

2008 Caucus/Convention Cycle Findings

King County Democratic Central Committee - R4 – 8/19/2008

Goal: Establish a task force at the State Party level with representatives from across the state to begin the discussion and improvements necessary for the 2012 cycle {ed. KCDCC related resolution was passed at the State Convention, 6/14/2008.}

- A. Primary or Caucus? Most agree that they would never walk away from the caucus approach because of the great opportunities of Party building and community outreach. However, if caucuses are kept, there are many who believe that several procedures require serious review and change. With this in mind, we should review what the other 49 states do and make data available for review (this data will be available at the WSDCO website on 9/13/2008).
- B. Change the formula for calculating the number of delegates/alternates elected at the precinct level. Suggestion is for 100 votes rather than 50 votes per precinct for winning presidential candidate. There were far too many Legislative District Delegates/Alternates for Districts to accommodate.
- C. The planning, preparation, and cost of conducting precinct caucuses are a great strain on the treasuries and volunteerism of most of the legislative districts. Help from the State Party should be a consideration.
- D. Establish a deadline for new voter registration that complies with the rules of the counties and State laws. Registering voters on the same day of the caucus and asking for no identification complicates the day's events.
- E. "Absentee" balloting needs to be considered for more than religious, veteran, or disabled reasons. For instance, many people work on Saturdays and felt disenfranchised. Many calls and letters were received. Provisional balloting needs to be considered for students and others. Again, many calls and letters received.
- F. WSDCC Standing Committees should be comprised of state committeemen and women and other party activists who understand the process and cycle timing. The early meetings of the standing committees set the cycle rules and should have the best and brightest Party activists onboard. When the caucus/convention dates are discussed, calendars should be checked for holidays and conflicting major events during the initial rules committee meeting or before.
- G. Establish a State-level committee to write the procedures and ensure that every precinct, district, county, and congressional meeting employs the standard procedures. Establish a State-level committee to determine needs for credentialing. Hire a vendor and/or purchase known, working software and support staff time so that EVERY DISTRICT USES THE SAME, STANDARD APPROACH. Credentialing is the most important function at the Precinct and LD caucuses and it must be standard. The chosen approach could also be used for County and Congressional caucuses. This committee could also devise a standard form for Districts to deliver data back to the State Party – no standard format caused a lot of rework and was also very late.
- H. Allow Chairs to deliver their data from caucuses ELECTRONICALLY. If all use a standard form as discussed in G. then there is no need for re-entry. If not, then HIRE A GOOD VENDOR TO DO THIS so that data is available back to the Districts in a timely manner. Accuracy is essential. Or, establish a State-level committee to design and develop standard forms for LD Caucus reporting. This committee should also establish a FIRM deadline for returning data.

- I. We need to establish expectations and provide the proper level of training to as many participants as possible. We must approach training at the lowest level (e.g., first time participants). Training started in June 2007 for chairs/caucus leaders and continued on throughout the cycle. The State, Districts, and the campaign teams gave much more training in 2008. We did a fair job, but did not reach them all. Comment received indicated that the Chairs training was good but the State Party did not have the real substance available for the training to be really effective.

There were some districts where Democrats and Campaigns did not work well together and this generated bad feelings on both sides. Campaigns did not encourage delegates and alternates to attend county and state conventions – focus was all on the Legislative and Congressional District Caucuses.

Democrats did not provide complete delegate information to campaigns; for instance in one district, campaigns were given names and phone numbers for precinct delegates and alternates. The decision not to provide email addresses was completely arbitrary and made it harder for the campaigns to keep track of delegates, especially when the numbers had been recorded incorrectly. Again, the data entry and re-entry issues surface.

Campaign staff should be encouraged to participate in caucus planning; Democrats should seek out these people and invite them to planning meetings; this worked well for the 7th Congressional District caucus.

Democrats should reach out to the campaigns to ask for volunteers at the caucuses. Often local active Democrats are also active in the campaigns, but there are also often out-of-state volunteers coming in for the campaigns.

How should names and contact information be shared? One option is a reciprocal agreement where Democrats provide lists at the beginning of the campaign season while campaigns provide their lists to the Democrats at the end of the campaign season.

- J. Install infrastructure in a timely manner:

- It would appear that the State Party staff was stretched well beyond its limits in lots of categories, which suggests that as a matter of general principle, it might be more productive to look for ways to REDUCE the load on the State Party so that it's not such a bottleneck in the process.
- Ensure that VoteBuilder is in synch with County Auditors and Elections Department changes. In some cases, the data was more than 18 months old and not in tune with data from the County. At a minimum, VoteBuilder should be using the list of precincts given to us by the WSDCC statistician, which it did not in 2008. Michael Snyder, WSDCC Statistician, gave the County leaders a verified County list of precincts for the cycle – VoteBuilder did not update their precincts to match, causing a myriad of issues.
- County, and Legislative District Caucus Leaders need to be able to DIRECTLY edit official lists of area caucus sites, precinct site assignments, elected delegates/alternates, PCOs and committee contact points. The leader should also be able to AUTOMATICALLY DISSEMINATE the data with little or no State Party intervention.
- Provide District Chairs with the ability to query and download their entire district in VoteBuilder. We had this capabilities in the former system.

