

# ORGANIZING & RUNNING A DFL CONVENTION

Brian Melendez<sup>1</sup>  
Julie Mattson Ostrow<sup>2</sup>

## Contents

- I. The Basics
- II. Preconvention Planning
- III. Convention Day

## Attachments

- A. Sample calls
- B. Model agenda and rules: Senate-district endorsing conventions in Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, Stearns, St. Louis, and Washington counties
- C. Model agenda and rules: Senate-district endorsing conventions in other counties
- D. Model agenda and rules: County-unit conventions

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<sup>1</sup>Faegre & Benson LLP, 2200 Wells Fargo Center, 90 South Seventh Street, Minneapolis, MN 55402-3901 (ph. 612.766.7309, fax 612.766.1600, e/m brian.melendez@usa.net).

<sup>2</sup>2239 Arthur Street NE, Minneapolis, MN 55418-3910 (ph. 612.788.4581, e/m jmostrow@msn.com).

## I. The Basics

### A. Calling the convention

1. “At all levels except the State Convention, conventions may be called by the chair or by a majority of the Executive Committee.”<sup>3</sup>  
But:

- a) “A unit may explicitly restrict the power of the chair to call conventions by requiring approval by specific percentage of the unit executive committee.”

### B. Scheduling: The convention must occur within the window specified in the DFL Official Call:

1. County units: 2 Mar. – 4 Apr.
2. Congressional districts: 17 Apr. – 22 May
3. Senate districts: 2 Mar. – 11 July

### C. Delegates

1. Senate districts: “Senate district conventions shall be composed of the following persons who reside within the senate district: precinct delegates and alternates seated as delegates and Distinguished Party Leader Delegates”<sup>4</sup>
2. Counties: “County conventions shall be composed of the following persons who reside within the county unit: precinct delegates and alternates seated as delegates and Distinguished Party Leader Delegates”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>DFL Const., art. III, sec. 4(A).

<sup>4</sup>DFL Const., art. V, sec. 1(A) (party organization in Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, Stearns, St. Louis, and Washington counties); *id.*, art. VI, sec. 1(A) (party organizations in counties not covered in article V).

<sup>5</sup>DFL Const., art. VI, sec. 3(A).

3. Congressional districts: “Congressional district conventions shall be composed of the following persons who reside within the congressional district: State Convention delegates and alternates seated as delegates, who reside in the county unit from which elected, State Party officers at the time of the congressional district convention and Distinguished Party Leader Delegates”<sup>6</sup>
  
4. Distinguished Party Leader Delegates: “DFL members of the State Senate and State House of Representatives, DFL State Constitutional Officers, DFL members of the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives from Minnesota, and any current or former U.S. Presidents or Vice Presidents who are Minnesota residents. Distinguished Party Leader Delegates shall also include the tribal chair of each Native American tribe whose tribal government headquarters is located in Minnesota, provided the chair is a resident of Minnesota and attended the DFL precinct caucus in the year the State Convention occurs.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>DFL Const., art. VII, sec. 1.

<sup>7</sup>DFL Const., art. VIII, sec. 1 Membership (b).

## II. Preconvention Planning

### A. Site selection

1. Does the site have sufficient seating capacity?
2. Is it available for the convention (including a walk-through or set-up the night before if necessary)?
3. Will it accommodate convention-related activities such as concessions?
4. Is it accessible?<sup>8</sup>
  - a) “All caucuses, conventions, committees and commissions shall be conducted in facilities accessible to people with disabilities. . . . Accessible sites shall meet State Building Code requirements including:
    - (1) “Entry: level or ramped surface, wide door opening low threshold.
    - (2) “Interior circulation: a ramp, elevator, or platform lift shall connect different levels where activities are held.
    - (3) “Restroom: wide door opening, maneuvering room, grab bars in the stall, sink with clearance underneath, grab bars and level control, low accessories.”
  - b) “All meetings will be held in public buildings accessible to persons with disabilities and senior citizens. Buildings which by their character prevent open discussion of any issue are not suitable locations. If commercial establishments are utilized, unionized establishments shall be given priority in site consideration. Wherever possible, meetings will be held at locations accessible to public transportation.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>DFL Const., art. III, sec. 1, third bylaw.

<sup>9</sup>DFL Official Call, General Rules for All Meetings, Meeting Locations, at p. 24.

- c) “Communicatively impaired individuals who need interpreter services must notify in writing the chair of the respective unit holding a . . . county unit, congressional district or state convention at least 30 days before that convention . . . date, or within 5 days after being elected a delegate or alternate, whichever is less. The party chair of that unit shall secure an interpreter at least 14 days before the caucus or convention.”<sup>10</sup>
  - d) “Braille, taped materials, disk or other electronic formats, or an interpreter for persons with auditory disabilities shall be provided if the state office is notified at least five days in advance. . . . The DFL State Affirmative Action Commission shall maintain a list of resources available to implement this Bylaw.”<sup>11</sup>
- 5. How much will it cost?
    - a) Space rental
    - b) Engineering or maintenance
    - c) Overtime charges
  - 6. Is parking available?
- B. Site planning
- 1. Main hall
  - 2. Space within or near the main hall for subconventions (such as house-district endorsing conventions held in conjunction with a senate-district endorsing convention) and walking subcaucuses
  - 3. Desk for credentials and related displays (see “credentials desk” below, III.A.1 at pp. 12–13)
  - 4. Breakout rooms for nominating and other pre-convention committees

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<sup>10</sup>DFL Official Call, General Rules for All Meetings, Access for Persons with Disabilities, at p. 24.

