

NOMINATION AND ENDORSEMENT PROCEDURE FOR THE 25TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT DEMOCRATS

I. Purpose

The 25th LDD nomination and endorsement procedure seeks to nominate qualified Democrats to partisan and nonpartisan offices, and to endorse qualified candidates who align with our values in races for which we have not nominated.

II. Elections Committee

Immediately after the reorganization meeting, the 25th LDD Chair shall appoint an Elections Committee. This Committee shall be responsible for:

- 1) Candidate recruitment and vetting. The Committee may seek and accept help from others in recruiting candidates. Candidate vetting may involve questionnaires, interviews, and other methods of investigation as deemed appropriate by the Committee.
- 2) Conducting any full votes of the membership that occur as part of the nomination and endorsement process.
- 3) Making recommendations to the membership about which position should be taken in any such vote and why.¹ When there is disagreement among the Committee, a majority or plurality report and one or more minority reports shall be submitted from the Committee so that members will be aware of the different views of the Committee members.²
- 4) Coordinating the 25th LDD's actions in support of nominated and endorsed candidates.

If there is disagreement among the 25th LDD membership about how the duties of the Elections Committee shall be carried out, then in making appointments to the Committee, the Chair shall make every reasonable effort to ensure that the different viewpoints are represented in equal proportion to their prevalence among the membership.³

III. Full Vote of the Membership

¹ The requirement that recommendations include explanations is meant to prevent the phenomenon of members simply rubber-stamping the recommendation of the Endorsement Committee without understanding why. This provides members with access to the information used by the Committee but in a condensed form, so that it can be reviewed quickly.

² Many organizations have a single recommendation from the Endorsement Committee. While dissenting members of the Committee are allowed to express their views, the option is rarely taken. Treating minority reports the same as majority and plurality reports ensures that dissenting views will be available to the membership.

³ If "every reasonable effort" is not sufficient to ensure proportionality, then a proportional representation election could be used. However, proportional representation systems are rather complex to those who are unfamiliar with them, and such complexity could intimidate new members.

A. Procedure

Any time that a full vote of the membership is called for, a ballot shall be emailed to all members in good standing of the 25th LDD. The Elections Committee shall send the email with instructions to the members to reply with their vote within one week, explicitly stating the date and time of the deadline for responses. The Committee shall collect the responses, record the itemized votes for future review, and report the totals. Any member in good standing may review the votes upon request. Whenever possible, the voting period shall begin on the day of a general membership meeting, and the vote shall be announced at the meeting.⁴

For any full vote of the membership, the Elections Committee shall also compile a voters' guide that includes the Committee's recommendations and reasoning for each vote that will be on the ballot. The recommendations for each vote shall include either:

- 1) A unanimous report agreed to by all members of the Committee,
- 2) A majority report agreed to by more than half of the members of the Committee, or
- 3) A plurality report agreed to by more members of the Committee than any other report, but by no more than half of the members.

When there is a majority or plurality report, there shall also be one or more minority reports expressing the views of the Committee members who dissent from the majority or plurality report. Each report shall include the names of the Committee members who agreed to it. Each report shall either recommend a vote for a single option in the relevant vote or make no recommendation. The voters' guide shall be emailed to all members in good standing three days before the start of the vote, and it shall also be included in the email that includes the ballot for the vote.

B. Exceptions

If a full vote of the membership is called for and the by-laws do not allow for voting by email, then the vote shall be taken at a general membership meeting.⁵

Voting members present at a meeting in which an email ballot has been announced may cast a signed, written ballot at the meeting. Subsequent email ballots on the same question from the same member shall be disregarded.⁶

⁴ The purpose of a full vote of the membership is to ensure that members who work on Monday evenings, have young children, or for any other reason are unable to attend meetings are still able to participate in important decisions. Beginning the vote on the day of a general membership meeting and announcing it at the meeting reduces the likelihood that less tech-savvy members who regularly attend meetings will be disenfranchised.

⁵ This clause exists because our by-laws do not currently allow for email votes. We plan to address this soon, but this clause is needed to prevent disagreement between by-laws and this procedure.

