

DELEGATE SELECTION: A BRIEF EXPLANATION

Following these calendars is a 50-state guide to the 2004 elections. On the "Election at a Glance" pages we have included a concise description of the Byzantine rules of delegate selection. To guide you through the process, we draw heavily on a glossary of terms prepared by Delegate Meister-Emeritus-**Marty Plissner**.

On the Democratic side nothing much has changed since 1984. Democrats, who spent a generation tinkering with their rules, have pretty much settled into a system of dividing delegates proportionately among candidates who gain 15 percent of the vote in primary and caucus states and allocating 18 percent of the delegates to party and elected officials. The specific rules are outlined at the end of this Glossary.

GLOSSARY

Presidential nominations of the Republican and Democratic parties are won by getting a majority of the votes of the delegates to a national convention. In both parties, the largest bloc of delegates is chosen, or their votes determined, by presidential primaries. A smaller number are chosen by a process that usually starts with local meetings called caucuses and ends at a state convention.

The vast majority of Democratic delegates have one vote at the national convention. Some of the Democratic delegates have fractional votes, so there will be slightly more delegates at the Democratic convention than there are votes to cast. The number of votes expected at the Democratic Convention, as of Nov. 24, 2004, was expected to be 4,315. That number could rise or fall by a handful of votes between this time and the convention.

About one-sixth of the Democratic delegates, so-called **SUPERDELEGATES**, are elected officials and party leaders. These include the entire Democratic National Committee, all Democratic members of Congress and governors of states or territories, the Mayor of Washington, D.C., and 21 "Distinguished Party leaders." These range in distinction all the way from former Presidents Clinton and Carter to former chairmen of the national committee.

This chapter focuses almost exclusively on the Democratic Party's delegate process as President Bush won't face competition for the GOP nomination. The Republican's rule are almost exactly the same as in 2000. There will be a total of 2,509 delegates at the Republican National Convention.

In describing the kinds of delegates, how they are chosen, and the manner in which their votes at the convention may be determined, a number of words and phrases are often used which may need explanation. Some of the more commonly used are explained on the next page.

DELEGATES

DELEGATES are men and women chosen in each state, the District of Columbia, and a number of overseas locations to vote at the Democratic and Republican national conventions.

The majority of these delegates are chosen in each state by district -- usually Congressional. These are called **DISTRICT (CD) DELEGATES**. A smaller number from each state are chosen from a statewide pool and are often, though not always, men and women of greater political stature. These are called **AT-LARGE DELEGATES**. Democrats have an additional category of delegates chosen statewide called **ADD-ON DELEGATES**. These are party and elected officials pledged to presidential candidates who earned a share of these delegates in the state's primary or caucuses.

In the Democrats' system, all delegates determined by primaries or the caucus/convention process are called **PLEGGED DELEGATES**. All delegates who serve by virtue of party or public office, past or present, are called **UNPLEGGED DELEGATES** or, sometimes, "**SUPERDELEGATES**."

The Democratic Convention is scheduled to have **795** unpledged delegates who serve by virtue of being governors, members of Congress, National Committee members or "distinguished party leaders." That number could change slightly by the time of the convention, due to vacancies or special elections. Because these delegates serve by virtue of their office, or prior office, there is no specific time of selection, and they are included at the top of the delegate selection calendar before any of the primaries or caucuses are held.

Additional unpledged delegates, called **add-on delegates**, are selected after the caucuses or primaries in their respective states by an official party body. Among other things, these add-on delegates can be used to help meet the party's "affirmative action goals" with respect to women and minorities. This produces an expected total of 795 **unpledged "superdelegates."** Combined with the 3,520 **pledged delegates** determined by the primaries and caucuses, they produce a grand total of 4,315 delegate votes at the convention. Again, this number could change as the convention approaches.

Another group of delegates, called **UNASSIGNED DELEGATES** are not allocated to specific states, but exist to fill party needs when changes -- such as a big city mayor losing a re-election campaign -- occur. The **UNASSIGNED DELEGATES**, of which there were a total of five at the time of this writing, could change between now and the convention and exists to fill "future needs."

PRIMARIES

A **PRIMARY** is an election dealing with nominations for public or party office.

A **PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY** is a primary that 1) elects delegates to a presidential nominating convention, 2) indicates preference for a party's presidential nomination, or 3) determines how all or part of a state's delegation to a national convention will vote. A primary will often do a combination of these things. All primaries referred to in this section are presidential primaries. A primary in which voters can vote directly for a presidential candidate is called a **PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY**. Presidential primaries can be either **BINDING** or **NON-BINDING**.

