



# Local Party Reorganization Guidelines and FAQs

The exciting time of the year where we gather to elect new party leadership begins on December 1<sup>st</sup>! Below are some helpful tips and rules you'll want to follow to hold a successful reorganization meeting. If you have questions that are not addressed in this document, please contact [partyaffairs@wa-democrats.org](mailto:partyaffairs@wa-democrats.org).

## What is a Reorganization Meeting?

The State Party's Charter and Bylaws require that all county and legislative district party organizations elect new officers (a process called "reorganization") every two years, shortly after each even-year election. Counties are responsible for planning and running their reorganization meetings in accordance with the State Party's Charter and Bylaws; however, in large counties (Clark, King, Pierce, Snohomish and Spokane), the county organization also assist their LDs in planning and running their meeting. LD's that encompass multiple counties will receive assistance from the State Party office.

At these reorganization meetings newly elected PCOs elect local leadership like chairs, vice chairs, and state committee members.

## Time and Date of Reorganization Meetings

Ideally, all County or Legislative District Reorganization Meetings should be completed no later than January 16, 2019. Why? Those newly elected State Committee members will be voting for State Party Leadership at the January 24-27, 2018 Reorganization Meeting of the Washington State Democratic Party in Olympia and we want to be able to give them reasonable notice. Also, those newly elected Chairs and Vice-Chairs are welcome to attend important planning meetings that same weekend. It is crucial that you make sure that your list of newly elected party officers and WSDCC committee members is received by the state party prior to this meeting and we would appreciate every effort to receive that no later than January 16<sup>th</sup> to ensure proper notification and credentialing of meeting attendees, as well as time to make travel and accommodation arrangements for the meeting.

If you have not done so already, please select the location, time and date of your reorganization meeting NOW. It's important that you send this information to new PCOs several times in advance of the date. DO pick a location large enough to have your meeting and consider the support and logistics your will need for your elections.

Please send the information regarding the date, time and location of your reorganization meeting to BOTH [partyaffairs@wa-democrats.org](mailto:partyaffairs@wa-democrats.org) and [drew@wa-democrats.org](mailto:drew@wa-democrats.org) by **Friday, November 16, 2018** so that we can announce it on our webpage.

## Eligible Voters at Reorganization Meetings - PCOs

At local reorganization meetings, only Precinct Committee Officers (PCOs) elected during the primary election on August 7, 2018 (**including any PCOs who were the only candidate to file in their precinct in May, and were elected without appearing on a ballot**) are allowed to vote for the chair, vice chair, state committee members and any representatives the LPO is authorized to send to other Party organizations. They are also the only people eligible to vote on the adoption or amendment of LPO bylaws.



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Eligible voters in elections for other leadership positions and issues are determined by local bylaws, and you will need to check those and explain them thoroughly to your PCOs. Also remember that **proxies are not permitted at reorganization meetings – PCOs MUST be present to vote**. State Party staff will work to collect data from county elections officials on all newly elected PCOs and make it available via Votebuilder. If you need a list of newly elected PCOs in your County or Legislative District, contact [partyaffairs@wa-democrats.org](mailto:partyaffairs@wa-democrats.org).

Remember, you will need a verified list of your newly elected PCOs for your reorganization meeting.

## **Leadership Election Results – Finalizing and Communicating**

Make sure to gather name, dates of birth, and contact information from all officers elected at your reorganization meeting as you'll need to **report their contact information to State Party staff NO LATER than January 20, 2019**.

There are two ways to report your results:

- **Through our online form**. The easiest way to report your results will be through an online form that will be accessible **by clicking here**. Ideally, have the newly elected leaders enter in their information right after being elected, and submit the form at the end of your meeting.
- **Emailing a Reorganization Meeting Results form**. If you are electing an unusually large number of officers (more than 12) it may be easier to email your information directly to the party. Please send the Reorganization Meeting Results Form to us at [partyaffairs@wa-democrats.org](mailto:partyaffairs@wa-democrats.org). Please send this information in Excel format.