⁶ This clause is to prevent members who do not have email from being excluded from decision-making.

IV. Nominating Process

This nominating process shall apply for any office the constituency of which is entirely contained within the 25th Legislative District. By December 15th, the Elections Committee shall set the schedule for the first nominating vote and transmit that schedule to all members in good standing of the 25th LDD, any person whom the Committee believes may wish to seek the nomination of the 25th LDD, and all Democratic campaign consultants known to operate in the 25th LDD.

A. First Vote

The first nominating vote shall be a full vote of the membership that begins no sooner than the 1st of January and no later than the general membership meeting in March. The deadline for candidates to file shall be no more than seven days before the start of the vote. Once the deadline for candidates to file for the nominating contest has occurred, the Committee shall compile a ballot listing each office for which one or more candidates have filed. The options for each office shall be the candidates that filed and a "no nomination at this time" option. This ballot shall be used for a full vote of the membership in which each member shall rank the candidates in order of preference from their first choice to "no nomination at this time". Votes shall be counted in accordance with the following process:

- 1) The first choice votes shall be totaled for each candidate and for "no nomination at this time".
- 2) If any candidate has a majority of the votes, that candidate shall be the nominee of the 25th LDD for that office.
- 3) If "no nomination at this time" has a majority of the votes, then no candidate will be nominated for that office until the next vote.
- 4) If there is no majority for any option, then the candidate with the fewest votes shall be eliminated.
- 5) All votes for the eliminated candidate shall be reallocated to whichever remaining option was ranked highest by that voter.
- 6) Any ballot that is exhausted (all candidates who were ranked have been eliminated) shall count as a vote for "no nomination at this time".
- 7) Return to step 2, and continue until one option receives a majority of the votes.⁷

⁷ This is the Instant Runoff Voting algorithm, but adapted to acknowledge that we are not required to nominate for every office, and in the process, addressing a serious potential flaw with the algorithm. Those who were following Pierce County politics back in 2008 may remember the Dale Washam situation, in which an unqualified person was elected as Assessor-Treasurer and ended up costing the County a great deal in legal fees. Washam's election was blamed on the Instant Runoff system, but a close analysis of the results shows that specific elements of that system were responsible for his election. First, when a ballot was exhausted (everyone the voter voted for was removed from consideration), it no longer counted towards the total, and the amount of votes needed for a majority decreased. Second, many Democrats and Republicans ranked Washam higher than members of the other party, in order to prevent someone from the wrong party from being elected. Requiring that all ballots be filled out with full rankings would address the first problem, but would likely exacerbate the second. Allowing people to rank chooses down to "no nomination at this time" and then stop (and interpreting any incomplete ranking as ending with "no nomination at this time") addresses both problems: exhausted ballots would not reduce the amount of votes needed for a majority, and no one would need to rank an unqualified candidate above a candidate from a different faction, since voting for "no nomination at this time" would be enough to vote against both the unqualified candidate and the candidate from another faction.

B. Additional Regular Votes

In the event that offices remain for which there is no nomination in the first vote, the Elections Committee shall hold one or more additional regular nomination votes, the last of which shall begin no later than the general membership meeting in April. Each such vote shall follow the same process as outlined above for the first vote. In the event that no candidate is nominated in the last of these additional votes, the top vote-getting candidate shall be determined by continuing the process of removing candidates and reallocating votes until only one candidate remains.

C. Final Nomination Votes

If, after the last of the regular nomination votes described in section B, there is at least one office for which no candidate has been nominated, then there shall be a final nomination vote for all such offices, beginning no later than the general membership meeting in May. For each such office for which there has been at least one regular nomination vote, the vote shall be between nominating the top vote-getting candidate from the last regular nomination vote and making no nomination.⁸ For any office for which there has not been at least one regular nomination vote, the vote shall be between transferring the authority to nominate to the Executive Board and making no nomination.⁹

D. Vacancies in Nominations

If, at any point in the nominating process, a nominated candidate withdraws from the election, the manner of filling the vacancy shall be determined based on when the Elections Committee is made aware of the withdrawal.

