

2012 Iowa
Caucus Guide

**FOR ALZHEIMER'S
DISEASE ADVOCATES**

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Developed by SPPG; Alzheimer's Association, Greater Iowa
Chapter; IowaAgainstAlzheimer's; and Campbell/Patterson LLP

Educate Yourself:

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION PROCESS

There are 80,000 elections held each year in the United States. The most visible is the national election for president, held every four years. These days, the process for a national election lasts more than a year, taking up more than 25% of the current president's term. Though the national election process is actually quite a confusing one, here are the essentials.

THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATING PROCESS

Each political party picks a presidential candidate who will represent the party in the general election. Parties hold either a primary election or a caucus in each state to determine that state's choice for the national party nominee.

The first step of a presidential campaign is the nomination campaign. During this time, the candidate competes with other candidates in the same party, hoping to win their party's nomination. The candidate works to convince potential voters that they are the best choice and tries to win the most delegates—the state representatives who promise to support the candidate at the national party convention.

The nominating process differs from state to state, but the goal is the same: to determine the state party's choice for the national candidate.

CAUCUSES VS. PRIMARY ELECTIONS

There are two basic nomination processes: the caucus system and the primary elections. Caucuses and primaries are both ways for the general public to take part in nominating presidential candidates. At a caucus, a voter registered with a party gathers with other members from the same party to nominate a candidate. A caucus is a lively event. People attend a caucus to talk about issues, consider candidates, choose delegates, and discuss the party platform, or statement of principles. The rules for caucuses are different for each state and party.

A primary is more like a general election. Voters go to the polls to cast their votes for a presidential candidate (or delegates who will represent that candidate at the party convention).

THE IOWA CAUCUS

Iowa uses a caucus system to choose its party nominees. Of all the country's primaries or caucuses, the first are held in Iowa. This is the first real test of the public's opinion and receives a great deal of attention from the media because of the influence the Iowa Caucuses have on the outcome of future races. Though Iowa has used the caucus process since Iowa became a state in 1846, it wasn't until the 1970s that Iowa became the first in the nation to hold the caucuses. In 1972, the Democratic Party moved its caucus from early spring to January. In 1976, Republican Party of Iowa moved its caucus to coincide with the Democrats. This created the first-in-the-nation focus by the media and generated increased influence of Iowa on selection of the presidential candidates.

WHY IS IOWA FIRST?

While Iowa is not the largest state and does not have a large urban population, Iowa has many good things to offer:

- » The Iowa Caucus system makes candidates campaign in person and discuss issues with voters face-to-face. Candidates can't count entirely on advertisements to get votes. They must go out and meet people.
- » Iowa's population size ranks right in the middle of the 50 states.
- » Iowans are politically aware. We study the issues and take our role in the nomination process seriously.
- » Campaign costs are lower in Iowa. The candidate's one-on-one interaction with the people of Iowa is more important than the amount of money they must raise to campaign.

Iowa's Democratic and Republican parties conduct Precinct Caucuses (precincts are small local areas with approximately equal numbers of voters) that include a discussion of issues, a decision on presidential candidate of choice, and the selection of delegates to represent the precinct at party county conventions. At the party's county convention, delegates will elect other delegates to go on to the district conventions, and then to the state convention. Delegates elected at the state conventions will go to the Democratic and Republican National Conventions where each party selects its official presidential nominee. The Iowa Caucuses are the beginning of a long process of delegate and candidate selection and issue discussion.

REPUBLICAN VS. DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

On caucus night, Iowans gather as Democrats or Republicans to elect delegates to the 99 county conventions. The Republican and Democratic processes are very different.

► **Republican Party Caucus**

At the 2012 Republican Caucus, four important matters of business are completed. First, the Presidential Poll is taken. At the beginning of the precinct caucus meeting, the Caucus Chairman will call for the Presidential Preference Poll. Any presidential candidate or candidate representative will be given the floor to speak on behalf of his or her candidate, and then ballots are passed out for the poll. You can write your preference on the ballot or, sometimes, the vote is by show of hands, and the results are reported to both the precinct caucus and the national media. In this way, the Republican Caucuses are more like a traditional election with a simple vote for the presidential candidate you support.

Second, leaders are elected to the County Central Committee. Nominations are taken, and an election is held for “precinct committee leaders,” who are elected to the County Central Committee to represent all Republicans that live in that precinct.

Third, delegates are elected to the Republican County Convention. If you are thinking about running as a delegate for the Iowa Republican State Convention, this is where that process begins.

Fourth, and last, platform issues for the Republican Party platform are submitted and discussed for consideration at the Republican County Convention. This is the portion of the Caucus where it will be possible to introduce a platform issue in the form of a resolution. See page 8 for an example of a resolution concerning the key issues related to Alzheimer’s disease.