- Hire more State Technology Department staff that is available to the central hotline folks (e.g., much like a development team that has experts available to customer support staff).
 - Telephone Bank of twenty lines or more, staffed by competent and trained staff to accommodate queries. Hundreds of calls were logged, but many more were missed and/or given incorrect information. Staggered shifts should be considered to cover the timeframe of 7:00 am through 9:00 pm each day. Saturday and Sunday coverage should be available two weeks before the precinct caucuses.
 - Central Caucus Hotline Availability should be formally introduced and the number published on all websites and in all newsletters -- everywhere possible and EARLY.
 - An online locator that allows users the ability to enter their street address and receive Precinct, Legislative District, Congressional District, and Precinct Caucus Location
The maps were a great addition in 2008. Easy to use application backed by an up-to-date, data base is critical.
 - Consideration should be given for an online, pre-caucus registration application to alleviate confusion, long caucus sign-in lines, and may result in people participating in the right caucus.
- K. A new idea came from the 5th District (Bob Iness and Di Irons) on the possibility of a point system to be added to the delegate selection process. Consideration could be given for Party activism -- PCO, Neighborhood Leaders, District Officer, County Officer, State Officer, Event Committee Volunteer, Proof of Voter Registrations, and many more volunteer roles.
- L. More, detailed training for chairs, especially for the new chairs.
- M. Put more preparation into the guidelines/packets and deliver them to the Chairs in a timely manner. Involve experts and writers into the process and proofread, proofread, proofread. Changes being directed on the day before or day of a caucus do not reach everyone .
- N. Too many speakers. We generally plan for speakers to fill the time it takes for credentialing so that there is no down time. Being forced into a County Convention on a Sunday afternoon with limited time created issues, compounded by the traveling schedule of electeds and candidates that affected the timing and the agenda items being changed. There are very few chairs that will take the microphone from an elected official who has gone over time. All speakers were given the theme and purpose, but one or two decided to do stump speeches that lasted far longer than the 3 minutes allotted to each. {Ed. – my apologies – even my standing up beside them, and falling off the stage at one point, did not deter them. Scs}.
- O. Platform/Resolutions (mostly about King County Convention):
- The changes made to the caucus/convention cycle for no platform/resolution discussions at the precinct and LD caucuses resulted in many people feeling disenfranchised and many more confused about the approach.
 - If we stay with the current set of procedures, we need to ensure timely communication and involvement from all districts. Inviting delegates/alternates into the process via the official convention call is another possibility.
 - Use laptops and printers in a Platform/Resolutions room for display, editing, and/or printing. We made a conscious decision on the number of copies after throwing away hundreds of documents after the last convention. We did have a laptop and printer, but not enough copies to accommodate needs.

- Insert an agenda item for an online presentation on Platform/Resolution expectations, approach, and rules to be presented in layman's terms.
- Provide cover sheet on Platform/Resolutions with explanation of process/procedure
- Allow 1-2 minute presentations on each Platform section.
- Much training is needed and especially on what is the difference between a platform and a resolution. At the county convention, it was very helpful to have the committee in the front row, introduced, and accessible to the participants. We need to consider having a table and/or room assigned during credentialing for people to browse and make comments (State Party employed that technique in 2006).
- Even though the website had a Platform/Resolutions section for edit, input, and method of contact for the committee, we still did not reach all of the participants. Need a better display of the section at the website. The 2006 Platform and Resolutions were available for one month for editing, and for about three weeks on the proposed documents for the convention. Links were advertised in the newsletters; but we did not reach everyone.
- Provide the option of having the platform and resolutions mailed to participants (advertised on website, newsletters, and district meetings). KCDCC Reps could provide information back to their respective districts. And, once we have delegate/alternate names, send out emails.
- Need better training on motions especially privileged motions, consensus, Robert's Rules of Order. We did provide 250 sets of a Robert's Rules Summary.
- The convention is not the place for "wordsmithing," unless an entirely new section is introduced and accepted for discussion.
- Suggestion for bigger display and screens.
- Perhaps, candidates and electeds can get more involved in the process and read sections of the document or include in their "1-3" minute speeches or as a replacement topic for stump speeches.
- Suggestion for up or down voting on platform by plank of a section. That is what the flagging is or should be about. Then voting would take place on the issue. The platform committee is then not on shaky ground, but has its position(s) affirmed or reversed. Criteria is to include positions supported by most Democrats, but sometimes the committee could be wrong and it's good to have the general vote to confirm or deny that assumption.
- Since County Conventions are supposed to feature Platform/Resolutions work, speeches should be kept to a minimum. Conversely, some have said they come to see the candidates and hear them speak.
- Delegates/Alternates need to better understand their responsibilities on attendance and participation, and it is our responsibility to provide more and better training, and broader participation on the committees.
- Focus more on Platform in off-election years.

Next Steps:

- A. Form committee of experts to review this document; assign subcommittees.
- B. Schedule sub-committees to review/update and prioritize requested changes.
- C. Each sub-committee tasked with writing value statements

- D. Create input form for State Chairs to record income/cost/net , number of locations, and any problems not addressed above
- E. Present final report to KCDCC Executive Board
- F. Present this report to the WSDCO for additional input/concern
- G. Schedule meeting with WSDCC Chair and Staff
- H. Task Force formed at State Level to begin work on the 2012 cycle