

1 **Eliminate Presidential Nominating Precinct Caucuses**

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3 WHEREAS the 2016 platform of the Washington State Democratic Party supports efforts to
4 increase voter participation and the elimination of all forms of voter suppression;

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6 WHEREAS the 2016 platform of the Jefferson County Democrats supports laws that make it
7 easier to vote and opposes laws that make it harder to vote;

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9 WHEREAS presidential nominating precinct caucuses, in which a fraction of registered voters
10 participate, are undemocratic by making it harder to vote, effectively disenfranchising many
11 voters who cannot or who do not wish to participate;

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13 WHEREAS precinct caucus attendees tend to be politically active, tend to hold views held by
14 political parties' extreme wings which often skews the results, and generally are "wealthy,
15 educated, white and interested" according to the Brigham Young University study titled *Who*
16 *Caucuses?* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); and

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18 WHEREAS the Washington State Democratic Central Committee passed on June 18, 2016 a
19 resolution submitted by the San Juan County Democratic Convention that calls for "allocating
20 delegates based on the results of the primary" instead of caucuses.

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22 THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Jefferson County Democrats call on the Washington
23 State Democratic Central Committee, pursuant to Article IX, Section A of the Charter of the
24 Democratic Party of the State of Washington, to revise Article VI of the Charter, and to revise as
25 needed any other official documents that describe the process for the selection of presidential
26 nominating delegates and alternates, to ensure that the number of delegates and alternates
27 allocated to each presidential candidate is determined solely by popular vote resulting from a
28 primary election;

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30 THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that any revisions also ensure that the actual
31 delegates and alternates pledged to each presidential candidate selected to participate in each
32 county's Democratic convention will be determined by a vote of Democratic voters at caucuses
33 held at the precinct level or by some other means acceptable to the Washington State
34 Democratic Party; and

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36 THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that all other processes and procedures for
37 legislative and congressional district caucuses and conventions, and county and state
38 conventions shall follow the most recent guidelines and rules set forth by these Democratic
39 party organizations.

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41 Submitted by the Jefferson County Democrats to the WSDCC for consideration at its meeting
42 scheduled for September 15-17, 2017.

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44 Submitted to the Jefferson County Democrats on August 9, 2017 by:

45 David Tonkin - z9davton@q.com, 360-385-2468; **Date Signed: August 21, 2017**



Supporting Documentation

Lines 3-4 – The 2016 Washington State Democratic Party Platform Calls for:

- [Line 28] Elimination of all forms of voter suppression;
- [Line 29] Exploration of electoral processes intended to increase voter participation and confidence in our electoral system, including such significant changes as replacing the electoral college with a popular vote of the people to elect the President, mail-in voting, multi-member districts with proportional representation, and instant runoff voting;
- [Line 34] Making voter suppression illegal; and
- [Line 49] A Constitutional amendment providing for direct election of the United States President.

Website: <http://www.wa-democrats.org/sites/wadems/files/documents/Washington%20State%20Democrats%20-%20Platform%20-%20160618.pdf>

Lines 6-7 – The 2016 Jefferson County Democrats Platform Civic Involvement Plank includes the following statement:

The hallmark of a free society is the opportunity to wholeheartedly engage in civic affairs. We support adopting laws that make it easier to vote, and oppose laws making it harder to vote.

Website: <http://jeffcodemocrats.com/party-documents/jefferson-county-platform/>

The 2016 National Democratic Party Platform Protecting Voting Rights Plank includes the following statement:

The Democratic Party was founded on the promise of an expanded democracy. The right to vote is at the heart of our national vision. It is a core principle of the Democratic Party to maximize voter participation for all Americans. Our democracy suffers when nearly two thirds of our citizens do not or cannot participate, as in the last midterm elections. Democrats believe we must make it easier to vote, not harder.

Lines 9-11 – 2016 Washington Vote Counts

The Washington State Democratic Party reported over 230,000 voters participated in the 2016 presidential precinct caucuses (<https://www.bustle.com/articles/150343-how-many-people-voted-in-washington-the-evergreen-states-primary-marked-a-major-win-for-bernie>). The Washington Secretary of State Elections Division reported 1,421,841 votes were cast in the presidential primary election out of 4,088,029 registered voters; According to the Seattle Times, “As of Tuesday, more than 660,000 Democratic votes had been counted in the primary [election].”

Website Links:

- Washington State Democratic Party 2016 Delegate Selection Process [bottom of page]: <http://www.wa-democrats.org/page/2016-democratic-caucuses>
- Washington State Secretary of State – Elections & Voting – Voter Turnout by Election: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/elections/research/Voter-Turnout-by-Election.aspx>

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- Seattle Times, May 24, 2016, 4th paragraph from the bottom:
<http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/wash-primary1/>

Lines 13-16 – Primary Voter Vs. Caucus Participant Numbers and Demographics

That caucuses skew the election results is unquestionable. In 2016, Bernie Sanders won the Washington caucuses with 74% of the vote, but Hillary Clinton won Washington's primary election by a slight margin. Even if all registered Democrats had voted in the primary election, Clinton might still have won, but if not, the election results would have been much closer than the results from the caucuses.

- Panagopoulos, Costas. "Are Caucuses Bad For Democracy?" *Political Science Quarterly* Volume 125 Number 3 (2010): 425-442;
http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/files/cces/files/panagopoulos_psq_2010.pdf. In this analysis, the author concludes "that caucuses are not especially undemocratic, although I echo concerns about participation inequalities. Thus, I do not believe that caucuses are especially "bad" for democracy; that said, I do not believe that caucuses are any better for democracy than primary elections. While the evidence suggests that alarmist claims about the nature of caucuses, compared to primaries, are generally exaggerated, my view is that caucuses can be abolished without much damage to the electoral process. In fact, replacing caucuses with primaries may result in some marginal improvements in terms of demographic and attitudinal representation.
- Israel, Josh. "America Is Supposed To Be A Democracy. So Why Do We Still Have Caucuses?" *ThinkProgress* March 15, 2016. <https://thinkprogress.org/america-is-supposed-to-be-a-democracy-so-why-do-we-still-have-caucuses-ffbbdf32caf9>.

Lines 18-20 – San Juan County Democratic Convention Resolution

This resolution can be found on the WSDP website on the Resolutions > Party Affairs page as 2016SCRES - 003 - 160618 - RECPA - INT - Caucus Process (San Juan) and the link to it is <https://www.wa-democrats.org/sites/wadems/files/resolutions/2016SCRES%20-%20003%20-%20160618%20-%20PASS%20-%20INT%20-%20Caucus%20Process%20%28San%20Juan%29.pdf>.