► **Democratic Party Caucus**

Democrats gather at the precinct meeting places, and like the Republicans, supporters have a chance to make their case for a candidate. Then the Democratic Caucuses become more involved, with people splitting into groups with others who support the same candidate. These groups are called “preference groups.” A candidate must receive at least 15 percent of the votes in that precinct to move on to the county convention. If a candidate receives less than 15 percent of the votes, that candidate is not considered “viable” and the supporters in that group have the choice to:

- » Join a viable candidate group (one that has more than 15% of the votes),
- » Join another nonviable candidate group to make it viable,
- » Join other groups to form an uncommitted group, or
- » Choose not to move anywhere and not be counted.

The percentage cut-off is determined by the number of delegates assigned to the precinct. Once the groups are settled, the next order of business is to figure out how many of that precinct’s delegates each group (supporting each candidate) should win. The media reports the “winner” based on the percentage of delegates going to each candidate, not on individual attendee preference.

Democrats at the Caucus are then able to submit and discuss party platform issue resolutions to be considered at the Democratic State Convention. See the section about the resolution process on page 6 for more information and a sample resolution related to Alzheimer’s disease.

THE 2012 CAUCUS CONTEXT

While this might seem like a confusing system, it is actually quite simple. It is an exciting process where people fight for their candidates and try to persuade others to join them. The Iowa Caucuses are your opportunity to show your support for a candidate publicly and advocate for them with your neighbors. Each of the precinct caucuses is led by trained volunteers who can help with any questions you may have. County Party Chairs can also help you to better understand the caucus process in your county.

This year there is a big field of Republican candidates. The main focus of the caucuses will be the selection of a candidate, but they will also work to develop their stands on issues through the resolution process.

Because President Obama is not likely to have any other Democrat running against him, the Democratic caucus will focus more on issues, and the selection of delegates to further develop those issues in the party's platform. They will not need to divide into preference groups as noted above, unless someone decides to run against the president. This focus on issues presents opportunities for advocates to bring up and discuss Alzheimer's policy needs.

THE NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

After all of the state primaries and caucuses are over, each party holds a national convention. Each state has representatives called delegates. The main purpose of a national convention is to announce the party's platform and nominate candidates for president and vice president. At each convention, a chair is elected and the delegates vote on a platform that is written by the platform committee.

By the third or fourth day of the national convention, presidential nominations begin. The chair calls the roll of states alphabetically. Each state nominates a candidate. A simple majority is required, although this may involve many ballots. The process of awarding the delegates is very complicated. In most cases, delegates cast their vote for the candidate that their state voted for in their primary or caucus, but they are not required to do so. The candidate who has the most support among the delegates at the national convention wins the party's presidential nomination.

THE GENERAL ELECTION

The 2012 General Election: Tuesday, November 8, 2012

After the conventions, the campaign to win the general election begins. It's heated, it's expensive and it's exciting. You feel as if you can't escape it!

On the Tuesday following the first Monday of November, millions of U.S. citizens go to local polls to elect, among other officials, the next president and vice president of the United States of America. Their votes will be recorded and counted, and winners will be declared.

Republicans And Democrats In Their Own Words

RESOLUTIONS

Many people think the caucuses are all about picking a candidate for president. That is certainly a part of it, but not the only part. Caucuses are a time when you get together with others in your party to pick a candidate for president AND talk about the issues that will become a part of the party's platform.

A party platform is a document produced by a political party every two years that sets forth that party's beliefs and values, as well as its policy positions on important issues of the day. What you may not know is that party platforms start in precinct caucuses.

Anyone attending a caucus can propose a resolution that asks the party to take a position on a specific issue. For instance, if you believe that more money should be spent in developing high-speed rail, you may offer a resolution that says that the Iowa (Democratic or Republican) Party supports the investment of public funds to pay for the development of high-speed rail and other public transportation options.

Whatever your issue, you can influence your party's stand on that issue by writing and submitting a resolution for consideration at your caucus. It's not as difficult as it may seem, and each caucus will handle the resolution process differently.

We are focusing on the issues related to Alzheimer's disease, and the packet provided includes good background information and facts to back up your argument for more attention being paid to this common and tragic disease.

1. Use the template on the next page to draft your resolution. You don't need to use this template—you can write your resolution on a napkin if you want (but we don't advise it).
2. If you are having trouble getting started, we have included a sample resolution on page 8 that you can offer at your caucus or adapt to better fit your beliefs.
3. Go to your caucus and submit your resolution!

There are more than 1,700 precinct caucuses in Iowa, all chaired by a volunteer from your community. They may be your neighbor or your cousin's best friend. They will all run their caucus in a slightly different way. Typically, the direction from the state parties is for the caucus to "discuss resolutions to be submitted to the county platform committee."

