

**THEY CAN'T  
HEAR YOU IF  
YOU'RE NOT THERE.**

**JANUARY '08**

**ISEA Caucus Kit**

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# Shape the future of Iowa's public schools

## *Attend your Precinct Caucus*

**W**ant to help shape the future of Iowa and America's public schools? You can start by being a messenger for public schools at the Iowa caucuses in January. Democrat, Republican, or no party, you can help bring your neighbors together around the issues that really matter—children and public education.

In this kit you'll find all the information you need to be an effective caucus participant, including sample resolutions that you can introduce. Caucus resolutions are critically important because they help shape party platforms and become central to the policies elected officials support at the state and national level.

Your participation in the caucuses also helps build the foundation for a successful lobbying effort in the upcoming Iowa legislative session. Iowans are rightfully proud of our outstanding public school system. But ISEA members know we cannot continue that success by just maintaining the status quo.

Recognizing that having a caring, competent, and enthusiastic teacher for every child is essential to student success, ISEA will concentrate significant efforts in the upcoming legislative session to make sure the next generation has opportunities—even greater than our public school students have today.

Be a part of it all! Come to the caucus, bring your family and neighbors, and send a strong signal that Iowa is willing to continue its national leadership as a model for effective public education. It's the best two hours you'll spend this winter.

For more information and resources, visit the ISEA Web site at [www.isea.org](http://www.isea.org) and click on our "caucus" link.

# Facts about the Iowa Caucuses

Iowa has a rich tradition with caucuses. Some form of caucus has existed since the early 1800s, even before Iowa became a state in 1846. Today, Iowa holds 1,784 precinct caucuses across the state where neighbors of the same political party gather together to elect delegates to their county conventions and discuss issues that will ultimately become part of their party platforms. Here are some answers to commonly asked questions about the caucuses:

## Where and when are the caucuses held?

The caucuses are held within the boundaries of each precinct in the state. The list of caucus sites within each county must be published not less than five days before the caucus is held. They are usually held in schools, public buildings, church basements, or even in private homes. The Republican and Democratic caucuses are scheduled for January 3 starting at 6:30 p.m. Watch your local newspaper or contact your county chairperson or your party precinct committee person if you do not know the location of your caucus.

## What happens at a caucus?

Although the nation's media attention this year is focused on presidential politics, the caucuses perform several other major tasks. Most important, they reflect Iowans' views on important issues through resolutions. These resolutions influence a party's platform which, in turn, sets the agenda for future legislative positions of both political parties. A caucus also elects delegates and alternates to the County Convention, as well as representatives to your party's County Central Committee. In addition, caucus attendees may express their support for a particular Presidential candidate.

The Republicans and the Democrats handle the Presidential preference process differently. The Republican Party, for example, holds a straw poll so that attendees may indicate their Presidential preference. The whole caucus then elects delegates and alternates to the County Convention. The Democratic caucus-goers, on the other hand, elect their County Convention delegates by Presidential preference group, rather than by the whole caucus. There is no secret ballot and no straw poll. Instead, attendees split up into "preference groups" — supporters of each candidate gather in different parts of the room. The number of delegates elected for each candidate is then determined by a mathematical formula based on the total number of persons who attend the caucus. After the Presidential preference vote takes place, each party then discusses platform issues.

## Who may attend a caucus?

Any person who is eligible to vote, or who will be eligible to vote before the next general election (November 4, 2008) and who lives within the precinct boundaries may attend. Both parties require that you be a member of the party of the caucus you are attending. Democrats require that you be registered as a Democrat, or register that night at the caucus as a Democrat, and sign a pledge that you support the party's principles. Republicans also require that you either be a registered Republican or sign up as a Republican the night of the caucus.

**What is a resolution?**

One of the most important functions of the caucuses of both parties is to take positions on issues that will ultimately shape their platforms. Anyone who attends a caucus may propose a “resolution” that the caucus-goers can discuss and either approve or reject. Those resolutions then go through the county, district, and state convention process until the issues that survive become part of the official platform of the parties. Those party platforms then provide direction to legislators and help shape the entire legislative agendas of the parties. That’s why it is so critical that educators attend and speak out about issues of concern to children and education. It all begins at the precinct caucus!

