



# Delegate Selection Process Basic

Center Forward Basics  
March 2020

## Overview

Between now and June 2020, all fifty states and territories will be holding primary elections and caucuses in order to select Democratic and Republican presidential candidates. The elections and caucuses will choose delegates that will vote for the eventual Democratic presidential nominee and the Republican presidential nominee. Delegates are individuals that are chosen to represent their state at the Democratic National Convention (DNC) and Republican National Convention (RNC). They are typically party activists, local political leaders, or early supporters of a particular presidential candidate.

## The Democratic Party

The 2020 Democratic National Convention will be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin from July 13 to July 16. At the convention, 4,750 delegates will vote to choose the Democratic presidential candidate. Of the total delegates, there are 3,979 pledged delegates that are elected or chosen at the state or local level. The pledged delegates are picked with the expectation that they will support a specific candidate at the convention. The number of delegates in each state typically depends on certain factors such as how big the state is, how Democratic it leans, when the primary is held, and its electoral vote. Overall, a candidate must win at least 15% of the votes cast in the primary or caucuses in order to receive any delegates. In 2020, superdelegates are a group of 771 delegates that are not required to pledge their support to a specific presidential candidate. The superdelegates are typically members of the DNC, Democratic members of Congress, Democratic governors, or distinguished party leaders, including former presidents and vice presidents.

To win the Democratic nomination at the convention in July, a presidential candidate must receive support from a majority of the pledged delegates (1,990 delegates) on the first ballot. If the convention is contested and goes to a second ballot, the candidate must receive majority support from all delegates (2,375 delegates).

A brokered convention is a presidential nominating convention that fails to nominate a candidate in the first round of delegate voting because no candidate gets the votes of more than half the delegates. If no candidate received at least 1,990 delegates in the first round of voting, the party's nomination is decided through additional rounds of votes. In these additional rounds, the delegates are no longer bound to vote for the candidate they originally supported. Following a rule change by the DNC, Democratic party superdelegates can only vote on the second ballot on at the convention.

## Center Forward Basics

Center Forward brings together members of Congress, not-for profits, academic experts, trade associations, corporations and unions to find common ground. Our mission: to give centrist allies the information they need to craft common sense solutions, and provide those allies the support they need to turn those ideas into results.

In order to meet our challenges we need to put aside the partisan bickering that has gridlocked Washington and come together to find common sense solutions.

For more information, please visit [www.center-forward.org](http://www.center-forward.org)

## Key Facts

- Democratic National Convention: July 13 - 16, 2020
- Republican National Convention: August 24 - 27, 2020
- Democratic Delegates in 2020:
  - 4,750 delegates: 3,979 pledged delegates and 711 superdelegates
- Republican Delegates in 2020:
  - 2,551 delegates: 2,441 pledged delegates and 110 unpledged delegates
- History of Brokered Conventions:
  - 15 multi-ballot Democratic national conventions
  - 9 multi-ballot Republican national conventions
  - In 1924, the longest

## The Republican Party

The 2020 Republican Convention will be held August 24 - 27, 2020 in Charlotte, North Carolina. There will be 2,551 delegates at the convention: 2,441 pledged delegates and 110 unpledged delegates.

multi-ballot convention occurred when it took 103 ballots to nominate John Davis, who lost in the general election to Calvin Coolidge.

In order to win the Republican nomination, a candidate must receive votes from a majority of delegates (1,276 delegates). Republican delegates are typically selected through elections, by the Republican state committee, by state or congressional district conventions, or by holding a leadership position within the state's Republican Party. There are four types of pledged delegates:

1. Pledged district delegates are elected at the congressional district level. There are three district-level delegates in each congressional district.
2. Pledged at-large delegates are distributed and elected statewide, with 10 at-large delegates in each state.
3. Pledged party leaders are leaders from each state and territory: national committeeman, national committeewoman, and state party chair.
4. Pledged bonus delegates are assigned to states whose electoral votes went to the Republican nominee in the last presidential election and states where Republicans hold the majority of the statewide offices.

At the convention, the pledged delegates vote on at least the first ballot based on the results of their respective state's primary or caucus, while, the unpledged delegates are not bound by the results of state primaries and caucuses.

## Conclusion

By the end of March 2020, roughly two-thirds of Republican and Democratic delegates will have been allocated. Overall, the RNC and DNC have different methods of determining the number of delegates per state, who the delegates are, and how the delegates vote for the eventual nominee.

## Links to Other Resources

- Ballotpedia - [Democratic Delegate Rules, 2020](#)
- Ballotpedia - [Republican Delegate Rules, 2020](#)
- Brookings - [What is a brokered convention? What is a contested convention?](#)
- Business Insider - [Here's how Democrats will elect their presidential nominees over the next several months](#)
- Democratic National Committee - [Delegate Selection Rules 2020](#)
- FiveThirtyEight - [Election Update: What Are The Chances Of A Brokered Convention?](#)
- New York Times - [Republicans Changing Delegate Rules to Prevent Discord at Convention](#)