

# **Charter of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington (As Amended by State Convention 6/5/2004)**

## **Preamble**

We, the Democrats of the State of Washington, believe in the concepts expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States – that all power to govern resides with the people. In accordance with the National Charter of the Democratic Party of the United States, we organized and pledge ourselves to promote a truly representative Party open to all who support its principles.

We further pledge to make every effort to encourage maximum participation in the political process and to protect individuals' rights, civil liberties, our environment and social and economic justice for all.

Upon these basic principles we do hereby adopt this Charter of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington.

## **Article I Democratic Party of the State of Washington**

- A. The Democratic Party of the State of Washington exists to:
  - 1. Adopt and promote statements of policy to serve as standards for Democratic elected officials and goals for the people of the state.
  - 2. Nominate and assist in the election of Democratic candidates at all levels who support the goals of the Party.
  - 3. Administer the Party organization in accordance with rules and standards which will facilitate achieving the goals of the Party.
  - 4. Establish standards and rules of procedure to afford all members of the Democratic Party full, timely and equal opportunities to participate in decisions concerning the selection of candidates, the formulation of policy, and the conduct of other Party affairs without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, age (except where state and federal law precludes participation), religion, sexual orientation, economic status or ethnic origin.
  - 5. Promote fair campaign practices and fair adjudication of disputes.
  - 6. Raise and disburse monies needed for the continuing operation of the Party.
  - 7. Work with the elected Democratic public officials at all levels to achieve the goals of the Democratic Party.
  - 8. Encourage and support codes of political ethics governing all public officials in the conduct of their offices.
  - 9. Encourage voter registration and voting.
  
- B. The Democratic Party of the State of Washington shall be composed of:
  - 1. Democratic precinct committee officers.
  - 2. Elected Democratic officials.

3. Members of Democratic county, legislative district, congressional district and state Party organizations.
4. All residents of the State of Washington who are willing to support the principles and goals of the Democratic Party as expressed in the Charter and wish to be known as Democrats.
5. Members of those Democratic organizations that are recognized or chartered by the state central committee.

## **Article II State Democratic Convention**

- A. The State Convention is the highest authority of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington, subject to the provisions of this Charter.
- B. The purpose of the convention shall be to adopt a state Party platform and to perform such functions as are inherent to such an organization.
- C. The State Democratic Convention shall be called by the state central committee once every two (2) years.
- D. The state convention shall adopt its own rules.

## **Article III Washington State Democratic Central Committee**

- A. The Washington State Democratic Central Committee, also called "state central committee" shall be the governing body of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington.
- B. Members. The state central committee members shall be the state committeewoman and state committeeman elected by each county central committee and by each legislative district organization. Members shall be elected to terms of two (2) years. They shall have an equal voice and vote. In the event that a county central committee or a legislative district organization fails to elect such a representative, the chair (or the chair's designee) shall be the representative on the state central committee.
- C. Special Members. In addition, the state central committee shall have Special Members. Except in the election of officers and on the adoption or amendment of charter or bylaws, special members shall have equal voice and vote as other members in affairs of the state central committee when in personal attendance. Special Members have no proxy. The Special Members of the state central committee shall be:
  1. The National Committee members elected from the State of Washington;
  2. The Governor of the State of Washington if the Governor is a Democrat;

3. United States Senators from the State of Washington if Democrats;
  4. United States Representatives from the State of Washington if Democrats;
  5. The Leader of the Washington State Democratic Caucus;
  6. The Leader of the Washington State House of Representatives Democratic Caucus;
  7. A representative of the Young Democrats of Washington;
  8. A representative of the Federated Democratic Women's Clubs;
  9. Elected officers of the state central committee; and
  10. The Chair of the Organization of County and District Chairs. In the case of the Chair of the Organization of County and District Chairs, the vice Chair of that organization may serve as the Chair's alternate with vote.
- D. Organizational meeting. The state central committee shall hold its organization meeting in the first quarter of each odd-numbered year, following legislative district and county organizational meetings. The outgoing Chair of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington shall issue the call to the organizational meeting. In the absence of such a call, any ten (10) members of the state central committee may call and convene the organizational meeting. Timely notice shall be sent to all members. At its organizational meeting, the state central committee shall elect a chair who shall be known as the Chair of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington (and also called the "state chair"). At this meeting, the state central committee shall also elect a vice chair and such other officers specified in the bylaws, or in the rules of the state central committee.
- E. Meetings, officers, finances.
1. The state central committee shall meet at least four (4) times per year.
  2. The officers of the state central need not be members of the committee. Officers of the outgoing state central committee, unless otherwise qualified, shall not vote in the election of new officers.
  3. The National Committeemen and Committeewomen shall be elected by the state central committee for terms of four (4) years during each Presidential election year.
  4. The state central committee shall be the sole Party organization authorized to collect and disburse funds in behalf of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington, except as otherwise authorized by the state convention. It shall report the financial conditions of the Party at each state convention as well as the political activities of the state Party since the previous state convention.