1. Before the last regular nomination vote begins. If a nominated candidate withdraws before the last regular nomination vote, then the office for which that candidate had been nominated shall be placed back into consideration at the next nomination vote as though no nomination had been made.¹⁰

2. After the start of the last regular nomination vote, but before the start of the final nomination vote. If a nominated candidate withdraws during this time period, then the office for which the candidate had been nominated shall be placed on the ballot for the final nomination vote. The vote in this case shall be between transferring the authority to

⁸ The purpose of this vote is to allow members one more chance to choose between nominating a candidate they do not prefer and making no nomination, even if they previously preferred no nomination to nominating the candidate who is presented.

⁹ This vote allows for candidates found at the last-minute to be nominated.

¹⁰ This allows a replacement candidate to be selected in the regular manner.

nominate to the Executive Board and making no nomination, as though there had not been a regular nomination vote.¹¹

3. After the start of the final nomination vote, but before the filing deadline. If a nominated candidate withdraws during this time period, then the Executive Board shall have the authority to nominate a candidate to fill the vacancy. If such authority is exercised through an email vote than a quorum for any nomination shall be either

- 1) An affirmative vote by a majority of the Executive Board,
- 2) However many members of the Executive Board respond within twenty-four (24) hours of when the email asking for a vote was sent, or
- 3) However many members of the Executive Board have responded when there are four hours until the filing deadline,

whichever is reached first.¹²

4. After the filing deadline. If a nominated candidate informs the Elections Committee after the filing deadline that they no longer wish to run, the Committee shall decide whether to ask the candidate to leave their name on the ballot or allow the nominated candidate to withdraw and recommend endorsement of a different candidate. If the nominated candidate is elected, they can then resign, and the vacancy will be filled according to the procedure laid out in law. If a nominated candidate removes their name from the ballot after the filing deadline, and without the approval of the Elections Committee, then they shall not be considered for any other nomination for a period of four (4) years.¹³

V. Endorsement Process

This endorsement process shall apply to any office for which the 25th LDD made no nomination, including any office the constituency of which is not entirely contained within the 25th LD and any office for which the nominated candidate removed their name from the ballot after the filing deadline. However, no vote to endorse for any position shall be taken while the 25th LDD has an endorsed candidate for that position. The Elections Committee shall develop a candidate questionnaire for each such office, and, as soon as practical after the filing deadline, email a copy of the questionnaire to each candidate for that office, provided that the Committee may choose not to send the questionnaire to any candidate if the Committee has evidence that such candidate disagrees with core

¹¹ This allows the search for a replacement candidate to include candidates who chose not to run for the nomination, some of whom would have made that choice because they preferred the candidate who won the nomination and then withdrew.

¹² Executive Board nominations allow for quick selection of candidates in the event that we do not have a nominee close to filing week. The conditions on quorums for the Executive Board are an attempt to strike a balance between including the entire board and reaching decisions quickly while under pressure.

¹³ Because we do not have the official power to nominate, we cannot fill vacancies on the ballot. All we can do is attempt to prevent such vacancies from forming, and a sanction for candidates who create vacancies is one possible way to do that. I do not know whether this is the best type of sanction, or whether we should even try to sanction such candidates, but it is included for your consideration.

Democratic values.¹⁴ Returned questionnaires shall be made publicly available on the 25th LDD website.

1. Candidate forums

The Elections Committee shall schedule one or more candidate forums where candidates who have returned questionnaires may speak to and be asked questions by the membership. These forums shall, if possible, be scheduled for regular general membership meetings. Forums for offices that will appear on the primary ballot shall occur no later than the July general membership meeting, and all forums shall occur no later than the September general membership meeting. All candidates running for the same position shall be scheduled for the same forum.¹⁵

2. Endorsement votes

Endorsements shall be decided by a full vote of the membership. The vote for endorsing in each position shall begin within twenty-four (24) hours after the end of the candidate forum for that position, and if possible on the same calendar day as the forum. The options for each office shall be the candidates that filed and a "no endorsement at this time" option, and each member shall rank the candidates in order of preference from their first choice to "no endorsement at this time". Votes shall be counted in accordance with the following process:

