

# **Democratic National Political Conventions 1832-2008**

## **1832 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The Democratic convention of 1832, held on May 21 - 22 in Baltimore, is notable as the convention where the Democratic Party formally adopted its present name. The party had previously been known as "Republican Delegates from the Several States." The convention nominated President Andrew Jackson for a second term and nominated Martin Van Buren of New York for vice president.

Delegates to the 1832 Democratic convention refused to renominate John C. Calhoun as vice president. Many Democrats opposed Calhoun because of his tariff policy and his defense of the doctrine of nullification, which claimed that a state had a right to nullify federal laws within its own borders. South Carolina, with Calhoun's backing, supported the nullification doctrine. The nullification debate foreshadowed the slavery controversy that would become the most divisive national political issue in U.S. history.

The 1832 conventions played a crucial role in making organized parties a fixture of the U.S. political system. The Democratic convention adopted rules that succeeding conventions retained well into the 20th century. One rule based each state's convention vote on its electoral vote, an apportionment method that remained unchanged until 1940. The 1832 convention also adopted the procedure of having one person from each delegation announce the vote of his state.

## **1835 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The second Democratic National Convention was held in Baltimore on May 20 - 23. It was held a year and a half before the election in order to prevent the emergence of opposition to President Andrew Jackson's hand-picked successor, Vice President Martin Van Buren. There were 265 delegates from twenty-two states and two territories. Alabama, Illinois, and South Carolina were unrepresented at the convention. The nomination of Van Buren was unanimous on the first ballot. However, Jackson's favorite for Vice President, Richard M. Johnson, barely reached the necessary two-thirds majority on the first ballot, receiving 178 votes, just one over the required minimum.

No platform was passed at the convention. The convention debated the issues that were most pressing in 1835; slavery and states rights were major ones. There was a consensus for a moderate position on slavery. In order to maintain the support of southern states, a majority of the delegates felt that the decision to keep or abolish slavery should be made by the states and not the federal government. In a letter accepting the nomination Van Buren wrote that he would generally continue the political policies of the Jackson administration.

## **1840 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The Democratic National Convention was held in Baltimore on May 5 - 6. President Martin Van Buren was renominated by acclamation. However, the convention refused to nominate a vice president in response to controversy regarding Vice President Richard M. Johnson. He had been a weak candidate in the general election of 1836 which had led to his distinction as the only vice president elected by the U. S. Senate under the provisions of the Twelfth Amendment. A large contingent of delegates was opposed to renominating him because of growing dissatisfaction regarding his personal life. Johnson had lived for many years with Julia Chinn (deceased in 1833), a slave he inherited from his father. They had lived together with their two daughters whom Johnson educated. This relationship was unacceptable to southern Democrats; at the same time, Johnson continued to own slaves which led to a loss of support for Johnson in the North. The convention decision was to allow state Democratic leaders to select the vice-presidential candidates for their states.

The 1840 convention is notable for being the first in which a party platform was adopted. The delegates clearly stated their belief that the Constitution represented the primary guide for political affairs in all of the states. Where the Constitution did not define a role for the federal government, the delegates determined that states should take the lead. For example, the platform stated that the federal government should not become involved in subsidizing the building of roads and canals. The delegates adopted a moderate stand on slavery. Once again slavery was said to be an issue which should be decided by the states. Regarding taxes the platform stated that no more should be raised than was necessary to defray the necessary expenses of the government. Once again the Democrats opposed the establishment of a national bank. The platform said that such an institution would concentrate monetary power in Washington in such a way that would be harmful to the best interests of the people.

## **1844 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

Delegates from every state except South Carolina assembled in Baltimore on May 27 - 29 for the Democratic convention. The frontrunner for the presidential nomination was former president Martin Van Buren, whose status was threatened on the eve of the convention by his statement against the annexation of Texas. Van Buren's position jeopardized his support in the South, and with a two-thirds majority apparently necessary, diminished his chances of obtaining the presidential nomination.

Van Buren led the early presidential balloting, but on succeeding roll calls, his principal opponent, Lewis Cass of Michigan, gained strength and took the lead. Neither candidate, however, approached the 178 votes needed for the nomination. With a deadlock developing, delegates began to look for a compromise candidate. James K. Polk, former speaker of the Tennessee House and former governor of Tennessee, emerged as an acceptable choice and won

the nomination on the ninth ballot. This marked the first time in U.S. history that a dark-horse candidate had won a presidential nomination.

Sen. Silas Wright of New York, a friend of Martin Van Buren, was the nearly unanimous nominee of the convention for vice president. But Wright refused the nomination, quickly notifying the delegates by way of Samuel Morse's new invention, the telegraph. George M. Dallas of Pennsylvania was then chosen as Polk's running mate. The 1844 Democratic convention was the first to be reported by telegraph.

### **1848 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The Democratic Party's fifth national convention welcomed all 30 states of the union to Baltimore, Maryland on May 22 - 25, 1848. The front runner for the nomination was Lewis Cass, a former Michigan senator, with a respected career in the military, cabinet and international diplomacy. A full field of contenders arose after Polk declined to run for a second term, but the numbers thinned by early 1848. Running against Cass were Secretary of State, James Buchanan of Pennsylvania and U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Levi Woodbury of New Hampshire. Cass won the nomination on the fourth ballot. Two ballots assured William O. Butler of Kentucky of the vice-presidential nomination.

The most contentious issue of the 1848 convention and campaign was slavery. A Democrat had introduced the controversial Wilmot Proviso into Congress, which, if passed, would have prevented the introduction of slavery into the western territories acquired from Mexico. Cass had favored the Wilmot Proviso, but later realized its divisiveness for the northern and southern states. His nomination may, in part, have been due to his choice to support the ambiguous position of Congressional and government nonintervention or "popular sovereignty" - leaving the choice for or against slavery to the territories themselves.

The Democratic platform set limits on federal power over commerce, internal improvements, and slavery, noting that "States are the sole and proper judges of everything appertaining to their own affairs." The platform decried the concept of a national bank and applauded the Mexican war as "just and necessary." The 1848 convention is noteworthy for the formation of a national committee which would attend to party business between conventions.

### **1852 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

Benjamin F. Hallett of Massachusetts, the first national chairman, called the Democratic Party to order on June 1 - 5, 1852, again in Baltimore, Maryland. Procedural matters, including the retention of the two-thirds rule, were quickly handled. The balloting for the nomination, however, took two long days and 49 ballots. The major contenders were Lewis Cass of Michigan who had won the 1848 nomination along with James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, William L. Marcy of New York and the much younger Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois. Each candidate

represented the views of a section of the fractionalized democratic party and traded front-runner status as the balloting continued, none gaining enough votes to meet the two thirds needed to win the nomination.

In pre-conference discussions New England Democrats had persuaded dark-horse candidate Franklin Pierce to consider running for the nomination. Pierce, an affable, undistinguished party follower with two terms in the House and one in the Senate, agreed - against his wife's wishes - to run for the nomination if a stalemate occurred. His name was entered on the thirty-fifth ballot as a compromise choice. He gained support in subsequent ballots and won on the forty-ninth vote. Senator William R. King from Alabama was chosen as the vice-presidential nominee.

The Democratic platform reiterated many of the party's resolutions from the previous convention, including limits to the power of the federal government, the right of states to manage their own affairs and opposition to a national bank. Exhausted by years of wrangling over the economic, political and emotional issues of slavery, they resolved "That the democratic party will resist all attempts at renewing, in congress or out of it, the agitation of the slavery question, under whatever shape or color the attempt may be made."

### **1856 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

On June 2 - 6, the delegates to the 1856 Democratic convention gathered in Cincinnati, Ohio. This was the first Democratic convention to be held outside of Baltimore. Three men were in contention for the party's presidential nomination: President Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire, James Buchanan of Pennsylvania and Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois. The Democratic Party platform consisted of two segments, with the domestic and foreign policy sections debated separately. Dominating the domestic section was the Democrats' concept of a limited federal government and the slavery question. The foreign policy section expressed a nationalistic and expansionist spirit that was absent from previous Democratic platforms.

