

HOW TO BE A DELEGATE TO THE 2010 TEXAS STATE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

We encourage you to participate and to run for delegate to the Texas State Democratic Convention. What follows is, in general terms, an explanation of how to be a delegate. If you would like more information, read The Rules of the Texas Democratic Party (TDP Rules).

PRIMARY ELECTION

Texas will hold a Primary election on Tuesday, March 2, 2010. The Primary will be open to any registered Texas voter who votes in the 2010 Democratic Primary (on Election Day or by early vote) and who does not vote in another party's primary or attend another party's political convention.

CONVENTION SYSTEM

The Texas Democratic Party has a three-level convention system:

Level 1. Precinct Conventions

Level 2. County Conventions (or Senatorial District Conventions in urban areas)

Level 3. State Convention

Those who attend their Precinct Convention will elect delegates to the County/Senatorial District Convention; those who attend their County/Senatorial District Convention will elect delegates to the State Convention.

PRECINCT CONVENTIONS

A convention will be held in your precinct at 7:15 p.m. on March 2, 2010, the same day as the gubernatorial primary. The convention is usually held at the polling place and is open to anyone who votes in the Democratic Primary that day (or during the early voting period). There will be a sign at the polling place telling exactly where the convention will be held. If you can't find a sign, ask your election clerk where the convention will be held.

The convention begins at 7:15 p.m. when the Precinct Chair calls the convention to order. If the Precinct Chair is absent, anyone participating may start the meeting. The convention is governed by Robert's Rules of Order and Texas Democratic Party Rules. If you are late to the convention, you can still participate; however, you can't change what has already happened.

The first item of business is for everyone attending to sign in. The State Party will provide your Precinct Chair with special carbon paper forms to use for the sign-in sheet. **Please be sure to print all sign-in information neatly on the sign-in sheet.**

In presidential years, convention participants always sign in by presidential preference and then allocate and elect delegates based on each presidential candidate's showing on the sign-in. In non-presidential years, however, participants have an option of either signing in supporting a "petition" of a particular political preference or signing in at large. Delegates are elected in two different ways, depending on whether the sign-in is at-large or by political preference.

The "political preference" sign-in has rarely been used in the convention system. The Party rule which allows for this sign-in by political preference was originally enacted as part of the McGovern reforms of the early 1970's to provide for proportional representation of groups aligning themselves behind a particular person or philosophy.

Should you wish to circulate a petition and encourage like-minded Democrats to join in signing in for a particular political preference, TDP Rules require that you put your petition in writing and that it be attached to the Precinct Convention Minutes which are turned in to the County Chair.

After the sign-in is complete, the convention elects a chair and secretary to run the convention.

The Convention Chair then announces how many delegates to the County/Senatorial District Convention the precinct will elect. The precinct is entitled to elect one delegate for every 15 votes cast (or major fraction thereof) in that precinct for the Democratic gubernatorial nominee in November 2006, with each precinct entitled to at least one delegate. Your County Chair will apprise the Precinct Chairs of the number of delegates each precinct is entitled to.

Please note: If convention attendees have opted to sign in by petition, the Chair will announce the percent of people attending the Precinct Convention on behalf of each political preference and the number of delegates each political preference is entitled to elect. Should your precinct convention opt to elect its delegates through the petition process, please refer to the last page of the rules handout (which will be provided to each precinct as part of the precinct packet) for the EZ Math/Delegate Proportionate Share Formula instructions. Anyone who supports a preference which did not win enough of the convention to elect one delegate may join the political preference group of their second choice. If petitions have been submitted and the political preferences have qualified for delegate positions, supporters of each preference gather in a group (caucus) to elect delegates and alternates to the County/Senatorial District Convention. Voting within the caucus is done in the same manner as if no petitions were submitted (i.e. secure sufficient nominations, participants cast one vote, seats filled in rank order).

If no petitions have been submitted, voting for delegates and alternates shall be by **majority vote** of the convention, with the Chair calling for nominations in a number sufficient to fill all of the delegate and alternate seats that are awarded to that precinct. Then the eligible members of the precinct convention simply cast their vote for their chosen nominee. Each participant may cast ONE vote in the election for Delegates. The top vote-getters are the delegates, while the next highest vote-getters are the alternates, in rank order, until all of the delegate and alternate positions are filled.

You do not need to be present at the Precinct Convention to be elected a delegate or alternate, if you are otherwise qualified.

After their election, the Secretary of the Convention records the names of the delegates and alternates on the carbon Minutes forms and sign-in sheets as indicated in the instructions on those sheets. The convention may then take positions on issues and pass resolutions if desired.

COUNTY/SENATORIAL CONVENTIONS

If you are elected a delegate or alternate at your Precinct Convention, you may attend your County Convention on Saturday, March 20, 2010. In some urban counties, Senatorial District Conventions will be held instead of a County Convention.

The County/Senatorial District Convention is called to order by the County Chair or the Chair of the Senatorial District Committee, who serves as the Temporary Chair of the Convention. Before transacting any business, the Temporary Chair calls for all qualified participants to “enroll” – that is, sign in – on Exhibit A. After announcing the names of those individuals elected to the Standing Committees of the Convention, the Temporary Chair then calls for the report of the Credentials Committee. The Credentials Committee is a committee of the convention that decides disputes over who has been elected a delegate or alternate. (The Credentials Committee is elected by the County Executive Committee (CEC) at its statutory meeting in March).

