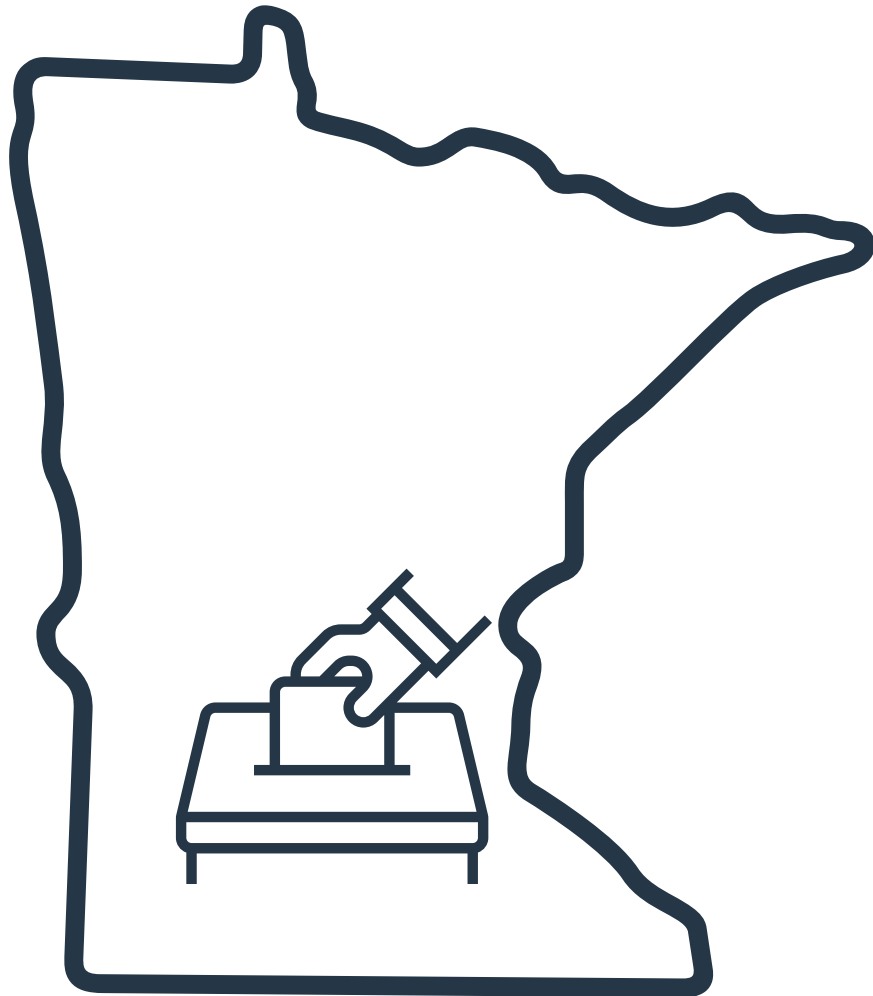


Caucus Participation Guide



Get Involved, Make A Difference!



MINNESOTA
FAMILY COUNCIL

www.mfc.org

How To Caucus

Find your caucus date and location at <https://caucusfinder.sos.state.mn.us>.

What Is a Precinct Caucus?

A precinct caucus is a meeting for those interested in participating in and influencing the election of candidates. Precinct caucuses are the formal start of the election season. In Minnesota, the two largest political parties that hold caucuses are: (1) the Republican Party, and (2) the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party. Minnesota has approximately 4,100 precincts, with each precinct scheduled to conduct a caucus on a day in February set by the Secretary of State. Caucuses are voluntary, open meetings that anyone may attend. Precinct caucuses follow a uniform established format governed by Minnesota State Statute (202A.14–202A.20). A precinct is the geographical area in which you live and vote that may be your township, your city or a portion of your city.

Who May Participate in a Precinct Caucus?

