

How to win your precinct caucus for Barack Obama!

EASY ANSWER: Have the most people show up to sign in for Barack Obama. If that happens, you've won. The margin of victory is important, so have a LOT show up.

When: 7:15 p.m. Tuesday, March 4 – or as soon as all those in line at 7 p.m. have voted. (You may start sign-in at 7:15, but you may not convene until everyone has voted.)

Where: At every precinct polling location in Texas.

When you get there, don't expect anyone to know where it's occurring or who is in charge. The Democratic Precinct Chair (if there is one) will figure out the best location and call the meeting to order. If there isn't a Chair, anyone can call the meeting to order. **JUST DO IT!**

The meeting can be wherever you make space. If you're in a building with Republicans, nicely work out arrangements of who'll be where. There is no rule or regulation about location as long as people can find you. It wouldn't hurt to take some tape, paper, and markers and make signs for the doors to say where the Democrats are meeting (Ex: Democratic Caucus in cafeteria ... or basement ... or room 101). If the doors are locked and you're standing there with some others, you can declare that you're the caucus and hold it on the sidewalk. **JUST DO IT!**

WHAT HAPPENS (in a nutshell):

- Everyone signs in and notes presidential preference.
- The group elects a chair and secretary of the convention by majority vote.
- The chair announces how many delegates the precinct has.
- The chair and representatives from each candidate calculate how many of the delegates and alternates each candidate has won based on how many people signed in.
- Each presidential candidate's supporters caucus separately and elect allocated delegates and alternates.
- All participants come back together to propose, discuss and adopt any resolutions or platform topics they wish to forward to the next convention level.
- Adjourn.

WHAT YOU NEED:

Each Democratic Precinct Chair should have some basic documents, such as: Rules of the Party, simple "how-tos" for running the convention, minutes forms that you can merely fill in the blanks, and sign-in sheets. If your precinct is unorganized or has no Democratic Precinct Chair, you can bring these items with you. These are the forms approved by the Party. (So if you haven't ever met or can't find who's in charge BEFORE the meeting, be assured there won't be anyone in charge. **JUST DO IT!** Print these out and take them with you:

- Sign-in sheets:
democracyfortexas.org/resources/precinctsigninform.pdf
- Minutes forms:
democracyfortexas.org/resources/precinctcaucusminutes.pdf
- Rules of the Texas Democratic Party:
www.txdemocrats.org/the_party/tdp_rules/

Just in case you get there and find no forms, no one in charge, etc., and you didn't download the stuff, **JUST DO IT!** Use a

tablet and make your own sign-in sheets, your own minutes, etc. You will not have your delegates disqualified if you do your best to make your convention happen!

Who attends?

As in any election, it takes votes to win. In this case, casting a "vote" is achieved by a person showing up, signing in and listing their presidential preference as "Barack Obama." Anyone who lives in the precinct and who voted in the Democratic Primary either early or on election day may participate.

What does it take to "win?"

In this case, winning means having a majority of delegates elected for Obama. Every precinct is different in the number of delegates it is allotted (based on 2006 Democratic vote for Chris Bell, the Democratic candidate for Governor, one for each 15 votes). You're setting yourself up to win the delegates at the next level.

Although this document is about the precinct caucus, let us jump ahead to explain the process at subsequent steps so you understand the big picture up front:

At the next level, the County or Senate District convention, each precinct elects one or more delegates to the state convention (one delegate for each 180 votes cast). These elections at the county/senate conventions are won by plurality votes. The first highest is the delegate, the second highest vote-getter is the second delegate if there is one, etc. Each precinct also elects alternates in the same number as the delegates. (If you have two delegates allocated, you also have two alternates.) In the example above (two delegates allocated), the precinct will also elect two alternates.

Note: Don't worry about alternates and who they are pledged to. Use all your strategy at the county convention to win the delegate slots. If someone cannot go to the State Convention, they can, in writing, appoint any other Obama delegate from your county to take their slot. The alternate from your precinct does not automatically move up to delegate status unless the delegate fails to make an appointment. This explanation is important in that if you can allocate your votes so that you assure that your Obama delegates bloc vote and win first and second, and therefore the delegate seats, you'd want to do that.

When the delegates get to the state convention, there is a sign-in of those elected from the county/senate district conventions. If Obama wins 50% of the sign-ins, he'll get 50% of the National Delegates allocated to be selected by the At-Large process at the state convention. The higher our percentage in the entire convention hall, the more we win. That's why even if you're in far-flung rural Texas or urban Houston, getting to the State Convention matters to us. Surprisingly, the more rural you are, the easier it is to get elected because of the unorganized nature of the local Democratic Party in many counties. You can do lots of good with little effort.

SIGNING IN FOR OBAMA AT THE PRECINCT CAUCUS

When a person arrives at the caucus, the first thing to do is sign in with name, address, voter certificate number and demographic information.

If you don't have your voter registration card, you can usually get the election judge to look up your number from a duplicate voter list. If attendees can't prove they voted (stamped voter card

or name on the roster of voters provided by the election judge), you could deny them entrance to the caucus. However, the Obama campaign asks that you play fair. If it's pretty clear they voted and they just forgot the card and the election judge left with the ballots and list, please do not deny anyone the right to participate, even if they are for another candidate. The Party can assist you in getting certificate numbers later.

