



# COLORADO DEMOCRATIC PARTY

## What's a Precinct Caucus?

In an election year, Democrats have to nominate candidates, write a platform and organize their effort to get out the vote on Election Day. Colorado's process starts with precinct caucuses, following State law and the rules set by the Democratic Party.

### ***Precinct Caucuses***

Precincts are the smallest political unit in the state. They generally hold a thousand or fewer people, basically a neighborhood. There are 3,000 precincts in Colorado.

On the third Tuesday in March of each even-numbered year (March 21st in 2006), Colorado Democrats hold precinct caucuses at homes or in public buildings.

Anyone can come to a precinct caucus, but not everyone can vote. In order to vote, you have to be a *registered elector* in the precinct. What does that mean? You have to have lived in the precinct for at least 25 days before the caucus and have been affiliated with the Democratic Party for at least two months. There are some exceptions: if you just turned 18 or just became a citizen you're eligible.

At every caucus, the agenda is the same:

- Elect a chair to run the meeting
- Elect someone to record the meeting
- Elect two precinct committee people (often a man and a woman) to represent the precinct on the Democratic Party's county central committee
- Elect delegates to the Democratic county assembly
- Introduce, debate and approve or reject resolutions and platform issues

That's the agenda. In reality, it's a lot more fun. Your caucus reflects you and your neighbors. Some meet, do their business and adjourn. Some debate for hours.

### **Getting Started**

First the caucus elects a chairperson to run the meeting and a secretary to write down what happens. Then you'll elect precinct committee people.

The precinct committee people will represent the caucus on the Democratic County Committee for the next two years. They're also expected to do precinct work, like getting out the vote for all the candidates in their party on Election Day and planning the next caucus.

Usually someone in the caucus speaks for each candidate seeking a nomination; in a presidential election year that can mean candidates for president, governor, senator, representative, the state legislature and county offices. If you have a lively caucus, people often debate the merits of each candidate.

People at your caucus can also introduce items to be included in the party platform; these can range from fascinating to truly bizarre. You debate the items, and then vote on them. If your precinct approves an item, it

gets passed on to the county platform committee, which will discuss incorporating it into the county platform.

### ***The County Assembly***

At the County Assembly the process starts all over again, only this time you're nominating candidates for countywide office and electing delegates to a variety of assemblies:

- The State Assembly, which nominates candidates for statewide office, elects delegates to the Democratic Party's national convention and considers planks in the state party platform.
- The Congressional District Assembly, which nominates candidates for Congress and the State Board of Education.
- The Senatorial and Representative District Assemblies, which nominate candidates for the Colorado General Assembly.
- The Judicial District Assembly, which nominates candidates for district attorney.

That's a lot of assemblies, but most of them are held on the same day at the same location. Usually the Congressional District Assembly is held the night before the State Assembly and all of the rest of them are held the next day at the location of the State Assembly.

### ***The Primary Election***

OK, one more thing. What if more than one candidate gets 30% of the vote at an assembly? Well, then it goes back to the voters. The eligible candidates run against each other in a Primary Election in August.

Incidentally, a candidate who doesn't get 30% of the vote at an assembly isn't necessarily out. He or she just has to collect enough signatures on petitions (the number is decided by the Secretary of State based on number of votes cast in previous elections), to qualify. (In fact, some candidates say "to heck with the caucuses" and just plan on petitioning their way onto the primary ballot from the beginning). There is a catch, though: a candidate who participates in an assembly and fails to get at least 10% of the vote, cannot petition his or her way on to the primary ballot.

### ***The General Election***

The winners of the primary get their party's nomination and go on to the General Election in November.

### ***More Information***

For more information you can go right to the law itself. It's in the Colorado Revised Statutes, Volume 1, Title 1, via the Internet at [http://www.state.co.us/gov\\_dir/stateleg.html](http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/stateleg.html). While you're at it, you can also read the state democratic party rules at: <http://www.coloradodems.org/statepartyrules.pdf>