

# SHDEMS

SOUTHAMPTON TOWN  
**DEMOCRATIC**  
COMMITTEE

## **Guide to Campaigning and Getting Out the Vote!**

A Publication of the Southampton Town Democratic Committee

PO BOX 472, Southampton NY 11969

Phone 631-709-5022

Web: [www.shdems.org](http://www.shdems.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SHDEMS>

Twitter: Southampton Dems@SHDEMS

Email [info@shdems.org](mailto:info@shdems.org)

Gordon Herr, Chair

*Good Government  
is Good Politics*

## HELPFUL INFORMATION

Fill in the blanks below and keep this booklet handy.

Address your questions to: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Your assigned election district (ED): \_\_\_\_\_

Polling place for your assigned ED: \_\_\_\_\_

Your co-committee person: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Zone Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Suffolk County Legislative District: \_\_\_\_\_

Your NYS Assembly District: \_\_\_\_\_

Your NYS Senate District: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Congressional District: \_\_\_\_\_

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

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# WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SOUTHAMPTON TOWN DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE PERSON

## What is a committee person?

A committee person is an official of the Southampton Town Democratic Committee (SHDEMS), who represents one of the town's 42 election districts (EDs).

*Definition: An election district (ED) is a small geographical area within the town with registered voters of all parties and unregistered voters as well.*

Committee persons attend SHDEMS meetings and help the Democratic Party by voting on the candidates and issues that come before the committee and by supporting the Democratic candidates who run for elective office. Committee persons are elected for a two-year term or, in interim years, may be temporarily appointed by the town chair to fill existing vacancies.

Two committee persons are assigned to each election district (ED). Multiple EDs within roughly the same area of town are organized into 6 zones. Each zone is headed by 2 zone leaders.

*Definition: A zone is a collection of EDs within the same area.*

A SHDEMS committee person is also a voting member of the Suffolk County Democratic Committee.

## What does a committee person do?

Committee persons are the face of the Democratic party to the community at large. They work within their EDs to shape and promote the party agenda by campaigning to get Democratic candidates on the ballot through the petitioning process and by "getting out the vote," i.e., taking actions to increase Democratic voter registration and voter turnout.

They may also support candidates by volunteering to organize their local neighborhoods, helping to host community forums, making phone calls, helping with mailings, and serving on subcommittees. Being a committee person is also a great way to meet people with diverse perspectives on a variety of issues.

## Who is eligible to be a committee person?

Any Southampton resident who is a registered Democrat is eligible to serve as a committee person.

## **How does someone become a committee person?**

Committee persons are elected party officials. Every two years, they must carry petitions with their names and get signatures from registered Democrats in their EDs and turn these in to the Suffolk County Board of Elections. If there is no contest for the position, they receive a certificate of election from the Suffolk County Board of Elections after Primary Day.

In interim years, the town chair may appoint committee persons to fill open seats. In this case, the committee person's name is read aloud in an official meeting and submitted to the Suffolk County Democratic Committee for ratification. Once acknowledged, the committee person may participate as a full member of the Southampton Town Democratic Committee and the Suffolk County Democratic Committee.

## **THE ELECTION PROCESS**

### **How Southampton Town Candidates are Elected**

Each February, the SHDEMS designates (selects) candidates for town offices and for officers of the SHDEMS itself by voting at a caucus of the full SHDEMS, which is held in February.

Southampton town elected offices include the town supervisor, four town council members, five town trustees, receiver of taxes, town clerk, and superintendent of highways. SHDEMS elected officers include the committee chair, first vice chair, second vice chair, treasurer, secretary.

### **The Voting Process**

If there is no competition for a particular office, a voice vote is usually taken. If there is competition for the same office, a full roll call vote is taken, whereby each committee person's name is called in order of ED.

Each ED is assigned a weighted number of gubernatorial votes, which was derived from the votes cast in the last election for NYS Governor. One committee person may cast all of the gubernatorial votes for their ED if the second committee person is absent or if there is no other committee person representing the ED. The candidate who receives the highest number of gubernatorial votes for a particular office becomes the designee of the party for that office. The losing candidate either withdraws or wages a primary campaign.

### **Suffolk County Elections**

Essentially the same process applies for designating candidates for Suffolk County elective offices. Since Southampton committee persons are also members of the Suffolk County Democratic Committee, they are encouraged to participate in all county conventions, which are called by the county leader.

