

# **CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF THE MERCER COUNTY DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE**

## **ARTICLE I: NAME AND PURPOSE**

Section 1: The name of this organization shall be MERCER COUNTY DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE.

Section 2: The purpose of the Mercer County Democratic Committee shall be furthering good government, encouraging grass roots participation in the Democratic Party, recruiting and supporting Democratic candidates for Primary and General Elections, developing an open convention system for endorsing Democratic candidates in Primary Elections, and fulfilling the duties assigned to it under Title 19 of the New Jersey Revised Code.

## **ARTICLE II: MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1: The County Committee shall be composed of duly elected Committeemen and Committeewomen in the election districts of Mercer County.

Section 2: Any Committeeman or Committeewoman vacancy occurring within the Mercer County Democratic Committee shall be filled at a meeting of the Municipal Democratic Committee or Ward County Committee in which the vacancy occurs.

Section 3: Notwithstanding any provision of Title 19 of the Revised Statutes of the State of New Jersey, members of the County Committee shall be elected biennially at the primary for the general election in even numbered years in the manner provided in Title 19 of the Revised Statutes. Members shall take office on the first Saturday following their election, on which day the terms of all members therefore elected shall terminate. The biennial reorganization meeting of the county committee shall be held on the First Tuesday following the primary election in even numbered years in the manner provided in Title 19 of the Revised Statutes.

## **ARTICLE III: ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Section 1: Officers: The Committee shall elect the following officers at the biennial reorganization meeting:

Chair – The Chair shall be responsible for carrying out the goals and directives as set forth herein.

Vice Chair – The Vice Chair shall be of the opposite gender of the chair and shall assist the chair as set in the duties of the chair above and shall act as Chair if the office of the chair should become vacant for any reason.

1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair, 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Chair and 4<sup>th</sup> Vice Chair – The Committee shall elect a 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Chair and a 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair of the opposite gender. The Committee shall further elect a 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice Chair and a 4<sup>th</sup> Vice Chair of the opposite gender. The Vice Chairs shall be responsible for carrying out the policies of the Committee as directed at the discretion of the chair.

Recording Secretary – The Recording Secretary shall be responsible for the recording, reading and maintenance of the minutes of all meetings of the Committee.

Corresponding Secretary – The Corresponding Secretary shall be responsible for maintaining the list of all the members and officers and official correspondence of the Committee and shall provide notice to all meetings of the Committee to all members, officers and Democratic elected Officials in Mercer County.

Treasurer – The treasurer shall be responsible for all finances of the Committee including the maintenance and filing of all account and election reports.

Sergeants-at-Arms – The two Sergeants-at-Arms shall lead the pledge of allegiance and preserve the order at all meetings of the Committee.

Section 3: A Nominating Committee shall be selected by the County Chair at least five days before the reorganization meeting and the names of the members of the nominating Committee shall be sent to the members of the County Committee with the Meeting Notice. The Nominating Committee shall accept applications for nomination to office for the purpose of ensuring that all candidates are duly registered and recognized Democrats residing in Mercer County. Nomination Committee members shall not be nominated for any office to the Committee.

Section 4: All County Committee Officers shall have obtained more than fifty percent of the vote of Committee Members in order to be elected. In the event that more than two candidates run for the same office and no individual candidate gets more than fifty percent of the vote, there shall be a runoff of the top two.

#### **ARTICLE IV: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Section 1: There may be the position of Executive Director who will be appointed by the County Chair and who will serve at the discretion of the County Chair.

#### **ARTICLE V: MUNICIPAL CHAIR**

Section 1: Each Municipality or Ward shall form a Municipal or Ward County Committee Organization and elect a Municipal Chair in accordance with Title 19.

#### **ARTICLE VI: COMMITTEES**

Section 1: The Chair shall appoint members of the following standing committees in a number sufficient to carry out the purpose of each committee and shall designate a chair to each committee. Consideration in selecting the members to each committee shall be given to affirmative action goals and equal representation among males and females. Members of the Standing Committees must be registered democrats in Mercer County and the majority of each standing committee must be comprised of County Committee members.

Membership: The Membership Committee shall be responsible for promotion and recruitment of membership in the County Committee.

Program and Workshop: The Program and Workshop Committee shall be responsible for developing, organizing and producing programs and workshops for the purpose of educating County Committee Members and interested democrats into the various aspects of party building and campaign techniques

Finance: The Finance Committee shall work with the Chair to ensure the financial goals as set forth by the Chair within the scope of the appropriate election finance laws and to ensure the financial viability of the County Committee.

Convention: The Convention Committee shall be responsible for carrying out the call of the annual County Democratic Convention for the purpose of endorsing candidates for Primary elections.

