

## **CONVENTION PLANNING GUIDE FOR SOUTH CAROLINA COUNTIES**

As a member of the Republican party, a volunteer organization, the prospect of reorganization and convention may be a little overwhelming. By now, you are aware that every two years, the party “reorganizes.” This means that your party has an opportunity to increase numbers of enthusiastic members, to raise up new precinct and party leaders, and to make a difference in your county and the state of South Carolina.

Start early!

If your team waits until the month before (or even three or six months before) to begin planning, you’ve waited too late. This guide should assist you and your team in starting and planning your best convention ever.

Let’s dig in!

### **BEFORE YOUR CONVENTION -- NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS**

Newspaper advertisements are no longer required (as of 2021) for reorganization or for county party conventions, but it is best practice to use multiple methods for publicizing reorganization and convention. Since one of our priorities is to grow representative government at every level, it’s important to encourage people to participate in the reorganization and convention process. There are many low cost (and no cost) ways to publicize the meetings and spread the word to any and all who want to engage in grassroots activism.

#### **Selecting a Credentials Committee and Other Temporary Officers**

Months before the convention, be thinking about a temporary convention president, temporary secretary and a credentials committee to be elected at the county convention. These positions are mandated by state party rules and state law and are necessary to preserve the integrity of your county convention. (SCGOP rule 5-C-2 and State Law 7-9-80)

First, let’s consider the requirement of a credentials committee. This committee should actually be formed long before the convention; it’s often a formality to vote on these folks at convention, since their work begins long before that assembly. (One exception to that would be if you are in a situation where you want to ensure fairness and impartiality from a committee that you feel may be biased. In that case, you want to nominate/elect additional members to the committee.) It is even useful to put the committee in place before reorg; having individuals who are already familiar with the process, the precincts, and even the members and leaders of the precincts can be the foundation of a well-run reorganization and convention. (Most counties have in their rules the chairman’s ability to create “special

committees” for particular purposes; people can be appointed and serve for a specified period of time.)

The members of the credentials committee are charged with the duty of validating the number of county delegates from each precinct in attendance at the county convention. The committee needs to keep count of county delegates from each precinct for purposes of seating alternates in the absence of delegates and they need to keep track of delegate ballots for the election of county officers and state delegates/alternates. In accordance with State Party Rule 5-C-3, during the convention, the credentials committee chair will make the report of the number of verified delegates in the assembly. Any appeals from people who disagree with the report will be made at that time to the assembly (SC 7-9-80). Any further appeals will be made to the state Executive Committee, per SCGOP rule 5 C 3.

Recent situations across the state have shown that it’s vitally important to have an alert and efficient credentials committee. They should be “armed” on convention day with all of the precinct forms, spreadsheets, etc from the reorganization process so that they are prepared to handle any complaint effectively.

Next, lay the groundwork for the convention officers. The temporary convention president and secretary are charged with the duty of holding the election of permanent convention officers (for candidate nominating purposes) and county officers. Best practice is to select temporary convention officers before the county convention so they have time to review parliamentary procedure, state party rules and any county by-laws that may exist guiding the county convention. It’s important to consider and choose a convention president that is seen as fair and unbiased, because this person must carefully guide the convention with order in the case of disputed elections.

Temporary convention officers may be elected as permanent convention officers, but it is not mandatory. If the assembly prefers, the convention may be presided over by one individual as a temporary president, and another elected to the position of permanent president. This is important if a portion of the assembly feels the temporary president will not be fair and/or unbiased.

### **Convention Location and Materials**

Months before the convention date, the county should have a set time, date and location for the county conventions. Again, start early! Many counties’ rules specify that the county executive committee should set the date and location, but it is within the rules for the county chair to appoint a special committee to research and secure a venue, and announce the date, etc to the party members. Another option is for the chair or a vice chair to research and bring their findings to the county committee, who can vote to approve the

venue and date. Each of these options are more efficient than having the entire committee try to work on it.

