



Indiana Young Republicans

STARTING YOUR CLUB - FIRST STEPS

The first step is leadership. Once you have talked to the State Yrs, your Republican county chairman and other Republican leaders about starting a club, begin meeting regularly, even if it's just you meeting by yourself. You can't miss a meeting. Work as acting chairman until you gather enough people to form a solid leadership team. Elect or assign your other officers for your initial group (Chair, Vice, Secretary, Treasurer). It is preferable to have opposite sexes in the Chairman and Vice Chairman spots, but it is not required. Once you have an operating group, conduct official leadership elections. (TIP: Charge a nominal membership fee as little as \$5 to clarify who counts as a member and who does not before elections).

When we re-charted, we started meeting every other Thursday at 7pm at a local bar & grill. I had two other people who were committed to meeting every other Thursday until the group was established. It was our goal every meeting to bring someone new. Then the new member brought new people and so on. Some days, we three were the only ones who showed. But we kept meeting very regularly so that people would have more opportunities to attend if they had to miss one. Eventually, we became large enough that meeting every month was sufficient. We are now passing our 200 member mark since re-establishing our club five years ago.

YR COLONY AND CHARTERING

Once you get your officers in place, you will be recognized as a colony. You can call yourselves Young Republicans and attend events, but you do not yet have a vote at state functions and are not yet recognized as an officials club. Once you have 10 members in place, officers elected and a constitution adopted, you will be eligible for charter with the state.

The forms you will need to complete once you have met the charter guidelines can be found on yrindiana.org. Under our bylaws, once you reach these requirements and forms are completed, you will be on your way to Charter at our next board meeting. The forms will need to be returned to the State YR Chair or your district chair.

THE FORMS

Charter Renewal

This has instructions for the overall requirements. It's mostly just a list of your officers and members.

Membership Survey

Try to get an accurate survey of your membership. Don't worry if it's not perfect. We're just trying to get a look at the type of people joining the YRs.

Then, as it says in your Charter renewal form, you will need a \$50 re-chartering fee and approve a constitution (sample attached).

GROWTH

The biggest danger to young groups is getting yourself overly wrapped in policy and procedure. Meet, talk, have fun, work on campaigns. Keep it social. Bring in some speakers and invite local officials (once you get big enough to make it worth their time). It's not rocket science, but it takes a social personality and a lot of dedication.

If you can find someone to be on your committee who was in a fraternity or sorority, they will have some experience with recruitment and the social function required to keep the attention of the younger members.

It is extremely important to have a YR presence at all community festivals where the Republican Party may have a booth and all major Republican events (Lincoln Day, etc.) Young people are attracted to other young people. Always have a sign up sheet available that emphasizes collection of e-mail addresses. E-mail regularly.

Once my own club became bigger, we started annual recruitment and social events. We have three major planned events for the year: a Derby party, a Labor Day party, a September Theme Party, and our New Year's Eve formal ball. We also have smaller events throughout. Each one helps bring in new members and thanks our membership for all of their hard work. You can start having those once you can consistently get 15-20 people at your functions. We eventually moved our meetings to the second Friday of each month. We meet, we eat, and then we all go out. It actually works out quite well for us since the YRs have become the center of our social framework. We have more than a few couples and a few married couples that found each other in the Young Republicans. Also, if you are in a county with a small population, join with neighboring counties for social events and functions.

CAMPAIGNING

The YRs are certainly not all social. We take pride in being the people who are actually on the ground running many of Indiana's campaigns. We have campaign training seminars that your members will be able to attend. The YR sphere of influence is focused on grassroots. Many of our older counterparts don't like to do this very necessary part of campaigning. We usually own the festivals, parades, and door-to-door activities in the counties where we are established. This serves two purposes. One, it helps the party and candidates in a vital task. Two, it puts a young face on the party as the first point of contact, and helps draw more young people into the GOP and thus your club.

COMMUNICATION

E-mail people often enough to keep them up to date but not so much that they are annoyed. Once a week is usually sufficient. Make your members feel special by getting them inside news before other people get it or have volunteer opportunities in place that allow them to get into big fundraisers free or for a reduced price. Our YRs who can't afford tickets know that they are first on the list for volunteer detail with the President or Vice President or some other large dignitary comes to town. Give members at least a week's notice reminder on meetings and a second reminder the day before or day of. If you need meeting attendance up, add a phone bank the night before the meeting. A YR newsletter is helpful more for improving the standing of your chapter than with actually communicating anything to your membership. It should be targeted at elected officials, party officers, and party donors.

KEEP IT FUN WITH AN EYE TO THE UNCOMMITTED

I can't emphasize this enough. Hard core Republicans are only part of your target group. In reality, many of your best members and future best volunteers will have absolutely no political inclination when they first encounter the Young Republicans. They will come at first because they know someone in the group. They will enjoy your parties and social activities. They will make friends with other people in the group. They will get talked into working a parade or a booth or helping on election day because the rest of their friends are doing it. They will volunteer for a candidate because they met them at a YR function and they seemed nice. They will begin to pick up the dispositions of the people around them. Before long, they will be yelling at the television screen during the DNC and scheduling lunch around Rush Limbaugh. That is the true purpose of the Young Republicans. It is to be the first contact with young voters and the Republican Party, and they should see a face much like their own.

NEXT STEPS

Of course, there is a lot more to a club once you get going, but much of that is leadership style and typical to any organization. Once you build a larger club, we can discuss finding your replacement chairman, institutionalizing practices, member retention, and advancement.

For help with your club, e-mail membership@yrindiana.com