After 15 ballots, none of the three candidates had received the number of votes necessary to win the nomination. On the 16th ballot, Stephen Douglas withdrew, and on the 17th roll call, James Buchanan received all 296 votes, securing the nomination. Buchanan was popularly known as "Old Buck."

On the first ballot for the vice presidency, 11 individuals received votes. Representative John A. Quitman, Mississippi, led with 59 votes, followed by Representative John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky, with 50. Early in the second ballot, the New England delegations voted overwhelmingly for Breckinridge, resulting in his nomination for the vice presidency. Breckinridge was in the convention hall and announced his acceptance of the nomination. His presence for both of these events was unusual during the early conventions.

## **1860 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

Rarely in U.S. history has a convention been as tumultuous as the Democratic Party convention of 1860. It was clear that the explosive question of slavery would be the dominant issue. Delegates to the national Democratic convention met in Charleston, South Carolina on April 23 - May 3. A bitter dispute between Northern and Southern delegates over the wording of the platform's slavery plank resulted in a walkout by several dozen Southern delegates. The remaining delegates, led by Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois, supported the Supreme Court decision in the 1857 Dred Scott case, which nullified the Missouri Compromise's provisions giving Congress the authority to prohibit slavery in the territories. The convention adjourned on May 3 without making any nominations.

On June 18 - 23, the Democratic convention reconvened in Baltimore with less than two-thirds of the delegates to the original convention present. The delegates nominated Senator Douglas for president and Herschel V. Johnson, the former governor of Georgia, for vice president. The platform adopted acknowledged the difference of opinion on slavery among delegates to the Democratic Party and underscored that the party would abide by the decision of the Supreme Court regarding the question of congressional authority over the issue of slavery within the territories.

The Southern Democrats who had walked out of the convention in Charleston met later that June in Richmond, Virginia. Vice President John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky won the presidential nomination, and Senator Joseph Lane of Oregon was chosen as his running mate. Their platform supported slavery in the territories. The failure to reach agreement on the slavery question was the most disruptive sectional split in the history of U.S. political parties.

## **1864 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1864 Democratic national convention was held in the Amphitheatre, Chicago, Illinois on August 29 - 31. George B. McClellan and George H. Pendleton were nominated as the presidential and vice presidential candidates.

The Democratic Party was splintered by opposing views of the ongoing Civil War. There had been no clear leader of the party since Stephen A. Douglas had died in 1861. Those party members wishing to see the Union preserved, even at the expense of war, allied themselves with the Republicans as War Democrats or Unionists. Other Democrats (anti-war, often called Copperheads) were willing to allow Southern independence including a return to antebellum conditions. The lack of success in local elections by the anti-war Democrats weakened their standing and the more moderate Democrats had a greater voice at the 1864 convention. These moderates were willing to allow Southern independence but realized this was an unpopular idea among the public and instead tried to play upon Northern discomfort with wartime restrictions and changes. They appealed to Northern white social and economic fears regarding emancipated African Americans.

Even with the party being divided, Democrats attending the 1864 convention had high hopes of winning the upcoming election. The Republican Party was badly fractured along ideological lines as well and faced a restless northern populace and an increasingly unpopular war.

George B. McClellan, former commander of Union armies, was nominated on the first ballot. McClellan had not thought the war unwinnable, but believed Republican interference had cost the North victory in the field. Democrats could now offer McClellan as a patriot who had tried to win the war but now would end it by any means, even if it meant allowing the South its independence. George H. Pendleton, an anti-war Democrat, was chosen as McClellan's running mate.

The party platform focused on the failure of the war, Republican excesses in the curtailing of individual and state's rights, and called for an immediate armistice with the South. The platform decried the altering of pre-war racial balances through emancipation of slaves. McClellan would later disavow the peace before reunion platform plank, and instead called for reunion to be a condition of peace, in hopes of appealing to public sentiment.

### **1868 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1868 Democratic national convention was held in Tammany Hall, New York, NY on July 4 - 9, 1868. Horatio Seymour and Francis P. Blair, Jr. were nominated as the presidential and voice presidential candidates.

The Democratic Party suffered from remaining internal fractures that did not split the party but caused party disharmony. The party's depiction as the party of wartime disloyalty was an image rightly or wrongly reinforced by the fact it was more popular and stronger in the South. President Andrew Johnson, a War Democrat and Abraham Lincoln's successor, sought to unify with other Democrats and was at odds with Republicans, who eventually impeached him. Reconstruction of the South and African American civil rights were important issues in 1868.

At the convention, Democrats emphasized their party's stand for constitutional conservatism and advocacy of limited government. A petition presented by the Women's Suffrage Association asking for the party's support in gaining women the right to vote was not seriously considered. Economic issues in the 1868 platform such as lower taxes, a low tariff, and a plan to pay off the public debt were considered more important by the party. Slavery and secession were considered closed matters. Immediate restoration of Southern states to the Union, amnesty for political offenses, state regulation of suffrage, a reduction in the size of the military, and equal protections for native and foreign-born U.S. citizens were other platform planks. Convention attendees included William M. "Boss" Tweed, Clement L. Vallandigham, and former general Nathan Bedford Forrest, a founder of the Ku Klux Klan.

Eight nominees were considered for the presidential slot, including Horatio Seymour, Andrew Johnson, General Winfield Scott Hancock and Supreme Court Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase.

After twenty-three ballots a reluctant Seymour won the nomination. Seymour was seen as an acceptable alternative for each faction rather than having to acquiesce to another's candidate. Francis P. Blair, Jr., a close associate of President Johnson was quickly chosen as Seymour's running mate.

### **1872 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

Democrats convened on July 9 - 10 in Baltimore, Maryland, for one of the strangest political conventions in history. In truth, the Democrats did not offer a candidate as the party was in deep disarray. Instead, the Democrats endorsed the presidential and vice presidential candidates representing the Liberal Republican Party, demonstrating their belief that this was the only way to defeat a second presidential term for Ulysses S. Grant. The Liberal Republican Party, which was short-lived, was created by members of the Republican Party who were disgusted with the corruption and policies of the Grant administration. In particular, the Liberal Republican Party objected to the "carpetbag" governments established in the South following the Civil War, advocating the restoration of home rule in the southern states.

The presidential candidate selected by the Liberal Republican Party and endorsed by the Democratic Party was Horace Greeley, who founded the *New Yorker* in 1834, and in 1841, the *New York Tribune*, which became one of the most influential dailies of the nineteenth century. Through editorials in his publications, Greeley advocated the rights of workingmen, promoted a protective tariff, encouraged development of the frontier, and opposed slavery. At the Democratic convention nominating speeches were forbidden and Greeley won on the first ballot with 686 votes of the allotted 732. Governor B. Gratz Brown of Missouri, again the Liberal Republican nominee for vice president, was the unanimous choice of the Democrats with 713 votes.

Debate on the Democratic platform was limited to one hour, and once again the delegates endorsed the same platform approved by the Liberal Republican Party. Key elements of the platform included a call for the end of reconstruction and complete amnesty for citizens of the South, a limit on the powers of the federal government, civil service reform, adoption of a hard-money policy, and bringing to an end the policy of giving grants of public land to railroads and corporations. The platform was adopted by a vote of 671 to 62. In all, the delegates to the 1872 Democratic convention met, voted, and completed their work in a total of six hours.

### **1876 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1876 Democratic Convention was held on June 27 - 29 in St. Louis, Missouri. This marked the first time that a national convention was held west of the Mississippi River. Reconstruction, the corruption of the Grant administration and the lingering sectional animosity between the North and the South following the Civil War were dominant themes at the convention.

Two governors, Samuel J. Tilden of New York and Thomas A. Hendricks of Indiana, were the principal contenders for the presidential nomination. Tilden, a proven reformer and enemy of corruption, was elected on the second ballot. Hendricks, the runner-up, was the nearly unanimous choice of the delegates for the vice presidency.

