

34th Legislative District Democratic Organization Code of Conduct

Commitment: This document is to define and state our commitment to the expected behavior and conduct of any person participating in events or meetings of the 34th Legislative District Democratic Organization (34th Dems).

Diversity is the strength of the 34th Dems. To foster and build on that diversity, members are urged to acknowledge and celebrate that diversity. Given that the 34th Dems is an all-volunteer organization, we are committed to the following:

- Our central mission is to work to elect Democrats and engage in local, county, and state politics.
- Members are expected to engage with each other and the community with respect and civility. We will avoid negative politics; negative political action increases apathy and is likely to discourage membership and participation.
- Members are responsible for fostering a safe, open, and welcoming environment that encourages participation at any and all events and meetings in which the 34th Dems are involved or sponsoring.
- Elected and appointed executive board members have an additional responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner that facilitates a positive environment at all times.
- In order to increase participation, meeting and events happen in a variety of venues including online. Online meetings, events, and conversations can pose a challenge for members to remain civil during political discourse. Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram are some of the platforms used by the 34th LD Dems. Avoiding conversations that can be construed as cyber-bullying should remain a priority in maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for all members and guests.

I. Purpose

The 34th Legislative District Democratic Organization (34th Dems) is dedicated to maintaining a culture of respect, inclusion, and equity. This Code of Conduct (Code) defines the standard of behavior by which all who participate in meetings or events hosted or sponsored by the 34th Dems must abide. The Code establishes a process to address alleged violations. In defining and enforcing standards of behavior, it is the goal of the 34th Dems to keep and enhance membership and public trust in this organization. As an organization taking part in public affairs, we must commit to maintaining a safe environment for all, to educating voters, and to facilitating civil dialogue **that** builds communities, improves diversity and inclusion, and increases participation.

II. Scope

A. This Code applies to the language and actions of all who attend or otherwise participate in:

- Meetings of the 34th Dems;
- Meetings of the Executive Board (Board);
- Events hosted by or on behalf of the 34th Dems;
- Events participated in by or on behalf of the 34th Dems;
- Events sponsored by the 34th Dems;
- Official correspondence or publication of the 34th Dems;
- Any correspondence, communication, or publication (including social media), wherein a member of the 34th Dems identifies their current or previous membership or appointed/elected position within the 34th Dems; and
- Duties or responsibilities as an appointed or elected officer of the 34th Dems.

B. The language and actions violating this Code of Conduct include but are not limited to; ad hominem arguments, cyberbullying, assault, bigotry, discrimination, harassment, hate speech,

34th Legislative District Democratic Organization Code of Conduct

oppression, and suppression. If warranted after review of an alleged violation of this Code of Conduct, any member or appointed/elected officer of the 34th Dems may be subject to one or more of the penalties specified herein for violation of the Code of Conduct. Any visitor or guest violating this Code of Conduct may be asked to leave the meeting or event.

III. Standard of Behavior

Disagreements happen but are not an excuse for poor behavior. We must ensure everyone is heard, understood, and respected. It is expected that all attendees and participants:

- Treat everyone with dignity, respect, and worth;
- Use welcoming and inclusive language;
- Assume good intent on the part of speakers and participants;
- Avoid profane, prejudicial, exclusionary, abusive, and sexualized language; and
- Respect the personal space and property of others.

It is expected that, if an attendee or participant experience or witness behaviors that may violate these or any related standards, the violation can be reported to a member of the Executive Board.

IV. Definitions

Ad Hominem – an argument or statement directed against a person (rather than their position) relating to any real or perceived difference, characteristic, or preference; includes spoken and written defamatory language.

Assault – unwelcome, non-consensual, or inappropriate physical contact; physical violence or attack.

Bigotry – language or actions demonstrating intolerance toward those holding different opinions.

Chair – the Chair of the 34th Dems.

Correspondence or Publication- formal or informal debate or discussion, email communication, print or internet media (official statements, comments, letters to the editor, etc.), social media (comments, messages, etc.), and any document published or dispersed by or on behalf of the 34th Dems.

