



Indiana's

Ninth District Democratic Party

February 21, 2024

District Procedural Review

Caucus and Other Management Inquiries for the Monroe County Democratic Party

Conducted by: Adam Dickey, Ninth District Democratic Party Chair
Josh Stigdon, District Counsel & Parliamentarian
Ashley Pirani, Monroe Co. Democratic Party Secretary
Karen Wrenbeck, Treasurer

Introduction:

At the request of the Monroe County Democratic Party, the Ninth District Democratic Party conducted a review of rules, processes, and procedures related to the organization of Vacancy Caucuses and related management inquiries surrounding these events. The review was undertaken with District Chair Adam Dickey, District Counsel Josh Stigdon, Monroe County Party Secretary Ashley Pirani, and Monroe County Democratic Party Treasurer Karen Wrenbeck. The review covered the caucuses for County Treasurer, County Auditor, 5th District City Council, and Party Vice Chair. Several substantive issues were address or reviewed, including the following:

I. Notice & Process:

Indiana State Code and the Indiana Democratic Party Rules are clear regarding vacancy notice, caucus notification, and the adoption of rules of procedure for vacancy caucuses. At the time of the review, two caucuses had transpired – one for the position of County Treasurer on January 10th, 2024 and the other for County Auditor on February 10, 2024. Proper notice of the vacancies was provided by the County Clerk to the Party Chair, the last occurring on January 16th, 2024. Following such notice, both proceedings provided more than 10 days written notice to the Precinct Committee, and the caucuses were each called within the 30-day vacancy window provided under Indiana Code. In addition to the required notice, the Party also provided publication of the caucuses online and in its email correspondence with both events being widely attended by precinct officials, party activists, and media.

Notice for the 5th District City Council seat previously held by Shruti Rana and the Party Vice Chair position were pending at the time of the review. A caucus date of March 2nd had been announced by the Party Chair and written notice to the Precinct Committee was being prepared for dispatch no later than February 17, 2024. This notice complies with the Indiana Code, naming the Caucus Chair; the time, date and location of the caucus; and providing other particulars for the event. The party will use its standard caucus rules consistent with the caucuses held for County Treasurer and County Auditor.

Regarding the caucus for Monroe County Vice Chair, the Monroe County Party officers had set a caucus date of March 23rd following internal discussions and consultation with District and State Party leadership on February 12th – 13th. While technically falling outside the 30-day window from the date of resignation, it was understood by all units that there were unique considerations, including the availability of space for the caucus, other scheduled community



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events such as the college and primary school spring break schedules, and the number of caucuses conducted by the committee since January 10th. The notice for this caucus is slated to be published in the party's email newsletter on February 22nd with the subsequent call to caucus notice to follow afterward.

In setting this schedule, it is important to remember that Rule 13(j)(2) and Rule 13(j)(3) were established to ensure continuity of leadership and set forth a schedule for notice and the election of that new leadership. What is incumbent to these provisions is that the Chair (or other presiding officer), as head of the precinct committee, undertakes the responsibility of calling the vacancy caucus and providing sufficient notice for participation. The timeline provided by Chair Henry accomplishes both these conditions. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that the remedy for a failure to call a caucus is for that responsibility to default to the higher party level. Considering the specific schedule allowed under party rules, the District Committee could not officially call a vacancy caucus prior to March 8th, well after the announcement planned by Chair Henry and the other officers. Furthermore, working on the minimum allowance for internal administration and the 10-day notification requirement, it could not reasonably be expected to hold the event prior to March 23rd.

The officers are correct to recognize the significance of the school spring break schedule on their committee. A significant amount of college students and faculty members were elected or appointed to precinct positions following the last precinct person election in 2022. Both this group and families with school age children may be traveling or otherwise impacted by the loss of childcare and the disruption of a normal schedule. To ignore this impact simply to comply with the 30-day schedule would be a material disservice to the committee and deny it the greater participation encouraged for Democratic Party events.