Democratic platform issues included a call for the repeal of the Resumption Act of 1875, a hard-money measure that called for the payment of Civil War bonds in coin rather than paper money, and extensive civil service reform. In addition, the platform called for restrictions on Chinese immigration and a new policy on the distribution of public land that would benefit homesteaders and not the railroads.

### **1880 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

Cincinnati, Ohio was the setting for the 1880 Democratic convention, which was held June 22 - June 24 in the modernized Gothic Music Hall. As delegates walked into the hall's auditorium, they were greeted with a gigantic blue and white streamer which read "OHIO GREETES THE NATION." No one candidate stood out to the generally apathetic delegates. The decision of Samuel J. Tilden, the Democratic presidential candidate in 1876, not to seek renomination allowed new prospective candidates to emerge.

On the first ballot, General Winfield Scott Hancock, from Pennsylvania, took the lead in delegate votes. General Hancock had earned his reputation during the Civil War, earning the nickname "Superb" Hancock for his valiant stands in battle. Other nominees were Senator Thomas F. Bayard of Delaware, and former Representative Henry G. Payne of Ohio. General Hancock won on the second ballot, when the Wisconsin delegation spearheaded a series of vote switches that provided him with the votes needed for the nomination. The vice-presidential nomination had only one candidate, former Representative William H. English of Indiana, who was elected by acclamation.

The Democratic platform was approved without debate or opposition. It called for decentralization of the federal government with increased local government, currency based on hard money, a revenue only tariff, civil service reform, and an end to Chinese immigration.

The most severe language in the platform concerned the presidential election of 1876, which the Democrats had labeled "the great fraud." In that election, the Democratic candidate Samuel J. Tilden had beaten Republican candidate Rutherford B. Hayes in the popular vote. Republican leaders challenged the vote results from Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina on the grounds that African-Americans had been intimidated from going to the polls. Southern Republican election officials from the three states disqualified votes from Democratic precincts, thus providing a victory for Hayes. The turmoil and accusations of fraud resulting from the Hayes victory ultimately forced the Congress to determine the election outcome. A deal was made whereby Democratic Members of Congress agreed to the formation of an election commission that favored the Republicans in return for private assurances that federal troops would be



withdrawn from the South. Hayes was officially declared president by the election commission on March 4, 1877.

### **1884 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

Chicago, Illinois, was the setting for the 1884 Democratic convention, which was held on July 8 - 11. A highlight of this convention was the extension of delegate voting rights to the District of Columbia and the U.S. territories. On the first day of the gathering, delegates from Tammany Hall, the New York political machine, attempted to break the unit rule which bound all delegates to their state convention and mandated that they vote as a unit. The Tammany Hall delegates were in the minority in the New York delegation. Their attempt to break the unit rule was defeated by the convention as a whole, thus limiting their powers and assuring the nomination of the Governor of New York, Grover Cleveland, a Tammany Hall enemy.

Governor Cleveland was the front runner for the presidential nomination after the first ballot. His opposition consisted of Senator Thomas F. Bayard of Delaware and former Senator Allen G. Thurman of Ohio. On the second ballot, a shift by the North Carolina delegation to Cleveland gave him the two-thirds majority needed to secure the nomination. Senator Thomas A. Hendricks of Indiana was nominated for the vice presidential half of the ticket, winning by an almost unanimous vote.

The platform produced by the Democrats in 1884 was one of the longest adopted by the Party during the nineteenth century, with a substantial portion containing a list of alleged Republican failures and misdeeds. The main issue in the Democratic platform concerned tariff revisions that would provide revenue for the federal government, but also protect and promote domestic industries. One of the tariff revisions called for taxes “bearing heaviest on articles of luxury, and bearing lightest on articles of necessity.” Other issues addressed in the platform expressed support for the rights of organized labor, and the continuation of restrictions on Chinese immigration into the United States.

### **1888 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The Democratic convention assembled in St. Louis on June 5 - 7. The Democratic Party, in control of the White House for the first time since the beginning of the Civil War, renominated by acclamation the incumbent President Grover Cleveland. The country had been without a vice president since the death of Thomas A. Hendricks in 1885. Former senator Allen G. Thurman of Ohio was the favorite for the vice presidential nomination and won easily on the first ballot.

Tariff reduction was the predominant issue on the Democratic platform, along with tax reform. Growing divisions between conservative and populist wings of the Democratic Party threatened party unity. The conservative wing sought to place states rights at the top of the agenda, while the populist wing proclaimed that the free coinage of silver was the main issue.

While president, Cleveland had also angered many Democratic partisans who believed that he had not made full use of his patronage powers to reward his Democratic supporters. Tammany Hall, the Democratic Party political machine that greatly controlled New York City politics, was a bitter foe of the reform-minded Cleveland. Its influence undermined his campaign in his home state of New York, denying him the state's 36 electoral votes that would have assured his reelection.

### **1892 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1892 Democratic convention met in Chicago, Illinois on June 21 - June 23 with frequent interruptions from storms and a leaky roof. Delegates all received special invitations to visit the Jackson Park fairgrounds of the World's Columbian Exposition, the Chicago World's Fair, to be dedicated in October of that same year.

Grover Cleveland, having served as the 22<sup>nd</sup> President of the United States from 1885 to 1889, won a narrow first ballot victory over Governor David B. Hill of New York and Governor Horace Boies of Iowa, a former Republican and populist. Cleveland was vehemently opposed by his own New York delegation which was packed with Tammany Hall men, the New York political machine, supporting Governor Hill. Adlai E. Stevenson of Illinois, a former representative and assistant postmaster general, was the convention favorite for vice president, winning over Isaac P. Gray of Indiana who was favored by the Cleveland supporters.

The Democratic platform of 1892 called for the construction of a Central American canal through Nicaragua; opposed sumptuary laws (prohibition) as interference with individuals' rights; supported antitrust laws, federal aid to education, improvement of the Mississippi River, and statehood for New Mexico and Arizona; demanded the rigid enforcement of the laws against Chinese immigration while denouncing attempts to restrict the immigration of the "industrious and worthy of foreign lands;" and straddled the currency debate with a policy favoring stable money and the coinage of both gold and silver equally. The sharpest platform debate focused on the tariff plank, ultimately calling for a tariff for revenue only and "denouncing Republican protection as a fraud, a robbery of the great majority of the American people for the benefit of the few. ... a fundamental principle of the Democratic party that the Federal Government has no constitutional power to impose and collect tariff duties, except for the purpose of revenue only, and we demand that the collection of such taxes shall be limited to the necessities of the Government when honestly and economically administered."

### **1896 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

Chicago was the setting for the July 7 - 11, 1896 Democratic convention. The issue of currency dominated the proceedings. The party was split along regional lines, with Eastern delegations favoring a hard-money policy with maintenance of the gold standard and most Southern and Western delegations supporting a soft-money policy with the unlimited coinage of silver. As a

delegate to the convention, 36-year-old William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska was determined to write a free-silver plank into the party platform.

In perhaps the most memorable address ever delivered before a political convention, Bryan captivated the delegates with a blistering attack on the gold standard, stating, “You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.” Bryan’s speech moved him into the front ranks of candidates for the nomination. The other leading contender was Rep. Richard “Silver Dick” Bland of Missouri. William Jennings Bryan received enough votes to secure the nomination on the fifth ballot. With Bryan declining to indicate a preference for vice president, 16 candidates received votes for the office on the first ballot. On the fifth ballot, Arthur Sewell of Maine prevailed.

### **1900 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The Democratic Convention of 1900 was held in Kansas City, Missouri. Although the meeting hall was destroyed by a fire on April 4, 1900, it was rebuilt in 90 days time to house the convention delegates and candidates on July 4 - 6. King David Kawananakoa, heir to the throne in Hawaii, was the first member of royalty to attend a political convention as a delegate at this event.