Suffolk County elected offices include the county executive, district attorney, sheriff, comptroller, county clerk, 18 county legislators, and multiple family court judges and county court judges.

## Political Calendar

The political calendar is set by the NYS Legislature and changes from year to year. Election Day is always the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. All other dates, such as state and federal primary days and deadlines for absentee voting and filing petitions are determined by working backwards from Election Day.

## PETITIONING FOR SIGNATURES

Once candidates have been designated, the petitioning process begins, typically in March, whereby committee persons carry petitions door-to-door in their assigned EDs and obtain the signatures of registered Democrats on behalf of designated Southampton town and SHDEMS candidates.

In New York State, candidates may appear on the ballot only after designating petitions containing the required number of valid signatures, as defined by state election laws, have been filed with and validated by the Suffolk County Board of Elections.

As an SHDEMS committee person, you have primary responsibility for getting Southampton town and SHDEMS Democrats on the ballot and for supporting their election.

## WHAT YOU'LL NEED

When the petitioning process begins, typically in March, you will be instructed on how to collect signatures of the eligible Democrats within your assigned ED and will be given all the materials you need to do so, including:

- ED Book - List of all enrolled voters in your assigned ED, regardless of their political affiliation, i.e., Republican, Democrat, Independence, Working Family, etc.
- ED Map - Shows all the streets in your ED and the boundaries of the ED
- ED Walk List - Identifies all the voters in your ED who support Democratic candidates
- Designating Petitions
- NYS Voter Registration forms
- NYS Absentee Ballot Application forms

These items will be provided to you at a meeting of the SHDEMS at petitioning time or can be obtained through your committee chair.

*Tip: Bring pens and a writing surface such as a clip board when you go door-to-door with petitions.*

## What to Say

You can use this script to start the conversation with the voter:

**“Hello, My name is [your name], may I speak to [name of registered voter]? I am a volunteer for [candidate’s name] who is running for [name of office]. I am collecting signatures to allow [candidate’s name] name to be placed on the ballot for the Primary Election in [month of election]. Would you please sign for me?”**

Many voters may not understand what the petitioning process is all about. If they show hesitation about signing, don't give up. You may respond by clarifying,

**“You're not committing to vote for anybody by signing this petition. You're just supporting the democratic process and allowing [candidate's name]'s right to run for office by being on the ballot. Will you sign just to support [candidate's name]'s right to run for public office and our right to have a choice of who to vote for?”**

## Rules Regarding Petitions

Petitions must be signed by voters and witnessed by you in accordance with certain rules under New York State law or they risk being invalidated or rejected. Only Democrats who are registered to vote in the district in which the candidate is running may sign the petition for that candidate. To ensure that your petition is valid, follow the rules and guidelines below.

### Tell Voters...

- To sign in **black ink**, not pencil.
- You must **personally observe** every voter signing the petition.
- To use their **actual signature**, just as they do when they vote.
- To **omit titles** such as Ms., Mrs., Mr., or Dr.
- **Not to use ditto marks** and **not to abbreviate** (unless it is abbreviated on the Walk List).
- **Not to sign for another** person, even their spouse.
- To use the **address of their permanent residence** (street address and post office name), which should match the information on your Walk List. They should **not enter a post office box** or a temporary mailing address such as the address of their vacation home.
- The zip code can be omitted, but if it was included, leave it as is—it will not invalidate the signature.
- Address examples:  
**Right:** 123 Main Street, Hampton Bays  
**Acceptable:** 123 Main Street, Hampton Bays 11942  
**Wrong:** P.O. Box 47, Hampton Bays 11942

### Also Important...

- Signatures must appear in **order by date**, from oldest to most recent, e.g., March 4, March 6, March 9.
- You or the voter may fill in the date and voter address. Just be sure the date, the address, and printed name are **correct and legible** and that the voter signs on the correct line.
- If there's an error, **cross out the entire entry**, go to the next numbered line below and have the voter sign again. **Initial and date the crossed out entry. Do not correct mistakes** after you have left the voter.
- You may not personally sign any petition (as a voter) that you are a witness to, since **you cannot witness your own signature**. You may sign a petition that is witnessed by another committee person.

## Sign the Witness Statement

Before you fill out and sign the witness statement for the first time, **watch someone else who's experienced** do it. Be aware that when you sign the witness statement, **you are swearing that you actually saw each voter sign** his or her own name.