**Do you have to pay to attend?**

There is no fee for attending the precinct caucus. However, since public and quasi-public buildings are now used, a voluntary contribution is often taken to offset any costs incurred for janitorial or other services.

**How is business conducted?**

Caucus rules are not normally set by the caucus, but are generally those recommended by state officials in the caucus information and directions kit sent in advance to precinct committee persons. Beyond those, Roberts’ Rules are used.

# What if I don't belong to a political party?

*Special Instructions for persons who are Unregistered or Independent (No Party)*

**B**oth major political parties constantly are at work trying to expand their base of registrants because it provides them with a voting base, a worker base, and a financial base. That's why they generally open up the caucuses to those who are either unregistered to vote or who are registered as Independents or "no party" as it is stated in Iowa law. Both parties' rules encourage non-registered voters, "no party" persons, and past non-caucus-goers to attend the caucuses.

It's not hard to attend a caucus even if you aren't registered to vote, but both parties do require that you be a member of the party of the caucus you are attending — you can register that night or you can change your party registration at the caucus. Of course, you can change your party affiliation back to "no party" at any time after the caucuses.

If you're an Independent, you must first decide which caucus to attend. Since an involved Independent normally leans toward one party more than the other, your past voting trends may help you decide. Obviously, the choice of current candidates may influence your decision. Remember, whichever party caucus you choose to attend and switch your affiliation to — you must sign the registration sheet in order to be eligible to vote. This is the same sheet that all other caucus attendees must sign.

For the unregistered voter, you, too, merely have to decide which party caucus you want to attend; and once you're at the caucus, you must sign a voter registration card listing that party as your preference.

# The Democratic Precinct Caucus

Thursday, January 3, 2008

6:30 p.m.

## ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. All eligible voters of the precinct present sign the "Registration Declaration" form. Only those who sign can vote at the caucus.
2. Temporary chairperson, normally the committeeman or committeewoman, calls the caucus to order.
3. Temporary chair reads announcements from state party.
4. Caucus nominates and elects a permanent chairperson and a permanent secretary. Election requires a majority vote.
5. Nomination papers, if any, should be passed around to be signed. Candidate letters are also passed around or read.
6. Pass caucus resolutions for County Platform. This order of business may be continued until after the end of elections if the caucus so votes. Every passed resolution is to be taken to the County Platform Committee.

## **CAUCUS CANNOT PROCEED BEYOND THIS POINT UNTIL 7:00 PM**

7. Election of delegates and alternates to the County Convention.
  - Caucus divides into Presidential preference groups, including uncommitted. (To be eligible to elect a delegate, a preference group must have at least 15 percent of the total caucus attendees.)
  - Time is given for a realignment of preference groups if one or more of the preference groups fails to have at least 15 percent of the total attendees.
  - Election of delegates then occurs within the preference groups.
  - Alternates, any number, then are elected within the preference groups.
8. The entire caucus ratifies the entire slate of delegates and alternates.
9. The entire caucus elects members of the County Platform Committee and Committee on Committees to represent their precinct on these committees for the County Convention. To be eligible for any committee assignment, you must have been elected a delegate or alternate.
10. The entire caucus elects two precinct committee persons for two-year terms. These persons represent the precinct on the County Central Committee. All efforts are made to elect one woman and one man.

# **Iowa Democratic Party**

## **Caucus and Convention Dates**

### **PRECINCT CAUCUS**

January 3, 2008

### **COUNTY CONVENTION**

March 15, 2008

### **DISTRICT CONVENTION**

April 26, 2008

### **STATE CONVENTION**

June 14, 2008

### **NATIONAL CONVENTION**

August 25-28, 2008

Denver, Colorado

For complete details about the Democratic delegate selection process,  
visit [www.iowademocrats.org](http://www.iowademocrats.org)



# The Republican Precinct Caucus

Thursday, January 3, 2008

6:30 p.m.