William Jennings Bryan received the presidential nomination unopposed, and allowed the delegates at the convention to choose his running mate. Seven names for vice-president were placed in nomination and two candidates withdrew prior to the balloting. Adlai E. Stevenson, who had served as Vice President under Grover Cleveland, led on the first roll-call vote and was selected as the vice-presidential nominee after a series of vote switches.

The Democratic Party platform of 1900 named anti-imperialism as the most important issue. The platform also denounced colonial policies enacted by the current Republican administration after the Spanish-American War and condemned post-war expansionism. During the 1896 campaign silver coinage and adoption of the gold standard were divisive issues. By 1900 discovery of additional gold deposits and an increase in currency diminished the silver issue. Although there was some controversy about the mention of silver coinage, Bryan threatened to withdraw his candidacy unless a silver plank was included in the platform. The silver plank was accepted without protest by the delegates.

### **1904 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The Democratic convention convened in St. Louis on July 6 - 9, with the currency question still a major issue. Eight candidates were nominated for president. Alton B. Parker, chief justice of the New York Court of Appeals, was the conservative front-runner but was not supported by the still-influential William Jennings Bryan. Parker, who had not actively worked for the

nomination, was supported by conservatives and the top officials of Tammany Hall. He was elected on the first ballot.

Former senator Henry G. Davis of West Virginia was nominated for vice president. At 81 years of age, he was the oldest major party candidate ever nominated for national office. Davis was a man of great wealth, and the Democrats hoped that he would give freely to their campaign.

The Democratic platform deliberately omitted reference to the currency issue; however, to make his position clear, Alton Parker, after his nomination, informed the convention by letter that he supported the gold standard. Additionally, the platform called for a reduction in government expenditures, a congressional investigation of corruption in the executive departments, construction of a Panama Canal, statehood for the Western territories and the direct election of senators. The convention ended July 9.

### **1908 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The Democratic convention of 1908 was held July 7 - 10 in Denver. This was the first convention held by a major party in a Western state and the first national political convention to accredit women, with five women credentialed as delegates or alternate delegates. For a third time, the Democrats turned to William Jennings Bryan as their nominee. He was easily elected on the first ballot.

Bryan had learned a lesson from his stubborn silver fixation and advocacy against the gold standard during the campaign of 1900. He now advocated a more balanced and varied set of reforms reflecting the prevailing progressive mood. Bryan focused on his dedication to a social agenda, which insisted that material prosperity should be pursued and gained but accompanied by charitable programs for the poor. He insisted on only “necessary” taxation, advocated nationalization of the railroads and denounced U.S. imperialism by calling for independence for the Philippines.

John W. Kern, a former gubernatorial candidate from Indiana, was chosen by acclamation to be Bryan’s running mate. *The New York Times* sarcastically described the compatibility of the Democratic ticket as follows: “For a man twice defeated for the presidency was at the head of it, and a man twice defeated for governor of his state was at the tail of it.”

### **1912 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1912 Democratic Convention was held on June 25 - July 2 in Baltimore, returning to that city for the first time since 1872. There were a number of presidential candidates, including House Speaker Champ Clark of Missouri, Rep. Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama, Gov. Judson Harmon of Ohio and Gov. Woodrow Wilson of New Jersey. William Jennings Bryan was not a candidate himself, but as the titular head of the Democratic Party he was the key to the

nomination. Six names were placed in nomination for the presidency. After 10 ballots, Champ Clark had the most votes, but when Bryan learned of Clark's collaboration with the New York political machine Tammany Hall and Wall Street forces, he addressed the convention announcing that he was switching his support to Woodrow Wilson. On the 46th ballot, Wilson finally received enough votes to secure the nomination. The 46 roll call votes represented the highest number of presidential ballots taken at any convention, Republican or Democratic, since 1860.

Wilson preferred Oscar Underwood for vice president; however, the Alabama congressman was not interested in second place on the ticket. Wilson then agreed to accept the convention favorite, Gov. Thomas R. Marshall of Indiana.

The Democratic platform called for a lower, revenue-only tariff, as Democrats felt that the high cost of living was a result of the existing protective tariff. Passage of stronger antitrust legislation, regulation of the railroads, a constitutional amendment providing for a federal income tax, a workmen's compensation law, stricter pure food and public health laws, extension of the presidential primary system, and a call for a single presidential term were all issues included in the 1912 platform.

### **1916 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

St. Louis was the setting for the 1916 Democratic convention, held June 14 - 16. Support for the renomination of President Woodrow Wilson was nearly unanimous. Wilson won on the first ballot with a vote of 1,092 ayes to 1 nay – the lone dissenting vote coming from an Illinois delegate who disapproved of a motion to nominate Wilson by acclamation. With Wilson's approval, Vice President Thomas R. Marshall was renominated by acclamation.

Wilson had planned to showcase the theme of Americanism and national unity at the convention. Americanism was Wilson's approach to the future role of the United States as a key world power. However, it was pacifism and Wilson's commitment to keeping the United States out of the raging conflict in Europe that dominated the convention. By the second day, Wilson's determined neutrality regarding the war became the theme of the convention, and the slogan "He kept us out of the war" became the battle cry of the delegates.

The Democratic platform included a call for military preparedness and the progressive reforms made by the Wilson administration, particularly with respect to tariffs, banking, labor and agriculture. The only section of the platform brought to a floor vote was the plank on women's suffrage. The majority plank favored extending the vote to women, while a minority plank advocated leaving the matter to the individual states. The minority plank was defeated by a vote of 888 ½ to 181 ½. The Democratic position on women's suffrage contrasted with that of the Republicans, who proposed leaving the matter up to the individual states.

## **1920 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

San Francisco hosted the 1920 convention on June 28 - July 6, the first time a convention of one of the major parties was held west of the Rockies. The November 1920 election would also be notable as the first election allowing women to vote for president. For the first time in a generation the party had no recognized leader such as Grover Cleveland, William Jennings Bryan or Woodrow Wilson. Retiring President Wilson's refusal to endorse a candidate prevented the emergence of any one candidate as the front-runner.

Twenty-four candidates received votes on the first presidential roll call, with no candidate reaching the 729 votes needed for the nomination. After several ballots, four candidates emerged as the leaders: William Gibbs McAdoo, Wilson's son-in-law and former treasury secretary; Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer; Gov. Alfred E. Smith of New York; and Gov. James M. Cox of Ohio. On the 44th ballot Governor Cox received 699 ½ votes, and with victory assured a motion was adopted to declare the Ohio governor the unanimous nominee. Cox's choice for the vice presidential nomination, Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York, the 38-year old assistant secretary of the Navy, was nominated by acclamation.

The 1920 Democratic platform's major plank expressed the party's endorsement of the League of Nations as the "surest, if not the only, practicable means of maintaining the permanent peace of the world." Additionally, the plank called for supporting President Wilson's call for U.S. membership in the League. Enforcement of prohibition under the Volstead Act, the continuation of progressive reforms on labor, government regulation of industry and transportation, conservation and reclamation of natural resources and immigration were issues also included in the platform; however, praise of Wilson's leadership and legislative accomplishments was the central theme.

## **1924 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

New York City's old Madison Square Garden was the site of the 1924 Democratic convention. The convention convened on June 24<sup>th</sup> and adjourned on July 9<sup>th</sup>, a total of sixteen days making it the longest in American history. The prolonged brawl for the presidential nomination was the result of the conflict between the Party's rural and urban factions. Candidate Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York represented the urban faction of the Democratic Party, which opposed Prohibition and the Klu Klux Klan. Former Treasury secretary William Gibbs McAdoo of California was the candidate of the rural faction, which supported Prohibition and tolerated the Klu Klux Klan. Fourteen other candidates were also nominated.

On Monday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, balloting for the presidential nominee began. After 69 ballots, William Gibbs McAdoo had the most votes, but not enough to secure the nomination. Negotiation began on compromise proposals to break the deadlock, but continuous balloting still could not produce a winner. Finally, after nine days and 103 ballots, a winner emerged, John W. Davis of West Virginia, a former Member of Congress and U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain. Davis's core

support came from rural delegates, but it was the votes of urban delegates that provided his margin of victory.

