

## Influencing Others - The Political Party Convention Process in Texas

There are six levels of involvement for Christians living in a Federal Republic: Knowing God's Word (having a biblical worldview and values), registering to vote (no later than 30 days before an election if you are not registered), researching the candidates/issues and voting well, *influencing others by political party involvement*, supporting specific candidates, and serving in government (as an employee, volunteer, or elected official).

One of the best ways to have a biblical influence on the political process is to get involved in party politics. Once you have chosen a party that you think best reflects your views as a believer (check out their party platforms online), you may choose to participate in their convention process that takes place every two years. This could include being elected as a delegate or an alternate at: the Precinct Convention, the Senatorial District Convention, the State Party Convention, and, during presidential election years, the National Convention. There are many opportunities to volunteer.



### Precinct Convention

In Texas, the political parties hold Primary (meaning "first") Elections in March. About 30 minutes after the polls close at 7pm, parties hold their precinct conventions at the polling location. Those who attend have their credentials checked to see if they voted in the Primary. Participants can present and vote on party platform resolutions. From each precinct convention, Delegates and Alternates to the Senatorial Convention are chosen according to a set amount (according to how many in the precinct voted in the last election for governor). Both the resolutions and delegate/alternates move on to the next convention level.

### Senatorial/County District Convention

About three weeks after the Primary Election was held, political parties hold their County or Senatorial District Convention in a local venue paid for by the party. Those living in the state senatorial district and who are considered delegates/alternates may attend. In preparation for this convention, several delegates (who are party activists/volunteers) have been working on the following committees:

1. Facilities – organizes the convention, finds a location for and sets up for the convention.
2. Rules – establishes supplemental rules to run the convention.
3. Credentials - verifies that the delegate/alternates submitted from the precinct conventions are eligible to be part of the senatorial/county convention.
4. Resolutions – culls through the resolutions submitted by the precincts then presents their results to the convention of delegates for a vote.
5. Nominations - interviews delegates for the state convention presents their list of delegates and alternates to the convention for a vote.

(Senatorial Convention continued)

For those who want to attend the State Convention as a delegate/alternate, they can attend the nominating committee meetings prior to and during the Senatorial Convention. At this convention level, participants vote on approval of committee reports, resolutions to the party platform, and the list of delegate/alternates nominated to attend the State Convention. The business of the district conventions, including speeches made by local or state politicians, usually takes a day to complete. Both the approved resolutions and delegate/alternates names are sent on to the State Convention level. Note: alternates are usually seated at State because not all of the delegates are able to attend.

### **State Convention**

A couple of months after the Senatorial Convention was held, several thousand delegates/alternates from Texas' 31 districts gather to meet for 3 days in a city chosen by their party (must be large enough to accommodate the participants and guests). During the week prior to the State Party Convention, party activists meet on the following committees (operating much like those on the senatorial level): facilities, rules, credentials, and resolutions/platform to present to all the state delegates for consideration, amendments, and vote of approval. If they choose to do so, Delegates can attend these committee meetings to observe or testify. After the Convention begins, registered Delegates/Alternates are scheduled to attend meetings with: all state districts, their senatorial district caucus, and their U.S. Congressional district caucus for party business. They will vote for the State Chairman, Vice Chairmen, and for the Executive Committee man and woman (to represent the senatorial district on the State level of party politics). During presidential election years, each district votes for 3 national delegates, 3 alternates, and one elector for the Electoral College to send to the National Convention. During the convention, attendees have access to a vending area where food is sold and booths are set up for educating on the issues, for selling souvenirs, and for allowing candidates to interact with participants. During the evenings of the 3 day event, there are various events scheduled where attendees can meet candidates and attend banquets to hear speakers. The primary purpose of the convention is to debate and vote on the State Party Platform and for each district to elect their party representatives for State Party business.

### **National Convention**

Every four years a United States president is elected the first Tuesday of November. Each political party has already held their National Convention in August/September to approve the National Party Platform, to choose their presidential candidate, and rally the party to get out the vote for the election. This convention is smaller than the State conventions, but follows a similar organizational pattern. You may have noted that each level of the party convention process gains in importance and excitement. The National Party Convention serves the purpose of letting the public know what they stand for and who their "standard bearer" will be. On to the general election!