Note the following important information:

- Sign the witness statement only **after all signatures on the petition have been gathered**.
- The witness date must be the **same date or later** than the last voter's signature.

## Registering Voters

A registered voter is someone who has filed the NYS Voter Registration Form furnished by their Board of Elections. In addition to allowing someone to vote in the general election, the form allows voters to enroll in a party and vote in primary elections.

Your packet contains NYS Voter Registration Forms. Going door-to-door is an ideal time to make sure all household members who are eligible to vote are registered. You should also offer absentee ballot applications to individuals who will be unable to get to the polls.

*Tip: Keep a supply of mail-in forms on hand at home and in your car.*

## Identify Unregistered Voters

To be eligible to register, a person must be at least 18 by Election Day, must not be in prison or on parole for a felony conviction, and must not claim the right to vote elsewhere.

When going door-to-door in your assigned ED, either when canvassing or when collecting signatures on a petition, ask if anyone in the household is unregistered and wishes to register as a Democrat. For example, someone may have just turned 18 (or will be 18 by Election Day) and is not yet registered. Or someone in the household may wish to change their party affiliation.

Review the NYS Voter Registration Form with the person who wishes to register and help them fill it out right there, checking the Democrat box. Offer to file the form for them. They may not sign the petition at this time, since they are not formally registered until their registration form has been filed with the Board of Elections.

Send the completed form to the committee chair or mail it directly to the Suffolk County Board of Elections, PO Box 700, Yaphank, NY 11980.

## Distribute Absentee Ballot Applications

When going door-to-door, ask if any registered voters in the household will be unable to get to the polls on Election Day. If so, give them a NYS Absentee Ballot Application, help them fill it out, and offer to mail it in for them. Send the completed application to the Suffolk County Board of Elections, Absentee Ballot Department, PO Box 700, Yaphank, NY 11980-0700. Mailed applications must be postmarked by the USPS no less than seven days before Election Day. Your packet also contains NYS Absentee Ballot Applications.

When the Board of Elections receives the completed form, they will send the voter an Absentee Ballot to complete. If mailed, the ballot must be postmarked by USPS by the day before Election Day and received by the Board of Elections no later than the seventh day after Election Day. If delivered in person, the ballot must be received by close of polls on Election Day.

## **SUPPORTING CANDIDATES AND GETTING OUT THE VOTE**

Campaign activities increase between Labor Day and Election Day, with the last few days before and including Election Day devoted to getting out the vote (GOTV). GOTV describes our efforts aimed at increasing voter turnout. Campaigning and GOTV are critical aspects of your work as a committee person.

In any given year, multiple candidates will be running for elective office in Southampton and in Suffolk County. Candidates run as a team and committee persons are encouraged to support the whole team. Candidates rely on the help they get from committee persons in their various legislative districts. Contact the SHDEMS to get the name and contact information of the candidate's campaign chairperson, who will tell you how you can be most useful during these busy days.

We recognize that not all committee persons can devote endless hours to the campaign. However, we urge you to try to devote 2 to 4 hours per week to campaign work. This may consist of, for example, making phone calls on behalf of candidates, walking door-to-door in selected EDs and talking to voters, visiting railroad stations and shopping centers to hand out literature, or accompanying a candidate to an event. Contact the SHDEMS Campaign Committee to see where you are needed most.

Several different ways you can contribute are described below. Some of these activities are done throughout the campaign and some are done primarily during the GOTV period (last weekend before the campaign).

### **Walk Your District**

Walking door-to-door (canvassing) and talking to voters is one of the most important contributions you can make to any campaign. Personal contact within your ED is remembered and valued by voters. Your Walk List identifies all the voters in your ED who support Democratic candidates.

Visit these voters to ensure that they are supporters, and again on GOTV days leading up to the election. Then, on election day, your job is to do what you can to make sure that these people come out and vote.

*Tip: Most people are pleasant when you come to their door--this does not necessarily mean they support or will vote for your candidate.*

### **Make a Contribution**

Campaigns are expensive. The cost of printing, postage, signs, office space, and media are a tremendous burden on the candidate and the party. From time to time, fundraisers are held to support the work of the SHDEMS and the candidates themselves. Committee persons are given a special rate to attend such functions. You are not expected to contribute to every fundraiser; however, know that any contribution you do make will go directly to fund the election of Democrats and will have a direct impact on the outcome of the election.

