

# HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 2008 DELEGATE SELECTION PROCESS

Democrats from all across America will come together in Denver, Colorado, August 25-28, 2008 for the 45th Democratic National Convention. This unparalleled event will present to the country our Party's nominees for president and vice president and highlight the hard work Democrats have done to chart a new direction for America. The 2008 National Convention will put our presidential nominee on the path to victory in the November 2008 general election.

Due to an increasing interest in participating in the 2008 National Convention, the following brief overview explains how delegates to the National Convention are selected and tips that individuals should be aware of in order to run for a delegate position.\*

## THE DELEGATE SELECTION PROCESS

### I. National Rules and State Plans

- A. A plan describing how delegates are chosen is written by each of the 50 state Democratic Parties (plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands and Democrats Abroad). These "Delegate Selection Plans" must comply with rules adopted by the National Party that provide guidelines to ensure a fair and open process.



- B. Each plan indicates exactly how delegates are to be selected in that state (or other jurisdiction) -- including specific information about what, where and when to file to run for a delegate position. These plans are forwarded to the National Party in spring 2007 for review and to ensure compliance with the Party's rules. Anyone interested in becoming a delegate should contact his or her state's Democratic Party to obtain a copy or summary of the plan.\*\*
- C. In order to ensure representation by the various constituencies of our Party, states conduct education, outreach and training on the process beginning as early as September 2007. All National Convention delegations are equally divided between men and women.

### II. Types of Delegates

Each state is allocated a certain number of delegates to the convention, based on its population and Democratic voting strength. There are several types of delegates, which are briefly described below:

- A. *"District-Level" Delegates.* A majority of a state's delegates are elected from local districts (usually Congressional Districts). Each district-level delegate pledges support to a presidential candidate of his or her choice (or no specific candidate – which is known as "uncommitted"). This is the first category of delegates to be selected. *Any Democrat* is eligible to run for one of these positions.
- B. *"Pledged Party Leader and Elected Official" Delegates.* Some delegate positions are reserved for Democratic

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\* While most people want to attend the convention as a delegate, each state also selects alternates who attend the convention and serve if a delegate is unable to attend or is to be absent. In most states, the process of becoming an alternate is the same as for becoming a delegate. Persons interested in being considered for an alternate position should review the state's delegate selection plan for specific information and requirements.

\*\* For information about how to contact a state Democratic Party, visit the Democratic National Committee's website at [www.demconvention.com](http://www.demconvention.com) or call the Office of Party Affairs & Delegate Selection at 202-863-8046.

Party leaders and elected officials who pledge support to a presidential candidate (or "uncommitted"). These delegates are elected after the add-on unpledged delegates.

- C. *"At-Large" Delegates.* The final group of delegates chosen is the at-large delegates. These are pledged delegates. *Any Democrat* within the state is eligible for one of these positions.
- D. *"Unpledged" Delegates.* Some individuals in each state will go to the convention known as "unpledged" delegates, because they are not required to officially support any presidential candidate. Included in this category are the state's Democratic Governor, Democratic National Committee Members, and Members of Congress. In addition, each state selects a small number of add-on unpledged delegates who are chosen after the district-level delegates.

### III. Selection of "District-Level" Delegates

There are two types of systems that states use to determine support for presidential candidates: (A) Primary systems, and (B) Caucus systems. These systems in turn influence the way presidential candidates are awarded delegate positions, and how individuals are chosen to fill those positions in order to go to the convention.