Participation criteria and voting requirements are established by Minnesota State Statute (202A.16). You may participate and vote in a precinct caucus if you: are or will be eligible to vote in the next general election; reside in the precinct on the day the caucus is held; agree with the political party's stated principles; and have not or will not participate in another political party's precinct caucus in the same year. State law establishes your right to attend a precinct caucus—exercise your right!

Who Can Attend a Precinct Caucus?

Anyone may attend the precinct caucus. A person may attend to observe without participating in discussion or voting. An observer must sign an observer registration form. Students are encouraged to attend to observe civics in action. Parents are encouraged to bring their children to observe.

Is There a Fee to Attend a Precinct Caucus?

No, there is no fee to attend a precinct caucus; however, there are costs associated with organizing and conducting a caucus. Venue rental, printing, and mailing expenses are a few of the costs involved. For this reason, caucus attendees may be given an opportunity to donate. Donations are voluntary. You will not be pressured to contribute.

When Are Precinct Caucuses Held in Minnesota?

The caucuses are held on a date in February set by the Secretary of State. The meeting must remain open for at least one hour (202A.15 Subd. 1). In the event of hazardous weather, precinct caucuses may be postponed by the Secretary of State (202A.14, Subd. 1 (c)). Any postponement will be announced on radio and TV by 6:00 p.m. on the day of the caucuses. Minnesota has become a primary state for the presidential election, therefore, there will be no presidential preference poll at the caucuses. The presidential primary election occurs in March during presidential election years. To identify your precinct, go to <https://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>.

Why Should You Attend Your Precinct Caucus?

The delegates elected at their precinct caucuses begin the process of choosing which candidates and which issues the respective political parties will support, endorse, and put on the ballot. Delegates elected at the precinct caucuses hold the most power at party conventions because they vote to endorse the candidates for elected office, vote on the issues their party supports, and vote for the delegates who will go on to the Congressional and State Conventions. Precinct caucuses initiate the representative process that is the core of our electoral system. The first representatives of the people are chosen at the caucus as delegates who will represent them to their political party. The process of a representative Republic continues to the county/district level, then to the congressional and state level, and finally to the national convention level where (in Presidential election years) the candidate for President of the United States is chosen for each political party.

What Should I Expect at the Precinct Caucus?

The precinct caucus meeting will begin promptly at 7:00 p.m. When you arrive you will be asked to register. You may browse the literature and any letters from candidates, ask questions, and get acquainted with your neighbors. By state law, a fellow party member will convene the meeting (202A.18, Subd. 1). This person has been appointed by the political party to call the meeting to order. The convener holds a temporary position just to start the meeting. Since each precinct is a self-determining body, each precinct has the right to choose its own chair for the caucus meeting. The temporary convener will open the floor for nominations to elect a permanent chair for the caucus meeting. The caucus may elect the temporary convener as the permanent chair for the meeting, or it may elect someone else. A temporary secretary may also be appointed to take minutes at the start of the meeting. The caucus may elect the temporary secretary as the permanent secretary for the meeting, or it may elect someone else. The precinct caucus will then conduct its business.

What Business is Conducted at the Precinct Caucus?

According to law, Minnesota political parties will caucus together by precinct to

1. Elect officers for their precinct for the next two years (202A.18, Subd. 2);
2. Elect delegates to represent their precinct at the county/district convention which is a meeting of all delegates elected in each county or legislative district (202A.18, Subd, 2);
3. Consider and vote on political resolutions to promote at the county or district convention.

The person elected as the chair of the caucus meeting is chair for that meeting only. The caucus will elect those who will be the precinct officers for the next two years.

Precinct caucuses and political conventions follow Roberts Rules of Order, except when other specific rules are adopted by the seated convention delegates (202A.18 Subd. 5).

Election of Delegates: Each precinct will elect delegates and an equal number of alternates who will represent the precinct at the county or district conventions during the next two years.

Adopt Resolutions: Any person participating in a precinct caucus may submit a resolution to the caucus for consideration. If the resolution is approved by a majority vote of the caucus, it is then forwarded to the County/District Convention for consideration. A resolution is intended to change a specific portion of that party's state platform. Submit the resolution in writing. If you are submitting more than one, submit each one separately to present to your caucus attendees.