District and State Party leadership will continue to advise the Monroe County Democratic Party leadership on this caucus to ensure it meets with the nature and spirit of party rules and completes its goal of electing a new Vice Chair.

II. Eligibility of Precinct Committee Members

Precinct Committee Chairs currently elected or appointed 30 days prior to the notice of vacancy are eligible to participate in each of the caucuses. However, a question had been raised regarding the circumstances of the vacation of the Perry 21 precinct committee person, Allyson McBride, an elected committee person. Specifically, individuals questioned whether the vacation of the seat was a forced removal or whether the individual vacated the position freely. If the vacation was forced, were proper procedures followed providing notice and due process.

Upon review, it was determined that the vacation was a consenting resignation. Ms. McBride had indicated to the Party Chair that she had moved outside of the precinct and had vacated her position accordingly. Written documentation substantiates this exchange and Ms. McBride has verbally confirmed the circumstances to the review team.

As a vacant position, the Party Chair is entitled to appoint a replacement to this seat, but that individual, if appointed, cannot participate in the 5th District and Vice Chair Caucuses due to the 30-day lock set by Indiana Code and Party Rules. For the purposes of those Caucuses, the seat will be considered "dead."



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III. Party Chair as a Candidate:

Party Rules are silent regarding a County Chair running for elected public office and neither prohibit such activity nor restrict the rights, responsibilities, or powers of those individuals in those circumstances. Throughout the history of the party, several County, District, and even State Chairs have also served as

Democratic candidates, including more recently State Chair John Zody (2020), Scott County Chair Denny Wilson (2020), Dearborn County Chair Dylan Liddle (2023), and Floyd County and Ninth District Chair Adam Dickey (2023). Accordingly, a Party Chair is well within their power to continue to appoint vacancies to party positions, nominate poll workers, supervise coordinated campaign activities, and manage operations for the party, including by presiding over meetings or caucuses of the body.

A Party Chair may wish to be sensitive to political considerations when serving in this instance. Particularly when the Chair is involved in a contested race during a party primary, they may make appropriate accommodations to ensure opposition candidates are notified of events and have equal access to party services offered to all candidates. These decisions should be made in consultation with the other officers of the party and announced to the Precinct Committee.

IV. Conflicts as Chair of Caucus:

As mentioned above, the Party Rules are silent and allow for a Party Chair to dually serve as a candidate and a Party Chair. As a result of this dual role, it is possible that a Conflict of Interest may occur depending on the circumstances of the candidacy. For example, if a Chair is standing for election to a vacant elected position at a caucus, it would typically be seen as a conflict of interest to preside over such a caucus. They would, however, be within their rights as a precinct committee person to cast a vote in the caucus.

In the specific instances regarding the caucuses for County Treasurer and County Auditor and anticipating the caucuses for 5th District City Council and for Vice Chair, Mr. Henry, as Party Chair, was not a candidate. Furthermore, we can find no substantial relationship (Ex: Familial relationship, professional relationship, etc) between him and the caucus candidates, as currently known, and find no pecuniary interest that he might have in the caucus results. Without such conflict, Mr. Henry is within his rights as Party Chair to preside over these caucuses.

V. Additional Considerations:

While this review attempts to settle questions pertaining to rules, processes, and procedures of the caucuses, any political proceeding conducted by actors in the democratic process is not without interest and opinion. Precinct committee members, party activists, and the public may all express their individual and collective sense of preference or displeasure regarding the actions of the Party, its caucuses, or its members. It cannot be understated that these actions may have other repercussions, such as political support for or against a political actor or general approval or disapproval with a result. While we respect the interest and opinion of all individuals, that interest does not reverse or negate the application of the rules. In completing this review, it is our hope that party members will be reassured on the process and, while allowing for political and interpersonal differences, focus on the important work to fill these vacancies and provide solid political leadership for Monroe County.



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Respectfully Submitted,

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