

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION PROCESS

What Worked:

1. Caucuses are democracy in action
 - Face-to-face interaction and issue/platform discussion
 - Democrats choosing democratic candidates
 - Identifies candidates with strong grassroots organization
2. Party building opportunity
 - Activist recruitment
 - New PCOs
 - Adds names to database
 - Potential money maker
 - Networking and lobbying opportunities

What Didn't Work:

1. Process frustrated many
 - Confusion about rules and unfamiliar processes
 - Confusion about primary vote not counting in delegate allocation/some believe ignoring primary is undemocratic
 - Over-crowded venues with so many people/impossible to hear and actually caucus/potential fire code violations
 - Same-day voter registration resulted in errors/people attending wrong caucuses/needed better way to verify eligibility at precinct level.
 - Absentee process too restrictive-disenfranchised too many
 - Conflict between platform/governance and the presidential/delegate selection
 - Contested nominations overwhelmed system
 - Peer pressure and non-secret voting made many voters uncomfortable

-Delegate attrition as process proceeded, due to lack of understanding /many people expected party paid their way to the Convention

2. Logistics

-Labor intensive/not enough volunteers

-Framework/system not flexible

-People who ran process unable to participate and did not become delegates

-Venues expensive to rent/often difficult to find/ didn't allow early notification of caucus sites

- Equipment to facilitate not available

-Impossible to provide adequate preparation of delegates

-Limited accessibility for some with disabilities

-Timing/affidavit restrictive and cumbersome

-Party commitment is not rewarded/not enough people moving forward who have strong party commitments

-Burned-out many party regulars and new volunteers

-Potential money loser

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

1. Better use of technology

-Need on-line system for registration/bar-coded pre-registration

-On-line absentee ability with opt-in for ID prior to caucus

-Improvement of quality and quantity of voter information

-Bar-coded ballots tabulated by computer with delegate calculations pre-programmed

-Share technology and organization "secrets" and best practices across state

-All sites should have cell phone access with state party emergency number available

-Record final caucus results on computer, same day, rather than turning in results on paper

2. Streamline delegate selection process/reward party loyalty/commitment

3. Inform the public that the delegate selection is a party function, not a public tax-funded activity/ which they can avail themselves by becoming active in the party

4. State Party needs to provide:

- A consistent statewide plan that works for all parts of the state/with a well-defined line of command
- Process that is consistent for all/better enforcement of rules
- Hot-line with trained people to answer caucus conveners' questions
- State-level training that is consistent/use experienced local organizers
- Comprehensive outreach plan
- State Party caucus loan fund to help district reserve caucus sites long in advance, district would pay back
- State Committee presentation about delegate selection /rules in early 2010 with procedural information to go back to district organizations in written form.
- Better coordination with presidential campaigns beforehand so there is less effort to take over the party function by candidate workers /reduction of paranoia among campaigns and the party
- Pool statewide profits from caucuses to compensate areas where caucuses resulted in net loss

5. Retain caucus for delegate selection, as is, with above recommendations with WSDCC vote in late 2010, or early 2011, regarding primary/caucus

6. Consider a different day than Saturday

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS:

1. There is a strong sentiment that both the caucus and primary have something to offer the voter and the Democratic Party.
2. Use state-run primary to select presidential nominee and use caucus for delegate selection. Utilizing the state-funded primary would allow more voters to participate and would allow caucuses time for substantive discussion of platform issues at the grassroots level.
3. PCOs and party officers should be automatic delegates to county and state convention/should not affect national delegate proportions
4. Party registration in order for primary to work
5. Recommend DNC reconsider hybrid plan for delegate selection
6. Hold conventions on-line in a video conference format