The vice presidential nomination was won by Governor Charles W. Bryan of Nebraska, the younger brother of William Jennings Bryan. One of the vice presidential nominees was Mrs. Lena Springs, a South Carolina delegate-at-large and chairman of the credentials committee, who would be the first woman to be proposed for vice-president of the United States. Mrs. Springs' name was placed on the ballot by her fellow South Carolina delegates as a way to pay tribute to her service to the state of South Carolina as well as to the national Democratic Party.

The battle for the 1924 Democratic platform was almost as intense as the presidential nomination marathon conflict. The first subject of debate focused on American entry into the League of Nations, with the majority report favoring that entry be determined by a national referendum, and the minority report supporting American entry without reservation into the League of Nations and the World Court. After vigorous debate, the minority report was defeated by a vote of 742 ½ to 353 ½. The second contentious issue was the controversial religious liberties plank. Debate focused on the Klu Klux Klan, not mentioned in the majority report, but opposed by name in the minority report. Voting on this plank produced one of the closest votes in convention history, with the rural delegates supporting the majority report (thus supporting the Klu Klux Klan) and urban delegates supporting the minority plank. The minority report was defeated literally by a fraction of a vote, 543 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>20</sub> to 543 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>20</sub>.

## **1928 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

Houston, Texas was the site for the June 26 - 29, 1928 Democratic national convention marking the first time since 1860 the party met in a southern city. Four term Governor of New York, Alfred E. Smith, was the frontrunner for the presidential nomination. William Gibbs McAdoo, Smith's main competitor, dropped out of the race in the interest of promoting party unity. On the first ballot Governor Smith came within ten votes of the required two thirds needed to win the nomination. Ohio then switched its forty-four votes to Smith making him the nominee and the first Roman Catholic nominated for President. Senate Minority Leader Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas was nominated on the first ballot for vice president.

The Democratic platform focused on agriculture more than any other issue. Agriculture was the most depressed part of the economy in 1928. The Democrats called for the establishment of a Federal Farm Board to oversee loans to farmers. On foreign policy the platform favored keeping the United States out of entangling political alliances, including the League of Nations, and mentioned specifically Latin America. The Republicans were criticized for their ineffective sponsoring of weak disarmament agreements. The Democrats proposed the establishment of major public works programs to help resolve the unemployment problem. Flood control projects were specifically mentioned as being a priority in a Democratic administration.

## **1932 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The Democrats came to the 1932 convention in Chicago hopeful that their presidential candidate would have a very good chance of unseating President Herbert Hoover. The convention, held June 27 - July 2 began with Franklin D. Roosevelt controlling a majority of the delegates. The Roosevelt forces argued for abandonment of the rule that required two-thirds of the delegates to vote for a candidate in order for him to become the nominee. However, Roosevelt dropped this demand when it became clear that he risked losing the support of Southern states. The first ballot, held in the early morning of July 1, showed Roosevelt ahead of Alfred E. Smith and John Nance Garner with 666 delegate votes; 777 votes were needed for nomination. On the evening of July 1, during the fourth ballot, Garner released his delegates and quickly there was a movement to make Roosevelt the nominee. He won on that ballot with 945 votes. Garner was the unanimous choice for vice president.

Roosevelt broke a tradition by coming to Chicago to appear before the convention and accept the nomination. His speech promised Americans a "New Deal" that would change political institutions in Washington forever to better serve the people. The platform included proposals for federal unemployment relief for the needy and new public works projects to provide jobs. There was also a plank calling for the repeal of Prohibition.

## **1936 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1936 Democratic convention was held in Philadelphia June 23 - 27. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Vice President John Nance Garner were renominated by acclamation. The major issue at the convention, initiated by President Roosevelt, was the elimination of the rule requiring a candidate for President to receive votes from two-thirds of the delegates. Starting in 1936 a nominee only needed the support of a majority of the delegates. President Roosevelt appeared in person to accept the party's nomination. In his acceptance speech Roosevelt declared that this generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny.

The Democratic platform in 1936 emphasized the success of expanded federal public works programs to help resolve unemployment. It stated that the federal government should continue to stimulate private industry, resolve labor disputes, and oppose monopolies through the vigorous enforcement of anti-trust laws. The agricultural policies of the Roosevelt administration were credited with doubling the net income of farmers. It vowed that programs to reduce the indebtedness of farmers would be maintained. National defense was not specifically mentioned in the platform. The foreign policy of the United States was based on neutrality in foreign disputes and the continued expansion of foreign trade.



## **1940 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

When the delegates to the Democratic Convention of 1940 met in Chicago on July 15 -18, the prospect of U.S. involvement in the conflict in Europe was the major influence upon presidential politics. Franklin Delano Roosevelt had already served two terms as president and had indicated ambivalence about seeking a third term. As the threat to U.S. security increased and the party appeared to be unable to find an adequate New Deal proponent as a successor to Roosevelt, the president began to indicate that he would accept the nomination for a third term in office. This would break the precedent set by the first president, George Washington, to serve only two terms.

On the third day of the convention, Roosevelt won easily on the first ballot. Although the delegates, who included seven African-Americans, were pleased to have President Roosevelt at the top of the ticket, they did not want his choice for vice president, Agriculture Secretary Henry A. Wallace of Iowa. A former Republican and a leading liberal, Wallace was unacceptable to conservative Democrats. Delegates felt that the vice presidential nomination should be decided by the convention. A personal appearance at the convention by the first lady Eleanor Roosevelt and a threat by the president that he would not accept the nomination for president, persuaded delegates to vote for Henry Wallace. With so many of the delegates unhappy with the vice presidential nominee, Wallace was asked not to address the convention.

The party platform, adopted without a roll call vote, was divided into three sections. The first addressed U.S. military preparedness and foreign policy; the second outlined the benefits of the New Deal for the agricultural, labor and business segments of the economy; and the third enumerated New Deal welfare measures. The convention closed with the delegates listening to a radio address by Roosevelt, who stated that he had not wanted the nomination but accepted it because the existing world crisis called for personal sacrifice.

## **1944 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The Democratic convention was held in Chicago July 19 - 21 and renominated President Roosevelt for an unprecedented fourth term. However, Vice President Henry A. Wallace was not renominated for his office. Acknowledging there was dissent in the party concerning Wallace, Roosevelt refused to publicly support anyone. Wallace received the most votes on the first ballot, but Missouri Senator Harry S. Truman was a strong second. On the second ballot Truman passed Wallace, but he did not receive a majority. However, Alabama shifted its votes to Truman and this started a bandwagon of support for his candidacy. Roosevelt stated that he was happy to have Truman as his running mate.

The platform of the Democratic Party pledged the successful completion of the great crusade to end tyranny in the world and proposed the establishment of a United Nations organization to provide a forum for the peaceful resolution of conflicts between nations in the future. It acknowledged that the United States had built the best trained and equipped army in the world,

the most powerful navy in the world, and the greatest air force in the world. It called for legislation to assist the transition of ex-servicemen and women to civilian life with special consideration for the disabled. It favored unrestricted Jewish immigration to Palestine and the establishment there of a free and democratic Jewish state. It called for maximum self government in Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico and for the extension of the right of suffrage to the people of the District of Columbia.

### **1948 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

Delegates attending the 1948 Democratic convention, which met July 12 - 14 in Philadelphia, were in a somber mood. Franklin D. Roosevelt had died in office in 1945; the Republicans had regained control of Congress in 1947; and Harry S. Truman, who succeeded to the presidency after less than two months as vice president, had not been able to stop the loss of massive numbers of liberals and Southern conservatives from the New Deal coalition. The displeasure of Southern delegates with the national policies of the Democratic Party intensified at the convention, with the civil rights issue becoming the source of heated debate among the delegates.

