Constitution of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin

This constitution supersedes all previously published constitutions of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin.

PREAMBLE

Freedom, equity, security, peace and prosperity throughout the world; these are our high aims. To achieve these aims, we seek to promote and to preserve liberal democratic government everywhere -- abroad, in America, in Wisconsin. To promote and to preserve liberal government, we seek to build and to develop a liberal Democratic Party.

A political party is a means to an end. Means shape ends. To be a force for democracy, a political party must be a democracy. Its members must have equal voice, one with another. Its leaders must be freely chosen by its members and must answer to them. Its program must arise from the free and full competition of ideas among its members.

In recognition of these plain truths, we adopt this Constitution. Through it we shall fashion and maintain a democratic party.

ARTICLE I - Name

The name of this organization shall be the Democratic Party of Wisconsin.

ARTICLE II - Membership

Any person at least fourteen years of age who subscribes to the liberal principles of the Democratic Party is eligible for voting membership and shall become a member upon payment of dues and receipt of such dues by a unit of the county in which they reside, or the State Party Headquarters. Residence for membership shall be defined as that required for voting in state elections unless the county constitution provides otherwise. A student who is at least 14 years old may elect to become a voting member of the county unit in which s/he lives during the school year. No further restriction shall be imposed upon membership. Members of the respective county party units, provided for herein, shall automatically become members of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin and the congressional district in which they reside.

ARTICLE III - State Organization

Section 1 - The officers of the state party shall consist of a chair, first vice-chair of a different gender, second vice-chair, treasurer and secretary.

Section 2 - The state chair shall be responsible for executive direction of the organization and shall be authorized, with the consent of the Administrative Committee, to appoint such administrative staff as may be necessary.

The first vice-chair shall be responsible for executive direction of the organization in the event the chair is absent or incapacitated and for such other duties as the chair or Administrative Committee may assign.

The state treasurer shall be the custodian of funds of the organization, shall make written financial reports to the Administrative Committee, at least four times per year, shall make a full financial report in writing at each annual state convention (a copy shall be mailed to each delegate at least (7) days before such convention), and shall expend funds from the state treasury in accordance with the directives of the Administrative Committee.

The secretary shall be responsible for taking the minutes at the Administrative Committee meetings and state conventions and file the same at the state headquarters immediately after each such meeting and shall have such other duties as the chair or Administrative Committee may assign.

The administrative staff shall maintain the records of the organization.

Section 3 - The governing body of the DPW shall be the Administrative Committee, which shall be composed of the above-named officers, the chair of each congressional district; one additional representative, of a different gender than the chair to be elected from each congressional district for a two-year term each odd-numbered year; the chair of each DPW caucus; the chair of a county whose population is greater than any congressional district; the elected or appointed members of the Democratic National Committee from Wisconsin; the chair of the College Democrats or their representative; the chair of the Young Democrats or their representative; and the chair of the County Chairs' Association.

No member of the Administrative Committee may be represented by proxy. If a congressional district chair or representative is unable to attend an Administrative Committee meeting, an alternate may act in place of the chair or representative, provided such substitution preserves a diversity of gender between the chairperson and representative.

Other members shall be provided for as follows: the immediate past state chair shall serve for one term following the term as state chair, the Senate and Assembly Democratic caucuses shall each select a respective member therefrom to serve a two-year term which shall commence with the first legislative caucus following the election of the Legislature; and at large representatives to be elected by the Administrative Committee members, the number and gender of which to be determined by the state chair from time to time in order to assure that the state Administrative Committee is gender balanced as well as to assure that the state party meets the affirmative action goals and other requirements established by the Democratic National Committee. The state chair will propose a slate of at-large representatives to achieve the necessary requirements stated above; such a slate to be reviewed and confirmed or modified by the Administrative Committee pursuant to bylaws to be established by the Administrative Committee. People selected by the Administrative Committee to gender balance the committee should be selected first from those districts that are underrepresented. Should there be any conflict between state party and Democratic National Committee rules, Democratic National Committee rules shall supersede those contained herein. Only one legislative representative to the state Administrative Committee may be elected from any one county.

Section 4 - The Administrative Committee shall meet at least four times per year. The times and places of regular meetings shall be fixed by the Administrative Committee at the first meeting after the state convention or after the transition date to the new chair, whichever is later. The state chair may call meetings outside of the regularly scheduled meetings when circumstances require. The state chair may change the date of a regularly scheduled meeting if necessary to accommodate activities that are beneficial to the state party. At least ten days' written notice shall be given to all members for any meeting.

Upon written agreement of fifty percent of the currently seated members of the Administrative Committee, the committee may call a meeting without the consent of the state chair.

