

Chapter 3 Delegate and Convention System

The Texas Democratic Party (TDP, State Party, the Party) holds conventions in even-numbered years to conduct the business of the Party. Involvement in the TDP three-level convention system is highly encouraged.

These are the three levels of the TDP convention system:

- **Level 1: Precinct Conventions** are open to everyone in that precinct who voted in the Democratic Primary.
- **Level 2: County Conventions [or Senatorial District Conventions in counties that have multiple Senatorial Districts]** are open to delegates elected in the precinct conventions in that county or senatorial district.
- **Level 3: State Convention** is open to delegates elected by delegates in county and senatorial district conventions. Seating is by senate district.

To be a delegate to the state convention, a Democratic Primary voter must first be elected as one of the allotted precinct delegates to the county / senatorial district convention. The delegates from the precinct convention attend the county / senatorial district convention where they elect the delegates to the state convention. The numbers are determined by the number of Democratic votes cast for governor in the last gubernatorial election.

In presidential years, Texas delegates to the national convention are elected at the state convention.

Precinct Conventions

Democratic primary voters meet on the evening of the Primary Election to hold the precinct convention and to do the following:

- Elect delegates to the county or senatorial district convention. In presidential election years, the delegates are elected based on presidential preference
- Adopt resolutions that will be submitted to the county or senatorial district convention

The precinct chair prepares for the precinct convention and typically acts as its temporary chair. However, if the precinct chair is not available, any interested Democratic primary voter from the precinct may convene the meeting.

The County Party provides a convention packet with instructions, forms, and easy-to-fill-in agenda/minutes. The packet is typically kept at the polling place on the Primary Election day.

The precinct convention is open to anyone who voted in the Democratic Primary that day or during the early voting period. By Texas law, the precinct convention begins at 7:15 PM.

It is called to order by the temporary chair at the precinct's polling location. The precinct convention is typically at the polling location.

County / Senatorial District Conventions

County and Senatorial District conventions elect delegates to the state convention and conduct the business of the Party. Local, state, and federal candidates and elected officials should be invited to the convention. The purposes of the county or senatorial district conventions, in the urban counties with multiple senate districts, are the following:

- To elect delegates and alternates to the State Convention
- To adopt resolutions that will be passed on to the State Convention
- Optionally, to establish platform positions for inclusion in the *State Party Platform*

The county and senatorial district conventions are held on the third Saturday after the first Primary. However, if that date occurs during Passover or on the day following Good Friday, the convention is held on the next Saturday that does not occur during Passover or on the day following Good Friday.

The convention shall be properly publicized and in accordance with state law. The location must be easily accessible and large enough to accommodate all participants. The time and location of the county convention is determined by county executive committee; the senatorial district convention by the senate district committee.

A county convention is held when the county is in a single senate district. It is organized by the county chair and county executive committee. The SDEC committee members may also give assistance.

A senatorial district convention is held when the senate district encompasses several counties and/or parts of counties. However, it is more common that county conventions are held that include senate district caucuses. A senate district convention is organized by the senate district committee. The SDEC committee members may also give assistance. When a combined county/senatorial district convention is held, the delegates sign in according to their senate district. The convention begins with all of the delegates together and then splits into senate district caucuses to conduct the remainder of the convention's business.

County and senatorial conventions function with the use of the following four committees:

- **Credentials Committee** -The Credentials Committee signs in delegates and alternates; establishes the permanent roll of the convention; and makes recommendations to the convention to resolve challenges to credentials of delegates to the state convention.
- **Nominations Committee** - The Nominations Committee ensures the proper number and breakdown of delegates to the State Convention.
- **Platform and Resolutions Committee** - The Platform and Resolutions Committee considers resolutions submitted to the Convention and makes recommendations on those resolutions to the Convention.
- **Rules and Procedures Committee** - The Rules and Procedures Committee ensures the convention follows appropriate protocols and *TDP Rules*.

Either the County Executive Committee or the senate caucus, made up of precinct chairs within the senate district, selects the committee members.

Note to convention goers - the convention occasionally goes into a recess when some committees meet. This time may be used for listening to candidates, attending workshops, listening in on the committee meetings, or visiting old friends and meeting new ones.

County / Senatorial Convention Senate District Caucus

A Senate District Caucus is a subdivision of a senate district and is an essential part of the convention process and consists of convention delegates.

Pre-convention, the caucus consists of all of the delegates elected at the precinct conventions to the county/senatorial convention from within a single county or portion of a single county of a senate district. Two examples: (1) In a senate district that has several counties, the delegates of County **A** would be a senate district caucus; the delegates of County **B** would be another caucus, etc. (2) In a senate district that has portions of several counties, the delegates in County **X** within that senate district would be a caucus, the delegates in County **Y** within that senate district would be another caucus, etc.

Prior to the county/senatorial convention, the purpose of the senate district caucus is to organize the county/senatorial convention senate district caucus and to select convention committee chairs and committee members.

At the county/senatorial convention, the purpose of the caucus is to conduct the business of the convention, including electing senate district delegates to the state convention.

Senate District Delegation

The senate district delegation is made up of all the delegates and alternates that are elected to attend the state convention from the county/senatorial district conventions.

At the state convention, the senate district delegates elect state convention committee members, Senate District Executive Committee members, and in presidential years, delegates to the national convention depending on the process selected by the senate district committee.

State Convention Senate District Caucus

The senate district caucus is a sub-division of the senate district at the state convention and consists of the delegates from a single county or portion of a single county within the senate district. It has the same geographical boundaries as the senate district caucus at the county/senatorial district convention. The purpose of the senate district caucus at the state convention is to recommend or select state convention committee members, SDEC members, and in presidential years, delegates to the national convention, depending on the process selected by the senate district committee.

The senate district caucus at the state convention is made up of state convention delegates elected at the county/senatorial district convention. It should not be confused with the senate district caucus that occurs at the county/senatorial district convention, which is made up of delegates to the county/senatorial district convention elected at the precinct conventions. For additional information on the individual conventions, see the appendices.

State Convention

The purpose of the State Convention is to conduct the following business of the Party:

- Elect the Party's officers
- Elect the SDEC senate district committee members
- Pass resolutions
- Adopt a platform
- Additionally, in presidential years, elect Democratic National Committee members and delegates and alternates to the National Convention

A full meeting of the State Democratic Executive Committee precedes the two-day State Convention.

Specific information about the State Convention is mailed to each delegate and alternate in advance of the event. Information is also available on the Internet.

The Texas State Convention is held in June of even-numbered years at a location selected by the State Democratic Executive Committee.

Elected delegates and alternates are grouped by senate district.

Guest passes may be available from the State Party office for the limited seating available.

Because the purpose of the convention is to conduct Party business, attendees should understand that not every moment will be exciting. The convention occasionally goes into a recess when some committees meet. This time may be used for listening to candidates, attending workshops, listening in on the committee meetings, or visiting old friends and meeting new ones.

National Convention

In presidential years, the Democratic National Committee convenes a national convention with the set purpose of nominating the Democratic nominees for president and vice-president.

The process to become a delegate or alternate begins, in general, at the precinct convention when the attendees sign in under their presidential preference, while the specific rules for national convention and delegate selection vary from one convention to the next. That preference is carried forward to the county/senatorial district convention and on to the state convention. Prior to attending the state convention, anyone wishing to be a delegate or alternate to the national convention files a request to be a delegate and/or alternate with the DNC.

Delegates and alternates to the national convention are selected in the senate district caucuses. The nominations committee fills the remainder of the Texas delegation.