When the presidential balloting began, 13 members of the Alabama delegation and the entire Mississippi delegation withdrew from the convention in opposition to the party's stand on civil rights. This did not prevent President Truman from winning a clear majority on the first ballot, defeating Georgia Senator Richard B. Russell, who received the votes of more than 90 percent of the remaining Southern delegates. Kentucky Senator Alben W. Barkley, the keynote speaker at the convention, was nominated for vice president by acclamation.

The fight over the civil rights issue in the Democratic Party platform brought national attention to the young mayor of Minneapolis, Hubert Humphrey. He led the successful fight for a civil rights plank, which asserted that "racial and religious minorities must have the right to live, the right to work, the right to vote, the full and equal protection of the laws on a basis of equality with all citizens as guaranteed by the Constitution." The Southern delegates who had walked out of the convention met three days later in Birmingham, Alabama, along with other invited Southern Democrats. They formed the States' Rights Party, known as the Dixiecrats, and elected Gov. J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina as their candidate for president.

### **1952 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1952 Democratic convention in Chicago on July 21 - 26 was marked by a sitting president who, constitutionally, could have run for reelection but instead chose retirement. A fractious floor fight over both the seating of alternative delegations and a requirement that all delegations take an oath of allegiance to the party and its platform were highlights of the convention. There was much behind-the-scenes maneuvering of party leaders to select a candidate who would be acceptable to both the Northern liberal and Southern conservative factions, thereby avoiding a

schism similar to 1948, when a splinter group of Democrats nominated Governor Strom Thurmond of South Carolina to run as the States' Rights (Dixiecrat) Party's nominee.

President Truman declined to make an early endorsement, and 11 candidates were nominated, including Governor Adlai Stevenson, who was drafted as the compromise candidate. Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee, who had great success in the primaries but was running without party support, and Senator Richard Russell of Georgia were also on the ballot. After placing second to Kefauver on the first two ballots, Stevenson was nominated on the third. He chose Senator John Sparkman of Alabama as his vice presidential running-mate, who was nominated by acclamation.

The platform included planks on continuing agricultural price supports, repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act, which greatly restricted labor union activities, and the eradication of discrimination -- basically, a continuation of the programs of Roosevelt and Truman. There were also speeches vigorously defending the Korean War.

### **1956 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The Democratic National Convention was held in Chicago on August 13 - 17, 1956. Adlai E. Stevenson, the unsuccessful 1952 Democratic candidate, easily won nomination on the first ballot. In an unusual move, Stevenson decided not to choose a running mate, but to leave the selection to the convention. The major candidates for Vice President on the first ballot were Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver, Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy, Tennessee Senator Albert A. Gore, New York City Mayor John F. Wagner, and Minnesota Senator Hubert H. Humphrey. Kefauver won the first ballot but fell short of the 687 votes needed to nominate. Kennedy won the second ballot with 618 votes. Following the second ballot Gore withdrew and gave his support to Kefauver. This started a bandwagon movement for Kefauver that led to his winning the nomination.

The Democratic platform in 1956 criticized the Republicans for destabilizing world peace by reducing the strength of U.S. armed forces. It stated that the survival of democracy worldwide required stronger leadership by the United States and better coordination in defense relationships with U.S. allies. The problems mentioned included aggressive actions by the Soviet Union, the tragedy of Cyprus, French forces in North Africa, Israeli-Palestinian relations, and the growth of anti-Americanism in Asia. Although the United States was the most prosperous nation in the world, the Democrats argued that the economic growth rate was less under the Republicans than under the Roosevelt and Truman administrations.

### **1960 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1960 Democratic convention met on July 11 - 15 in Los Angeles -- the first time that a national political convention was held there. The front-runner for the presidential nomination

was Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy, having won each of the seven primaries he entered and whose support from Democratic Party urban leaders was strong. Kennedy's principal rival was Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas, but also in the running was Adlai E. Stevenson, the party's presidential nominee in 1952 and 1956. Kennedy won on the first ballot. This was the first time since 1920 that a senator had been nominated for the presidency by either the Democrats or the Republicans and the first time since 1928 that a Roman Catholic was chosen to lead a national ticket for one of the two major parties.

Senator Kennedy's choice for a running mate was Lyndon Johnson, whose nomination was approved by acclamation. This choice was a surprise to many liberals, but Kennedy chose Johnson to improve his prospects in the South, particularly in Texas, which would be a key state in the election. It was also said that Kennedy wanted to get Johnson out of the Senate so that he would be unable to hinder or undermine Kennedy's legislative agenda.

Issues on the Democratic platform included national defense, disarmament, civil rights, immigration, foreign aid, the economy, labor and tax reform. It was the longest platform yet written by the party. The greatest controversy was caused by the civil rights plank. Senator Sam J. Ervin Jr. of North Carolina introduced motions to delete several portions including ones to set 1963 as the deadline for the initiation of school desegregation plans, to make the Civil Rights Commission a permanent agency, and to grant the attorney general the power to file civil injunction suits to prevent discrimination. Speaking in favor of the civil rights plank was delegate and future member of Congress Patsy Mink of Hawaii, who gave an impassioned speech before 10,000 delegates and a national television audience. Senator Ervin's motions were defeated by voice vote and the entire plank was approved by a vote of 66-to-24.

## **1964 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1964 Democratic National Convention met in Atlantic City, New Jersey on August 24 - 27. In attendance were 5,260 delegates and alternates. The nomination of the incumbent Lyndon B. Johnson, who had assumed the presidency after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy the previous year, was not in question. Johnson and his vice-presidential choice, Minnesota senator Hubert H. Humphrey, were nominated by acclamation, without roll call votes (previously only the 1936 Democratic convention had used this approach). The lengthy platform document was designed for broad appeal and was moderate in tone, condemning extremism of both right and left and praising the accomplishments of the Kennedy-Johnson administrations. A convention highlight was Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy's speech introducing a documentary film about his late brother's achievements as president.

A contentious issue at the convention was the seating of the delegation from Mississippi. The recently formed Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party sent a racially integrated delegation to the convention, contesting the legitimacy of Mississippi's all-white delegates chosen in the regular Democratic primary since African Americans had been prevented from registering to vote. The credentials committee of the convention listened to eloquent testimony (notably from

civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer) concerning racial discrimination in the electoral process and stipulated that future conventions would not accept delegates chosen through discriminatory procedures. As a compromise, the credentials committee offered two at-large seats to the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegation.

## **1968 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1968 Democratic convention met on August 26 - 29 in Chicago, with protestors and police clashing in the streets over the Johnson administration's policies concerning the Vietnam War and unprecedented security precautions instituted at the International Amphitheater. The 1968 assassinations of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and the race riots in more than 100 hundred cities following the King assassination all combined with the protest over the Vietnam War to make this the most divisive and contentious Democratic convention since the Civil War.

With the decision by President Lyndon B. Johnson not to seek reelection, the three major candidates were Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, Sens. Eugene J. McCarthy of Minnesota and George McGovern of South Dakota. Humphrey won on the first ballot by winning the votes of party moderates, Northern big-city political organizations and Southern conservatives. Also receiving votes on the first ballot was the Rev. Channing E. Phillips of the District of Columbia, who became the first African-American ever nominated for the top of the ticket at a national convention.

Humphrey chose Maine Sen. Edmund S. Muskie as his running mate, whose nomination was approved by acclamation before the balloting was complete. A film tribute to Robert Kennedy was shown to the delegates prior to the vice presidential nomination, sparking a prolonged standing ovation and the singing of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Prior to the heated debate over the platform and the nomination process, the convention committee had fought over what was known as the "unit rule." This rule allowed some states to instruct that the entire vote of their delegation be cast as determined by the majority of the delegates. For more than a century this rule had been enforced at national Democratic conventions, but the supporters of McCarthy attacked the rule as a device for denying representation of minority viewpoints. Humphrey had indicated his support for reform of this rule, and ultimately the convention approved a motion to abolish it at the 1968 convention, and forbidding its use in future years. The defeat of the rule allowed the seating of a number of disputed Southern delegations that had faced credentials challenges, in particular a new Mississippi Democratic loyalist group, whose membership included the American voting rights activist and civil rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer.