<sup>11</sup>DFL Const., art. III, sec. 1, third bylaw.

5. Space offstage for tellers
  6. Space for concessions
  7. Help desk?
  8. Breakout rooms for campaigns?
  9. Tables for candidates and organizations? (The arrangements committee may charge a price that earns at least a reasonable return for renting a table or other space in or near the hall.)
  10. Signs: What are the site's rules for signs? adhesive tape? stickers?
- C. The call (for sample calls, see Attachment A)
1. Notice of time and place of convention: "Written notice of the date, time, and place of a convention . . . shall be mailed or presented to all delegates and alternates to any convention . . . other than the State Convention at least ten days before the date of the convention . . . ." <sup>12</sup>
  2. Notice of time and place of pre-convention committee meetings: "The county unit central committee shall . . . establish the date and location for any initial committee meetings." <sup>13</sup>
  3. The statement, "Accessible Site" <sup>14</sup>
  4. Optional additions:
    - a) Constitutional amendments: Many unit constitutions require notice in the call if the convention may consider amending the constitution.
    - b) An invitation to contact the Affirmative Action Officer if the delegate needs any auditory or visual aids, an interpreter, or any other special accommodation or arrangement.

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<sup>12</sup>DFL Const., art. III, sec. 8(A).

<sup>13</sup>DFL Official Call at p. 2.

<sup>14</sup>DFL Const., art. III, sec. 1, third bylaw.

- c) A reminder that, if the delegate has any special dietary or medical requirements, they should bring with them what they need.
  - d) A statement that the organization has not arranged for child care.
  - e) A suggestion about making a contribution through the Political Contribution Refund program.
  - Preference should be given to a union printer for printing the call.
- D. Preconvention committees: “By January 31, 2004: . . . The county unit central committee shall . . . identify the preconvention committees that are to be used in that county unit, specify whether the committee members are to be elected by the precinct caucuses or the county unit central committee, specify the method for allocating committee members among the precincts, if applicable, and establish the date and location for any initial committee meetings.”<sup>15</sup>
1. Arrangements
    - a) prepare and publish the convention’s program (see “the program” below, II.E at p. 9)
    - b) award concessions for food and drink
    - c) in consultation with the host site, make rules for signs and other campaigning (see “sign wars” below, II.G at p. 11) and otherwise regulate the use of space at the site
    - d) arrange tables, a hospitality area, or other space for campaigning outside the hall
    - e) arrange seating in the hall, including seating for any subconventions and walking subcaucuses
    - f) take all other necessary or prudent measures for the delegates’ comfort and convenience

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<sup>15</sup>DFL Official Call at p. 2.

2. Candidate Search / Endorsements
  - a) recommend, and if necessary recruit, at least one candidate for each public office that the convention may endorse
    - An endorsements committee is common only where a candidate will not ordinarily step forward
3. Credentials
  - a) prepare a roster of delegates and alternates entitled to be seated
  - b) prepare badges and issue them to delegates and alternates who appear so entitled
4. Nominating
  - a) nominate, and if necessary recruit, at least one nominee for each party officer that the convention will elect
    - The nominating committee sometimes nominates the Convention's permanent chairs
    - The nominating committee should not consider any endorsement that the convention will consider
5. Resolutions
  - a) screen the resolutions offered for a convention's consideration
    - A resolutions committee is necessary only if the convention itself will be selecting which resolutions it will forward. See DFL Official Call, Platform and Resolutions at pp. 6–7.
6. Rules
  - a) recommend rules and an agenda (or any necessary or prudent amendment to the standard rules and agenda) for the orderly conduct of the convention's business

- E. The program: The arrangements committee usually distributes a program to each delegate, which includes—
1. Agenda
  2. Rules
  3. Constitutional amendments: “Delegates must be provided with both the old and new wording of any proposed constitutional change.”<sup>16</sup>
  4. Advertising (The arrangements committee may charge a price that earns at least a reasonable return for advertising in the program.)
    - Preference should be given to a union printer for printing the program.
- F. The convention’s officers and staff
1. Conveners
    - a) The conveners are usually the unit’s chair and associate chair.
    - b) The executive committee may appoint other conveners if the usual conveners are unavailable.
    - c) “Where vacancies exist, it is recommended that persons from groups underrepresented in party affairs be sought as conveners.”<sup>17</sup>
    - d) The conveners call the convention to order, and preside until the convention elects its permanent chairs (who may include the conveners).
  2. Permanent chair(s)
    - a) The conveners usually recruit as the convention’s permanent chairs two or more members, balanced by gender, who are skilled at presiding.

