

# ILGP Local Chapter Packet

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## Statement of Purpose

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This guide was written to help members of the Illinois Green Party form and sustain local Green Party chapters.

Local chapters are a key organizational building block for the state party. As a grassroots organization, the Illinois Green Party puts significant decision-making power in the hands of its local affiliates.

The information in this ILGP Local Chapter Packet is meant to make creating an affiliated local chapter of the ILGP as easy as possible.

## The Role of Local Chapters

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At its core, the Illinois Green Party (as a chapter of the Green Party of the United States) is an electoral party. Getting Greens elected to office (and otherwise making the positive social changes that we want to see in the world) requires organization.

Some organizing can take place over the Internet, and we encourage all ILGP members to sign up for the mailing list and check the announcements on the [ILGP webpage](#), and to follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

The best organization, however, happens when people are active and engaged with the communities they live in, and local chapters fill that role in a way that no email list or social media campaign from the state party could match.

### **What Do Chapters Do?**

Chapters play several important roles in the party. One important role is in the recruitment, selection and vetting of candidates. When we run candidates for office, we want them to be dedicated, authentic Greens that support and advocate the Ten Key Values, and that agree at least substantially with the state platform.

Under our by-laws, article 10-D-2, ILGP members who are residents of an electoral district or jurisdiction have the primary authority to recognize or endorse candidates for offices serving that electoral district.

While the state party can organize a canvass of members in districts where no local chapter exists, the preferred method will always be to let a local chapter host its own caucus to decide on endorsement/recognition of local candidates.

Chapters can and should also serve as a hub for Green Party activists working in various social or issue-oriented movements. The Green Party aims to be an electoral arm and outlet for a wide range of movements working for positive change: environmental, anti-war, social justice, civil liberties, ballot access and integrity, criminal justice reform, labor, public education, and more. These are all movements that struggle to make progress when Democrats or Republicans are in office, and many Greens are individually involved in aiding movement struggles and actions.

Local ILGP chapters can serve as a hub for networking, information sharing, and strategizing with activist movements. The party can help by providing and supporting candidates who strongly support movement goals, reducing the level of activism needed to move legislation forward, while movement groups can help support the party with electoral turnout and opportunities for direct involvement.

### **How Are Chapters Organized?**

Per its by-laws, the Illinois Green Party is organized into local chapters, which guide the party's electoral and other activism in the area.

Although ILGP by-laws allow members to organize chapters based on affinity groups, most chapters are organized based on geography, recognizing the need for Greens to have face-to-face meetings and to focus locally on political issues of import to their counties, towns, neighborhoods, precincts, etc.

In the absence of an already-existing Green Party chapter, a county-based chapter is usually the simplest and most easily understood form of chapter to organize. It's not the required form of organization, but it has several advantages over other electoral units:

- Cities and villages can vary considerably in their rules for government and elections, whereas counties and townships are relatively consistent (though certainly not identical) in their administration across Illinois.
- A county gives a broad enough geographical area to bring together a large number of Green supporters, but is still small enough that everyone in the chapter can get to local events relatively quickly.
- When a political party has "established party" status (a complicated legal issue; sometimes the Green Party is "established" in a region and sometimes not), county committees are one of the fundamental organizing units under Illinois law. Having a county-based chapter in place that can register as the county committee with little change in membership or bylaws significantly speeds the organizing process.

Chapters do not have a hierarchy or seniority structure. They are separate groups that address their own local constituencies, even where boundaries overlap partially: the Green Party of Chicago, for example, is not a subsidiary of the Cook County Green Party, even though Chicago lies within Cook County. Both are fully affiliated chapters of the Illinois Green Party.

The party strongly encourages chapters to have defined geographical boundaries and for Greens who live within those boundaries to participate in those chapters rather than join other ones or form a new one, unless the members of a current chapter agree that it makes sense to form a new one and/or redraw the boundaries.

## Starting a Local Chapter

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If you're an ILGP member and you want to be more involved with the party, the best way to do it is usually to attend meetings of your local chapter. But what if there's no local chapter in your area?

### Requirements for a New Chapter

Per the Bylaws, the ILGP only requires five things from a prospective new chapter:

1. The name of the new chapter (typically location-based, i.e., "Kendall County Green Party")
2. The names of at least three current ILGP members who have agreed to found the chapter.
3. Contact information for a lead organizer, point person, or chair of the chapter.
4. Meeting dates, times, and locations. Regular meetings are required—a monthly schedule works well for most chapters, sometimes with more frequent meetings during campaign season, but the exact schedule is up to the chapter to set.
5. A summary of the chapter's activities, projects, and goals.

