

The Democratic Party in Mississippi

Precincts

The precinct is the smallest political unit. A precinct is usually a part of a supervisor's district (called a "beat"). Each county has five beats. Since there are usually two or three precincts to a supervisor's district (beat), there are usually at least ten or fifteen precincts in a county. Some counties have many more precincts, other counties have fewer precincts.

The precinct convention is the only convention open to all voters in an area. Usually the precinct conventions are poorly attended, so any good-sized number of people can probably control a precinct convention.

Any registered voter can attend the convention of his precinct. The convention is announced in the paper at least ten days before it is to take place. The meeting must be held at 10 a.m.; usually the meeting is on a Tuesday morning.

At the precinct convention delegates to the county convention are chosen. The number of delegates is decided earlier by the County Democratic Executive Committee; usually from one to six delegates are chosen. The votes may be split in half and twice as many actual delegates chosen. Usually there are alternate delegates chosen for each of the elected delegates, thus again doubling the size of the delegation. The precinct convention is run by majority vote and by rules decided by majority vote.

We intend to challenge precinct meetings in about 15 or 20 precincts by having registered and unregistered Negroes attempt to attend the meetings in the desired precincts. This will be the basis for our national challenge and is of utmost importance. After the challenge we will begin our duplicate Freedom Democratic precinct meetings which will parallel the regular Democratic meetings.

Counties

The county convention meets at least one week after the precinct conventions and is attended by the elected delegates from the precinct conventions of that county. The time and place for the county convention is decided by the County Democratic Executive Committee. Usually this information is published in the paper, so care must be taken not to miss the information when it appears in the county paper. Only the delegates elected at the precinct conventions are allowed admittance to the county convention, pointing up the importance of the precinct conventions.

The county convention selects delegates to the district and state conventions. Each county elects delegates equal to twice the number of representatives that county has in the Mississippi House of Representatives. Many times each vote is split in half, so twice as many delegates are elected, and an alternate is then elected for each half vote delegate. For example Issaquena County has one representative in the Mississippi House of Representatives. That means there are two votes from that county at the district and state conventions. If each elected delegate is given half a vote, then there will be four delegates from Issaquena County. If an alternate is elected for each delegate, then there will be eight people elected. An alternate takes the place of a delegate who cannot attend a convention for some reason. Thus Issaquena County would send eight people to the other conventions: four of the people would have half votes, and the remaining four would be alternates. These delegates attend both the district and state conventions.

The county convention also elects the County Democratic Executive Committee which has fifteen members. This committee appoints poll watchers, counts votes, and is the county political body.

Districts

The district conventions are held at least a week after the county conventions. There are five district conventions--one for each congressional district. At the district convention 6 delegates, each with half a vote, are chosen to go to the National Democratic Convention. Three alternate delegates are also chosen. The National Democratic Convention is where the selection of the Democratic candidate for the President of the United States is made.

Three members of the State Democratic Executive Committee are chosen at the convention.

Also one candidate for Democratic Presidential elector is chosen.

State

At the state convention, which is held at least a week after the last of the district conventions, the rest of the delegates to the National Democratic Convention are chosen. Mississippi has 24 votes at the National Democratic Convention. The Jackson Clarion Ledger indicates that they will be sending 68 people: 46 delegates and 22 alternates. This means that two people have whole votes and the rest half votes. This means that the state convention will elect 14 delegates, two of whom will have whole votes, and 7 alternates.

The state convention also elects the National Democratic Committeeman and the National Democratic Committeewoman. These two people sit on the Democratic National Committee; this is the committee in charge of policy for the party between conventions.

The selection of the State Democratic Executive Committee that was made on the district level is ratified (okayed) at the state convention. The State Democratic Executive Committee is the policy body for the Democratic party throughout the state.