Once the signature is on the list, the person has "voted" in the caucus for the allocation of delegates and may leave. Those who remain can elect the delegates, even listing people who aren't there. (If you have someone who has to get to work or needs to get home to children, etc., accommodate them. Let them sign in and leave.)

Technically, as long as one Obama person stays behind to make nominations in the Obama caucus, vote for the delegates and alternates, and turn in the results, that works. The only way this can get mucked up is if the person remaining doesn't have a "list" of delegates to nominate – but if you're reading this, that won't happen!

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND SECRETARY

These positions are administrative in nature. There is no advantage to having the chair's seat if your caucus follows the rules. Having an "Obama" delegate as Chair helps assure that we won't have someone violate the rules. At the same time, having an Obama person as Chair who doesn't follow the rules is **NOT** tolerated. Play by the rules!

The advantage of being Chair is that you get to take home the sign-in list. You can make copies of everyone's email addresses and contact information before you mail them to the state party office. If an Obama person is NOT chair or secretary, ask to copy the list that night during the meeting or have them send you a copy the next day. You're going to want to talk to the Obama delegates to the next convention before you get there. (The Obama campaign has a rapid-response reporting system in place. If you are an Obama precinct captain, you'll be told how to report this information.)

ALLOCATION OF DELEGATES

Once everyone has signed in, the chair will allocate the delegates to be elected. This is done purely on percentage of support which signed in for each candidate or Uncommitted.

Delegates are awarded to presidential candidates based on a candidate's share of supporters at the convention. The Chair, and usually a representative of each campaign, work on the math so that all agree it's done correctly.

Every candidate gets at least one delegate if they met the threshold for the precinct. Example: 31 people attend a precinct caucus which is entitled to 6 delegates to the county/senatorial convention. Divide 6 into 31 for an answer of 5.1. Since you always round up, the threshold for this precinct caucus would be 6. If a candidate has 6 supporters there, they will get to elect a delegate. If there were less than 6, they get no delegate.

Anyone who supports a candidate who did not win enough of the convention to elect one delegate may join the supporters of the candidate who is their second choice. (Although you must allow people who were for other candidates to join, you would not want to elect them as delegates for Obama to the next level. They can switch back to their first choice at the next level and not support Obama!)

Supporters of each candidate gather in a group and elect delegates and alternates to the county/senatorial convention. The Obama delegates will gather to elect their allotted delegates and alternates. Voting within the group is done at one time. The

group first secures enough nominations to fill all of the delegate and alternate positions. Each person casts as many votes as there are delegates to be elected. For instance, you support Obama for President and he is entitled to 4 delegates and 4 alternates to the county/senatorial convention. Your group must first make at least 8 nominations. Then, 1 vote is taken and you cast 4 votes. You may cast your votes for one person or split them among several people. This type of "bullet voting" where you can vote for one candidate or spread your votes around is allowed. The top highest vote getters are selected in rank order until all delegate and alternate positions are filled. In this example, the persons with the four highest vote totals are delegates, and the next four highest are alternates.

In reality, this is a very cumbersome process, especially if you have 100 people nominated. Be patient and make sure everyone is treated fairly.

Automatic Delegates: There are only a few automatic delegates to the next convention. Everyone must be elected except: Democratic County Chairs, State Democratic Executive Committee Members, and Democratic National Committee members. Since they are already automatic delegates to the State Convention, don't waste a spot for them in your delegation. Use that spot to elect another Obama delegate. And if the other candidate's representatives want to nominate any of these people who live in your precinct, let them. It'll only take up a delegate spot they could have had!

Consensus votes for a delegation list: Often the delegates at this caucus have an open discussion on who can attend the State Convention or who everyone knows is a great Obama representative, etc. If after this discussion it is abundantly clear who the delegates and alternates would be, by **UNANIMOUS** agreement, you can just have a motion to elect the consensus delegates and alternates by acclamation. (Example: The leader says, "We have to elect 30 people as delegates and 30 as alternates. Raise your hand if you really want to attend the next convention on Saturday, March 29, and guarantee us you'll be there." If only 30 people raise their hands, then move to elect them all without the tedious balloting process. You can then make a list of up to 30 alternates.)

However, if any **ONE** delegate asks for the rules about voting to be followed, you **MUST** hold the election. Remember that if you don't follow the rules, anyone from the caucus can file a challenge at the County Convention and ask that their name(s) be substituted for the names submitted. They will win that challenge, and you might have spent a lot of time just to be tossed out on your ear from the Convention! Play fair and by the rules!

RESOLUTIONS AND OBAMA

The final action of the caucus is the passage of resolutions. Many people will have brought their own resolutions' some come from interest groups, and others are just strong feelings of the individual. Any delegate can propose a resolution. The group can discuss, amend, table, or adopt, etc. any resolution.

The Obama campaign **WILL NOT** sanction or oppose any resolution. This is the democratic process at its best. We hope you'll participate in these discussions. You might even propose resolutions based on the Obama positions on issues. However, at this level, **DO NOT** represent any position as the "Obama campaign's position" unless you've expressly seen it listed on the BarackObama.com site.

AFTER THE CONVENTION

Be sure to get information on who was elected to the texas.barackobama.com site as directed. If you don't know what to do, email us at info@democracyfortexas.org