

Democratic Party Convention Delegate Selection

A Primer for 2016

Watch a political convention and you'll see a bunch of excited people on the floor. They're likely to be dressed up, wearing zany hats, covered in buttons, and probably half drunk - *though whether it's with enthusiasm for the party's candidate or alcohol is anyone's guess.*

The majority of those people are elected convention delegates who are elected/selected by their state parties. In Alabama, we have a presidential primary. **Here are the basics of how delegates are selected, the costs, and the deadlines you need to know if you want to run.**

How The Alabama Democratic Party Chooses Delegates

Alabama has to abide by the provisions set up by the national party, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and by the state party's bylaws. The procedures for delegate selection seem (and are) pretty arcane and convoluted. This is in no way a complete description of the process!

Delegate Selection Plan: the year before a presidential primary, each state has a committee that created a "delegate selection plan (DSP)," that sets election procedures and goals for diversity in the delegation. For instance, states have an equal number of male and female delegates, and have goals to meet for age, racial, & ethnic diversity as well as GLBT and disability community representation.

The DSP is submitted to the DNC, which approves it formally during a national DNC meeting - that should have happened at the August 2015 meeting.

What happens next is the by-product of the DSP. After the primary, the party can "tweak" the delegation to make sure it meets the diversity guidelines in the DSP. If you don't win a spot in your CD election, you can apply to be appointed to an "at-large" or "alternate" post - but those political plums rarely goes to newcomers.

Alabama 2016 Convention Delegation Basics

Alabama will send 58 total delegates & 4 alternates to Philadelphia. [Here's a link to the entire DSP.](#)

- **34 delegates elected by Congressional district during the presidential primary**
- **DNC members** from Alabama (who are elected by the state committee)
- **Members of Congress** - AL has one Democratic member, Rep. Terri Sewell.
- **At-large delegates** - Selected by the SDEC at a meeting held on 4/2/2016.

Delegates elected from Congressional districts

- CD-1: 5 delegates (3 men, 2 women)
- CD-2: 5 delegates (2 women, 3 men)
- CD-3: 5 delegates (3 men, 2 women)
- CD-4: 3 delegates (2 men, 1 woman)
- CD-5: 4 delegates (2 men, 2 women)
- CD-6: 3 delegates (1 man, 2 women)
- CD-7: 9 delegates (4 men, 5 women)

Qualifying to run as a delegate

"Qualifying" in political terms means that a candidate fills out a bunch of forms with the local or state party and pays a "qualifying fee" that's set by the party. The party reviews the qualifying form and decides whether to accept or reject the candidate. *That's not a big deal for people running as a delegate, but can get controversial if someone is running for an elected public office.*

The "qualifying period" for the Alabama Democratic Party's March 1, 2016 primary is from **September 14, 2015 - November 6, 2015**

Qualification Requirements

- At least 18 years of age.
- Registered voter.
- Plan to vote in the Democratic primary (this is on the qualifying form)
- Pay a \$50 donation to the state party - *although it's optional.*
- Have the form notarized and delivered to the state party no later than 5pm on the closing date. *Most people take use certified mail, just in case.*

How to qualify

- Qualification forms will be available online at the [Alabama Democratic Party Web site](#).
- County party offices should also have forms available - and often hold events/parties when qualifying opens. Contact your local county party office for details.

How delegates are credited to candidates

- **Primary voting is a two-step process.** First, the voter selects a presidential candidate. Second, the voter **may** (but doesn't have to) vote for up to 4 men and 4 women delegate candidates who are pledged to that **particular** presidential candidate. Most voters who bother to vote for delegates just mark the first 4 names on the list (and delegate candidates are listed alphabetically). *Those of you with last names beginning with "A" or "B" should pat yourselves on the back. You get a huge boost in the race for delegate just from that!*
- Delegates are awarded proportionally (it's not a "winner take all" primary), but a presidential candidate has to get at least 15% of the vote in the district to be awarded any delegates.
- Delegate positions are awarded to the highest vote-getters in the district, alternating by gender. In districts with an odd number of delegates, there's a long explanation of how those spots are awarded. See the [state's online DSP](#), page 8.

If you win, congratulations! You'll have more fun than you can ever imagine - ***Democrats know how to party!*** - but keep in mind that you'll be responsible for your travel and housing at the convention. That can be pricey, but the memories will last a lifetime.