



# CIVICS IN REAL LIFE

# Presidential Nominating Conventions

*Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how “We the People” interact with the government and each other. Let’s help each other expand our civic literacy.*

Once the dust has settled from the nation's presidential caucuses and primaries, the focus of attention shifts to the major parties' **nominating committees**. It is at these conventions that the major party candidates will officially become the Democratic and Republican nominees for president of the United States.



During the primary and caucus season (January-June), voters cast their ballot for pledged delegates to officially support a presidential candidate at the nominating convention. The candidate who has a majority of the total number of party delegates wins the party's nomination. For a Democratic presidential candidate to win the **Democratic nomination**, they must have 1,975 of the 3,949 pledged delegates. For a Republican presidential candidate to win the **Republican nomination**, they must have 1,215 of the 2,325 bound delegates.

In addition to pledged delegates, each of the two major parties also have something called 'automatic delegates, more commonly known as 'super delegates.' It used to be that super delegates were unpledged delegates at the convention and could vote for any candidate at any time, but this has changed. Since the 2012 convention, the Republican Party requires its super delegates to vote for the presidential candidate that wins their state's primary or caucus. Following the 2016 convention, the Democratic Party changed its rules and does not allow its super delegates to vote unless the convention is contested.

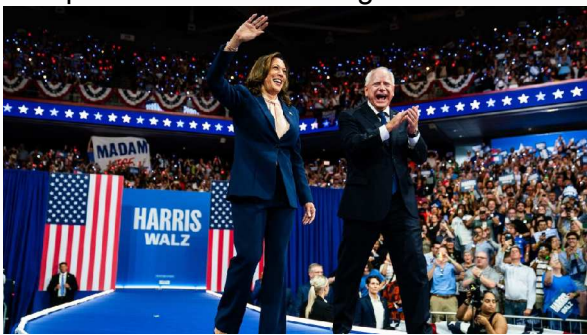


A **contested convention** is when a candidate does not receive a majority of the pledged delegates during the primaries and caucuses. This means that after the first round of voting for a nominee, the pledged delegates are no longer pledged to a specific candidate. Under a "contested" convention, delegates may support whomever they want as the party's presidential nominee, and the nominee is usually selected through one or more rounds of voting from the convention floor.



Once the candidate is officially named the party's nominee, they typically **address the convention** delegates to formally accept their party's nomination.

Presidential nominating conventions have a rich history, having been in existence for nearly 200 years. The first-ever presidential nominating convention was held by the Democratic Party in 1832. The Republican Party hosted its first presidential nominating convention in 1856.



The **Republican National Convention** happened back in June with their nomination of Donald Trump (FL) and J.D. Vance (OH). The **Democratic National Convention** is set to happen August 19-22 in Chicago. After Joe Biden, the incumbent dropped out of the race in June, Kamala Harris (CA) and Tim Walz (MN) are set to take the party's nomination.

**To Think and To Do:** If you were a delegate at the Democratic or Republican National Convention, what would you like to hear in the party nominee's acceptance speech? Find and listen to both speeches and compare what you hear to what you identified.

**Learn MORE** about Presidential Nominating Conventions. Free registration may be required.

- [Brokered and Contested Conventions](#), from Brookings
- [Presidential Election Process](#), from USA.gov
- [What Are Superdelegates?](#), from PBS



**Lou Frey Institute**



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