Following the adoption of the report of the Credentials Committee, you will elect a chair and secretary to run the convention. The Permanent Chair of the Convention will then announce the number of overall delegates and alternates to the State Convention that their County or Senatorial District Convention was allocated, and the distribution of those delegates among the precincts.

Note: For purposes of calculating delegates, members of the State Democratic Executive Committee (SDEC) and County Chairs are ex-officio delegates to the State Convention, and as such, should not be included in the elections or calculations for delegate slots.

Participants from each precinct then proceed to elect delegates and alternates to the State Convention. Each precinct is entitled to one delegate to the State Convention for every full 180 votes cast by that precinct for the Democratic gubernatorial candidate in the November 2006 General Election. If a precinct does not qualify for its own delegate position, it is grouped (or “paired”) with another precinct (or precincts) to elect delegates. It is the responsibility of the County Executive Committee to pair precincts at their January statutory meeting.

Within each caucus, the delegates and alternates are elected at one time, but you cast only ONE vote. The highest vote-getters are the delegates and the next highest are the alternates. For example, suppose your precinct gets to elect one delegate and one alternate to the State Convention. Only one election is held and you get to cast only one vote. Thus if 10 supporters of John Smith are present and all 10 vote for one delegate to the State Convention while 8 supporters of Jane Doe are present and all 8 vote for another delegate, then the John Smith person will be the delegate and the Jane Doe person will be the alternate.

The results of all the elections within the precincts are added together and given to the Nominations Committee. This committee then nominates a slate of at-large delegates. The at-large delegate positions are used to balance the delegation to the State Convention to reflect the ethnic diversity of the County or Senatorial District; ensure gender balancing; and – if the convention opts for signing in by preference – to reflect the sign-in by political preference. TDP Rules provide that no more than two-thirds of the full delegation elected to the State Convention may be of one gender.

In order to proceed with the selection of at-large delegates, the body as a whole must make a decision whether the body prefers to elect their at-large delegates by political preference or not. This decision must precede any further action because the Nominations Committee's actions will be guided by the decision of the body. If the body decides to elect their at-large delegates by political preference, then the Nominations Committee's job is to review the delegates elected by their precinct caucuses, and then proceed to nominate at-large delegates in order to balance the entire delegation to reflect the political preference poll as is mathematically practicable to do so, without changing the decisions of the precinct caucuses as to their elected delegates/alternates. The Nominations Committee will then make its report to the full body.

However, if the body decides not to elect their delegates by political preference, then the Nominations Committee simply nominates individuals to fill the at-large delegate and alternates slots and reports their nominations to the floor.

After the nominations for at-large delegates are presented to the full convention for approval (or "ratification"), TDP Rules provide for additional nominations from the floor. However, while nominations from the floor may be entertained for the at-large delegate and alternate slots, such nominations are not in order with respect to those delegates and alternates elected by their respective precinct caucuses.

The convention will then consider reports from the Convention Rules Committee, Platform Committee and Resolutions Committee and will conduct any other necessary business. (The membership of these standing committees was constituted by the County CEC or Senatorial District Committee at the March statutory meeting).

The Secretary of the Convention records the names of delegates and alternates on the Minutes form and Exhibits provided by the state party office. One copy of the forms is retained and a copy is returned to the state party within five days of the County/Senatorial District Convention, in order to facilitate preparation for the State Convention.

STATE CONVENTION

If you were elected a delegate or alternate at your County/Senatorial District Convention, you may participate in the State Convention, held June 25-26, 2010, in Corpus Christi.

Although the State Convention will officially be called to order by the State Chair at about 6:00 p.m. on Friday, June 25th, there will be "issue caucuses" held during the day on Friday, with the

Senate District Caucuses meeting at the time and place on Friday assigned by the State Chair. The Senate District caucuses will also elect one member each to serve on the Rules, Resolutions, Platform and Nominations Committees.

After the Call to Order, the Pledge of Allegiance and Prayer, the Temporary Chair shall announce the meeting location for the Credentials Committee. The Credentials Committee is the committee charged with hearing challenges to an individual's Delegate or Alternate status, and as such, must begin meeting at the beginning of the Convention to resolve any disputes in order to present their recommendations for a permanent roll (i.e. those delegates who will officially be able to participate in Convention business) to the full convention. The adopted Credentials Committee report establishes the permanent roll of the convention.

Once the permanent roll has been adopted, the delegates in attendance will elect the permanent officers of the Convention. The Convention will then recess until 11 a.m. on Saturday; however, any Senate District Caucuses that do not finish their business will reconvene Friday evening after the convention recesses to complete their business.

The Convention Committees (Rules, Resolutions, Nominations and Platform) meet to conduct their business at approximately 8 a.m. Saturday morning, June 26th, while other delegates enjoy the traditional "Blue Star Breakfast" honoring Lady Bird Johnson.

The State Convention itself is called back to order at 11 a.m. on Saturday morning. The full convention considers the reports of the Rules, Nominations, Platform and Resolutions Committees as they are ready for consideration. Through the Nominations Committee report, the convention elects officers of the Texas Democratic Party and ratifies the elections of SDEC members from each Senate District who will serve for the next two years. The convention then adjourns upon completion of its business.