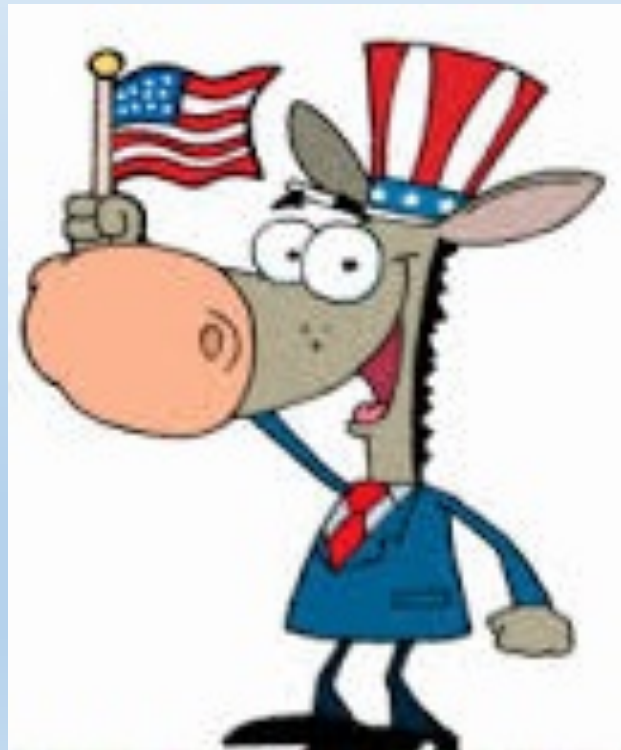


Effective Club Endorsement Practices

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Effective Club Endorsement Practices

What is a club?

A Democratic Club is an organization of Democrats allied by defined geographic area, special interest or cultural community. A Club's purpose is to support and strengthen the Democratic Party through the political development, activity and advocacy of its membership.

A Club's objectives are to foster active interest in the local, state and national Democratic Party, to contribute to San Diego County Democratic Party leadership and responsibility, to support the campaigns of Democratic candidates representing the Club's constituency, and to engage in grassroots outreach, organizing and recruitment within its area, or special interest or cultural community.

- San Diego County Democratic Party bylaws
(Article X, Section 1, Paragraph A)

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Why do clubs endorse candidates and ballot measures?

- Establishing on-the-record support
- Directing members and receptive parties to volunteer and vote for endorsed candidate/ballot measure
- Sanctioning club efforts towards financial support
- Building support and momentum for a candidate or issue position
- Club promotion

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Why do candidates and ballot measures want club endorsements?

- Establishing on-the-record support
- Directing members and receptive parties to volunteer and vote for endorsed candidate/ballot measure
- Sanctioning club efforts towards financial support
- Building support and momentum for a candidate or issue position
- Building momentum towards other, more significant endorsements

A CLUB'S ENDORSEMENT IS ONE OF ITS MOST VALUABLE ASSETS, AS IMPORTANT AS HOW MANY MEMBERS IT HAS OR HOW MUCH MONEY IS IN ITS TREASURY.

THEREFORE, IT SHOULD BE HANDLED AS THE PRECIOUS RESOURCE THAT IT IS!

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Which candidates/ballot measures should a club consider?

- National candidates (President, US Senate)
- Statewide candidates/ballot measures (Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Controller, Insurance Commissioner, Supt. of Education, Board of Equalization, state propositions)
- Countywide candidates/ballot measures (District Attorney, Sheriff, Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk, county propositions)
- City candidates/ballot measures (Mayor, local propositions)
- District candidates (US House, CA Senate, CA Assembly, County Board of Supervisors)
- Other offices (school boards, water boards, party offices, other unelected offices, etc.)

Should a club's endorsements have regional boundaries?

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What objective criteria should be used for a club's endorsement?

- Candidate is a Democrat
- Club candidate questionnaire score

What subjective criteria should be used for a club's endorsement?

- Candidate platform
- Candidate background
- Candidate's existing endorsements (elected officials, notable citizens, organizations)
- Amount of money raised
- Electability (the "x factor")

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Who should be allowed to vote on a club's endorsement?

- Club members!

But which club members?

- Membership eligibility
- Voting eligibility
- Membership notification
- Definition of quorum

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What are the possible outcomes?

- Endorsement
- Rating (Qualified, Unacceptable)
- No Endorsement

What will be the voting mechanism?

- Voice vote
- Hand vote
- Secret ballot
- Required percentage for endorsement/rating

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Other Considerations:

- “Friendly Incumbent” endorsement: criteria?
- “Priority” campaigns: What does this mean?

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OK, so you've endorsed in a race.

NOW WHAT?

Fundamentally: What will your club do for your endorsed campaign?