Some may require resolutions to be submitted in writing; some may allow them to be offered verbally (someone just standing up and stating a position for consideration). Some may ask for the person offering the resolution to make comments and explain the position, others will simply ask for a vote. Sometimes to save time, the volunteer running the caucus will ask for all resolutions to be sent to the district conventions (without discussion).

It is best to be prepared and have your resolution written before you go. It can be handwritten or typed. You just need one copy for the chair (but you might want to keep a copy for yourself, in case you are asked to speak). Just ask the Chair when you arrive at your caucus how resolutions will be handled, so you know what to expect!

Offering resolutions at your caucus is the best way to make sure the voice of your party is YOUR VOICE.

RESOLUTION TEMPLATE

Copy and use this template to help you draft your resolution. A fully written sample resolution, which you can use or adapt, is on page 8.

Proposed Resolution on (Subject/Issue)

Submitted by (Your Name)

Whereas

Present fact #1, which gives a reason why it is important to do what you ask in your resolution. These statements should contain facts that have been verified, not just opinions.

Whereas

Fact #2

Whereas

Fact #3. Present as many facts as needed to support the resolution. You can present one fact or three, but we do not recommend going beyond 5–6 facts.

Therefore, be it resolved that

“The (Democratic/Republican) Party shall ...

A good resolution identifies WHO should take action (in this case, the party and its elected officials); defines WHAT actions should be taken in as much detail as needed to ensure the desired action(s) are well-defined; states WHEN the action should be taken (if relevant); and identifies HOW the action should be taken.

RESOLUTION

for Expanded Alzheimer's Disease Diagnosis, Care Planning, and Research

Whereas

Alzheimer's disease increasingly takes its toll on people with Alzheimer's, their families, unpaid and paid caregivers, and family and national budgets; and

Whereas

69,000 Iowans have Alzheimer's and it is the 5th leading cause of death in the state; and

Whereas

Alzheimer's disease is a major driver of health care costs, with 131,854 unpaid caregivers providing \$1.7 billion in unpaid care in 2010 alone; and

Whereas

Iowa is experiencing an increasing care gap between the number of people with Alzheimer's needing care and the available trained workers to care for them;

Therefore, be it resolved that

as a party, we support public policy that:

- » Expands diagnosis and care planning for people with Alzheimer's as well as for their families and caregivers.
- » Increases commitment to Alzheimer's research to discover ways to successfully delay onset, prevent, and cure Alzheimer's.
- » Supports implementation of the federal National Alzheimer's Project Act that is under development.

OTHER PLACES TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT ALZHEIMER'S AND THE CAUCUSES

There are a number of websites that may be helpful as you search for information about Alzheimer's disease, policy related to Alzheimer's disease, the Iowa Caucuses, the candidates, and voting. Here are a few that may be helpful.

Alzheimer's Association, Greater Iowa Chapter

www.alz.org/greateriowa

Alzheimer's Association

www.alz.org

IowaAgainstAlzheimer's

www.usagainstalzhaimers.org/iowa

USAgainstAlzheimer's

www.usagainstalzhaimers.org

State Public Policy Group

www.sppg.com

The University of Iowa Center on Aging

www.centeronaging.uiowa.edu/index.shtml

Iowa CareGivers Association

www.iowacaregivers.org/index.php

Aging Resources of Central Iowa

www.agingresources.com

Iowa Alliance for Retired Americans

www.retiredamericans.org/state-by-state/state-alliances

Iowa Coalition on Mental Health and Aging

www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icmha

Iowa Department on Aging

www.aging.iowa.gov

Democratic Party Platform (2010):

iowademocrats.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/2010platform.pdf

Republican Party Platform (2010):

www.iowagop.org/platform.php

The Des Moines Register: www.caucuses.desmoinesregister.com

- » Calendar of Candidate Visits to Iowa:
www.caucuses.desmoinesregister.com/data/iowa-caucus/candidate-tracker
- » Candidate Issues Scorecard:
www.caucuses.desmoinesregister.com/data/iowa-caucus/compare-candidates
- » Candidate Backgrounds:
www.caucuses.desmoinesregister.com/candidates

The Gazette:

www.iowacaucus.com

Candidate Information:

www.iowacaucus.com/candidate-corner

Democratic Party's Caucus Website:

www.thecaucuses.com/index.php

Iowa Caucus News (Facebook):

www.facebook.com/pages/Iowa-Caucus-News/328833579809?sk=wall&filter=12

Democracy in Action (project of George Washington University):

www.p2012.org

League of Women Voters:

www.lwv.org

www.lwvia.org

Vote 411 (information on voting):

www.vote411.org