

The Nevada Democratic Presidential Caucus

Frequently asked Questions

What is a Caucus?

A caucus is a gathering of neighbors who meet to discuss grassroots politics. Democrats will join with others in their precinct to pledge their support for their favorite presidential candidate and thereby award delegates to the candidates.

Caucuses are different than primaries because caucus participants do more than just support a candidate for president – they also participate in other party business such as electing delegates to the county convention and submitting resolutions to the party platform to be considered by the platform committee at the county convention. The caucus is also the first step a Democrat needs to take in order to become a delegate to the national convention, which will be held in Denver, Colorado, in 2008.

The nomination process for Republicans and Democrats is the same: some states hold caucuses like Nevada's to express their preference for a candidate, others hold primaries. Nevada Democrats will hold the second caucus in the nation on Jan. 19, 2008. The winner of the caucuses and primaries around the country will be officially nominated at the National Democratic Convention in Denver and will represent the Democratic Party in the presidential general election on November 4, 2008.

What a caucus is not:

A caucus is not a primary election. Caucus participants do not vote by pulling a lever or filling out a ballot. Caucus participants express their support for the candidate(s) of their choice at a meeting open to all registered Democrats in their precinct.

What happens at a caucus?

Nevada has held caucuses since the 1960s, but this will be the state's earliest and most significant caucus. The eyes of the nation will be on Nevada on Jan. 19, 2008, as Nevada is the second state in the nation to hold a caucus to express preferences for a presidential nominee. Thousands of national and local media outlets will be watching closely and waiting on that Saturday to report the results of Nevada's caucus. Before the caucus, all registered Democrats will be notified where their precinct caucus will be held.

Democrats will meet at their designated sites at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 19, 2008.

Once there, caucus participants will express their preference for a presidential candidate, talk about local politics, discuss what they want to see in the party platform and make recommendations for the party's county central committee, which governs local party affairs. They also elect delegates to the county conventions in the spring.

How is the caucus done?

At a set time, Democrats will indicate which candidate they support and the precinct caucus chair will announce which candidates have the most support and which candidates do not have enough support to meet the “viability” threshold.

Caucus systems are not set up to be a one person one vote system. Rather, they are designed to allocate delegates to only those candidates with a threshold of support that is based on the number of people participating in a caucus. Meeting the minimum level of support is called “viability” and whether or not a candidate has enough support determines whether they meet the “threshold” to continue. Caucus participants who support a candidate who is not viable and has not met the threshold of support to continue, realign themselves with their second choice candidate. If a caucus participant does not have a second choice candidate, then he or she simply continues in the process in an uncommitted group. Based on the size of the presidential preference groups in support of one candidate or another, the delegates to the county convention are apportioned. For example: if the precinct sends 10 delegates to the county convention, those 10 delegates are allocated based on the percentage of people in a preference group. So if candidate A gets 60 percent and candidate B gets 40 percent, then candidate A would get six delegates and candidate B would get four delegates in that precinct.

How Is Viability Determined?

In order to be entitled to elect delegates to the county convention, groups must have a certain minimum number of eligible caucus attendees in their group.

There can be no more viable preference groups than there are delegates to elect from a particular precinct. If there are, the smallest groups must re-align until the # of groups equals the # of delegates to elect from that precinct.

Caucus Math

Caucuses which elect one (1) delegate	No groups may form, the delegate must be elected by the whole caucus
Caucuses which elect two (2) delegates	Viable groups must contain 25% of attendees (# eligible attendees X .25)
Caucuses which elect three (3) delegates	Viable groups must contain 1/6th of attendees (# eligible attendees, divided by 6)
Caucuses which elect four (4) or more delegates	Viable groups must contain 15% of attendees (# eligible attendees X .15)

*Round all fractions UP to a whole number when determining viability

Any preference group that is not viable must be given time to realign with preference groups that are viable or with another preference group that is also not viable.

Why is Nevada so important now?

In August, 2006 the Democratic National Committee voted to include Nevada as the second state in the nation to hold a presidential caucus for several reasons:

First, it is important for Democrats to reach out to Western states in order to win the White House. Democrats have done very well in Western states recently, including in Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Montana. Democrats in the West believe that a candidate who can win in the West can win the White House.