Cyberbullying – any electronic expression perceived as ad hominem attack, intimidation, or harassment having the effect of instilling fear, creating a hostile environment, oppression, or suppression (may also be classified as bigotry, discrimination, bullying, harassment, or hate speech).

Discrimination – language or actions demonstrating unjust or prejudicial treatment of a person or persons based on real or perceived differences.

Executive Board (Board) – the appointed and elected officers and committee chairs of the 34th Dems.

Harassment – aggressive pressure or intimidation; unwelcome, non-consensual, or inappropriate remarks or physical advances.

Hate Speech – speech that offends, threatens, or insults groups based on race, color, religion (or lack thereof), national origin, ancestry, marital status, age, sex gender identity or expression, LGBTQI (Lesbian Gay Bi-Sexual Transsexual Queer Intersex), disability, veteran status, or other traits.

34th Legislative District Democratic Organization Code of Conduct

Oppression – language or actions demonstrating prolonged discrimination.

State Committeeperson – one of the two State Committeepersons elected by the 34th Dems.

Suppression – language or actions intended toward or having the effect of preventing the development, action, or expression of feelings or ideas.

Vice Chair – the First or Second Vice Chair of the 34th Dems.

V. Initiation of Complaint

- A. Any participant may initiate a complaint. The complainant need not be the alleged victim of a violation in order to initiate a complaint.
- B. A complaint should (1) describe the alleged incident, (2) identify persons involved, and (3) identify any known witnesses to the alleged incident.
- C. A complaint must be submitted in writing to the Chair with a copy to a Vice Chair and a State Committeeperson. ***If the complaint is against the Chair, the complaint will be submitted to the Vice Chairs and a State Committeeperson. If the complaint is against a Vice Chair, the complaint shall be submitted to the Chair with a copy to the other Vice Chair and a State Committeeperson.***
- D. In advance of accepting a complaint, the complainant must be advised that in the case of potential criminal conduct, law enforcement may be notified.

VI. Initial Procedures

- A. The Chair must notify the Board of any filed complaint within two days and, with consultation of at least two additional members of the Board, shall review the complaint within five business days of filing. The Chair may recommend disciplinary action or further investigation to the Board.
- B. Upon reviewing the complaint, the Chair shall call a special meeting **of the Board** to consider the complaint within ten business days of the conclusion of the Chair's review. Notice of such special meeting will be given to all members of the Board. A quorum shall consist of five Board members (Bylaws – Article III, Sec. 4(1)). Action by the Board may continue during an investigation by law enforcement.
- C. Once a meeting is established, the complainant, victim, witnesses, and the alleged violator shall be (1) notified with the time, date and location of the meeting, (2) provided with an outline of the next procedural steps, and (3) reminded of the confidential nature of the proceedings.
- D. The Chair may, with agreement of at least two additional members of the Board, impose an interim suspension of an alleged violator for up to 30 days from all 34th Dems activities and appointments pending an investigation. The Board may, by majority vote (50 percent plus one vote) of Board members present and voting, extend the interim suspension until the conclusion of the investigation. *If an elected or appointed PCO has been suspended, that individual shall have the right to vote on those items that are limited to PCO votes.*

34th Legislative District Democratic Organization Code of Conduct

- E. If the complaint is against the Chair, Vice Chair, and/or other Board member(s), the lead role in these procedures shall be assumed by an officer that is not involved in the alleged violation in order of succession.

