clearly identify with a party, but are not marked as such in the voting literature.**
- **Recruiting Block Captains, your core support, volunteers who will help you with messaging and GOTV efforts on behalf of our candidates.**
- **Connecting with groups, clubs, businesses and charities who share values with the Democratic Party.**
- **Recruiting viable candidates to run for office (in conjunction with the Campaign Committee of the DEC).**
- **Attending regular monthly meetings of the County Democratic Party.**
- **Assisting the Party in fundraising events and contributing financially.**

ATTB GOALS: (1) supporting the evolution of the Party on a County-wide and State-wide basis away from the corporatist, fundraising-heavy orientation it has emphasized in the past (and which have contributed toward Republican control over much of Florida), and toward progressive, inclusive positions that emphasize the positive impact of government action when directed at individual citizens on an equitable basis; and (2) recognizing that voters have to be motivated and mobilized to effect change in politics and society, so by filling precincts with activists, good listeners and organizers, the party will be better positioned to drive turnout and turn the tide in local, state and even federal elections.

**Becoming a PRECINCT COMMITTEE PERSON in connection with the  
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY DEMOCRATIC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Step 1 – You must be a registered Democrat in the State of Florida to begin the process. Check your current registration status here <http://www.votehillsborough.org/About-Voting/My-Registration-Status> then write down your Voter Registration Number and take note of the number of years you have been a registered Democrat, you will need it. If you are not registered, or if you are not registered as a Democrat, or if you have moved within the State of Florida, you must STOP AND REGISTER NOW (forms are available on the website or do it online <http://www.votehillsborough.org/About-Voting/Registering-to-Vote/Voter-Registration-Form> ) THEN CONTINUE ONCE YOU HAVE THAT REGISTRATION NUMBER.

Step 2 – You must verify your precinct using <http://www.votehillsborough.org/About-Voting/Voting-Precincts> by entering your address. Write down your precinct number, you will need it. Precincts are precisely mapped and subject to redistricting; the most recent versions are here <http://www.votehillsborough.org/About-Elections-Voters/Precinct-Maps>

Step 3 – Open the HCDEC Membership Application available at <http://000e4gp.myregisteredwp.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2010/2016/04/membership-application.pdf> and use the ‘fill and sign’ function to enter all the required information. You can list Jessica Vaughn (President of the Democratic Progressive Caucus of Tampa Bay and HCDEC member) as your sponsor; this person is used as a back-up for the HCDEC to contact you in case there is a problem with any of the contact information. Feel free to list skills/talents and indicate ways/areas in which you want to be involved! The HCDEC won’t know unless you tell them.

Step 4 – Sign the Membership Application by hand; scan the executed form as a PDF. Email it to the HCDEC for processing, **Attn: Credentials, Maria Alexandra Ayala** using the contact information (for email address, click on the name) listed at <http://www.hillsboroughcountymocrats.org/our-party/about-us/>

Step 5 – Once your credentials have been reviewed and you have been approved for membership, you must attend the next scheduled DEC Meeting in person for formal approval by the DEC in order to be added as a member and then become a **Precinct Committeeperson**, either via election or appointment (which should happen by the end of the meeting). The loyalty oath can be requested a few days prior to swearing in, if you wish, and must be either notarized or filled out by two DEC members in good standing that have not been recently sworn in. *The loyalty oath is a necessary commitment because you are agreeing to support the Democratic Party and its candidates, to work WITHIN the organization; for example, if you are the kind of voter who would ordinarily support Green or Libertarian candidates over certain Democratic candidates, and do so vocally, then you might want to consider being an activist outside the context of the HCDEC! On the other hand, if you are willing to brave the choppy political waters – to listen, to convince others and to forge consensus, to be an advocate for change, with access to myriad elected officials across the county – and then put your efforts into achieving the objectives of the DEC to move Florida forward, WELCOME!*

Please note that there are many ways to serve the DEC other than simply becoming a Precinct Committeeperson, and many DEC sub-committees (Finance, Legislation, PR, Platform, IT, etc.) will leverage your talents and experience on a county-wide basis. We’ll work with you to find the right fit. If you have any questions about the foregoing, then please reach out to Marcus Klebe, Political Advocacy Task Force Officer, ATTB and Maria Alexandra Ayala, HCDEC Credentials.

*General Resources:*

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY PRINCIPLES

<http://000e4gp.myregisteredwp.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2010/2016/04/hillPrinciples.pdf>

OFFICIAL HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY PLATFORM

<http://000e4gp.myregisteredwp.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2010/2016/04/hillPlatform2.pdf>