Any member of the Administrative Committee who shall have three consecutive unexcused absences from regular Administrative Committee meetings shall immediately forfeit the office, and such vacancy shall be filled under the appropriate section of this constitution.

Section 5 - The Administrative Committee by a majority vote at any meeting may determine the rules of its own proceedings, set policy for the orderly conduct of party business, authorize expenditures in the interests of the party, adopt resolutions and take positions on issues of concern, determine membership classification and shall provide

for an annual audit of the financial records of the party. With three fourths (3/4) of its membership concurring, after notice and hearing, the committee may for adequate reason expel a party member.

Section 6 - The Administrative Committee by a two-thirds vote at any of its regularly scheduled meetings may adopt, add to, or amend the bylaws, which bylaws shall be not inconsistent with the provisions of this constitution. Such bylaws shall be published along with and at the end of this constitution and be available to the membership of the party.

Section 7 - There shall be an annual state convention at such time and place as the Administrative Committee shall determine, upon at least ninety days written notice to the chair of each county.

Delegates and alternates to such conventions shall be selected by each county on a fair and equitable basis of representation within quotas to be determined from time to time by the Administrative Committee.

Notice of meetings to select such delegates and alternates shall be as provided in the bylaws.

Upon receipt of the written and signed petition of at least 20% of the chairs of the counties in the state, the state chair shall call a state convention within ninety days and shall give at least sixty days' notice to the chairs of each county unit. Representation at such a state convention shall be on the basis used for the preceding annual state convention.

Section 8 - The state chair, vice chairs, treasurer and secretary shall be elected to a two-year term each odd-numbered year at the regular state convention. Each shall hold office until July 1 in the year of the succeeding election in order to allow a reasonable transition period for the newly elected officer. Except as otherwise determined by the Administrative Committee, full remuneration for services rendered during such transition period shall be afforded to the outgoing officer.

In order to run for an officer position, candidates must file a declaration of intent with the state party twenty-one (21) days prior to the state convention. In addition, candidates must file nomination papers containing no fewer than sixty (60) signatures of dues paid party members, with at least ten (10) signatures each from at least six (6) of Wisconsin's congressional districts at least twenty-one (21) days prior to the state convention. Candidates may submit more than the required sixty signatures. Candidates or their representatives may begin collecting nomination signatures no more than ninety (90) days prior to the state convention.

The elected members of the Democratic National Committee shall be elected at the regular state convention each presidential election year and shall assume office in the manner specified by the Democratic National Committee.

The election of officers of the Administrative Committee shall be conducted by an election commission.

This commission shall consist of a chair and four other people named by the state chair with the approval of the Administrative Committee. Terms of the commissioners shall be for five years, and the state chair shall not have the power of removal except with the approval of two- thirds of the members of the Administrative Committee.

Section 9 - In the event of a vacancy in any position on the Administrative Committee ordinarily filled by election at a state convention, the following steps shall be followed to provide for a successor to serve until the next annual state convention, at which time the vacancy shall be filled by election to serve the balance of the term. No vacancy by voluntary resignation shall occur until a letter of resignation is received by state headquarters.

a. In the event of a vacancy in the chair position, the 1st vice chair shall automatically assume the position of the chair until the next annual state convention, at which time there shall be an election to serve the balance of the term.

b. In the event of a vacancy in the 1st vice chair position, the 2nd vice chair shall automatically assume the position of the 1st vice chair if the gender balance is preserved. If gender balance (1st vice chair being a different gender than the chair) cannot be preserved, the Administrative Committee shall elect a successor of a different gender than the chair to serve until the next annual state convention, at which time the vacancy shall be filled by election to serve the balance of the term.

c. In the event of a vacancy in any other position normally elected by the state convention, the Administrative Committee shall elect a successor to serve until the next annual state convention, at which time the vacancy shall be filled by election to serve the balance of the term.

Section 10 - All Administrative Committee members shall be current members of the party and shall vacate such office immediately upon loss of or termination of party membership. Members of all committees and all officers of county units and

congressional district units must be current members of the Democratic Party and must vacate that office immediately upon loss or termination of party membership, after (10) days' written notice from the chair of the unit in question.

ARTICLE IV - Dues and Finances

Section 1 - Dues shall be set by the Administrative Committee with consideration to be given to the requirements of the Democratic National Committee.

Section 2 - Funds for the treasuries of the state, district, county or authorized subdivisions may be solicited from sources other than membership dues.

Section 3 - The Democratic Party of Wisconsin shall not assume the primary election debts incurred by a candidate or political committee on behalf of any candidate for political office.

The post-primary debts of any party candidate shall not be assumed unless such debts have been duly authorized and approved by the Administrative Committee prior to the time such debts are incurred.