## **Article IV**

### **Statutory State Committee**

- A. The statutory state committee shall be organized according to state law (RCW 29.42.020).
- B. It shall perform only those duties explicitly specified by RCW 29.42.020 (1) through (4). The statutory state committee shall adopt bylaws which shall delegate those duties to the state central committee which shall provide that the Chair of the

Democratic Party of the State of Washington shall be the chair of the statutory state committee and that the Vice Chair elected by the state central committee shall be the vice chair of the statutory state committee.

- C. The statutory state committee shall be subject to the overriding Party authority of this Charter, the state convention, and of the Washington State Democratic Central Committee.

## **Article V**

### **Other Organizations or Elected Officials Authorized to Function Continuously**

- A. General: These organizations and officials, along with the state central committee, are authorized by, state statute, charter, or custom to function continuously to govern Party affairs and to make Party policy; they are not directly involved in selecting delegates. All such organizations shall be constituted and shall conduct business according to this Charter and other provisions adopted pursuant to the authority of this Charter. State laws relating to Party operations shall be observed unless in conflict with this Charter and other provisions adopted pursuant to this Charter.
- B. Precinct committee officers
  - 1. Precinct committee officers shall be elected, appointed, or recalled according to state law, this Charter and other provisions adopted pursuant to the authority of this Charter.
  - 2. Vacancies in the office of precinct committee officer that exist because of failure to elect at state general election shall not be filled until after the reorganization of the county central committee and/or legislative district organization.
  - 3. Vacancies that occur in this office by reason of death, resignation, permanent change of residence, change of voter registration from the precinct, by recall of the incumbent, or because of failure to elect, shall be filled by appointment according to a procedure that affords every Democrat registered to vote in the precinct fair and equal opportunity.
- C. Legislative District Organizations
  - 1. The legislative district organization shall be the governing body of the legislative district Democratic Party and shall have the responsibility for conducting Party affairs at the legislative district level. It shall be composed of all elected and appointed precinct committee officers.
  - 2. Each legislative district organization shall be organized according to state law, the Charter and Bylaws of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington, and other provisions adopted pursuant to the authority of the Charter.
- D. County Central Committee
  - 1. The county central committee shall be the governing body of the county Democratic Party and shall have the responsibility for conducting Party affairs at the county level. It shall be composed of all elected and appointed precinct committee officers.

2. Each county central committee shall be organized according to state law, the Charter and Bylaws of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington, and other provisions adopted pursuant to the authority of the Charter.
3. In counties with legislative district organizations, the county central committee may establish a county executive board. Such a board shall be fairly apportioned.

E. Congressional District Organizations

1. Any congressional district may organize for purposes consistent with this Charter.

F. Judicial Review Board

1. A Judicial Review Board shall be established.
2. It shall consist of two (2) members elected by each congressional district caucus during each state convention. State committee members, county chairs, and district chairs shall not be eligible to serve.
3. Members of the board shall take office the following January 1<sup>st</sup> and shall serve for two (2) years.
4. A quorum shall be 60% of the members and no proxies or alternates shall be allowed.
5. Vacancies shall be filled by election by a caucus of the state central committee members from the congressional district having a vacancy.
6. This board shall consider questions of interpretation of the Charter, bylaws, delegate selection rules, affirmative action plans, and other adopted rules of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington and its component organizations. It shall make its recommendations in writing to each state convention before the convention votes on any of its recommendations and before new members are elected to the board.
7. The board shall not function as a credentials or rules committee, although its findings and recommendations shall be considered relevant evidence in a credentials challenge.

## **Article VI**

### **Party Organization Convened Periodically**

A. General

1. All periodic organizations are part of the delegate selection process.
2. In addition to the selection of delegates, caucuses and conventions, except congressional district caucuses, may adopt platforms and resolutions as desired, and perform other functions inherent in such an organization.
3. The national and state platforms and resolutions shall serve as the policy standards for the state Democratic Party. The national, state, county and legislative district platforms and resolutions shall serve as policy standards for the county and legislative district Democratic Party organizations.
4. Caucuses and conventions shall meet in even-numbered years.