- 1) The first choice votes shall be totaled for each candidate and for "no endorsement at this time".
- 2) If any candidate has a majority of the votes, that candidate shall be endorsed by 25th LDD for that office.
- 3) If "no endorsement at this time" has a majority of the votes, then no candidate will be endorsed for that office unless another vote is taken.
- 4) If there is no majority for any option, then the candidate with the fewest votes shall be eliminated.
- 5) All votes for the eliminated candidate shall be reallocated to whichever remaining option was ranked highest by that voter.
- 6) Any ballot that is exhausted (all candidates who were ranked have been eliminated) shall count as a vote for "no endorsement at this time".
- 7) Return to step 2, and continue until one option receives a majority of the votes.¹⁶

¹⁴ This clause is an attempt to preserve current practice, that endorsement questionnaires are not sent to known Republicans. Rather than specifically mention the Republican Party, however, I phrased it as disagreement with core Democratic values, because it is disagreement with our core values, and not membership in a particular party, that is the reason we do not send questionnaires to Republicans. I also did not want to explicitly mention one party that disagrees with our values and leave out others. Nor did I want to say that we would not send questionnaires to anyone who is a known non-Democrat, as there are many people who agree with Democratic values but for whatever reason do not consider themselves Democrats. I do not believe that this clause is necessary, but it is included for your consideration. Its main benefit is that it reduces the workload of the Elections Committee.

¹⁵ This paragraph lays out our current procedure for candidate forums.

¹⁶ This is the same voting algorithm used for nominations.

3. Additional votes

There are two circumstances in which additional endorsement votes shall be taken. Any position for which either the 25th LDD did not make an endorsement before the primary or the endorsed candidate did not get through the primary shall be included in the first vote after the primary election has been certified. Such vote shall begin no later than the September general membership meeting.

Upon the request of either five (5) members or five (5) percent of the membership, whichever is larger,¹⁷ there may be an additional endorsement vote held for any position for which the 25th LDD:

- 1) has held at least one endorsement vote, and
- 2) does not currently have an endorsed candidate.

Such vote shall begin no later than the first general membership meeting at least two (2) days after receipt of the request by the Elections Committee. If the request is received after August 31st, the vote shall begin no later than two (2) days after receipt of the request by the Elections Committee.

4. Endorsement of ballot measures

Endorsement votes on ballot measures may be taken in three circumstances:

- 1) Upon the request of either five (5) members or five (5) percent of the membership, an endorsement vote may be taken on a ballot measure that is in the signature-gathering phase. Such a vote shall begin within eight weeks of receipt of the request by the Elections Committee.
- 2) Upon confirmation by the Secretary of State or County Auditor that a ballot measure has qualified for the ballot, the Elections Committee shall schedule an endorsement vote on the ballot measure to begin within eight weeks of such confirmation, unless the 25th LDD at that time has an endorsed position on the ballot measure.
- 3) Upon the request of either five (5) members or five (5) percent of the membership, an endorsement vote may be taken on any ballot measure that has qualified for the ballot, provided that the 25th LDD does not at that time have an endorsed position on the ballot measure and there is no endorsement vote already on the schedule. Such vote shall begin no later than the first general membership meeting at least two (2) days after receipt of the request by the Elections Committee. If the request is received after August 31st, the vote shall begin no later than two (2) days after receipt of the request by the Elections Committee.

¹⁷ The five members or five percent threshold is included to prevent inundation by repeated endorsement votes that continuously result in no endorsement; some amount of work must be done to bring about another vote. We may decide that this threshold should be higher or lower. The same threshold appears in a few other places for the same reason. In each such occurrence, the word 'may' is used. This may need to be strengthened to 'shall', but I did not draft it as shall, because each time, the following sentence describing the vote is a 'shall' statement. As I am not a lawyer or a law-drafter, I am unsure whether multiple shalls are needed.

Each vote on endorsement of ballot measures shall provide each option that will appear on the ballot in the election, as well as a "no endorsement" option. Any choice that secures a simple majority of votes cast will be endorsed. If there is no majority, then there is no endorsement.