#### A. *The Primary System*

1. In a primary system, Democratic voters cast their ballot for their presidential preference in the primary election. Based on the results of that election, district-level delegate positions are allocated proportionately to the presidential candidates. For example, if a candidate receives 50% of the vote *in that district*, he or she will get half of the delegates. However, a candidate must win at least 15% of the vote to be eligible to receive any delegates.
2. A state uses one of the following methods to fill the district-level delegate positions awarded to the presidential candidates:
  - a. *Pre-primary caucus.* Prior to the primary election, supporters of each presidential candidate meet to select a slate of delegate candidates. For example, if eight delegates are to be chosen from a district, each candidate's caucus votes for eight people who have filed to run as a delegate pledged to that presidential candidate. If, as a result of the primary, that candidate wins two positions in that district, his or her top two vote-getters in the pre-primary caucus become delegates to the convention.
  - b. *Two-part primary.* During the primary election in certain states, Democratic voters can vote for a presidential candidate and for delegates on the ballot. For example, a Democrat who votes for Candidate X may then also vote for individuals to serve as Candidate X's delegates from that district to the convention. If Candidate X wins two positions as a result of the primary, then his or her top two vote-getters become delegates to the convention.
  - c. *Post-primary caucus.* Following the primary election, supporters of each presidential candidate who won delegate positions, meet to select people to fill those positions.

#### B. *The Caucus System*

1. In states using the caucus system, there is no binding primary election to measure the presidential preference of Democratic voters. Delegate positions are awarded to presidential candidates based on the vote taken in a meeting ("caucus"), or series of meetings.
2. The actual system for conducting caucuses varies widely. At the first stage, local meetings are held to vote on presidential candidates and individuals pledged to those candidates. Persons elected at this stage go on to the next series of meetings, generally at the county or congressional district level.

In some cases, there are several series of meetings, or "tiers," to a caucus. For example, in some states, there are precinct meetings, or caucuses, open to all Democratic voters. Each precinct caucus votes on the presidential candidates and on delegates to a county caucus. At the county caucus, those delegates elect persons to serve as delegates to a state convention.

3. At each stage, or "tier," delegate positions may be awarded to supporters of presidential candidates based on the votes of people attending that tier. In that case, the number of National Convention delegate positions awarded each presidential candidate could be based on the number of votes received at that tier. For example, a plan can designate that the first tier of precinct meetings will determine the number of delegates each candidate will receive. In that case, if a presidential candidate gets 50% of the vote in all the precincts in a Congressional District, he or she will receive half of the delegate positions allocated to that district. (However, a candidate must win at least 15% of the vote to be eligible to receive any delegates.)
4. The last stage in a caucus system is either the congressional district caucus or the state convention. Here, supporters of each presidential candidate meet separately to select the individuals who will go to the National Convention as delegates pledged to that candidate.

#### IV. Selection of Pledged "Party Leader and Elected Official" (PLEO) and "At-Large" Delegates

##### A. Allocation of delegate positions:

1. *In Primary States:* The number of these pledged delegate positions awarded to each presidential candidate is based on the statewide primary results. For example, if a candidate wins 25% of the primary vote statewide, he or she will get 25% of the PLEO and at-large delegate positions. (Again, a candidate must receive a minimum of 15% of the votes, on a statewide basis, to be eligible to receive any delegates.)
2. *In Caucus States:* Since there is no primary, these delegate positions are awarded to the presidential candidates based on the percentage of votes received at a specific caucus tier or the state convention (provided a candidate received at least 15% of the votes).

- B. Individuals selected to fill the pledged PLEO and at-large delegate slots are selected by one of three groups as determined by the State Party. The Delegate Selection Plan (or summary of the plan) will indicate who will make the selection, and when and where they will meet.

### HOW TO RUN FOR A DELEGATE POSITION

#### I. Running for "District-Level" Delegate

No matter the type of selection system a state has, anyone who wants to become a district-level delegate must keep in mind several key points:

- A. To run as a district-level delegate, an individual must be registered to vote within the district and must file a written declaration of candidacy and a signed "pledge" of support for a particular presidential candidate (or "uncommitted"). Forms will be available from the state Democratic Party. Delegate candidates should carefully review the state Delegate Selection Plan (or summary) for specific information about when and where the required documentation must be filed.
- B. The name of each person who filed to run as a delegate pledged to a presidential candidate will be given to the presidential candidates (or his or her authorized representative), before the selection takes place. The candidate (or representative) has the right to approve or disapprove anyone who signs a pledge of support for him or her. This being the case, it is important for delegate candidates to interact with the presidential campaign they are supporting. Delegate candidates should talk to the presidential candidate's local campaign officials about their intentions and any possible support.
- C. All state plans provide for the number of men and women delegates to be equally divided. If a candidate wins two delegate positions, one will go to a man and the other to a woman.
- D. Be sure to understand how the district-level delegates are to be selected. What type of meeting will be held? Who will make the selection? When and where will the selecting body meet? This information will be in the state's Delegate Selection Plan (or summary). Remember, this is a political position and it is important to campaign among those who are likely to attend the selection meeting. Since delegate positions are often very