What Are the Duties of Precinct Officers?

The precinct officers who are elected at the caucus direct the political activities of the precinct. They conduct meetings of the precinct, assist the Caucus Coordinator in finding the precinct's next caucus location, recruit the precinct leadership team for the next caucus, support endorsed candidates, encourage precinct members to assist the Party or candidates, and encourage and coordinate elected precinct delegates and alternates to attend conventions so that the precinct has a full voting strength and representation at conventions. Precinct officers serve for two years until the next precinct caucuses.

What Are the Duties of Precinct Delegates and Alternates?

The elected delegates from all precincts within the county/district meet for the County/District Party Conventions to represent their precincts for a two-year term. Alternates substitute for delegates who are unable to attend. When meeting in the even year, they:

1. Elect delegates and alternates to represent the County/District Party at District Conventions and the State Convention
2. Consider resolutions from the precinct caucuses to amend the State Party's platform;
3. Endorse a State House candidate and a State Senate candidate.

When meeting in the odd year, they:

1. Elect the Executive Committee of the County/District Party;
2. Amend the County/District Party's Constitution as needed;
3. Elect delegates and alternates to represent the County/District Party at the State Central Committee which is the committee that elects the State Party officers.

Occasionally, special legislative elections are called by the Governor when a legislative seat has been vacated. If the special election is in your district, an endorsing convention will be held. Delegates will receive a notice, and will be eligible to vote to endorse your party's candidate for that special election. The Governor sets the dates for a primary and general election in accordance with state law.

How Do I Become a Precinct Delegate?

To become a precinct delegate, you must meet the following requirements: you must be, or will be, eligible to vote in the next general election; reside in the precinct on the day the caucus is held; agree with the Party's stated principles; and have not or will not participate in another political party's precinct caucus in the same year. You may place your own name in nomination or have someone else nominate you on the ballot to elect you as a delegate to represent your precinct at the County/District Conventions.

Do I Need to Attend a Precinct Caucus to Be Involved?

Attending a precinct caucus is a great way to become active in the County/District Party. However, anyone may and is encouraged to volunteer to help elect candidates, contribute to candidates, contribute to the County/District Party, volunteer to help with party political activities, walk in a parade with a candidate, or install yard signs for a candidate.

Speaking the Language: Precinct Caucus Terms

- **Precinct:** The smallest political unit in the state comprised of a township, or geographical boundaries within a municipality that comprise approximately similar populations. Geographical precinct boundaries within municipalities are redrawn every ten years based upon the most recent national census. Election results are tabulated by precinct.
- **BPOU:** A Basic Political Organizing Unit consisting of all precincts within the boundaries of a county, House or Senate district and which is led by an Executive Committee elected by precinct delegates within that unit.
- **Precinct Caucus:** A meeting of members of a political party who live within the boundaries of a precinct. At a precinct caucus, you represent yourself, which is pure democracy. The precinct caucus attendees elect delegates and alternates to represent their precinct at County/District Conventions, our nation's elected representative republican form of government.
- **Delegate or Alternate:** A person elected to represent the precinct at County/District Conventions. Delegates and alternates are usually elected based on the candidates or positions they support or on the responsibilities they have assumed in the Party.
- **BPOU Convention:** A Party convention that consists of delegates and alternates from all precincts within the boundaries of that BPOU, each of whom represents the precinct that elected them.
- **Endorsement:** Delegates to a Party Convention choose a candidate for political races to represent the party in that election. Endorsement authorizes candidates to receive Party resources for their campaigns, and it commits the party to defending and supporting that candidate in the primary and general elections.
- **Resolution:** A written statement of an idea, issue, or action for delegates to consider at precinct caucuses, county/district conventions and at the state convention for possible inclusion in the Party's platform.
- **Platform:** A written statement of principles and issue positions that have been adopted through the convention process to guide candidates, legislators, and members of the political Party.