## B. Delegate Selection Rules

1. Delegate selection rules adopted by the state central committee shall govern the precinct, legislative district and congressional district caucuses, and county and state conventions.
2. Delegate selection rules adopted by any Democratic Party organizations shall conform to this Charter and the Charter, By-Laws and Delegate Selection Rules of the Democratic Party of the United States. State laws relating to the selection of delegates to the National Convention shall be observed unless in conflict with the National or State Charters or other provisions adopted pursuant to those Charters.
3. Any Democrat has the right to challenge any delegate or alternate to the county and state conventions or to the legislative and congressional district caucuses in accordance with the rules. No challenged delegate may vote on any matter pertaining to his or her own challenge.

## C. Precinct Caucuses

1. Precinct caucuses shall elect delegates to the county convention and/or legislative district caucuses.
2. Precinct caucuses shall be held in accordance with pertinent rules; the state chairperson shall issue the call to the caucus.
3. There shall be no registration fee nor collection of money before or during a caucus, except that voluntary contributions may be solicited or collected.

## D. Legislative District Caucuses

1. The legislative district caucus shall elect delegates to the state convention. The same delegates shall also attend the appropriate congressional district caucus, if applicable.
2. The legislative district caucuses shall be composed of delegates elected at the precinct caucuses.

## E. County Conventions

1. The county convention shall be composed of delegates elected at the precinct caucuses.
2. The county convention shall adopt a county platform and elect delegates to the congressional district caucus and state convention if delegates are to be elected at the county convention.

## F. Congressional District Caucus

1. The congressional district caucus shall elect the maximum number of National Convention delegates permitted by National Delegate Selection Rules.
2. Congressional district caucuses shall be composed of delegates to the state convention.

## **Article VII**

### **Basic Principles**

#### **A. Open Party**

1. The Democratic Party of the State of Washington shall be open to all who support the Party and wish to be known as Democrats.
2. All members of the Party shall enjoy equal rights, protections, and opportunities in all governing documents and in all proceedings of the Party at all levels.
3. Discrimination on the basis of sex, race, age (except state and federal law precludes participation), religion, sexual orientation, economic status or ethnic origin is prohibited in the conduct of Party affairs at all levels.
4. To the greatest extent possible all representatives shall be chosen from elected members.
5. The time, the place, and a description of the legal and practical procedures of all delegate selection and policy making or governance meetings shall be publicized fully and in a manner to assure timely notice to all interested persons.

#### **B. Full Participation**

1. The Democratic Party of the State of Washington reaches out and seeks to bring all people and ideas into its affairs.
2. In order to encourage full participation by all Democrats of the State of Washington with particular concern for minority groups, in the delegate selection process and in all Party affairs, the state and county Democratic Party organizations shall adopt and implement affirmative action programs.
3. Affirmative Action: Performance under an approved Washington State affirmative action program shall be considered relevant evidence in the challenge of any county delegation. If a county has adopted and implemented an approved and monitored state affirmative action program, the county and legislative district shall not be subject to challenges based solely on delegate composition. This goal shall not be accomplished either directly or indirectly by the imposition of mandatory quotas at any level of the selection process or in any Party affairs, as defined in the bylaws.

#### **C. Fair Representation**

1. In elections at all levels of the Party in which Party policy is determined or in which delegates, officers other Party officials, and nominees for public office are to be selected, procedures shall:
  - a. Provide full, equal, timely participation;
  - b. Assure fair, proportional representation of preference;
  - c. Prohibit the unit rule; not require delegates to vote as a majority determines;
  - d. Prohibit winner-take-all selections until the highest possible level of selection;
  - e. Not deny participation for failure to pay a cost, fee or poll tax;
  - f. Provide whenever possible for direct and not secondary elections.

2. The Democratic Party organization which is closest to the electorate and which encompasses the constituency of a public office shall select the nominees to fill a vacancy in that Party office.
3. Democratic nominees, candidates and delegates should be selected by Democrats; provided that in furtherance of the Party's goal bringing people and ideas into its affairs, the bylaws of the Party may authorize the participation in the selection of nominees and candidates for public office of voters who do not wish to publicly become members of the Party."