## **ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS**

Section 1: The first meeting of the County Committee shall be the Biennial Organization Meeting to be held on the first Tuesday following the Primary Election in even numbered years in accordance with these bylaws and the Revised Statutes of the State of New Jersey.

Section 2: There shall be at least two regular meetings of the Mercer County Democratic Committee held each year. One of these meetings may be held in or about the month of February for the purpose of conducting such business that is expected to impact the committee in the upcoming election year. A second meeting may be held in or about the month of September in preparation for the upcoming general election.

Section 3: Special meetings may be held at any time, upon the call of the County Chair or upon written request signed by 1/3 of the elected members of the County Committee upon presentation to the County Chair.

Section 4: All members of the Mercer County Democratic Committee shall be notified, by written notice, three days prior to the date of the Mercer County Democratic Committee Reorganization Meeting and ten days notice prior to the date of any regular or special meeting.

Section 5: Meetings shall be conducted according to Roberts Rules of parliamentary procedure.

## **ARTICLE VII: AMENDMENTS**

Section 1: Whenever an amendment to the Constitution and By Laws is to be brought before the County Committee, a statement of the proposed amendment must be included in the meeting notice and sent to all members at least ten days prior to the meeting.

Section 2: In order to adopt an amendment to the constitution and By Laws, 2/3 of the members in attendance must vote in its favor.

## **ARTICLE IX: QUORUM**

Section 1: Twenty five percent of the duly elected County Committee members must be in attendance in order to constitute a quorum at the reorganization meeting and at any other meeting of the County Committee to conduct Business.

# ***RULES OF THE MERCER COUNTY DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION***

Current as of July 1, 2008

## **Article I: Purpose**

The Purpose of the Mercer County Democratic Convention is to endorse candidates for County, State and Federal offices in the Democratic Primary in Mercer County under the slogan Regular Democratic Organization, or other such slogan as designated by the Mercer County Democratic Chair. Unendorsed candidates may run in the same column as the endorsed candidates as permitted by these rules, but may not use the same slogan. The Convention shall adopt such rules as it deems necessary to accomplish this purpose with the full and fair consideration of all potential candidates.

## **Article II: Membership**

The Mercer County Democratic Convention shall consist of delegates from the following categories:

### **Elected Official Delegates:**

All Municipal, County, State and Federal elected officials who reside in or represent any part of Mercer County and are registered Democrats.

The Democratic Members of the County Board of Elections, the Mercer County Superintendent of Elections or Deputy Superintendent, whichever said individual is a registered Democrat.

### **Party Leader Delegates:**

All duly elected officers of the Mercer County Democratic Committee.

All Democratic National Committee Members residing in Mercer County

All Democratic State Committee Members from Mercer County.

The Democratic Municipal Chair and Vice Chair from each municipality of Mercer County, the Democratic Municipal Club President and Vice President from all existing municipal clubs; and, the four Ward Chairs and Vice Chairs of the City of Trenton.

### **County Committee Delegates:**

All Mercer County Democratic Committee members who were duly elected no later than (30) days prior to the commencement of the Convention.

### **Democratic Organization Delegates and Alternates:**

One representative from each of the following Democratic organizations selected by such organizations: Trenton Polish American Democratic Club, Black Democratic Caucus, Hispanic Democratic Caucus, Federation of Democratic Women of Mercer County, C.O.O.P., Young Democrats, Young Black Democrats and the Democratic Clubs of the College of New Jersey, Rider University, Princeton University and Mercer County Community College.

The names and addresses shall be provided to the Chair of the Convention no later than eight (8) days prior to the Convention.

Democratic Organizations not listed above that are duly recognized democratic organizations in Mercer County may petition the Convention for representation in the delegation. Said petition shall set forth the organization's qualifications and the name of the selected delegate and shall be submitted to the Convention Committee within the time prescribed for organization delegates. The Convention Committee shall notify the petitioning organization prior to the commencement of the Convention if either its acceptance or rejection of the petition. The Convention Committee's decision shall be final.

#### **At-Large Delegates:**

The Mercer County Democratic County Chair shall appoint up to 25 delegates from within Mercer County. In making these appointments, the County Chair shall select delegates to ensure that the Affirmative Action Goals as set forth herein are met. The County Chair's appointments shall be submitted to the convention Committee following the deadline for selection of all other delegates mentioned above, but no later than 20 days prior to the Commencement of the Convention.

#### **Article III: Convention Committee**

The Mercer County Democratic County Chair shall appoint a standing Convention Committee, consisting of no fewer than ten (10) persons, equally divided among males and females and reasonably representative of the affirmative action goals as set forth herein.