1. Temporary chair starts the meeting and announces the purpose of the caucus.
2. Elect permanent chair and secretary.
3. Allow Presidential candidate or a representative to speak on behalf of candidate.
4. Presidential straw poll.
5. Elect precinct committee persons.
6. Elect delegates and alternates to County Convention.
7. Consider caucus resolutions to send to County Convention.
8. Elect County Convention Committee members.

# **Iowa Republican Party**

## **Caucus and Convention Dates**

### **PRECINCT CAUCUS**

January 3, 2008

### **COUNTY CONVENTION**

March 1, 2008

### **DISTRICT CAUCUSES**

April 26, 2008

### **DISTRICT PRESIDENTIAL CAUCUSES**

June 13, 2008

### **STATE CONVENTION**

June 14, 2008

### **NATIONAL CONVENTION**

September 1-4, 2008

Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota

For complete details about the Republican delegate selection process,  
visit **[www.iowagop.net](http://www.iowagop.net)**

# Suggested Caucus Resolutions

**I. We urge Congress and the President to amend the No Child Left Behind act to allow the use of multiple sources of evidence to assess student learning and school effectiveness, to restore a class size reduction program to give students more individualized attention, to increase the number of highly qualified teachers in our nation's public schools, and to fully fund its obligations to America's public school students.**

**RATIONALE:**

The goal of No Child Left Behind to improve student achievement is worthy. However, the prescriptive mandates in the law punish, rather than help, improve schools. It ignores what children really need: a full, well-rounded education, small classes, more parental involvement, up-to-date materials and textbooks, and quality teaching supported by quality professional development for teachers. NCLB relies exclusively on standardized tests to measure progress; fails to recognize children as individuals; redirects precious resources towards more bureaucratic paperwork; and reduces a child's education to a single test score.

**II. We call on Congress and the President to support full federal funding of special education.**

**RATIONALE:**

When the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act passed Congress 30 years ago, the federal government promised to provide 40 percent of the funding for special education. Current federal funding sits at 17 percent. States are left to pick up the difference, which takes money away from regular education programs at a time when overall funding is dropping dramatically.

**III. We oppose diverting public money from public schools to fund vouchers; tuition tax credits; or private, for-profit education businesses.**

**RATIONALE:**

As schools deal with continuous federal budget cuts, providing quality education may become a faint memory. Taking scarce public resources away from public schools at a time of greatly increased expectations is unacceptable.

**IV. We support maintaining professional salaries for educators and increasing the wages of support professionals in our public schools.**

**RATIONALE:**

The Iowa Legislature and Governor made a strong commitment to raise educators' salaries at Iowa's public schools, area education agencies, and community colleges in 2007 when they enacted the teacher quality funding for teachers and appropriated \$2 million for community college faculty. The Legislature and Governor need to roll the commitment to teachers into the Iowa school finance formula to make the promise of reaching 25th in the nation permanent. Community college faculty need additional increases of \$8 million so they can reach 25th in the nation as well. Additionally, the Legislature and the Governor need to make sure that public education in Iowa has adequate resources so that all educational professionals, including support professionals, who play such a vital role in Iowa's kids' education, can earn a competitive living wage.

**V. We support allowing the IPERS contribution rate to be determined by the system’s actuary within a limit of 0.5 percent per year, creating an independent board of trustees, and funding to make the COLA for pre-1990 retirees and the favorable experience dividend for post-1990 retirees sustainable forever.**

**RATIONALE:**

The IPERS fund should have its contribution rate determined by its actuary and a reasonable limit of 0.5% per year adjustment will allow for prudent financial management of the trust fund and government resources. The IPERS trust fund currently does not have an independent board of trustees that represent the fiduciary responsibility of the members. This is key to proper oversight of this valued asset to the governments of Iowa and its employees. As for a COLA and the FED, it is incumbent upon the Legislature and Governor to make sure IPERS retirees can sustain a quality of life that isn’t jeopardized by inflationary increases outside of their control.