

## Neighborhood Caucus Meetings

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the caucus process, this document is an attempt to explain how it all works as simply as possible.

If you're still confused after reading what I have to say here then go to your caucus meeting anyway! If you ask questions and pay attention I promise that you will figure it all out very quickly. Don't be deceived by the length of this document the political process is not very complicated.

### PURPOSE OF CAUCUS MEETINGS

The only purpose of the neighborhood caucus meeting is to elect new precinct party officers and delegates. People might be in the halls campaigning for some candidate or cause, and there might be some other fanfare or short discussions, but electing delegates from your neighborhood is the reason that everyone is there.

Since all the candidates for delegate live in your neighborhood, you already know or will know very quickly whether a particular candidate is the best person to represent you. You do not need an in-depth knowledge of political terms and processes to simply cast a vote for those candidates.

### DEFINITIONS

**Precinct** A precinct is the smallest geographic political division in national, state, county, and city politics. Everyone in your precinct votes at the same location and is represented by the same people in the Utah Legislature, the city council, the U.S. Congress, etc.

Precinct borders are set every 10 years (after the national census) by the state legislature in a process called redistricting. Each precinct typically covers an area about the size of 2- 4 LDS wards, and at the time the precincts are created they all have about the same population.

**Local Political Parties** We are all familiar with the major national political parties: Republican, Democrat, Constitutional, Green, Libertarian, etc. etc. For every state and county in the U.S. these national parties have a local party. These local parties are quite independent from their national counterparts having their own platform, budget, bylaws, and officers.

For example, the Utah **County** Republican Party is affiliated with the Utah Republican Party and the United States Republican Party. However, the county party operates independently of the other two and has its own platform. The county platform has strong wording about educational freedom, gun rights, and other issues that either don't exist in the national platform or are not as strongly worded. The state party also has its own platform which is separate from the county party platforms and the national party platform.

**Platform** A formal statement of the party's beliefs and positions. It's usually 2-3 pages long, and although you don't have to agree with everything it says to belong to the party, it is meant to give the party's elected officials an idea of what issues are important to the people who put them in office.

**Convention** Each national and local political party holds a convention every year. The state and county conventions are typically held on a Saturday morning in June or July at a local school or convention center. The purpose of these convention is to:

- create the party platform
- agree on rules which will govern the party in the coming year (like, how early can we hold our primary? -- I'm talking to you Michigan and Florida)
- decide which candidates will receive the party's nomination in November's general election.

Conventions are also an opportunity for candidates to do last-second campaigning and for attendees to meet with or hear from currently elected officials.

**State and County Delegates** A delegate is someone who goes to a party convention and is allowed to vote on the business of the convention.

Elected delegates represent some geographic area (like a precinct). Each precinct selects 2-3 delegates to the state convention and 5-6 delegates to the county convention at their neighborhood caucus meeting.

Super delegates are people who may vote on the business of the party convention by virtue of holding some elected position within the party. These people are usually party officers, past party officers, or elected officials from the party (state legislators, county commissioners, mayors, etc.).

Candidates for the party nomination work hard to contact and meet with delegates because each delegate vote is very important when you're trying to secure a party nomination. Delegates serve their neighbors by researching each candidate and issue before casting informed votes at the convention.

**National Delegates** - Delegates to the national party convention are quite different than delegates to the state or county convention. They are selected at the party's state convention and represent the entire state.

Unlike county and state delegates national delegates are typically required to vote a certain way. Delegates to the national conventions are the ones which are very important in the U.S. presidential race and are the people who you've been hearing so much about in the news lately.

**Precinct Party Officers** Each precinct has officers which direct party affairs within their neighborhood. Precinct party officers usually include a Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. The precinct President is also a delegate to both the State and County conventions, and the Vice President is also a delegate to the county convention.

In reality there are hardly any party affairs to direct within a precinct. However, the precinct chair and vice chair sit on the county party's governing committee and are also occasionally called upon to assist the party by cleaning up voter records, advertising party events, fund raising, campaigning for party candidates, etc.

## **TYPICAL NEIGHBORHOOD CAUCUS MEETING AGENDA**

The neighborhood caucus meeting will be chaired by the outgoing precinct chairman and will typically last no longer than an hour and a half. Everyone at the meeting will have ample opportunity to ask questions, learn about their neighbors who are running for delegate positions, and run for delegate positions themselves if they feel so inclined.

- Read and briefly discuss the party platform [10-15 minutes]

- Elect a new precinct Chairman
  - People nominate one another for the position. Usually there are a 2 or 3 willing candidates. [5 minutes]
  - Each candidate introduces him or herself [1-2 minutes for each candidate]
  - Everyone at the meeting has a chance to ask the candidates questions about their political views [2-3 minutes for each candidate]
  - Vote on the candidates by secret ballot announce the winner [5 minutes]
- Elect other precinct officers (Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer) in the same fashion [20 30 minutes]
- Elect 2-3 at large state delegates in the same fashion [15 20 minutes]
- Elect 3-4 at large county delegates in the same fashion [15 20 minutes]
- Adjourn

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Q. Should I go to my caucus meeting?**

**A.** Yes.

### **Q. Care to elaborate?**

**A.** Of course, but pack your bags. We're going on a guilt trip.

Would you pick up a rifle and fight to defend our freedom? Would you give up your life to defend this county? I sure would, and I'll bet you would too.

So why is it that we find it so hard to do the little things to preserve our freedom? Big, heroic tasks no problem. Sit through a 2-hour meeting on a Tuesday night nah, I'm too busy.

Apathy and complacency will do a lot more damage to our freedom than terrorists and promiscuous White House interns. If you sit at home on caucus night because you don't understand the process, don't know much about local politics, or don't think your vote counts you're making a big mistake and you're giving up the hard-fought

### **Q. But I don't know very much about politics. Shouldn't I leave this to political junkies?**

**A.** No no no! Not only is going to caucus meeting the best way to start educating yourself on politics, the purpose of the meeting is to elect delegates from among your neighbors. And remember, you will know most or all of the candidates at the caucus meeting personally. You probably already know whether or each candidate has the most important qualifications of all: good character and a strong work ethic.

### **Q. Should I run as a delegate.**

**A.** Yes. See the answer to the first question.

### **Q. Does it take much time to serve as a delegate?**

**A.** No. It basically requires you to read literature sent to by the various candidates, go to a couple meet n' greets and maybe a debate or two, and to attend the convention on a Saturday morning. That's it. All in all, I'd say it requires 10 hours per year to do a really good job as a delegate.

### **Q. How do I run as a delegate?**

**A.** The first step is to be someone of good character that your neighbors trust. Then at the meeting

simply ask a friend to nominate you for a position, or just raise your hand and nominate yourself nobody will mind. Finally, when it's your turn to address the group be honest about your political views and your willingness to do the job. Your neighbors will vote you in if they know they can trust you to represent them well.

**Q. Do I need to register to vote in order to participate?**

**A.** Yes. You can register to vote or change your party affiliation at the meeting.

**Q. Do I need to be a member of the party to participate?**

**A.** It's a public meeting so anyone is welcome to observe. However, only registered members of the party who live in the precinct may cast votes or run for a position. Unaffiliated voters living in the precinct may participate in the discussion, but not vote or run for a position.

**Q. How long do delegates and party officers serve?**

**A.** 2 years. Delegates and officers elected this Tuesday will serve until March 2010.