competitive, it's not enough that a presidential candidate wins a certain number of delegate positions; delegate candidates need to actively campaign to be chosen to fill one of the positions as well as campaign for his or her presidential candidate.

## II. Running for Pledged "Party Leader and Elected Official" (PLEO) or "At-Large" Delegate

- A. Just as district-level delegates, pledged PLEO and at-large delegates must file a written declaration of candidacy and sign a "pledge" of support for a particular presidential candidate (or "uncommitted") in order to run. Forms will be available from the state Democratic Party. The state Delegate Selection Plan (or summary) will contain specific information about when and where the required documentation must be filed.
- B. As with district-level delegates, presidential candidates have the right to approve or disapprove persons who file to become PLEO or at-large delegates pledged to that candidate.
- C. Priority consideration for the PLEO positions will be given to the following Democrats: big city mayors, statewide elected officials, state legislative leaders, state legislators, and other state, county and local elected officials and party leaders. However, as recommended above, these delegate candidates also need to understand who chooses these delegates, and campaign among those people in order to be elected.
- D. If necessary, the selection of at-large delegates is used to ensure the entire delegation is equally divided between men and women, and may also be used by the State Party to meet its goals for outreach to various Democratic constituencies.

## III. General Information About Running for Delegate

- A. *Register to Vote.* In order to run for delegate and vote in a presidential primary or participate in a caucus, an individual must be a registered voter – and a Democrat. As well, anyone who wishes to support a delegate candidate must be a registered voter. Contact the local Board of Elections or the local Democratic Party organization for information on how to register to vote.
- B. *Know the State's Delegate Selection Rules.* For information on running for a delegate position, an individual should call or write his or her respective State Democratic Party Headquarters and request a copy of the Delegate Selection Plan (or summary) and filing forms. These documents provide the information candidates need to know in order to run for delegate positions.
- C. *Identify Which Presidential Candidate to Support and Become Involved in His or Her Campaign.* Each campaign is looking for supporters to run for delegate and alternate positions. Delegate candidates should get involved in the campaign early. Persons interested in running for delegate should discuss their campaign strategies with the presidential campaign organizers. Delegate candidates should work hard for their presidential candidate and get others organized to support the candidate. (For information about running "uncommitted," review the state's Delegate Selection Plan, or contact the State Democratic Party.)
- D. *Meet State Filing Deadlines and/or Petition Requirements.* All states require delegate candidates to file a "declaration of candidacy" in order to run. The deadline for this declaration varies among the states – but is specified in each state's plan. In some cases, the declaration must be accompanied with signatures of registered Democratic voters from that area. All filing requirements must be precisely followed.
- E. *Persuade Democrats to Support a Presidential Candidate and the Delegate Candidate.* The number of votes a presidential candidate receives in the primary or caucus is directly related to the number of delegate positions he or she will be awarded for the National Convention. Delegate candidates should identify potential voters for their presidential candidate and . . .
- F. *Get Out The Vote!* In the week before the primary or caucus delegate candidates should contact all of their supporters and make sure they know when and where to vote. If necessary, arrange for transportation. In order to be successful, be sure to *Get Out The Vote!*
- G. *Finally:* Whether successful or not in becoming a delegate to the 2008 National Convention -- stay informed and involved. Be sure to: (1) stay informed about the presidential campaign; (2) follow the convention; (3) support the Party's presidential and vice presidential nominees; and (4) **Vote on Election Day!**

For additional information on the 2008 delegate selection process you may visit [www.demconvention.com](http://www.demconvention.com)