Unless otherwise stated, a chapter's geographic area is usually assumed to be the political division given in its name. If the chapter is not geographically organized, or represents an area other than the one given in its name, it is useful to include that information when founding the chapter.

This packet includes a New Chapter Affiliation form that, filled out, meets all the requirements of a new chapter. The form, or any other application and attached documents, can be sent to [secretary@ilgp.org](mailto:secretary@ilgp.org) for consideration. Chapter affiliation is approved (or rejected) by the Executive Committee of the ILGP, and the Committee's decision can be appealed to a vote of the full membership if needed.

### **Finding Members for a New Chapter**

If you don't personally know two other ILGP members who live in your area, there are a couple of different ways to bring together the required founding membership.

One option is to try to recruit among family, friends, co-workers, or anyone else in your community who you believe would support the Ten Key Values and Green Party platform. Registration as a member of the ILGP can be done [on the website](#), after which individuals are eligible to become founding members of a new chapter.

Alternatively (or in addition), you can ask the state party to help. The ILGP Volunteer Coordinator ([volunteer@ilgp.org](mailto:volunteer@ilgp.org)) maintains a list of party members and supporters, and can help send out an email blast to your region looking for other ILGP members interested in joining a local party.

If you're having difficulty recruiting for a local chapter, consider reserving a room at a library or other free public space and advertising a "Green Party Information

Session" or something similar. Check with the state party to see if the ILGP Chair, Secretary, Volunteer Coordinator, or other officer can attend to give a short presentation on the Green Party and its activities. Typically, at least some of the attendees at an information session will be interested in signing up!

### Staying Active

Once a chapter is formed, it's best to select one or two core projects, as well as a list of issues of interest, on which the chapter can focus. It may help to select these at an initial meeting, write them down, and work on ways to enact the core agenda over time at the subsequent meetings.

In general, you always want to have at least one on-the-ground activity being organized, whether that's political campaign work (during election seasons), an outreach program like tabling at local events or arranging school visits, or a movement action like a protest, rally, letter-writing campaign, lobbying day at the state capitol, etc.

If you need something to change the schedule up or to fill a meeting between larger projects, any local chapter can always request an officer from the ILGP to come talk about statewide initiatives. The Chair, Secretary, and Volunteer Coordinator are all usually happy to travel, their schedules permitting.

Not everyone wants to participate in serious political work all the time, so it will also be helpful to organize social and fun activities such as potlucks, picnics, sports leagues, local outings, etc.

Online organization can help keep a chapter active—the ILGP website can provide a basic, blog-style page for your chapter, if wanted (submit a request to the Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteer@ilgp.org](mailto:volunteer@ilgp.org)), and a mailing list and Facebook page are both also good ideas.

The most important thing a local chapter can do to stay active is simply stick to their schedule: meet when and where you've said you will, and work on planning next-steps and future actions at every meeting!

### Re-Affiliation

Local chapters approved by the Illinois Green Party remain affiliated with the party for one year, after which they must re-apply for formal affiliation. Filled out, the second form attached to this document, "Request for Chapter Re-Affiliation," will provide all the needed information for re-affiliation. Typically, if a chapter has been active and engaged with the party during the previous year, re-affiliation will be easy to secure.

# Request for New Chapter Affiliation

This form contains the required information for new Green Party chapters that wish to formally affiliate with the Illinois Green Party. In addition to this form, chapters may submit a founding roster, charter, or other organizing documents for consideration. Please attach this form and all other documents in an email to [secretary@ilgp.org](mailto:secretary@ilgp.org) to request affiliation with the ILGP.

**Chapter Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Requested Affiliation Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Website (if any):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Political/Physical Boundaries:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Founding Members (at least three ILGP members required):**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact information for a designated point person:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Time and place for meetings (this can be a set of specific dates, or a regular schedule such as "second Tuesday of every month"):**

Location (include address): \_\_\_\_\_

Dates/Schedule: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary of Purpose, Projects, and Goals for the Coming Year:**

# Request for Chapter Re-Affiliation

Illinois Green Party chapters must apply annually to maintain their party affiliation. Enter the information below to request re-affiliation for an active chapter of the ILGP (or for a chapter which had been affiliated, but lapsed due to inactivity).

If the chapter has a roster, charter, or other organizing documents, please attach them with this form in an email to [secretary@ilgp.org](mailto:secretary@ilgp.org) when you request affiliation.

**Chapter Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Prior Affiliation Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Website (if any):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Political/Physical Boundaries:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact information for a designated point person:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Time and place for meetings (this can be a set of specific dates, or a regular schedule such as "second Tuesday of every month"):**

Location (include address): \_\_\_\_\_

Dates/Schedule: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Summary of Previous Year's Activities:**

**Summary of Purpose, Projects, and Goals for the Coming Year:**