VI. Withdrawal of Endorsement

Upon the request of either ten (10) members or ten (10) percent of the membership, a vote may be taken to withdraw an endorsement from a previously endorsed or nominated candidate, or a previously endorsed ballot measure.¹⁸ Such vote shall begin no later than the first general membership meeting at least two (2) days after receipt of the request by the Elections Committee. If the request is received after August 31st, the vote shall begin no later than two (2) days after receipt of the request by the Elections Committee. The ballot for endorsement withdrawal votes shall present a choice of withdrawing and sustaining the endorsement; no question of endorsing any other candidate for the same position shall be presented on the same ballot, nor shall any question of endorsing the alternate position on the ballot measure be so presented. Any endorsement withdrawal vote must meet the following criteria to succeed:

- 1) Withdrawal must receive a majority of votes cast, and
- 2) The number of votes cast to withdraw the endorsement must exceed half the number of votes cast in the vote on which the candidate was endorsed.

If the candidate was endorsed or nominated through a process that did not involve a direct vote of the membership of the 25th LDD, then the second condition shall not apply, and the withdrawal will only require a majority of votes cast.¹⁹

VII. Accepting Nominations by Other Democratic Party Organizations

If any Democratic Party organization covering part or all of the 25th LD establishes a nominating procedure, the 25th LDD shall hold a full vote of the membership on whether to accept such procedure as binding on the 25th LDD. In any such vote, the Elections Committee may either present the proposed nominating procedure for a single up-or-down vote, or they may divide the question such that the procedure's applicability to two or more

¹⁸ This threshold is higher because it should be more difficult to hold an endorsement withdrawal vote than an endorsement vote, as we do not want our endorsed candidates to be routinely worried about losing the endorsement. Like the other threshold, we may decide that it should be higher or lower. However, I believe that it is important that we have a process by which we can withdraw endorsements, in case video appears of one of our endorsed candidates bragging about committing sexual assault, or some other serious crime.

¹⁹ We may decide that we want a higher threshold for withdrawing an endorsement, two-thirds, three-fifths, three-fourths, etc. If we encounter a situation in which it is truly essential that we withdraw an endorsement, I expect that such a higher threshold will be reachable. The second condition is included because we should not withdraw an endorsement from a well-liked candidate just because of the result of a low-turnout vote. If a candidate is nominated (Executive Board nomination) or endorsed (nomination by other Democratic Party organization) without a vote of the 25th LDD membership, then it would not make sense to require more votes to withdraw than half of the turnout for a vote that did not occur.

categories of elections is decided separately.²⁰ If a nominating procedure is accepted, then any candidate nominated under such a procedure shall have the endorsement of the 25th LDD unless the endorsement is withdrawn.

In the event that two or more such nominating procedures are established and accepted, the following order of precedence shall apply:

- 1) The Presidential nominating process developed by the Democratic National Committee
- 2) Any nominating process approved by the Washington State Democratic Central Committee
- 3) A process for nominating congressional candidates established by a congressional district Democratic organization
- 4) Any nominating process approved by a County Democratic Central Committee²¹
- 5) Any nominating process approved by a congressional district Democratic organization for nominating candidates to offices other than United States representative

VIII. Amendments to This Process

In the event that Washington's filing week is moved from May to an earlier point in the year, the Elections Committee may recommend to the Executive Board an amendment to this process making changes only to the nomination timeline. Such amendment shall go into effect immediately upon acceptance by the Executive Board.²² Any other amendment must be presented for discussion and possible changes at two general membership meetings and then approved in a full vote of the membership in order to go into effect.²³

²⁰ For example, if the State Party develops a nominating procedure, we could decide separately on its applicability to federal, state, and local races.

²¹ Currently, this would only be the Pierce County Democratic Central Committee, but the 25th has, in the past, included slivers of King County, and currently both of our congressional districts stretch into other counties.

²² If the State's election timeline is changed, we would be unlikely to have time to go through the entire regular amendment process.

²³ This is the amendment process by which this process is being put forward, adjusted to include approval by a full vote of the membership rather than a vote at the meeting. There is no restriction on who may put forward amendments.