#### D. Majority Rule

1. Majority vote shall prevail in proceedings of this Party except when otherwise specified by statute, this Charter, bylaws or rules of order.
2. Majority vote shall permit those in the majority to organize a body, but those in the majority shall respect rights of those in the minority and take care not to exclude them from the organization.
3. Minority reports shall be considered and published whenever they are supported by a substantial minority, as defined by the bylaws or other rules.

#### E. Accountability

1. Those elected as Democrats have the obligation to support the principles of the Democratic Party.
2. The decisions and votes of a person holding a position of public trust should be a matter of public record.

#### F. Election and Campaigns

Each state, county and district Democratic Party organization is encouraged to:

1. Conduct candidate campaign workshops which the state central committee will arrange and start in March of every year to instruct candidates on effective campaign procedures and organization; campaigning as Democrats in that organization's jurisdiction'
2. Adopt and publish a code of fair campaign practices to be recommended to all candidates campaigning as Democrats in that organization's jurisdiction;
3. Monitor campaign funding within that organization's jurisdiction;
4. Adopt written guidelines for endorsement of candidates and issues;
5. Take positive, provable steps to ensure that Democratic candidates campaigning within those organizations' jurisdictions endorse Democratic Party objectives as expressed in the platforms of those organizations and in this Charter.

#### G. Ballot Procedures

1. When individuals vote in public elections, secret ballots shall be used.
2. When a person votes as an elected representative, open ballots shall be used. This provision does not apply to the election by precinct committee officers of organizational officers (e.g. chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer, state committeepersons), provided that there is a mechanism to ensure the eligibility of those who cast ballots (e.g. a check-off list, sign-in-sheet, ballot receipts).
3. Proxies may be used in accordance with the National Charter.

## **Article VIII General Provisions**

- A. This Charter is intended to conform to the Charter, By-Laws and Rules of the Democratic Party of the United States. If parts of this Charter are found to be in conflict with the National Charter or other provisions pursuant to the authority of the National Charter, the applicable National provision shall govern. State laws relating to Party operations shall be observed unless in conflict with this Charter or the National Charter or provisions adopted pursuant to the authority of either Charter. In the event of such conflict with state laws, the Democratic Party of the State of Washington shall take provable positive steps to bring such laws into conformity with such Party provisions.
- B. The state central committee shall publish and maintain current copies of this Charter and make them available on request.

## **Article IX Amendments, Bylaws and Rules**

- A. Charter Amendments
  - 1. This Charter may be amended by affirmative vote of a majority of all the delegates to the state convention. An amendment must be presented in writing to the state chair by an elected delegate to the state convention at least 30 days before the convention. The state chair shall then publish the full text of the proposed amendment in the call to the state convention or in a mailing sent to all convention delegates no later than ten days prior to the convention.
  - 2. This Charter may also be amended by affirmative vote of two-thirds of the entire membership of the state central committee. An amendment must be proposed in writing by a member of the state central committee and be published in full in the notice of the meeting of the state central committee sent to each member of the committee. An amendment adopted by the state central committee shall be subject to ratification by the next state convention if a written request for ratification is presented in writing to the state chair by an elected delegate to the state convention at least 30 days before the convention.
  - 3. Newly adopted or amended provisions of this Charter shall take effect on the January 1<sup>st</sup> after they are adopted or ratified by the state convention, except that the adopting resolution may specify that an amendment shall take effect immediately.
- B. Bylaws of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington
  - 1. The Democratic Party of the State of Washington shall adopt bylaws to govern its affairs in those matters not fully specified by this Charter. The bylaws should be consistent with and subject to this Charter, the Charter of the Democratic Party of the United States and provisions adopted pursuant to the authority of either Charter.
  - 2. Bylaws may be adopted or amended by affirmative vote of a majority of delegates at the state convention.

3. Bylaws may also be adopted or amended by affirmative vote of a majority of the entire membership of the state central committee.
4. The state central committee shall maintain copies of the current bylaws of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington and shall make them available on request.

#### C. Rules

1. Each official body of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington shall adopt its own written rules (including bylaws, if applicable) for the conduct of its affairs. These rules shall be consistent with this Charter, the Charter of the Democratic Party of the United States and provisions adopted pursuant to the authority of either Charter, and the bylaws of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington.
2. Each official body of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington shall maintain copies of its own current rules and make them available on request.
3. The state central committee shall maintain copies of current rules of each official body of the Democratic Party of the State of Washington and make them available upon request.