Vote = Voice

2020 IOWA CAUCUS GUIDE

ISEA
Shape the future of Iowa’s public schools: Attend your Precinct Caucus

Want to help shape the future of Iowa and America’s public schools? You can start by being a messenger for public schools at the Iowa caucuses on February 3, 2020. Democrat, Republican, or No Party, you can help bring your neighbors together around the issues that really matter—children and public education.

Iowa holds nearly 1,700 precinct caucuses across the state where neighbors of the same political party gather together to elect delegates to their county conventions and discuss issues that will ultimately become part of their party platforms.

Here are some answers to commonly asked questions about the caucuses:

Where and when are the caucuses held?
The presidential caucuses are held every four years in order to select a presidential candidate. They are held within the boundaries of each precinct in the state in schools, public buildings, church basements, or even in private homes. The Republican and Democratic caucuses are scheduled for Monday, February 3, 2020 with doors opening at 6:30 p.m.

For information on where to caucus, to verify voter registration and how to register to vote if you are not already registered, go to https://iwillvote.com

What are satellite caucuses?
This year, Iowa Democrats have the option to participate in a satellite caucus at pre-approved locations. Satellite caucuses are designed to make the process more accessible for Iowans who have traditionally been unable to attend their in-person precinct caucus. The satellite caucus sites are located at accessibility and assisted living centers, language and community gathering places, work centers and union halls throughout the state.

Iowans who were interested in hosting a satellite caucus submitted applications by November 18, 2019. A 10-person review committee, established by the Iowa Democratic Party, considered all of the applications equally based on demonstrated need for the satellite caucus, completeness of the application, proximity to precinct and other satellite sites and location accessibility.

For a complete list of approved satellite locations and criteria for participation, go to the Iowa Democratic Party web site at iowademocrats.org and click on Iowa Caucuses 2020. Please note that some of the satellite sites are “open” to the public and some are “closed” and are limited to participants of the site only.
What happens at a caucus?
Caucus attendees express their support for a presidential candidate. The Republicans and the Democrats handle the presidential preference process differently. The Republican Party holds a straw poll to indicate their presidential preference. The entire caucus elects delegates and alternates to their County Convention.

The Democrats elect their County Convention delegates by presidential preference group, rather than by the whole caucus. There is no secret ballot and no straw poll. Instead, attendees split up into “preference groups” — supporters of each candidate gather in different parts of the room. The number of delegates elected for each candidate is determined by a mathematical formula based on the total number of persons who attend the caucus. After the presidential preference caucus takes place, each party discusses platform issues.

Who can participate in a caucus?
Any person who is a resident of Iowa and of the precinct in which you wish to participate; A US citizen and otherwise eligible voter (18 years old by November 3, 2020); and register to vote as a member of the party of the caucus you are attending (you can register at the caucus). You must be in the registration line by 7:00 p.m.

What is a resolution?
One of the most important functions of the caucuses of both parties is to take positions on issues that will ultimately shape their platforms. Anyone who attends a caucus may propose a “resolution” that caucus-goers discuss and either approve or reject. Resolutions go through the county, district and state convention process until the issues that survive become part of the official platform of the respective state parties. Party platforms provide direction to legislators and help shape the agendas of the parties. That’s why it is so critical that public educators attend and speak out about issues of concern to children and education. It all begins at the precinct caucus!

Do you have to pay to attend?
There is no fee for attending a precinct caucus.

How is business conducted?
Caucus rules are generally those recommended by state party officials in the caucus information and directions kit sent in advance to precinct committee persons. Beyond those, Roberts’ Rules are used.

What if I don’t belong to a political party?
Both parties require that you be a member of the party of the caucus you are attending — you can register to vote that night and you can change your party registration at the caucus. Of course, you can change your party affiliation back at any time after the caucuses.

Registration Table:
All caucus attendees must register at the caucus registration table. You will sign-in and pick up your Presidential Caucus Card. This card is extremely important and will serve as the method by which the caucus chair counts your presidential preference.
Calling the Caucus to Order:
At 7:00 p.m., or soon thereafter as registration is complete, the temporary caucus chair calls the caucus to order.

The chair briefly reads through the caucus agenda.

The chair reads announcements from the state party.

The caucus nominates and elects a permanent chair(s) and permanent secretary(s).

Presidential Preference Groups:
The caucus will divide into presidential preference groups, including uncommitted (15 minutes); any group that is not viable may realign for a second round (15 minutes). If you are in a viable group in the first round, you may not realign; caucuses elect delegates to the county convention within preference groups.

Note: This process may not begin before 7:00 p.m. and everyone is registered

Election of Delegates and Alternates to the County Convention:
Nomination papers for candidates seeking office at the federal, state and local levels should be passed around to be signed. Candidate letters can be passed around or read.

The caucus chair is required to immediately report the delegate results to the Iowa Democratic Party. A representative from each preference group may be present when the results are reported.

