

# **DFL Precinct Caucus reference guide**

*Information Compiled by Education Minnesota*

This guide will walk you through the process and provide some helpful hints on how to become a delegate to the DFL convention.

## **Part 1: Key Dates**

**Feb. 2: Precinct caucuses**

**Feb. 2-March 17: Senate District and County Unit conventions**

**March 17-May 1: Congressional District Conventions**

**April 23-25: DFL State Convention**

## **Part 2: The Basics. What happens at each point in the process.**

**At the precinct caucuses attendees:**

- **Cast nonbinding ballots for candidates in the governor's race**
- **Elect precinct-level officers to organize the party**
- **Elect delegates to the Senate District and County Unit conventions**
- **Begin to shape the DFL platform**

**At the Senate District and County Unit conventions delegates:**

- **Endorse candidates for state Legislature (Senate District only)**
- **Elect Senate District and County Unit officers to organize the party**
- **Elect delegates to the Congressional District and State conventions**
- **Continue to shape the DFL platform**

**At the Congressional District conventions delegates:**

- **Endorse candidates for Congress**
- **Elect Congressional District officers to organize the party**
- **Continue to shape the DFL platform**

**At the State Convention delegates:**

- **Endorse candidates for governor, attorney general, secretary of state and state auditor**
- **Continue to shape the DFL platform**

### **Part 3: The Details. The fine points about each step in the process and how to maneuver it successfully.**

#### **DFL Precinct caucuses**

There are four steps to the DFL caucus and convention process. The first step is the precinct caucuses. These are neighborhood organizing meetings. The caucuses all begin promptly at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 2, and will be located in your neighborhood. At the caucuses there are four main items of business:

#### **Step 1. Cast nonbinding ballots for candidates in the governor's race**

The first step is to vote in the non-binding straw poll for governor. You'll be handed a ballot as you enter, simply pick your candidate and put the ballot in the box. Results will be announced for your precinct later that night, and statewide results will be public that evening.

#### **Step 2. Organize the party at the local level**

Next we elect precinct leaders to be in charge of the DFL and take a lead on important work in the precinct. Depending on your precinct there may be one or two positions or, in larger precincts, eight to 10.

#### **Step 3. Begin the platform process (Introduce Resolutions)**

The DFL has an ongoing platform, a document that lists the beliefs of the party and the issues the party is fighting for. If you would like to add something to the platform the caucuses are your first step to doing so. To add something to the platform attendees introduce resolutions.

#### **Step 4. Elect delegates to the Senate district/County Unit conventions**

Last we elect delegates to go on to the next level, the Senate District or County Unit conventions.

- In the metro area, St. Cloud, and St. Louis County the DFL organizes by Senate District. The party does this because there are too many people living in a county to have county meetings. In the rest of the state the DFL organizes by county. The party does this because in many parts of the state Senate districts are too geographically large to organize that way. Ask someone at your precinct if you are unsure about how your area organizes itself.
- There are three ways we elect delegates to the Senate District or County Unit conventions:
  - The first way occurs when there are more spots than there are people who want to go. In this situation people simply raise their hands and everyone who wants to become a delegate gets to. Many (35 percent) smaller precincts will see this situation on caucus night.
    - Example: There are 14 slots and only eight people want to fill them. Everyone gets to be a delegate!

- The second way is to elect delegates “at-large.” This means that the entire group will vote on who gets to become a delegate. The way this usually works is that everyone who wants to be a delegate gives a 30- to 60-second speech about themselves and people vote on their favorites. 50-60 percent of precincts will use this method on caucus night.
- The last way is a method of proportional representation known as the walking subcaucus. Very few precincts will use this method on caucus night but most will use it at their Senate District or County Unit convention. We’ll skip it for now and explain it in the next section.
- Two things to remember:
  - If you can’t become a delegate try to become an alternate! Most alternates will get upgraded.
  - The DFL does allow people to be elected as delegates to the next level even if they were not able to attend the caucuses.

## **DFL Senate District or County Unit conventions**

The second step in the DFL caucus and convention process is the Senate District (SD) or County Unit (CU) convention. As explained above these are set up differently depending on where you live. The SD/CU conventions are set up by the local committee and can take place anytime between Feb. 2 and March 17. Most will happen on Saturdays. At the SD/CU conventions there are four main items of business:

### **Step 1. Endorse candidates for state Legislature (Senate District only)**

The first important agenda item is endorsing candidates for state Senate and state House. This only takes place at Senate District conventions. People who live in areas that have County Unit conventions will endorse candidates at separate endorsing conventions.

### **Step 2. Organize the party at the SD/CU level**

Each SD/CU has elected officers and committees. The convention gives the members of the district a chance to hear from them and vote on who should lead the district going forward.

### **Step 3. Continue the platform process**

The SD/CU convention allows members to vote on the platform planks that passed at the precinct level and decide which ones will keep moving forward.

