

Electing a President

Presidential Primary

Election year 2008 is a presidential election year. Partly because of its national scope and partly because of some interesting political traditions, the election of a president is conducted differently than the election of our local and state officials.

Presidential candidates for the Republican and Democrat parties are nominated by their respective national conventions. Independent candidates for president are placed on the ballot through the petition process which requires 3,356 signatures.

South Dakota will conduct a "presidential primary" election on June 3 for the Republican and Democrat parties which are the only recognized parties in the state. While we call this a "primary" between the presidential candidates in each party, in reality this primary is used to elect delegates to each party's national convention. These delegates in turn will nominate their party's presidential candidate at the convention.

The Republican party will hold a series of caucuses in March beginning with a county caucus on March 6 and ending with a state caucus on March 15. These caucuses will elect delegate and alternate candidates for the national convention who have pledged themselves to vote for a particular presidential candidate. The names of these delegates and alternates will appear on the June primary ballot below the name of the presidential candidate whom they support.

The Democrat party allocates some of their delegates and alternates to office holders and party officials. Other delegates and alternates who are pledged to a presidential candidate are chosen through a caucus process. The process begins with the filing by March 4 of delegate pledge of support forms, continues with legislative district caucuses on March 8 and culminates with a state caucus mid-March. The names of the delegates and alternates chosen through the caucus process will appear on the June primary ballot below the name of the presidential candidate whom they support.

Presidential Electors

The President of the United States is officially elected by the Electoral College not by the actual votes of citizens of the United States. The Electoral College is a body of electors elected in each state who cast the official vote for president. Each state elects a number of electors equal to the number of representatives and senators which the state has in Congress. South Dakota will choose three electors.

The general election ballot in November will contain the names of the presidential candidates who were nominated by the Republican and Democrat parties and the names of independent candidates who were nominated by petition. Below the name of each candidate will be the names of three electors supporting the candidate. The electors for the Republican and Democratic candidates will be selected by their respective state conventions. The electors for the independent candidates are named in their nominating petitions.

The electors for whichever presidential candidate receives the most votes in South Dakota will be elected to the Electoral College. These electors will meet in December to cast the official presidential vote for South Dakota.