### **Help With Mailings**

Every campaign needs volunteers who are willing to fold, stuff, and stamp the targeted mailings that are sent to voters who have been identified as having a particular interest or party registration, or who live in an identifiable area of a district such as a village.

## **Distribute Literature**

“Lit Drops” refers to distributing literature door-to-door. This is a lower cost alternative to direct mailings. This activity requires a lot of people power and is a very effective way to help candidates maximize their visibility.

## **Work the Phones**

Telephone polling helps us test a candidate's strengths and weaknesses, areas of support, etc. and is generally done by volunteers who follow a script. The results are tallied and can help structure the campaign effort. Calls are also made to get additional volunteers, and most importantly, to GOTV just before and on Election Day.

## **Support Meet-the-Candidate Events**

A committee person can help organize a meet-the-candidate event. This may involve identifying a host (or hosting it themselves), sending invitations to registered voters, and following up by telephone to help ensure a good turnout for the candidate. This type of activity is most useful towards the end of the campaign when walking door-to-door is less practical because of declining daylight hours..

## **Support Friend-to-Friend Letters and Emails**

Many campaigns use friend-to-friend letter writing or email campaigns. You provide a list of names and addresses (or email addresses) of your friends. A letter or email from you that reflects your support for the candidate is then distributed to the individuals on the list.

## **Go to Shopping Centers and Railroad Stations**

These locations provide an excellent opportunity for candidates to meet a large number of voters in a short period of time. Committee persons may stand with the candidate, introduce him or her as voters pass by, and hand out literature on his or her behalf. This effort generates interest in the candidate, reminds people that Election Day is nearing and says to the opponent, “We mean business!”

## **Get Out the Vote**

Voter turnout can make or break an election. Every vote counts! That's why the last few days before and right up to the election are the busiest time for campaign volunteers, when all hands are needed to get out the vote (GOTV). This is the time to make phone calls and knock on doors to remind voters how important their vote is. A committee official or the campaign manager of whatever campaign is being worked on will tell you where and when you are needed during this time.

On Election Day, you may be asked to visit polling places where residents of your ED votes to check on voter turnout. You'll receive a certificate identifying you as a poll watcher. Show it to the election inspectors if they ask for identification and let them know that you are a committee person in that ED.

**Polls are open on Primary and General Election days from 6:00 am to 9:00 pm.**

## RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

### Websites

The following Internet resources provide useful information:

- Southampton Town Democratic Committee - [www.shdems.com](http://www.shdems.com)
- Suffolk County Democratic Committee - [www.suffolkdemocrats.com](http://www.suffolkdemocrats.com)
- New York State Democratic Committee - [www.nydems.org](http://www.nydems.org)
- Democratic National Committee - [www.democrats.org](http://www.democrats.org)
- New York State Board of Elections - <https://www.elections.ny.gov>
- Suffolk County Board of Elections - [www.suffolkvotes.com](http://www.suffolkvotes.com)
- Suffolk County Legislature - <http://legis.suffolkcountyny.gov>
- Town of Southampton - [www.southamptontownny.gov](http://www.southamptontownny.gov)

## SHDEMS Meetings

Committee persons are encouraged to attend meetings of the SHDEMS. Meetings frequently feature local officials, candidates, and expert speakers who present on current topics and answer questions. You will be notified by mail and email of all committee meetings.

### Definitions

**Canvassing** - Walking door-to-door within your ED to speak with Democratic voters, answer their questions, and secure their commitment to vote.

**Caucus** - An open committee meeting at which committee members vote for candidates for elective office. The winner is the designated candidate.

**Designation** - Selection of a candidate, which takes place during a caucus.

**Designating Petition** - A petition signed by enrolled party members to select a party candidate.

**General Election** - The main election where voters make their final decision on the winner. This vote is mostly between those individuals nominated by their party in the primary elections, but it also includes any independent candidates.

**Nomination** - Selection of a candidate for an office authorized to be filled at an election, following filing of the petitions.

**Primary** - The process used by political parties to nominate their candidates to run in the general election. Only party members who are registered may vote in the primary.

**Residence** - The place where a person maintains a fixed, permanent, and principal home.

**Zone** - A collection of EDs in roughly the same area of town. There are 6 zones in Southampton, with each zone having 2 leaders.

## NOTES

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# SHDEMS

SOUTHAMPTON TOWN  
**DEMOCRATIC**  
COMMITTEE

A Special Thank You to the  
Huntington Town Democratic Committee