VII. Duties of the Executive Board

- A. The Board shall receive any recommendation of the Chair (Sec. VI, A) and investigate all submitted complaints to the extent reasonable considering (1) the severity of the alleged violation, (2) the specificity of the statement, and (3) the availability of witnesses. The Board may determine no further investigation is necessary by a two-thirds vote of Board members present and voting. (Article IV, Sec.7).
- B. Prior to their decision, the Board shall offer the alleged violator an opportunity to present witnesses and their version of events.
- C. During the special meeting to review the complaint, the Board may establish an ad-hoc committee (by two-thirds vote of Board members present and voting) to further investigate the complaint and recommend any actions to be pursued by the Board.
 - 1. Alleged violators, victims, witnesses, and complainants shall not serve on this ad-hoc committee.
 - 2. With the consent of the new organization, members of the ad-hoc committee may continue serving through the disposition of the complaint, even if their term of office has expired.
 - 3. Members shall be appointed to the ad-hoc committee by the Chair, or by 1st Vice Chair should the complaint be against the Chair.
 - 4. The ad-hoc committee must complete their investigation and submit a report, including any recommended actions, to the Board within ten business days **unless there is some reason for an extension**.
 - 5. The Board must reconvene within ten business days of receiving the ad-hoc committee report to decide on any disciplinary actions.
- D. Any disciplinary action must receive a majority vote (50 percent plus one vote) of Board members present and voting to be imposed.
- E. Absent extraordinary circumstances, all investigations of the Board and any ad-hoc committee shall conclude within thirty-five days from the initial filing of the complaint. If no decision is reached within thirty-five days from the initial filing, and there are no extraordinary circumstances, the complaint shall be dismissed.
- F. In the event a complaint is summarily dismissed from the Board, the complainant and alleged violator shall be notified of the extent of the investigation undertaken and the reason the complaint was dismissed.
- G. In the event a penalty is imposed, the complainant and violator shall be notified of the extent of the investigation and the reason for the penalty.

VIII. Penalties for Violation

The following penalties may be imposed for violation of the Code of Conduct. Any suspension, removal, or expulsion imposed shall conclude at the term of the penalty or on December 31st of an even numbered year (whichever is sooner).

34th Legislative District Democratic Organization Code of Conduct

- A. Warning/Reprimand/Censure: The Chair shall review with the violator, in the presence of the complainant at the complainant's option, the violator's conduct. The Chair will explain to the violator that the conduct was inappropriate, and that repetition will lead to further and potentially more serious disciplinary action. The Chair will obtain from the violator a commitment and plan to reform the inappropriate conduct. The Board may also adopt a resolution, which shall be made part of the minutes of the Board meeting, describing the conduct violating the Code and formally explaining the punishment to the violator.
- B. Suspension: By affirmative majority vote (50 percent plus one vote) of the Board members present and voting, the Board may immediately suspend the violator from all 34th Dems appointments, meetings, events, and activities. **PCO cannot be excluded on vote to replace elected official holding a partisan office, reorganization and vote for Chair, vice-chairs, and state committeepersons.** (Article III& IV, Sec.7)
- C. Removal from Position: The Chair may remove the chair of any standing or ad-hoc committee effective immediately. At the next membership meeting, members may vote to uphold or overturn the Chair's decision. If a majority (50 percent plus one vote) of members present and voting do not vote to overturn the Chair's decision, the removal will stand. Prior to any vote, the violator and the complainant shall be entitled, but not required, to address the 34th Dems present during debate on the motion to remove. ***Removal of elected officers is governed by Article IV, Sec. 7 of the Bylaws.***
- D. Expulsion: By affirmative two-thirds vote of the Board members present and voting, the Board may recommend the expulsion of the violator. Given ten days' notice, the membership of the 34th Dems will vote on the violator's expulsion from the body. This expulsion is confirmed with an affirmative two-thirds vote of members present and voting. Both the violator and the complainant shall be entitled, but not required, to address the 34th Dems membership during debate on the motion to expel. **Suspension or expulsion of a PCO is governed by Article III of the Bylaws.**

IX. Confidentiality

All parts of these proceedings shall remain confidential. Violation of the confidentiality of these proceedings shall be a violation of the Code of Conduct subject to any of the Penalties for Violation.

X. Robert's Rules

In matters not expressly addressed in these Rules, Robert's Rules may be consulted for guidance but need not be followed if, in the opinion of the Board, it would be more appropriate in the specific circumstances to follow an alternative course.