### **There are other arrangements that need time:**

Remember that unlike the “immediate consumption” of Facebook and other social media outlets, there are time constraints for publishing any newspaper advertisements your group chooses to use for the county convention. Ballots and other convention materials need to be printed in advance. Many counties in the past have chosen to have delegate packets prepared in advance with separate ballots for state delegates, county officers and other convention business (resolutions, etc.) – this is a great idea and ensures that there are a proper number of county delegates represented from each precinct. Also, multiple ballots may be required for the election of county officers (because county officers are elected by a majority vote) so back up ballots need to be at hand for elections at your county convention.

### Other arrangements that need to be considered:

- Do I have enough chairs at my convention hall and do signs need to be produced to designate the seats of the delegates from each precinct?
- Is there an American Flag at my convention location or do I need to supply my own?
- Do I have enough volunteers to help sign in delegates and alternates, receive fees (if your county has any) for the convention, and count ballots?
- Do I need to have a designated parliamentarian at my convention in times where the rules need explaining?
- Do I need to print out copies of the Republican Creed?
- Do I need to make copies of resolutions passed at the precinct meetings and from my county Resolutions Committee to distribute to county convention delegates?
- Do I need to have drinks and snacks for convention attendees in case the convention runs long? (Are food and drink allowed in the venue?)
- Do I have a complete copy of the South Carolina Republican Party Rules and Robert’s Rules of Order printed out and on hand for the convention president and/or the convention parliamentarian?

### **Credentialing of Convention Attendees**

It is of the utmost importance to properly credential convention delegates and alternates at your county convention. Convention delegates and alternates must sign in upon their arrival by name of their precinct. When signing in the convention delegates, take note of the number of delegate seats being filled so alternates can be seated in the absence of a delegate. To decrease the likelihood of confusion when dealing with delegates, alternates

and visitors to the county convention, nametags and/or badges may be produced to clearly indicate the role of the convention attendee. Moreover, assigned seating by precinct may be used as a means of identifying a convention delegate's precinct during the convention – a method that is used at the State Convention and the Republican National Convention. After the credentials committee report is given, all alternates belonging to a precinct without a full slate of county delegates must be converted to county delegates and may be given the credentials and necessary ballots, etc. of a delegate. Alternates are also seated if a county delegate from their precinct must leave the convention and should be given the proper credentials. Please remember that if your county has specific packets/ballots for your county delegates and a county delegate needs to leave the convention, that county delegate needs to surrender their credentials and delegate materials so an alternate may take their seat. This should be announced several times from the podium, and the individuals taking the packets from delegates who leave, should be pointed out (or stand) so that delegates can recognize them.

### **SAMPLE STANDING RULES FOR THE COUNTY CONVENTION**

The following are sample standing rules for your county convention.

1. There shall be no food, firearms, beverage or tobacco products on the assembly floor.
2. Only credentialed delegates, credentialed VIP's and elected or appointed officers of the Convention shall be allowed on the Convention floor.
3. Candidates for public office shall be permitted to address the convention for no more than three minutes. Guest speakers that are not candidates for public office or the keynote speaker shall be permitted to address the convention for no more than three minutes.
4. All nominations for party officers shall be from the floor of the Convention.
5. Each candidate for a contested party office shall be limited to a speech of not more than five minutes in length.
6. Each candidate shall be allowed one nominating speech of not more than two minutes in length and two seconding speeches of not more than thirty-seconds in length.
7. Elections for contested races for party officers shall be conducted by secret ballot.
8. Elections for state delegates shall be determined by a plurality vote utilizing a secret ballot.
9. Each delegate to the county convention may vote for as many state and district delegate candidates up to a number equal that of the number of whole votes allocated to the county at the state convention.
10. The Chair shall give preference to the maker of a motion to speak first to the motion. Recognition shall alternate, so far as practicable, between those favoring the question

and opposing the question. Debate shall be limited to five minutes per side on each question. No member may speak a second time until all those wishing to speak on the same side of the question have spoken.

11. Resolutions must be submitted in writing and approved at a precinct committee meeting. If not approved at a precinct meeting, resolutions must be submitted in writing to the Chair and the author of the resolution must provide a copy to each credentialed delegate.
12. The proceedings of this county convention, not covered by these Rules or by enforceable provisions of the South Carolina election law, shall conform to the most recent edition of Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised .

### **SAMPLE COUNTY CONVENTION AGENDA**

2019 Reagan County Republican Party Convention  
Ronald Reagan High School Auditorium  
Saturday, April 1, 2019 9:00 AM

- I. Call to Order/ Welcome
- II. Invocation
- III. Pledge of Allegiance
- IV. Republican Creed
- V. Election of Temporary Convention Officers
- VI. Approval of Temporary Agenda
- VII. Approval of Temporary Convention Rules
- VIII. Report of the Credentials Committee
- IX. Approval of the Convention Agenda
- X. Approval of the Permanent Convention Rules
- XI. Election of Permanent Convention Officers
- XII. Approval of Permanent Agenda
- XIII. County Party Officer Elections
- XIV. Election of State/District Delegates
- XV. Approval of County Party Rules/Platform/Resolutions
- XVI. Benediction
- XVII. Recess

## Detailed Explanation of Common Convention Agenda Items

- I. Welcome -- In the welcome (given by the current county chair or the vice chair in his/her absence) a declaration must be made that, "This county convention was called under applicable South Carolina statutes and the Rules of the South Carolina Republican Party." Stress this to the individual making the welcome – the state party has implied that conventions can be nullified if this is not used.
- II. Invocation - The Invocation may be delivered by anyone.
- III. Pledge of Allegiance - The Pledge of Allegiance may be recited by anyone. Many counties choose one of their members with military service to lead. Make sure that you provide (or the venue provides) an American flag at your county convention. If you want to have American and South Carolina flags, make sure that proper protocol is followed: the American flag is placed on the left side of the podium (as viewed from the audience) and the South Carolina flag is placed on the right side of the podium.
- IV. Republican Creed - The Republican Creed may be recited by anyone, if the convention organizers wish to include it.
- V. Election of Temporary Officers The county convention is conducted by a set of officers, just like at a precinct meeting. Your county convention should elect a temporary convention president, temporary convention secretary and (optional) temporary convention treasurer. The duties for these temporary officers are as follows:
  - Temporary Convention President – This individual will preside over the county convention until a permanent convention president is elected.
  - Temporary Convention Secretary – Records the minutes of the convention and any recorded votes until a permanent convention secretary is elected.
  - Temporary Convention Treasurer – Responsible for any fiscal transactions related to the county convention. In many instances this is the current county party treasurer, but this position is not absolutely necessary.

NOTE: It is the privilege of the convention president (Roberts Rules) to choose a parliamentarian the he/she trusts to be fair and knowledgeable, in order to conduct a transparent and fair convention. The president may announce this choice as soon

as elected. The parliamentarian should be seated on or near the convention podium, along with the secretary, for ease of communication.

VI. Approval of Convention Rules

Each county convention should pass rules that will govern the assembly. The rules can cover all kinds of topics such as no food or beverage on the convention floor, who can enter the convention floor, the length of nominating speeches, and other topics so the convention can run smoothly. A sample set of convention rules has been included, but they are simply examples – they are by no means required to be used at your county convention. The rules should include one specifying the use of Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised. This is important if a situation arises that convention rules, state party rules or state law do not cover. NOTE: Convention rules may only be amended at the convention, and a motion to suspend the convention rules later in the convention meeting requires a 2/3 vote of the convention.

VII. Report of the Credentials Committee - The credentials committee report is an extremely important piece of business for a county convention. The report establishes the number of delegates (and the number of votes) that are eligible to participate at your county convention; this establishes the number of votes needed for a simple majority, and for a two-thirds majority if needed. The credentials report may be amended prior to being approved by the convention. The appropriate place for someone to question a delegate’s credentials or even an entire precinct is right after the credentials committee chairman makes the report. Both sides should be permitted to make their case to the credentials committee, and then the committee should vote on the delegate or precinct in question. If one side does not agree with the decision of the credentials committee report, they can make a motion to amend it from the convention floor, directly following the credential committee chair’s report. (However, any delegates whose credentials are in question cannot vote on this motion.)