The 1968 Democratic platform, which contained planks on many issues, including crime, gun control, housing, welfare reform and foreign policy, was not contested by the delegates on any issue except the U.S. policy in Vietnam. The administration plank did not support a halt to the

U.S. bombing of North Vietnam or a withdrawal of U.S. troops before the end of the war. A minority plank, drafted by McCarthy and McGovern, called for an immediate halt to the bombing and a negotiated troop withdrawal. The bitter debate on these two proposals raged over two days, with the final roll call vote defeating the minority plank by a vote of 1,567 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> to 1,041 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>.

### **1972 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The Democratic national convention was held in Miami Beach, Florida on July 10 - 13, 1972, with 3,203 delegates attending. Rules changes dramatically increased the participation of women, youth, and blacks. In the primaries the major candidates were South Dakota Senator George McGovern, former Vice President Hubert Humphrey, and Maine Senator Edmund Muskie. On the first day of the convention challenges to the seating of McGovern delegates won in the primary were settled in favor of McGovern. The next day Humphrey and Muskie withdrew from the race which assured McGovern the nomination. McGovern won the nomination on the first ballot with the support of 1,865 delegates. McGovern chose Missouri Senator Thomas Eagleton as his running mate. Eagleton won the nomination for Vice President with 1,742 votes on the first ballot. Ten days after the convention Eagleton disclosed that he voluntarily had hospitalized himself three times between 1960 and 1966 for nervous exhaustion and fatigue. The controversy caused by this disclosure led to Eagleton's withdrawal from the ticket. McGovern then chose R. Sargent Shriver to be his Vice Presidential running mate.

The 1972 platform of the Democratic Party called for the unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Vietnam. It stated that the war had cost the lives of 50,000 soldiers, drained more than \$150 billion in resources, and inflicted untold damage to the national will. It called for the overhaul of the current welfare system to guarantee each family receiving federal support had an income substantially above the poverty level. The platform called for handgun legislation to include a ban on Saturday night specials; favored the passing of an Equal Rights Amendment, and called for the elimination of the electoral college in order to give every voter a direct and equal voice in Presidential elections.

### **1976 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

On July 12 - 15 the Democratic convention met in New York City with delegates showing a unity that had not been present during the turbulent and conflict-ridden conventions of 1968 and 1972. Former Georgia governor Jimmy Carter, a dark-horse candidate who had surprised everyone by winning the Iowa and New Hampshire primaries, came to the convention with more than the 1,054 delegates needed to win the presidential nomination. Carter, a moderate, pledged to restore honesty and integrity in government. This appealed to the delegates in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, which had resulted in the resignation of President Richard Nixon in 1974. Carter won on the first ballot with 2,238 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> votes. His closest rivals were Representative Morris Udall of Arizona and Governor Jerry Brown of California. Carter's perception as a unity

candidate was cemented with the image, broadcast on national television, of Carter, George Wallace, Coretta Scott King and other prominent African-Americans joining him on the victory platform.

Jimmy Carter's choice for a running mate was Senator Walter F. Mondale of Minnesota, who had impressed Carter with his experience and political philosophy. Mondale won overwhelmingly on the first ballot, but two other individuals received votes: House Speaker Carl Albert of Oklahoma and Representative Barbara C. Jordan of Texas, an African-American who had given a memorable keynote speech.

The platform was designed to be noncontroversial and consisted of wide-ranging Democratic goals, as opposed to specific legislative initiatives and hard-line stands on issues. Democrats were determined to avoid the platform fights on divisive issues that had crippled the party in the two previous elections. Specific goals in the platform called for a comprehensive national health insurance system with universal and mandatory coverage, welfare reform, a commitment to the environment, energy conservation, the exploration and development of new energy sources and support for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment.

### **1980 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1980 Democratic Convention met in New York City on August 11 - 14, with President Jimmy Carter facing a strong challenge from Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts for the presidential nomination. Runaway inflation, high interest rates and slow economic growth, coupled with the continuing Iranian hostage crisis and the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan, were issues and events that had dominated Carter's presidency. Carter's preoccupation with both foreign and domestic crises had resulted in his presidential campaign being conducted from the White House instead of on the road. Although Kennedy had not won the required number of delegates in the primaries and caucuses, he attempted to take the nomination from Carter by working to defeat a rule adopted by the Democratic National Committee in 1978 and on the agenda for adoption at the 1980 convention.

The proposed rule bound delegates to vote on the first ballot for the candidates to whom they were pledged during the primaries and caucuses. After much debate and behind-the-scenes maneuvering, the rule finally came to a vote. The attempt to overturn the proposed rule was defeated, resulting in Kennedy's announcement that his name would not be placed in nomination. President Carter won renomination on August 13, with Senator Kennedy making an awkward and brief appearance on the platform with Carter to give the appearance of party unity. Walter Mondale was renominated for vice president with no opposition.

Conflict between the Carter and Kennedy camps over the 1980 Democratic platform was as intense as the struggle for the presidential nomination. The battle over the platform was one of the longest in convention history, filling 17 hours of debate and roll call votes that stretched over two days. Senator Kennedy succeeded in crafting the party platform to reflect his liberal

ideology in the platform planks, particularly with respect to economic policy. Kennedy's rousing speech to the delegates on behalf of his economic minority plank provided the most exciting moments of the convention, prompting a 40-minute emotional demonstration on the convention floor.

### **1984 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1984 Democratic convention met in San Francisco on July 16 - 19 with 3,933 delegates in attendance. A difficult and contentious primary season had ended only on June 5, when a final round of primaries gave the victory to Walter Mondale, Jimmy Carter's former vice president. Among the strong competitors had been Gary Hart, former Colorado senator, and Jesse Jackson, a civil rights leader from Chicago who hoped to build a "rainbow coalition" of diverse supporters.

For the first time, as a result of reforms completed in 1982 by the Hunt Commission, the Democrats admitted to the 1984 convention a new group of "superdelegates," Democratic Party leaders and elected officials who attended the convention as uncommitted delegates and controlled about 14 percent of the ballots. The Hunt Commission was named for its chairman, Gov. Jim Hunt of North Carolina. The commission was formed to address the bitter fight over the nomination in 1980, when Sen. Edward Kennedy challenged President Jimmy Carter.

Mondale selected as his vice president New York Rep. Geraldine A. Ferraro, the first woman to run on the presidential ticket of a major party. New York Gov. Mario Cuomo delivered the keynote address. The lengthy platform document pledged to reduce the budget deficit, particularly that portion resulting from increased military spending sponsored by incumbent President Ronald Reagan, to make the tax system fairer to disadvantaged and middle-class socioeconomic groups and to control health care costs. The platform opposed passage of a balanced budget amendment to the Constitution and supported the Equal Rights Amendment and abortion rights for women.

### **1988 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

In 1988 the Democratic National Convention was held in Atlanta, Georgia on July 18 - 21. Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis had won enough delegates in the primaries to guarantee his nomination for President. The only controversy at the convention concerned Jesse Jackson's bid for the Vice Presidential nomination. Dukakis had chosen Texas Senator Lloyd Bentsen for a running mate. Jackson, however, had won the second largest number of delegates in the primaries. In a meeting with Dukakis and Bentsen on July 18, Jackson agreed to support the ticket in the interest of party unity. It was also agreed that Jackson's name would be placed in nomination. The vote on the first ballot was 2,876 for Dukakis and 1,219 for Jackson.



The Democratic platform emphasized the need for a national health care program which would provide federal coordination to restrain rising health care costs while insuring quality care for all Americans. It pledged to better balance national priorities to increase federal funding for education. It called for the establishment of a national office to coordinate federal, state, and local efforts to control illegal drugs. It criticized the Republicans for wasting money on unnecessary weapons and advocated investing more money in training the armed forces for various types of conflicts. It called for a stronger national policy to promote peace in the Middle East.