ARTICLE V - Congressional District Organizations

Section 1 - The purpose of the congressional district organization shall be the election of representatives to the Congress of the United States who subscribe to the liberal principles of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin and the coordination and augmentation of the policies and programs of the ~~p~~party.

Section 2 - Each congressional district shall hold an annual convention within the time limits set by the Administrative Committee, prior to the annual state Convention. The time and place of the congressional district convention shall be set by the district executive committee, which shall provide for giving at least sixty days written notice thereof to the chair of each county or authorized subdivision in the district. Unless the district constitution shall provide otherwise, the district convention shall be held within the boundaries of the congressional district. Delegates and alternates to district conventions shall be selected by each county unit on a fair and equitable basis of representation within quotas to be determined from time to time by the Administrative Committee, except that counties containing one or more congressional districts may in their constitutions include rules governing the selection of delegates and alternates within the quota set by the state Administrative Committee.

Notice of meetings to select such delegates and alternates shall be as provided in the bylaws. The purpose of the district convention in odd-numbered years shall be to elect district officers, one representative to the state Administrative Committee and two alternates as described in Article III Section 3, and such other officers as may be determined by the convention and to conduct any business as may come before the convention.

Section 3 - Unless the district constitution shall provide for additional members, the officers of the district organization, the district representative to the Administrative Committee, plus the chair (or representative) of each county or authorized subdivision within the district shall constitute the executive committee of the district. The executive committee shall meet at least every three months to consider and act upon matters of concern to the district. The time and place for such meetings are to be determined by the chair. At least ten days' written notice of every meeting shall be given by the chair to members of the executive committee.

Section 4 - Upon receipt of a written and signed petition of at least half of the chairs of the counties within a district, the state chair shall call a convention of the congressional district and shall give at least sixty days written notice of such convention to all county or local units in the district.

Section 5 - The chair of the district shall be required to inform the Administrative Committee of the decisions and recommendations of the congressional district.

Section 6 - Each congressional district organization at a regular district convention shall adopt a constitution for the orderly conduct of its affairs. It shall be the duty of the district secretary to distribute copies thereof to each county or other unit electing delegates within that district after each convention in which a change is made and to the State headquarters for approval by the administrative committee. Such approval must be given unless such constitution is in conflict with this constitution. A two-thirds vote is required for disapproval.

Section 7 - In the event of a vacancy in the office of district chair, the vice-chair shall serve as their successor until the next annual district convention. In the event the vice-chair declines to accept the office of district chair within ten days after notification by the state chair, the congressional district executive committee shall elect a successor at a meeting called by the state chair. In the event of a vacancy in any district office other than district chair, the congressional district executive committee shall elect a successor to serve until the next district convention. This meeting shall be held within sixty days after the vacancy occurs.

Section 8 - A district, in its constitution, may provide funding for operating expenses and congressional campaign expenses.

ARTICLE VI - County Organization

Section 1 - The basic unit or organization of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin shall be the county unit, and the Administrative Committee shall issue charters to such units at its discretion. The Administrative Committee may authorize a county to organize subunits which shall be under the supervision of the county unit, provided that such subunits shall be based upon politically significant subdivisions within the county.

Section 2 - Each county shall submit a constitution for approval by the Administrative Committee. For new counties, constitutions must be approved prior to the issuance of a charter. Any changes in county constitutions after initial approval shall become effective only after approval by the standing Constitution Committee. Such approval must be given unless such county constitution or change is in conflict with this constitution. Each county constitution shall be printed or duplicated and copies with amendments shall be available to members of each county.

Section 3 - The officers of each county shall include a chair or co-chair as defined by county governing documents, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer. The offices of secretary and treasurer may be held by the same person. Counties may provide for additional officers. Officers of a county shall be elected for a term of one year, except that the constitution of a county may provide for two-year terms. The election shall be held no earlier than November 1 nor later than the following December 31 at a county meeting called for that purpose or at a meeting of delegates when the method of election of county officers by delegates has been approved by the Administrative Committee. Reasonable written notice of at least ten days of such election meeting must be given by the secretary of each county to the state headquarters and to all paid members of record of the notice date. At each county election only members who meet the requirements defined by the county or are approved members a minimum of 5 days prior to the election shall be eligible to vote. In the event that the chair of the county shall fail to call such an election meeting within the period specified herein, the state chair shall be authorized to call such an election meeting as soon as practicable provided always that the provisions of this section with respect to notice shall be observed.