VIII. Approval of the Convention Agenda - Once the credentials committee report has been adopted, it is now time to approve an agenda for the convention. The agenda establishes an order of business for the convention, such as election of officers, state delegates, approval of rules and resolutions. You may assign all of these items at any place on the agenda. Candidates may speak prior to the business portion of the agenda, often while the credentials committee meets or while officer election votes are counted, as a way to fill time for your county convention.

- IX. Election of Permanent Convention Officers - Permanent convention officers must be elected to conduct further convention business. Many times, a motion is made to elect the temporary convention officers as permanent officers. However, someone can make a motion to elect permanent convention officers different from the temporary officers. The duties of the permanent convention officers are the same as the temporary convention officers. Even if the assembly does not elect the optional treasurer, your county convention needs to elect a permanent convention president who is in charge of the convention, and a permanent convention secretary who is responsible for recording the minutes of your county convention.
- X. County Party Officer Elections - County party officer elections may be conducted by several methods; however, if your convention rules specify a method your convention must use that method unless a motion is made to suspend the rules. NOTE: the motion to suspend the rules is not debatable or amendable and requires a 2/3 vote of the assembly to pass.)

Elections may be conducted in several ways: using a voice vote, standing vote or division vote, roll call, or by secret ballot. Only a simple majority is required to be elected to a party office.

Voice vote: The convention president determines the outcome of a voice vote. If the outcome is in doubt, a motion can be made from the floor asking for a standing vote, sometimes called a division vote, where the delegates stand for the candidate of their preference, they are counted, and the results are announced.

A roll call vote: can be by individual delegate or by precinct. Each delegate or precinct, when their name is called, publicly states their candidate preference.

Secret ballot vote: Each delegate writes the name of the candidate they wish to support on a ballot or piece of paper. The ballots are collected, tabulated and the results are announced. If your convention chooses to use a secret ballot election, you should permit the candidates or a representative of each candidate to observe the tabulation of the ballots. (Detailed instructions on ballots, collections, and tabulations are listed in the Convention manual.)

NOTE: If there are more than two candidates running for a party office, it is important to remember that there are no runoff elections under parliamentary procedure, unless specified by your convention rules. The convention will keep voting until one candidate has received a simple majority or only one candidate remains after the others have withdrawn their candidacy. If you allow party officer candidates to address the convention, make sure to provide equal time to all candidates.

NOTE: If there is only one candidate nominated for a position, the president may announce that fact, and after confirming that there are no other nominations, he/she may declare that the nominee is elected by “acclamation.” It’s a courtesy for the president to turn to the assembly and say, “All those in favor, please say aye.” At that point, that nominee is an elected officer. (Roberts Rules 46:40)

- XI. Election of State Delegates - The election of state convention delegates is the next most important business item for a county convention. This election is doubly important, since state convention delegates also function as delegates to the Congressional District convention, as well. Per the state code (7-9-80) and party rules, the county convention, not the county executive committee, has the option to vote to make each delegate a “half - vote” delegate. This decision must be voted on by the county convention prior to the election of state delegates.

The state party rules do not specify a method of election for state delegates. Traditionally, county conventions have elected them using two methods: an election by the county convention delegates and election of a slate approved by the county convention.

Each county convention delegate can vote for as many candidates as the number of delegates allocated to your county at the state convention. Most counties prepare a **secret ballot** for the election of state/district delegates. For example, if your county has (10) whole vote delegates at the state convention, each delegate at your county convention may vote for up to (10) candidates for state delegate. If your county convention voted to make (20) half vote delegates, then each delegate at your county convention may vote for up to (20) candidates for state delegate. NOTE: Most counties have adopted a plurality vote requirement. This essentially means the state delegate candidates are ranked based upon the number of votes they receive. In our previous example, the top (10) candidates who received the most votes would be the state delegates, then the next (10) candidates by number of votes received would be the state alternates. In this case, the chairman (see the convention manual) should submit a list, ranked by number of votes, of the delegates and the alternates, in descending order of votes received.

