

How Iowa Democrats Select Their Delegates

The First Step: Tonight's Caucuses

1 After some introductory business, the attendees separate into groups according to their choice for president, or uncommitted.

2 To be "viable," each group must have a minimum number of members relative to the number of total attendees, in most cases 15 percent.

Groups that did not have enough people to be viable.

Iowans will gather Thursday to voice their presidential preferences in each of the state's 1,781 precincts. The caucuses will elect delegates, who will be narrowed further in a series of conventions. While the Republican caucuses involve more typical straw polls, politicking on-site is at the heart of the Democratic caucuses.

3 People aligned with a nonviable candidate must realign with another campaign within 30 minutes or leave. Often supporters of two nonviable candidates come together to make one of them viable. In a deeper layer of strategy, some participants might even align with a candidate they are not enthusiastic about to cut into the count of those who most threaten their first choice. Campaigns train volunteers in most precincts to recruit people from nonviable groups and devise strategies to undercut threats from rival campaigns. Last week, Representative Dennis J. Kucinich of Ohio urged his supporters to back Senator Barack Obama of Illinois in precincts where they could not form a viable group.

Group A needs one more person to earn a delegate, so it recruits the person from D.

The two people in Group F decide to align with E.

4 The remaining candidate groups are awarded delegates based on their proportion of the attendees. Each group elects its delegates from its members. In this example, the precinct has five delegates to allocate.

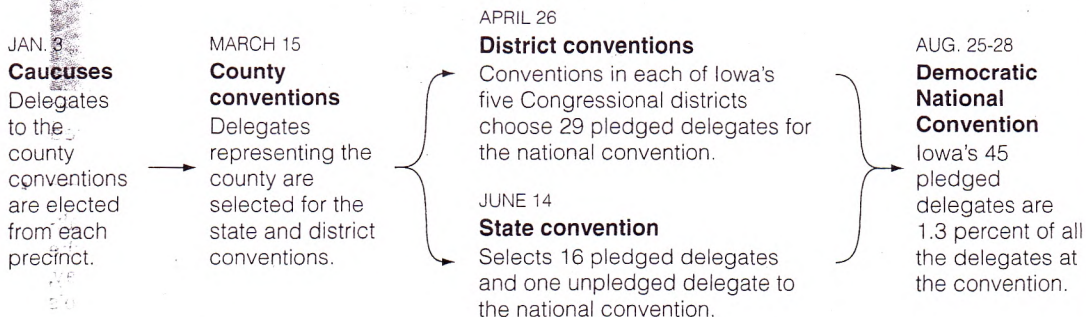
1 DELEGATE =

2 DELEGATES =

1 DELEGATE =

The Next Steps: Multiple Conventions Leading to the Nomination

A total of 46 delegates, 45 pledged and one unpledged, are at stake in Iowa's Democratic nominating process. An additional 11 unpledged delegate positions are filled with party leaders and elected officials.



Source: Iowa Democratic Party

FARHANA HOSSAIN AND ARCHIE TSE/THE NEW YORK TIMES