A binding primary decides how some or all of the delegates to a national convention will vote at the convention. A non-binding primary has no effect on delegate selection or on how delegates will vote at the convention. It is sometimes referred to as **ADVISORY** or, informally, as a **BEAUTY CONTEST**.

Binding primaries award delegates or delegate votes in a variety of ways. A **PROPORTIONAL PRIMARY** distributes them in direct proportion to the vote received by the presidential candidates.

A binding preferential primary in which all of the delegates go to the candidate who gets the most votes is called **WINNER-TAKE-ALL**. Republicans allow both Proportional and Winner-Take-All primaries. Democrats allow only proportional primaries and have a national rule that the delegates are divided among candidates receiving over 15 percent of the vote. This is called a **THRESHOLD**.

In 2004, there also will be several **PARTY-RUN PRIMARIES**. In party-run primaries, the political party – not the state – foots the bill. In 2004, the states holding party-run primaries are Hawaii, Michigan, New Mexico, South Carolina and Utah. In addition, the District of Columbia will hold both a state primary (on Jan. 13) and an "official nominating event" (technically party-run caucuses) on Feb. 14. The January primary, which violates DNC rules, will not count toward delegates.

In November, the DNC approved the Michigan state party's plan to allow voting in the caucuses on the Internet, in addition to voting in-person and through the mail. Some Democrats complained about allowing Internet voting because, they argued, poor and minority voters have less access to computers. In 2000, Arizona allowed online voting in its presidential primary, but won't be doing so in 2004.

A primary open to any registered voter is called an **OPEN PRIMARY**. A primary for which a prior act of party affiliation is required is called a **CLOSED PRIMARY**. Both kinds are permitted under the rules of both parties. The Democrats, however, call for a public record of which party's primary a voter selects. Republicans do not.

CAUCUSES AND CONVENTIONS

State parties that do not choose their national convention delegates in binding primaries generally select them by a process that starts with local meetings of party members called **CAUCUSES**. The caucuses elect delegates to a regional (usually county) convention that, in turn, elects delegates who will meet later to pick the district and at large delegates to the national convention.

In most states, this is accomplished by one statewide gathering, a **STATE CONVENTION**, with the delegates meeting by district (usually Congressional) to pick the district delegates and as the whole body to pick the delegates at large. In some states, one or both parties may hold separate meetings in each district to pick the district delegates.

There are variations in the process from place to place. Some state parties start with mass meetings at the county level, thus skipping the precinct caucuses. Each stage in the selection process, from the precinct caucuses through the district and state conventions that pick the national convention delegates, is called a **TIER**.

In the Democratic Party, caucus participants are required to state their presidential preference, and elections to each succeeding tier have to reflect that in the original caucuses. It is this Democratic practice which, starting in 1972, enabled the **Iowa** Democratic caucuses to replace the New Hampshire primary as the first event in the presidential nominating process.

SOME OTHER COMMONLY USED PHRASES

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION is a Democratic Party practice that requires state parties to promote "participation in the delegate selection process" by women, blacks and a number of other groups "as indicated by their presence in the Democratic electorate." In practice, this amounts to an order to the state parties to find a back-door mechanism for achieving the same results as overt quotas -- something that the same rule pretends to prohibit. While the Democrats do not have "quotas" they do have a firm requirement called "Equal Division" that requires that each state delegation be equally divided between men and women. [Republicans have **Rule 14(d)**, which encourages states to do the same thing.]

THE WINDOW is another Democratic rule, that -- with a few exceptions -- requires the process of selecting delegates to start no earlier than the first Tuesday in February (Feb. 3 in 2004) and ends no later than the second Tuesday in June (June 8 in 2004). The official Democratic exceptions are the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary. There is no such "window" in Republican Party rules. Most Republican primaries and caucuses also take place during the same period as the Democrats -- partly because that has always been the period when most of these events took place, partly because most of them are state-run primaries and no state is going to open the polls on separate dates for each party.

This year's Democratic calendar is more compressed than ever, with 36 states comprising nearly 75 percent of the Democratic delegates voting by March 9. Iowa and New Hampshire again with their “first-in-the-nation” status although the various machinations pushed Iowa up to January 19 and New Hampshire to Jan. 27, several days earlier than they were in 2000 and nearly a month earlier than they were in 1996.