Section 4 - The fundamental responsibilities of each county shall be to develop the fullest possible membership in the county, to hold regularly scheduled meetings, to encourage Democratic candidates for elective office, to form and maintain an effective campaign organization, to make recommendations for the Party platform, and to

promote the general interests of the Democratic Party. When three months elapse without a meeting of such county, any members of that county may petition the state chair who may thereupon call a meeting of such county subject to the provisions of the constitution relating to ten days written notice.

Section 5 - The Administrative Committee may, in its discretion, suspend or revoke a charter or take such other action as it may deem appropriate, if it finds that the officers or members of an existing county are clearly failing or refusing to perform the functions for which the county is responsible. No county charter shall be revoked or suspended until and unless the officers of said county shall be given an opportunity to appear at a meeting of the Administrative Committee.

Section 6 - The County Chairs Association is hereby recognized as the official organization representing the interests of the county units and subunits before the Administrative Committee. The chair and 1st vice-chair of each county unit or authorized subunit shall become a member of the County Chairs Association by virtue of their election and remain so during their tenure in office. The County Chairs Association shall adopt a constitution, subject to and consistent with the state Constitution. Any changes to the County Chairs Association constitution shall become effective only after approval by the standing Constitution Committee. The Administrative Committee may, in its discretion take such action as it deems appropriate to assure the County Chairs Association and its officers are functioning in a manner consistent with the County Chairs Association Constitution and the policies of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin.

ARTICLE VII - Other Organizations

The Administrative Committee shall have the authority to examine various entities to determine whether such entities qualify as a constituency caucus or other party caucus or council, a nationally recognized independent group, an allied organization, or an arm of the DNC. And as such, are recognized as part of DPW and administered as determined by the DPW bylaws.

ARTICLE VIII - Endorsements

Section 1 - The state organization, congressional district organizations, county organizations, the College Democrats of Wisconsin, the Young Democrats of Wisconsin, and all other subdivisions at any level of the state organization are prohibited from endorsing or supporting any candidate in a Democratic presidential preference election or any partisan primary election which will determine the candidate of the Democratic Party for the ensuing election to office unless the county or local Democratic group or

congressional district recommends a certain candidate (or candidates) be endorsed or supported due to unusual circumstances and these circumstances be submitted in writing to the state Administrative Committee in a timely manner for approval of an endorsement and support of a specific candidate (or candidates) for a specific reason and the Administrative Committee approves said recommendation by a two-thirds majority.

Section 2 - The affiliated county, local Democratic group, or other subunits of the party may make an endorsement in a local referendum campaign. They may also seek an endorsement of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin via a two-thirds vote of the Administrative Committee. Requests for DPW endorsement must be submitted in writing to the Administrative Committee, in a timely manner, stating a compelling case as to why the state party should consider the endorsement. The Administrative Committee may, on its own volition, by a two-thirds majority, endorse statewide referendum campaigns. Referendum endorsements should align with the party platform.

ARTICLE IX - Amendments

Section 1 - This constitution shall be amended by the concurrence of two-thirds of a quorum of the registered and accredited delegates at a regularly called state convention of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin; and for the purpose of this provision a quorum shall consist of one-half of the total registered and accredited delegates.

Section 2 - Proposals for amending this constitution shall be submitted in writing by any county unit or authorized sub-division thereof or of any permanent committee of the party to the standing Constitution Committee through the state party Headquarters at least 90 days before the state convention. This committee, appointed by the state chair shall consider such proposals and any others which the committee may itself initiate. Each proposed amendment accompanied by the recommendations of the committee shall be disseminated in writing to all members of the state Administrative Committee and the chairs of each county or authorized subdivision at least 30 days before the convention and shall be presented to the annual convention for adoption or rejection prior to the conduct of elections, and if adopted shall be effective immediately unless otherwise specified. All amendments to the state constitution shall follow this procedure. Appropriate notice of the provisions of this article shall be given to county chairs by the state party Headquarters prior to each convention.

END OF CONSTITUTION

Adopted at the first convention in Green Bay, Wisconsin, November 27, 1949. Amended at the forty-seventh convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, June 9, 1995. Amended at the fifty-fourth

convention in Madison, Wisconsin, June 7, 2002, and at the fifty-fifth convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin June 13, 2003. Amended at the fifty-eighth convention in La Crosse, Wisconsin, June 9, 2006. Amended at the sixty-fourth convention in Appleton, Wisconsin, June 8, 2012. Amended at the sixty-sixth convention in Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, June 6, 2014. Amended at the sixty-eighth convention in Green Bay, Wisconsin, June 3, 2016. Amended at the sixty-ninth convention in Middleton, Wisconsin, June 2, 2017. Amended at the seventieth convention in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, June 1, 2018. Amended at the seventy-third convention on June 5, 2021. Amended at the seventy-ninth convention in Madison, Wisconsin, June 14, 2026.