

How the Iowa Democratic Platforms are constructed.

There are three different levels of Democratic Platforms in Iowa. There is a Platform for each of the 99 counties, one for each of the 5 Congressional districts and finally one Iowa State Platform.

We focus here on what happens on the County Level.

It all begins on Caucus day at each precinct.

Platform Committee Elected

At each precinct, the entire caucus nominates and elects persons to serve on the County Platform Committee for the County Convention from the delegates and alternate delegates previously elected. This happens before discussion of resolutions.

Representatives on the County Platform Committee will help determine which platform resolutions are submitted to the County Convention for ratification in the County Democratic Party Platform.

Platform Resolutions

At each precinct caucus, near the end of the meeting, the caucus will discuss and adopt resolutions brought by participants to be submitted to the county platform committee.

Resolutions can be proposed by any caucus participant. All are strongly encouraged to use an official Resolution Submission Form for each resolution passed by the caucus. Please fully complete the forms according to the instructions on the form. These forms are available on our website at jcdems.org.

Time should be allowed for discussion and possible amendments before calling the resolution to a vote. The caucus chair may wish to limit discussion on resolutions by setting reasonable time limits.

Guidelines for writing resolutions:

If you are writing a resolution it is best to keep it as short as possible and have it pertain to one topic if at all possible. For example, if you propose "We support action A and action B", you risk not having it accepted if say 1/3 of the group does not like A and one third does not like B. Yet each of these actions might have been supported by a majority if presented separately. Similarly, a lengthy resolution risks losing support.

IMPORTANT: Avoid excessive detail---you are making statements about policy not writing legislation.

It is advisable to consult the previous 2008 Johnson County Platform as well as the 2008 Second District and State Platforms to get ideas on how to word your resolution. These documents are available on our website at Resources Page at jcdems.org.

What happens after caucus?

Each Precinct chair will pass on to the County Platform Chair resolutions passed at that precinct. Soon after, the Chair will meet with all elected County Platform Committee members (usually on a Saturday morning) and the Committee will divide up into a number of subcommittees---corresponding usually to the divisions indicated on the Resolution Submission Form(Education, International Affairs, Health and Human Services, etc).

It is the job of each subcommittee to write proposed planks for their topics. They are obligated to seriously consider those Resolutions from the precincts as well as take into consideration planks from the previous 2008 County Platform. They are free to craft other resolutions which are not included in these materials.

This process might take a week or two.

After subcommittees have discussed and voted to approve planks in their section, these planks are brought for discussion, possible revision, and (eventual) approval at a meeting of the entire Platform Committee.

After each of the sections has been approved, they are forwarded to the County Chair and put in the County Convention materials.

The number of meetings needed for this process varies from year to year, but generally three or four general meetings are needed together with a number of smaller subcommittee meetings.

There is one more important step. The Platform must be discussed, possibly changed, and finally approved on the floor of the County Convention. There is active involvement by the Platform Committee with this process at the convention. This is the final 2008 Johnson County Platform and will be the Platform for the County for the next two years.

Are we almost there yet?

The next step is the District Platform. All counties elect and send representatives to the District Platform Committee. Basically, the whole process is repeated. Subcommittees are formed according to topic, each subcommittee reviews the county platforms of the District and then writes, discusses, and finally approves a set of planks for their topics to be submitted the entire District Committee which, after discussion and votes, sends the proposed District Platform to the District convention, etc.

The final state meetings are similar where a State Platform is constructed (largely) from the five District Platforms.