Secondly, Nevada is an important state because it's makeup mirrors the rest of the nation. Around thirty percent of Nevada residents are minorities and fourteen percent of Nevadans belong to a labor union.

And thirdly, Western issues such as the environment, water rights and transportation are more important than ever for the next president as the country's population is shifting to states where these issues are of increasing concern.

Currently, candidates are visiting Nevada and hiring staff members to work in Nevada. With the Nevada caucus being held five days after the Iowa caucus and two days before New Hampshire's primary, presidential candidates who do well in Nevada will have tremendous momentum heading into the caucuses and primaries in the rest of the country.

Where will my caucus be held?

You won't have to travel very far. The meetings will be held in a school, library, community center, church, or some other public building.

What does it feel like to go to a caucus?

You should feel right at home. You will be meeting with your neighbors, so you'll know some of them. If you are new to Nevada, it is a great opportunity to meet your neighbors and have a chance to have an impact on politics - on what issues the party will stand for and what presidential candidates believe.

Many caucus participants leave feeling good about the fact they have participated in a democratic exercise that determines who the next President of the United States will be.

Is there a way to vote early or cast an absentee vote?

No. Participants must caucus on Jan. 19, 2008.

Does it cost anything to participate?

No. Anyone can caucus, as long as he or she is registered as a Democrat. Participants are able to register as Democrats the day of the caucus.

Who Can Attend a Precinct Caucus?

Precinct caucuses are open meetings. Anyone can attend and observe, but only registered Democrats (including 17 year olds who will be 18 by November 4, 2008 and register as Democrats) can participate.

- Young people who will not be 18 by November 2008 are encouraged to attend as Youth Attenders. They can not participate in the caucus. They are there strictly to observe.

Who Can Participate?

All participants must be Democrats registered to vote in the precinct. A list of registered Democrats will be available at the caucuses. If you are not on the list and are not registered to vote, you will be able to register as a Democrat at the caucus.

- Seventeen-year-olds, who will be 18 by the general election on November 4, 2008, will be allowed to fully participate. They will be required to fill out a voter registration card and register as a Democrat if they have not done so already.
- Participants may register to vote at the caucus. Republicans, nonpartisans and others can change registration to become a Democrat that day.

How Are Delegates Elected?

Once preference groups are viable, the caucus chair will use the following formula to allocate the number of delegates for each preference group.

Delegate Apportionment: Delegates to be elected at the Caucus shall be divided according to each group's size. The following formula shall apply:

Number of eligible attendees in a preference group	X	Number of Delegates to be elected from that Precinct Caucus
--	---	---

Divided by: Total number of eligible caucus attendees

Equals: Number of delegates to be elected by that group

**Round fractions UP at .5 and DOWN at less than .5 when apportioning delegates.*

- Once each preference group knows how many delegates they can elect, they do so within their preference group.
- Groups electing more than one delegate must try, to the extent possible, to elect equal numbers of men and women delegates.
- The number of alternate delegates that may be elected is not limited. Alternate delegates are also elected within preference groups.
- Once preference groups elect all the delegates, the caucus comes back together as one group and must ratify the slate of delegates and alternates.

Resolution Discussion

Prior to and/or after delegate selection, caucus participants will discuss resolutions. Some caucuses discuss and vote on each and every resolution. Other caucuses discuss only those resolutions that are controversial. Still other caucuses, decide to simply send all resolutions on to the county platform committee and let them decide which ones should be included in the proposed county platform.

If you would like to submit a resolution at your precinct caucus, it is best to bring at least a few typed copies of your proposed resolution. If it is lengthy and you believe that it may be controversial, you may want to make enough copies so that all the attendees may read the resolution before it is debated. Resolutions must be approved by a majority of attendees.

Nevada's Caucus

In general, the caucuses are a great way to have your voice heard. Your support for a candidate and your ideas about what the party platform should look like are an important part of the whole process and is really grassroots politics at its best. Coming together with your neighbors in a collective attempt to express your choice for the presidential nominee is a wonderful part of the democratic process.

More information including caucus locations and other key points will be available on the Nevada State Democratic Party website as they are confirmed. In the meantime, you can contact the Nevada State Democratic Party or [sign-up for email updates](#) directly and ask to have information sent to you or be put on a list so that you are notified of a training near you. To find out more information, visit our website here often or call the Democratic headquarters at 702.737.8683