## **Additional Frequently Asked Questions**

- a) Do I have to be a PCO to run for leadership?

The State Party does not restrict who can run for any office, including Chair.

- b) I can't attend my reorganization meeting; can I send a proxy?

No. The State Party Charter states that proxies "may be used in accordance with the National Charter." Under the Democratic National Committee's Charter, proxies are not allowed unless they are explicitly permitted by the Bylaws. Robert's Rules also prohibit proxy or absentee voting unless specifically authorized in the Bylaws. The National Party's Bylaws permit proxy voting at National Committee meetings but are silent about lower level meetings.

Similarly, the State Party Charter permits proxy voting at State Committee meetings but does not authorize it at lower level meetings. PCOs must come in-person to the meeting in order to vote.

- c) When do I have to hold my reorganization meeting?

The State Party's Bylaws require that reorganization meetings be held in December or January following an even-year election. State law requires that county organizations hold their reorganization meetings by Jan. 12, 2019 ([RCW 29A.80.030](#)) and the State Party has by custom followed this requirement. In addition, as a practical matter, local party reorganization meetings must be held at least a week prior to the first State Central Committee meeting of the year, so that newly elected state committee members



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can receive proper notice and fully participate in the State reorganization meeting. We would appreciate every effort to hold those reorganization meetings no later than January 16<sup>th</sup> to ensure proper notification and credentialing of State Committee meeting attendees, as well as time to make travel and accommodation arrangements for the meeting.

While there are conflicting state statutes on the books around when the meetings must be held, the party's governing documents rather than the conflicting statutes are the authority on these matters.

- d) Does our organization need to elect a State Committee Man and State Committee Woman?

No. To increase diversity the DNC and WSDCC recently changed our Charter and Bylaws to be inclusive of gender non-binary and nonconforming individuals and this change by its terms overrides any inconsistent language in statutes or local organization bylaws. To that end, each local organization must still elect two State Committee members, but they need not be individuals identifying as one man and one woman. The new rules state each local organization must elect "two State Committee Members of different genders." This means organizations cannot elect two people identifying as men, but they can elect, for example, one identifying as a man and another identifying as non-binary regardless of how their gender presents on appearance.

- e) What accessibility laws does my reorganization meeting need to adhere to?

As Democrats we strive to be inclusive of people from all backgrounds and local party organizations should always hold their meetings in places that are ADA accessible. The WSDCC has worked with the Disability Issues Caucus to put together a great checklist of parameters to consider when selecting a meeting location that can be found on [our website here](#).

Please review this checklist BEFORE you select a meeting location. This list includes both basic legally required criteria and ideas on how to make your meeting more inclusive for all beyond what's required by law. Again, please consult these guidelines and reach out directly to the Disability Issues Caucus or State Party staff if you need further assistance and guidance.

- f) Do non-PCO's have to be able to see how each PCO votes?

It depends on your organization. Under the State Party Charter, most votes taken by a PCO are expected to be open – a PCO is the representatives for Democrats in their neighborhood, and those Democrats have a right to know how their PCO voted. However, the Charter specifically exempts "the election by precinct committee officers of [local] organization officers" from this requirement, so long as there is some mechanism to ensure that only eligible voters cast ballots. If your organization has those procedures in place, such as a place where PCOs sign in and pick up voting credentials, then secret ballots are permitted.

- g) Can we use secret ballots for the elections?

Yes. The State Party Charter allows for secret or open ballots per Section VII.G.2 which reads as follows: "When a person votes as an elected representative, open ballots shall be used. This provision does not apply to the election by precinct committee officers of organizational officers (e.g., chair, vice chair, secretary, treasurer, state committee persons), provided that there is a mechanism to ensure the eligibility of those who cast ballots (e.g., a check-off list, sign-in-sheet, ballot receipts)."