Alternatively, some county conventions elect their state delegates by a designated **slate**. The slate must still be approved by the county convention; however, a slate can first be amended by the county convention. County conventions may elect the same number of state alternates equal to the number of state delegates that are

allotted. In this case, the chairman would submit the list from the winning slate of delegates that was chosen by the convention assembly.

- XII. Approval of County Party Rules/Platform/Resolutions -- County conventions may approve county party rules that govern the county executive committee, a county party platform and any resolution(s) received from the precinct meetings.
  - A. If your county party convention passes rules governing the county executive committee, under most circumstances those rules cannot be amended at a later date by the county executive committee. They would need to be amended or rescinded at another convention. County party rules can be amended, but they should not prevent the county executive committee from exercising its authority.
  - B. County party platforms are not required but some county parties have them. They require approval by the county convention with a simple majority vote.
  - C. Resolutions are one-time statements of policy or commendations for specific individuals. Many county parties have resolutions committees that review the resolutions prior to the county convention, however, you are not required to have a resolutions committee because precincts may also submit resolutions voted on at the precinct level. The convention may consider any resolution it desires, but a vote is required to approve resolutions. All resolutions approved at the county conventions may be forwarded to the State GOP immediately for dissemination to the State Resolutions Committee. NOTE: Submission to the state party is not mandatory. If the assembly chooses (votes) to instead send the resolution to elected officials, etc, it is possible to do so.
  
- XIII. Benediction -- The benediction may be delivered by anyone.
  
- XIV. Recess -- County conventions should always be recessed, never adjourned. The reason for recessing conventions is to be able to reconvene at a later date. By recessing your county convention, you preserve the ability to conduct further business, such as to nominate candidates by convention, change rules, etc. While State Party Rule 11-A-1 endorses the primary method of nomination, the convention method of nomination is still permitted under state law.

## **AFTER THE CONVENTION REPORTING AND TYING UP LOOSE ENDS -- Reporting of Convention Elections**

Immediately after your county convention, the county chair must submit a complete report of convention elections to the SCGOP. Reporting of convention elections immediately after your convention is necessary for the state party's preparations for the State Convention.

NOTE: Election outcomes should be submitted not only to the state party, but also to the county clerk of court and the Secretary of State (SC Code 7-9-80).

It's mandatory (SCGOP rule 5 C 7) to make a list of all county officers, state convention delegates and alternates elected by the county convention and have the list certified (signed) by the convention secretary **and** the convention president and/or county chairperson. This list will be sent by the secretary or chairman to the state chairman, and a copy to the district chairman not later than five (5) days following the county convention.

NOTE: The list should also include the name of the delegate chosen to serve on the state credentials committee.

NOTE: If an elected officer, state delegate, or state alternate did not attend their precinct meeting, the secretary must supply the state party must be supplied with their complete personal information, including their voter registration number for credentialing purposes. Include all of the information that would usually be on the SCGOP Form 1.

Remember to be accurate on the ranking of delegates and alternates -- alternates to the state convention will be seated in the order of which they are submitted to the state party by the county party chairman – the county list determines the order in which alternates are seated and the state party will follow closely the order in which alternates are submitted when registering at the state convention (SCGOP 5 C 5).

### **CHECKLIST:**

- The certified lists of state delegates, state alternates, elected county officers and the county's delegate to the state convention credentials committee **MUST** be signed by the convention secretary and the convention president or county chairman.
- The certified list of state delegates, state alternates, elected county officers and the county's delegate to the credentials committee must be sent to the South Carolina Republican Party headquarters using the official forms furnished by state party headquarters.
- All certifications must be sent to the SCGOP state party headquarters no later than five days following the county convention.

- This rule will be strictly enforced to guarantee the validity of a county’s state delegate/state alternate credentials and for reporting purposes to the county Clerk of Court (however, since the county party is responsible in state law [SC Code 7-9-80] for reporting to the county clerk and the Secretary of State, you will have already completed that requirement).



Provided by the South Carolina Republican Assembly for the use for use by counties in South Carolina in planning conventions. Some portions of this document were inspired by SCGOP 2018 source material. Protected and licensed by

Creative Commons, Licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/)