

Unity Reform: Lessons from Democrats Abroad



**DEMOCRATS
ABROAD**

Recommendations for Unity Reform Commission

We offer for your consideration our experiences and our party model.

DA's Global Convention and our platform process last year built momentum by bringing together DA leaders, Clinton and Sanders campaign staff, and new DA members, emphasizing empowerment and participation from every part of the Party – taking us all the way through November. *If you'd like to know more about how DA's experience can supercharge the Democratic Party's future, contact chair@democratsabroad.org for details.*

The Democratic Vote Overseas

We estimate that the 9 million American citizens living outside the United States and its territories include between 6 and 7 million eligible voters who have the right to return absentee ballots to all 50 home states. That figure gives blue state DA the 12th largest voting population of all the other state parties.

Global Presidential Primary 2016 – Growth and Unity

- Democrats Abroad was the *only state party to achieve an increase* in primary turnout from 2008: a 50% increase in valid ballots cast. (23105 to 34570)
- Americans abroad chose between voting in DA's primary or in their home state's primary. Most chose DA's primary due to familiarity, ease, and the power of their ballot.
- Democrats Abroad chose a hybrid primary-caucus Delegate Selection Plan to reflect our population's presidential preference while selecting delegates that represent our party.
- We offered in-person, email, postal, and fax participation over one week, and ran 150+ voting centers, building both community and momentum for GOTV work in the general election. Participants from remote locations included voters in ships at sea!

Solidarity at the Regional Caucuses and Global Convention

- *Trust built among passionate advocates* required weeks of preparatory work and radical transparency regarding rules, procedures, and schedules. DA leaders took every question seriously, explicitly justified all interpretations, and applied every rule evenly. Candidates' formal representatives, enthusiastic supporters, and rank-and-file members were all given opportunities to make their cases and were kept informed of progress.
- We made sure that all of our meetings at the Convention were available via WebEx video-conference in order to fully enfranchise all stakeholders in even minor matters.
- Our Global Convention began with the same hazards as the Nevada convention that same weekend when the nomination was still hotly contested. We ended with very different results: *a unity delegation of 21 individuals* who met all our diversity goals and who were committed to representing the DA population as a whole, plus 8 DNC members and 1 page. Our DNC members served as super-delegates and were elected by a hundreds of state-party leaders from all three regions.

DA's Platform: An Accessible and Collaborative Process

- We drafted our platform with the help of more than 40 experts around the globe, all working pro bono. We had an open engagement period which resulted in comments from 3000+ members via our website. Those comments were incorporated into our platform as a formal part of the process.
- The result is our current platform, a frequently-cited object of pride for DA. Possibly more important, the process demonstrated to thousands of newcomers "the DA way" of compromise and discussion among strong activists. This experience of openness and even-handedness built unity leadership teams in countries worldwide – the foundation of our 2017-2020 daily work.

Democrats Abroad as a model of an active and open State Party

In about 100 cities worldwide, our organizer-leaders maintain monthly events *at minimum* to keep the local Democratic community engaged year-round. Local expertise on what works determines what those events will be; the global organization teaches, supports, and promotes their work.

Democrats Abroad is an organization where newcomers can be effective at promoting ideas or strategies without having to wait for the next round of campaigns or to "put in their time." Empowerment and transparency are built into our structure, from resolutions to our own bylaws.

Democrats Abroad credibly claims to be the best way to create political change for Americans overseas. When it comes time to GOTV and win elections in all 50 states, DA has thousands of ready and dedicated volunteers who understand the internal organization of the Democratic Party – and how they can effect change within it and through it!