In addition to the duties set forth above, the Convention Committee Shall: (1) Review the composition of the delegates with respect to the affirmative action guidelines; (2) ensure compliance with all deadlines regarding the seating of delegates, (3) accept and review any challenges to the seating of delegates and with compliance with the procedures as set forth in these Rules.

#### **Article IV: Challenges**

Only duly recognized delegates can make a challenge to the seating of another delegate. All challenges shall first be submitted in writing to the Convention Committee and decided by a vote of the Convention Committee. If the challenging delegate is not satisfied with the decision of the Convention Committee, the challenge may be brought before the full Convention in the form of a motion for a final determination by a majority vote of the Convention.

#### **Article V: Convention Chair**

The Mercer County Democratic Chair shall appoint a Chair of the Convention who shall serve as a presiding officer of the Convention.

#### **Article VI: Candidate Qualifications, Nominations and Speeches**

Any individual seeking the endorsement of the Convention shall submit his or her name, address and qualifications for the office they are seeking to the Convention Committee. The Committee shall review all applications to ensure that all candidates are duly registered Democrats and qualified for the office sought. The names of all qualified Candidates shall be submitted to the Convention Chair. The Chair shall make a list of the names and addresses of all delegates to the Convention available to all qualified candidates once all delegate seats are established.

The Convention Chair shall report the names of all qualified candidates to the full convention. The Chair shall then open the floor to nominations. All candidates must be nominated and seconded by duly seated delegates to be considered for endorsement by the Convention.

All qualified candidates may speak to the convention. Each qualified candidate may select nominating and seconding delegates to speak on the candidate's behalf to the Convention. The Time and order of speeches shall be determined by the Convention Chair, who in making such determination shall consider the total number of persons seeking to speak, fairness to the candidates and the time reasonably required to complete the business of the Convention.

#### **Article VII: Voting Procedures**

Each individual delegate present shall have only one vote, regardless of the number of qualifications the individual delegate may have in order to become a delegate. When the office being voted upon is only for a portion of the County (i.e. New Jersey Legislature and United States Congress), only those delegates registered to vote in that respective part of the County will be eligible to vote.

All voting shall be conducted by secret paper ballot unless an alternate method is decided by a majority of the Convention. Paper ballots shall only contain the name of the office being voted upon. Delegates shall write-in the name(s) of the candidate(s) they wish to support. The names of all duly nominated candidates shall be displayed in the Convention room in a manner reasonably visible to all delegates.

Each office and special election seat(s) (i.e. unexpired term) shall be voted on separately.

All candidates must receive more than fifty percent (50%) of the ballots cast in order to receive the endorsement of the Convention. The first candidate(s) for any office who receives more than fifty percent (50%) of the ballots cast shall be the endorsed candidate(s). In the event that no candidate receives more than fifty percent (50%) of the ballots cast, there shall be a runoff between the top two candidates for each unendorsed office, except when an office has more than one seat and not all seats are endorsed by candidates receiving more than 50% of the ballots cast, then there shall be a runoff among all candidates who received at least twenty percent (20%) of the ballots cast unless such action would decide the winner(s). Then the runoff will be between the candidate(s) receiving the highest number of votes corresponding to the number of seats available plus the next highest vote getting candidate.

When an office has more than one seat and no candidate receives at least twenty percent (20%) of the vote on the first ballot, there shall be a runoff for each seat separately among all the candidates except the low vote getter whose name shall be eliminated from consideration. The process shall continue until all seats are endorsed by candidates who receive more than 50% of the ballots cast.

#### **Article VII: Unendorsed Candidates**

Any candidate failing to be endorsed shall have the option of choosing to run in the same column as the endorsed candidate(s) but without the party slogan only if the unendorsed candidate received at least forty percent (40%) of the vote of the registered delegates in any ballot in which a candidate received the endorsement of the Convention.

**Article IX: Affirmative Action Goals**

The delegation shall as close as possible be equally divided among males and females. The delegation shall also reasonably represent the percentages of black and Hispanic population segments as indicated by the most recent Federal Census. The Mercer County Democratic County Chair shall use the at-large delegate selections to correct as close to possible any violations of these goals.

**Article X: Convention Notice**

The Mercer County Democratic Chair shall determine the date, time and place of the Convention subject to the following limitations:

The Convention shall be scheduled no later than five (5) days before the date scheduled for the filing of candidate petitions.

All delegates shall receive notice of the Convention in writing mailed no later than the seventh day before the date scheduled for the Convention.

The Convention Committee shall be responsible for the mailing of all notices.

**Article XI: Quorum**

One hundred delegates (100) must be present at the Convention in order to conduct any business of the Convention.