#### **Step 4. Elect delegates to the Congressional District and State conventions**

Last we elect delegates to the Congressional District and State Conventions. People who are elected become delegates to BOTH. The process is similar to the one used at precinct caucuses, with two possibilities for how to process:

- The first way is to elect delegates “at-large.” This means that the entire group will vote on who gets to become a delegate. The way this usually works is that everyone who wants to be a delegate gives a 30- to 60-second speech about themselves and people vote on their favorites. 10-15 percent of SD/CUs will use this method at their convention.
- The second way is a method of proportional representation in which people split into groups based on their choice of candidates and issues and delegates are awarded based on the strength of each group. The method we use is called a walking subcaucus. Here is how it works:
  - The convention chair will announce the number of delegates available in your SD/CU. This can range from three to 29 and is based on the number of Democrats in your area
  - The chair will open the floor for people to go to microphones and nominate subcaucuses. Anyone can nominate one. Subcaucuses must have the name of a candidate (or uncommitted), and may have the name of an issue. They can have multiple candidates or issues. Hatch/Single Payer Health Care, Otto/Energy, and Uncommitted/Education are example of subcaucuses.
  - Once everyone has had a chance to nominate a subcaucus the chair will assign each subcaucus to an area in the room. This is when it gets fun!
  - People will be given 10 minutes to consider their options and go to the subcaucus of their choice. This is called the first walk. People don’t have to stay with their group, and there will be a lot of people trying to get others to join their subcaucus or moving from group to group. At the end of the 10 minutes the chair will “freeze the floor.”
  - While the floor is frozen the chair will have each subcaucus report how many people it has. When this is completed the chair will determine the viability number. The viability number is the total number of people in subcaucus divided by the number of delegates the SD/CU gets to elect. So the viability number is equal to the number of people it takes to elect one delegate.
    - Example:  $209 \text{ people in subcaucuses} / 12 \text{ delegates} = 17.416$ . We always round up, so the viability number is 18. It will take 18 people to elect one delegate.
  - The chair will then determine which caucuses are viable and which are not. If a subcaucus is viable it is fine, if it isn’t, it will have to disband or join another nonviable subcaucus.
  - The chair will announce the beginning of the second walk. This is usually 10 minutes as well. People will move around again and try to persuade each other.

- At the end of the second walk delegates will be awarded. This is done by dividing the number of people in the subcaucus by the original (non-rounded) viability number. Delegates are first awarded by whole numbers.
  - Example: 209 people in subcaucuses/12 delegates = 17.416. If my subcaucus has 36 people we would divide 36/17.416 and get 2.067. Thus we are initially awarded two delegates.
- Once each subcaucus is awarded their whole delegates we often need to award remainder delegates. In our example above, this would happen if only 11 of the 12 delegate spots could be awarded to subcaucuses based on whole numbers.
  - Example: Our math above left our subcaucus with 2.067 delegates. If another subcaucus had 1.567 it would get the remainder delegate because its remainder (after the whole number) was higher.
- At this point it is up to the subcaucuses themselves to decide who will represent their group as delegates (and alternates). Most groups will ask people who are interested to give a short speech about why, and then will vote as a body to elect the number of people they are allotted.
- Helpful hints for subcaucusing:
  - Bring friends! Friends can come and join you and vote for you to become a delegate.
  - If you don't want to be a delegate or can't, vote for another union member.
  - Remember that the DFL requires gender balancing of the delegates. If you see a subcaucus that is predominantly male or female, think about joining or avoiding it accordingly.
  - Take a leadership role if you can. Call a subcaucus, work to persuade others to join, help your team hold itself together.
  - Introduce yourself to people in your subcaucus individually during the first and second walks.
  - When you give your speech about wanting to be a delegate talk about your passion for the candidate and issue your subcaucus is named after.

## **DFL Congressional District conventions**

The third step is the DFL Congressional District (CD) Conventions. Each CD will hold a convention between March 17-May 1. Delegates who are elected to the State Convention also get to be delegates to the CD Convention. There are two main items of business at CD conventions:

### **Step 1. Endorse candidates for Congress**

The most important agenda item is endorsing candidates for Congress. This follows the process used at the SD/CU level and will either be a formality (like in CD 1 with Congressman Walz) or a contest (like in CD 6 with Tarryl Clark and Maureen Reed).

### **Step 2. Organize the party at the CD level**

Each CD has elected officers and committees. The convention gives the members of the CD a chance to hear from them and vote on who should lead the CD going forward.

## **DFL State Convention**

The DFL convention is the culmination of all these steps. At the convention delegates continue organizing the party and working on the platform. We'll also endorse candidates for governor, attorney general, secretary of state, and state auditor. The DFL convention will take place April 23-25 in Duluth.