### **1992 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

Democrats meeting in New York City on July 13 - 16 sought to nominate a candidate who would reverse their presidential fortunes after 12 years of Republican control of the White House. Delegates felt that the way to win the presidency was to nominate a party moderate and adopt a platform largely influenced by the centrist ideas of the Democratic Leadership Council. The DLC had been established almost a decade earlier in an effort to move the party from the left to a more centrist viewpoint. Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, who had taken a leading role in building the DLC and used it to become a key player in the party, came to the convention as the leading candidate for the nomination. Other candidates on the ballot were former California Governor Edmund G. “Jerry” Brown Jr. and former Massachusetts Senator Paul E. Tsongas.

Bill Clinton was formally nominated by New York Governor Mario M. Cuomo, who saluted him as the “comeback kid,” a reference to his comeback after the loss of the New Hampshire primary and media attention on allegations of infidelity and his lack of service in the Vietnam War. Clinton won by a vote of 3,372 votes, and subsequently the nomination was approved by acclamation. He surprised the delegates by selecting as his running mate another Southerner, Tennessee Senator Albert Gore Jr. The Clinton-Gore ticket was the youngest in the 20th century, with Clinton, age 45, and Gore, age 44.

Democratic women played a major role at the convention, with the opening program highlighting leading female Senate candidates and the discussion of issues of concern to women from the podium. In a change from the usual single keynote speaker, the delegates heard three keynote addresses: Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey, Governor Zell Miller of Georgia and former Texas representative Barbara Jordan. The Democratic platform reflected the new centrist philosophy emphasizing the need for economic growth, use of military force overseas when necessary, a cutoff of welfare benefits after two years and support for the right of states to enact death penalty statutes.

### **1996 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 1996 Democratic national convention was held in Chicago on August 26 - 29. The highlight of the convention was the renomination of President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore.

Former Reagan press secretary James Brady and actor Christopher Reeve appeared on the first night of the convention. Brady, paralyzed by a bullet in a 1981 assassination attempt on Reagan, praised Clinton's gun control legislation and called for increased action to reduce gun violence. Reeve, paralyzed by a horse riding accident in 1995, spoke for expanded research into diseases such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, spinal cord injuries, and AIDS. The second night of the convention featured an emphasis on families. It ended with a speech by First Lady Hillary Clinton on family values. On the third night Vice President Al Gore spoke about the Democratic Party leading the nation into the 21st Century. The voting for President that night resulted in Clinton receiving the unanimous support of the convention's delegates. On the fourth night President Clinton addressed the convention and highlighted his first administration's achievements.

The Democratic platform in 1996 proposed ending deficit spending by the U.S. government and balancing the federal budget. This proposal was accompanied by a pledge to maintain Social Security and Medicare at the levels needed by the public. In education, the federal government should promote national standards for primary and secondary schools to guarantee students have learned the skills required to advance to the next grade. In welfare, attempts should be made to get people into respectable jobs and reduce the number in need of public funds. Environmental protection was also advocated, especially protection of the National Parks and opposition to new offshore drilling in environmentally critical areas.

## **2000 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 2000 Democratic convention convened in Los Angeles, California, August 14 - 17, to nominate Vice President Albert "Al" Gore, Jr., as the Democratic presidential candidate. Gore had served two terms with President Bill Clinton as his vice president (1993-2000), and had represented the state of Tennessee as both a member of the House of Representatives and the Senate from 1976 through 1992. During the presidential campaign of 2000, Gore had secured the presidential nomination by defeating former New Jersey senator Bill Bradley in the Democratic primaries. Gore's name was the only one placed in nomination and on the ballot at the convention, and he won by a total of 4,339 votes. Gore's name was placed in nomination by his friend, Harvard roommate and Hollywood actor Tommy Lee Jones, and Gore was introduced by his wife, Tipper, before making his acceptance speech.

Gore had chosen Senator Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut as his vice presidential running mate. Lieberman was the first Jewish American to run on a major party's national ticket. Serving in the Senate since 1988, Lieberman had earned a reputation as a centrist who worked well with both Democratic and Republican members of Congress. Senator Lieberman was unanimously approved by the convention delegates by voice vote.

The 2000 Democratic platform included planks on fiscal discipline, education, health care, campaign finance reform, support for a woman's right to choose, protecting and strengthening Medicare, fighting crime, transforming the military, and valuing families. No floor fights

occurred over any of the platform planks; however, outside the convention hall protestors demonstrated, sometimes violently, during all four days of the convention. Protest groups included pro-life supporters, homeless activists, anti-globalization protestors, and anarchists.

### **2004 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

The 2004 Democratic national convention was held at the Fleet Center in Boston, Massachusetts, July 26 - 29, amid concerns about terrorism, protests, and impossibly snarled traffic, the latter due to the closure of major traffic arteries near the convention center. Enhanced security and a designated area for protesters, at some distance from the convention proceedings and surrounded by a fence topped with razor wire, added to the controversy.

The opening address was delivered by former President Bill Clinton and the keynote address by Barack Obama, at the time a candidate for the United States Senate in Illinois. Other notable speakers included former President Jimmy Carter, Senator Hilary Clinton of New York, former Vice President and 2000 Democratic nominee Al Gore, Reverend Al Sharpton, and retired General John Shalikashvili, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The speeches addressed the foremost topics of terrorism and the war in Iraq, health care, taxes, and economic revival. Perhaps the most poignant speech was given by Ron Reagan, son of former President Ronald Reagan who had died a month earlier of Alzheimer's disease. Reagan urged the delegates to support increased funding for stem cell research.

The Democratic nominee for President was Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, who had fought an uphill battle to win the Party's nomination against a large field of candidates. Senator John Edwards of North Carolina was Kerry's choice for the vice presidential half of the ticket. Major planks in the Democratic Party platform (which was accepted unanimously) included energy independence, environmental protection, strengthening the military, and homeland security.

### **2008 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**

Denver, Colorado, was the site of the 2008 Democratic Convention, held on August 25-28. The last time that Denver had hosted a national political convention was in 1908, when the Democratic Party nominated William Jennings Bryan as their candidate for president. The 2008 Democratic Convention was historic for two reasons – Senator Barack Obama of Illinois, an African-American, won the nomination for president, and New York Senator Hillary Clinton's name was placed in nomination in recognition of her momentous achievement in winning 1,896 delegate votes and over 18,000,000 popular votes in the state presidential primaries and caucuses. Senator Obama had secured the nomination prior to the convention by winning 2,201 of the 2,118 delegate votes needed to win. During the roll call of the states on Wednesday, August 27th, Senator Clinton stood among the New York State delegation on the convention floor and asked that the convention suspend the rules and nominate Senator Obama by acclamation.

Senator Obama selected Senator Joseph “Joe” Biden from Delaware as his vice presidential running mate. Senator Biden was first elected to the Senate in 1972 and is a past chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and the current chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Initially a candidate for president in the 2008 campaign, Biden ended his run for the presidency in January of 2008. Senator Biden’s nomination for vice president was also approved by acclamation by the convention delegates.

Highlights of the 2008 Democratic Convention included speeches by former President Bill Clinton, Senator Hillary Clinton, and Michelle Obama, wife of Senator Barack Obama. The most poignant moment of the convention occurred when Massachusetts Senator Edward “Ted” Kennedy made an appearance and gave a short speech before the delegates. Senator Kennedy, who was undergoing treatment for a malignant brain tumor, paraphrased both his brother’s 1961 inaugural address and his own 1980 convention speech, with the statement:

This November, the torch will be passed again to a new generation of Americans, so with Barack Obama and for you and me, our country will be committed to his cause. The work begins anew. The hope rises again. And the dream lives on.

Issues in the Democratic platform for 2008 included the redeployment of American troops serving in Iraq, support for a woman’s right to choose, a promise of “tough and practical” immigration reform, affordable access to health care, and the development of alternative energy technologies. Planks also called for the United States to assume a leadership role in the fight against global warming, amending NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) to reflect concerns about labor and the environment, and a call for more service through an expansion of the AmeriCorps and Peace Corps programs.