- Volunteer for campaign
- Raise money for campaign
- Publicize endorsement
 - Within Democratic party circles
 - At street fairs (capture names/email addresses!)
 - Phone banking to voters
 - Newspaper ads
 - Club website
 - Voter guides

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Suggested Plan for Effective Club Endorsement Process:

1. Determine club platform (i.e. what issues does your club care most about?)
2. Create candidate questionnaire that reflects platform
3. Look at next election year's list of offices:
 - a. Gubernatorial years (statewide offices, countywide offices, all US House seats, all Assembly seats, even-numbered State Senate seats, San Diego County BOS Seats 4 and 5, various city council seats/school board seats/other)
 - b. Presidential years (all US House seats, all Assembly seats, odd-numbered State Senate seats, San Diego County BOS Seats 1-3, various city council seats/school board seats/other)
 - c. US Senate seats for California: 2018 [Feinstein], 2022 [Harris] (repeats every six years)
4. Working backwards from primary election, create endorsement calendar; each endorsement meeting should be a mix of "boring" races and "juicy" races (i.e. open and/or hotly contested races)
5. Bulletproof bylaws to ensure fair and clear endorsement process (i.e. fair and clear to campaigns and to club members)
6. Give all known candidates identical notice of endorsement meeting and opportunity to submit candidate questionnaire

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Suggested Plan for Effective Club Endorsement Process (continued):

7. Designate endorsement meetings in advance on club calendar (preferably on web site)
8. Give notice of endorsements at one month's meeting at prior month's meeting
9. Notify membership of upcoming endorsements via newsletter and/or email
10. Conduct endorsement forum fairly
 - a. Chair should be impartial
 - b. Each candidate should be treated equally and consistently with other endorsement meetings
 - c. Time limits should be announced as meeting begins: opening statements, membership questions, candidate answers, closing statements)
11. Do everything you can do (ethically) to support your endorsed candidates and campaigns

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Endorsement Case Study 1

The North Park Democratic Club is having its regular meeting in January 2018. The membership has not been informed that any endorsements might be taking place at this meeting.

One of several Democrats who are running for San Diego County District Attorney just happens to show up at the meeting. She is allowed to address the membership, as any guest or candidate would be allowed to do.

Once she has concluded her brief remarks, the club president says, "Well, since you're here, we might as well endorse in your race." The membership immediately votes to endorse her candidacy for San Diego County District Attorney.

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Endorsement Case Study 2

The Morley Field Democratic Club has worked diligently to space out its endorsements for the 2018 political cycle. The race for San Diego County Sheriff has been scheduled for its April 2018 meeting. Four Democrats are running.

The board member in charge of contacting candidates finds each candidate's contact information via the San Diego County Registrar of Voters. He emails candidate questionnaires to the emails that each candidate provided.

When the night of the April 2018 meeting arrives, only one of the four Democratic candidates has submitted his questionnaire. This candidate is endorsed by the club.

As news of the club's endorsement is publicized, the three other Democratic candidates for Sheriff begin to protest that they were never informed about the endorsement forum.

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Endorsement Case Study 3

The Mount Soledad Democratic Club is facilitating a properly noticed endorsement forum featuring two Democrats who are running for the CA Assembly. Both candidates have scored 100% on the club's candidate questionnaire.

After the endorsement forum has concluded, the candidates leave the room so that the membership can discuss the race. Before she calls on anyone, the club president claims "personal privilege" to speak about the candidates. The president proceeds to inveigh against one of the candidates and his decision to run against his opponent, a "great Democrat," as described by the president.

After other members have made statements about the two candidates, both pro and con, the endorsement vote is taken. The club decides to endorse the "great Democrat."

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Endorsement Case Study 4

The San Diego Young Professionals Democratic Club is having its regularly scheduled meeting. One of San Diego's members of Congress, a Democrat, has asked to address the club. Her reelection is being challenged by another Democrat.

Many of the congresswoman's local staff are active members of the club. After she finishes her remarks, one of her staff makes the motion to endorse her for reelection. Because this particular meeting is not well attended, most of the attendees also happen to be staff members, who move to suspend the club's bylaws so that they can endorse in this race. The bylaws are suspended, then an endorsement vote is taken and the club endorses the congresswoman for reelection.

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Endorsement Case Study 5

The Borrego Springs Democratic Club meeting is about to begin. The centerpiece of this meeting will be a properly noticed endorsement forum featuring several Democrats who are running for a seat on the San Diego County Board of Supervisors.

A line of several dozen people are waiting in line. They have never attended the club but are all anxious to sign up as new members. Once they have paid for their membership, they are immediately eligible to vote on any club matters, including endorsements.

One of the candidates is overwhelmingly endorsed. Almost all of the new members voted to endorse this candidate.

After this endorsement forum is concluded, most of the new members promptly leave. As a result, the club no longer has a quorum (due to its instantly increased membership) and cannot conduct any further business (including a forum on a school board race and possible endorsement in that race).

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Endorsement Case Study 6

The San Ysidro Democratic Club board is looking towards the next election cycle and which races will be on the ballot.

The current mayor of Escondido will be termed out. This seat may present an opportunity to elect a Democrat for the first time in decades. The board votes to feature all Democratic candidates for Escondido mayor at an endorsement forum at one of their future meetings.

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Endorsement Case Study 7

The San Diego Sikh Democratic Club board is looking towards the next election cycle and which races will be on the ballot.

The current mayor of Escondido will be termed out. This seat may present an opportunity to elect a Democrat for the first time in decades. One of the Democratic candidates running for Escondido mayor is an observant Sikh who is a well regarded and highly visible community member in the city. If he wins, he would be the first observant Sikh to hold any elected office in the entire county and one of the few Sikhs to hold elected office in the country.

Although most of the club's membership lives far away from Escondido, the board votes to feature all Democratic candidates for Escondido mayor at an endorsement forum at one of their future meetings. The Sikh candidate is endorsed and the membership immediately votes to make the race one of the club's priority campaigns for this election cycle.

Questions? Comments?