The entire caucus ratifies the slate of delegates and alternates.

Election of Platform Committee & Committee on Committees Members:
The entire caucus shall nominate persons to serve on the Platform Committee and the Committee on Committees for the County Convention from the delegates and alternate delegates just elected. Usually two delegates and/or alternates are elected to each committee.

What is the Platform Committee?
Representatives on the Platform Committee will help determine which platform resolutions are submitted to the County Convention for ratification in the County Democratic Party Platform.

What is the Committee on Committees?
Representatives who serve on the Committee on Committees will be divided among the following committees for the County Convention: Rules, Credentials and Arrangements. These committees assist with logistics for the County Convention.

Election of Precinct Committee Persons:
Precinct Committee members are the first level of organization within the Iowa Democratic Party. The entire caucus elects Precinct Committee persons.

Resolutions Discussion and Adoption:
The caucus discusses and adopts resolutions to be submitted to the Platform Committee.

The Caucus is Adjourned.
Sample Agenda

Democratic Party Precinct Caucus
Monday, February 3, 2020
Doors open at 6:30 p.m.
Must be signed in or in line by 7:00 p.m.

Caucus is called to order by temporary chair at 7:00 p.m. or as soon as registration is complete.

Iowa Democratic Party Presentation.

Elected Officials Presentation.

Election of permanent chair and permanent secretary.

Viability threshold determined and preference groups form (this cannot happen before 7:00 p.m.).

First realignment.

Delegates awarded to viable preference groups.

Caucus results reported to the Iowa Democratic Party.

Election of delegates and alternates.

Ratification of slate of delegates and alternates.

Election of County Convention Committee representatives.

Election of Precinct Committee persons.

Resolution discussion and adoption.

New business.

Caucus adjourned.

Iowa Democratic Party Caucus and Convention Dates
March 21, 2020 : County Conventions
April 25, 2020 : District Conventions
June 13, 2020 : State Convention
July 13-July 16, 2020: Democratic National Convention

For further information please go to: https://iowademocrats.org
Sample Agenda

Republican Party Precinct Caucus
Monday, February 3, 2020
Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

Temporary chair starts the meeting and announces the purpose of the caucus.

Elect permanent chair and secretary.

Allow presidential candidate or a representative to speak on behalf of candidate.

Presidential straw poll.

Elect precinct committee persons.

Elect delegates and alternates to County Convention.

Consider caucus resolutions to send to County Convention.

Elect County Convention Committee members.

Iowa Republican Party Caucus and Convention Dates
March 21, 2020: County Conventions
April 25, 2020: District Conventions
June 13, 2020: State Convention
August 24-August 27, 2020: Republican National Convention

For further information please go to: https://www.iowagop.org
2020 Suggested Platform Resolutions

1. We oppose diverting public money from public schools to fund vouchers; tuition tax credits or private, for-profit education businesses. As public schools deal with continuous budget cuts, providing quality education becomes increasingly difficult. Taking scarce public resources away from public schools at a time of greatly increased expectations is unacceptable.

2. We encourage the Iowa Legislature and Governor to provide adequate funding for Iowa’s public schools, area education agencies and community colleges. The future of our state is tied directly to its public education system which creates the well-educated workforce that attracts and keeps jobs in Iowa. The Legislature and the Governor must provide supplemental state aid rates that are adequate for public schools and return community college state funding to appropriate levels.

3. We encourage the Legislature and Governor to allow Education Support Professionals (ESPs) employed by public school districts to be eligible for unemployment benefits. Current Iowa law does not allow employees of a school district employed in a non-teaching position to apply for unemployment if s/he is unemployed over the summer and has reasonable expectation of returning to the job in the fall. Employees who are sub-contracted to do the same job as ESPs employed by schools are allowed to apply and receive unemployment benefits. This discriminative practice needs to be corrected so that all employees whether employed by a school district or a sub-contractor are able to qualify for unemployment benefits over the summer while unemployed.

4. We support protecting the Iowa Public Employee Retirement System (IPERS) for educators, firefighters, nurses, snow plow drivers, and other public employees. It is well-funded and one out of every ten Iowans is an IPERS member making it a key economic driver in Iowa’s local communities. No policy changes are needed to IPERS at this time.

5. We believe public school personnel play an important role in identifying and linking students with effective mental health services and supports. In order for Iowa’s public schools to meet the essential emotional and mental health needs of today’s students, a systemic push for student on-campus licensed professional mental health providers is a fundamental requirement; we believe school counselors, nurses and other trained and qualified adults play a vital role in the health and safety of students; and we believe increasing the number of highly qualified adults in schools is essential to a healthy school environment.

Additional caucus information and resources:
National Education Association: https://educationvotes.nea.org/presidential-2020/delegates/
Iowa Secretary of State: https://sos.iowa.gov
Iowa Democratic Party: https://iowademocrats.org/2020-caucuses/
The Republican Party of Iowa: https://www.iowagop.org/caucuses