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<sup>16</sup>DFL Const., art. III, sec. 2(A), seventh bylaw.

<sup>17</sup>DFL Official Call, General Rules for All Meetings, Conveners, at p. 24.

b) The conveners and the permanent chairs usually recruit the other convention officers and staff.

3. Parliamentarian(s)
4. Secretary
5. Sergeant(s)-at-arms
6. Tellers
7. Timekeeper(s)
8. Help desk?

G. Sign wars

1. When may the campaigns begin posting signs?
2. Where may the campaigns post signs?
3. How many signs may each campaign post?

### III. Convention Day

#### A. Set-up

##### 1. Credentials desk

- a) Precinct-caucus rosters / sign-in sheets
- b) Precinct maps?
- c) Badges
  - (1) Delegates
  - (2) Alternates
  - (3) Visitors
    - Each badge needs a ribbons or a clip.
- d) Buckets for donations
- e) Required documents that must be displayed “at least one-half hour before the convention is to convene”:<sup>18</sup>
  - (1) DFL Official Call
  - (2) Notice of congressional-district convention
  - (3) Notice of State Convention
  - (4) State DFL Constitution & Bylaws
  - (5) DFL Ongoing Platform
  - (6) Affirmative Action Statement

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<sup>18</sup>DFL Official Call at p. 9; see also p. 11 (“Before registration opens, the senate district convenor will place the following on display at the convention location”); p. 12 (“Before registration opens, the congressional district chair will place the following on display at the convention location”). For copies of a document, visit the Party’s website at [www.dfl.org](http://www.dfl.org), and click About the DFL / Party Documents.

- (7) Platform & Resolutions Statement (DFL Official Call, pp. 6–7)
  - “Registration shall remain open at all conventions until adjournment.”<sup>19</sup>
2. Podium and stage
  - a) Microphone
  - b) Gavel
  - c) DFL Official Call
  - d) Agenda
  - e) Rules
  - f) *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised* (10th ed. 2000)<sup>20</sup>
  - g) Affirmative Action Statement (DFL Official Call, p. 2)
  - h) Affirmative Action Reminder (DFL Official Call, pp. 2, 9, 11, 12)
  - i) Convention forms (see “paperwork” below, III.C at p. 15)
  - j) Flag
  - k) Overhead projector and screen (or blackboard)
    - (1) Transparencies
    - (2) Markers
  - l) Paper and pens
  - m) Water

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<sup>19</sup>DFL Const., art. III, sec. 2(A), sixth bylaw.

<sup>20</sup>The current edition is the 10th edition, published November 2000, which has a gold cover. Earlier editions, including the blue hardback (9th edition), red paperback (9th edition), red hardback (8th edition), and any edition without *Newly Revised* in its title, are unofficial.

- n) A hat or bucket for donations
- 3. Hall
  - a) Rope, signs, or other means of reserving the floor for delegates
  - b) Signs for seating by delegation
  - c) Signs for subconventions
- 4. Tellers' room
  - a) Ballots (preferably on different-colored paper for each round)
  - b) Calculator
- 5. Other set-up
  - a) Concessions
  - b) Tables
  - c) Recycling bin: "All DFL party organizations shall be required to supply recycling bins at all official party functions."<sup>21</sup>
- B. Procedure: What the presiding officer must be familiar with
  - 1. Quorum: "A quorum of all other conventions [than the State Convention] . . . shall be a majority of those registered at the convention. A unit may set a higher quorum in its constitution."<sup>22</sup>
  - 2. Standard rules (see Attachments B–D)
  - 3. Standard agenda (see Attachments B–D)
  - 4. Subcaucus procedures (DFL Official Call, pp. 5–6)
  - 5. General Rules for All Meetings (DFL Official Call, pp. 24–25)

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<sup>21</sup>DFL Const., art. III, sec. 4(A), ninth bylaw.

<sup>22</sup>DFL Const., art. III, sec. 9.

6. Parliamentary procedure (see handout)
- C. Paperwork
1. County units: “The newly elected county unit chair shall complete and mail or deliver all official county unit convention report forms to the State DFL Chair and appropriate congressional district chairs within 48 hours after the convention. Copies of the county unit constitution and all other reports shall be mailed or delivered to the State DFL Chair and appropriate congressional district chairs within 5 days after the convention.”<sup>23</sup>
  2. Senate and house endorsing conventions: “The newly elected senate district chair must complete and mail or deliver all convention reports and a copy of the senate district constitution to the State DFL Chair and appropriate congressional district chair within five days after the convention. If no permanent chair is elected, the convention chair shall complete and mail or deliver such reports.”<sup>24</sup>
  3. Congressional districts: “The newly elected congressional district chair must complete and mail or deliver all convention reports, copies of any approved resolutions, and a copy of the congressional district constitution to the State DFL Chair within five days after the convention.”<sup>25</sup>
- D. Clean-up
- E. Happy hour!

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<sup>23</sup>DFL Official Call at p. 10.

<sup>24</sup>DFL Official Call at p. 11.

<sup>25</sup>DFL Official Call at p. 13.