

Legislative and Senate District Caucuses: Contested Races

Guidelines for Caucus Chairs

Before the meeting:

Arrive early.

Reserve a seat (front and center) for the Timekeeper.

Identify a location for the ballot box. It should be placed on a table or desk so the Elections Volunteers can properly manage both the box and balloting.

Decide how you want the delegates to proceed to balloting (e.g., form a line, direct them row by row, etc.). Plan to eliminate possible chaos around the ballot box.

Greet the candidates as they come in and ask if they have nominating and seconding speeches and check speakers' credentials at that time. (Speakers' eligibility – according to the convention rules – is verified prior to issuing credentials, so don't worry about that.)

You may want to remind poll-watchers and those giving nominating and seconding speeches of relevant rules.

Agenda/Script (The following script is provided to give you ideas, not to be read at caucus.)

1. Call the meeting to order.

"This is the caucus for [House/Senate District X]. I am [name/position]. I call this meeting to order."

[Allow Convention Committee members to cast a ballot at the beginning of the caucus, if needed.]

2. Explain the Order of Business so the delegates know how the meeting will proceed.

"We are here to select the Republican nominee for the _____ race. Before balloting, we will hear from the candidates in the order listed on the convention program and ballots. Each candidate will have ____ minutes to speak.

[Introduce timekeeper.]

"The timekeeper will hold up a card to notify the candidate when s/he has 1 minute, 30 seconds, and 15 seconds left. When time is up, the timekeeper will hold up a STOP card and then immediately stand and applaud." The speaker will say, 'Thank you,' and stop immediately."

“I remind the candidates that if you are being nominated, nominating and seconding speeches are included in your allotted speaking time. I also remind those giving nominating and seconding speeches to restrict your remarks to the attributes and qualifications of the candidate being presented. Otherwise, I may terminate the speech and invite you to leave the caucus.”

3. Candidate Speeches

[Announce speaking order – as indicated on the convention program and ballots – and give candidates the floor. Don’t comment on candidates. The less you say at this point, the better.]

4. Balloting

Thank the candidates.

[Encourage delegates not to fold their ballots. The ballot boxes are clear, so if they want to fold them to make sure people don’t see their vote, they can. However, if the Elections Volunteers have to unfold every ballot, counting will take much longer and results will be delayed. Still, it is a secret ballot, so it’s up to them. Remind delegates that balloting will only take place in the caucus room and no additional ballots will be accepted after the ballot box leaves the caucus room. If there is a possibility of multiple ballots, instruct delegates not to leave the caucus until balloting is complete.]

“Balloting is now open.”

[Allow sufficient time for all delegates to cast their ballots. If multiple ballots are NOT required, the room will typically be empty by the time everyone has cast a ballot. If multiple ballots ARE required, ask for a motion to end balloting.]

FYI – The Elections Volunteers will mark wristbands and credentials as delegates cast their ballots. They will not allow any other person to handle the ballot box. Candidates should cast their ballot and move away from the ballot box. Poll watchers should stand at least 3 feet away from the ballot box. Poll-watchers should not talk directly to Elections Volunteers. If there is a problem, the poll-watchers should notify the Caucus Chair. In case of a serious complaint, balloting should be interrupted and the Elections Chair should be called to the caucus.

5. Adjourn or await the next ballot.