
County chair won't dance the 'Two-Step'

BY GEORGE HATT
HIGHLAND LAKES NEWSPAPERS

AUSTIN—Llano County added its voice Friday as Democrats from all over Texas gathered in Austin and urged the party to dump what they consider an un-democratic primary system.

The Texas Democratic Party has been holding hearings at various locations around the state on the so-called "Texas Two-Step" primary system.

Under the current system, two-thirds of a county's delegates to the state

convention are determined by the popular vote in the primaries, and one third are determined by votes cast in a caucus after the polls close the night of the primaries.

For many Texas Democrats, the math just isn't adding up.

"We had 2,111 Democrats vote (in the Llano County primary), yet only 344 people were able to caucus on March 4," said Llano County Democratic Chair Jennie Lou Leeder during her

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testimony before the committee. "If you do the math, you will know that the caucus only represented 15 percent of the Democratic primary votes cast. Is this truly a democratic process?"

Leeder and other county chairs decried the lack of education the party gave on the caucus system's confusing formula for determining how many delegates each candidate got. Some counties even had trouble with improperly qualifying voters; some used voting machine receipts instead of voter registration cards.

a delegate-at-large during the Democratic National Convention, said that the heavy turnout during the primaries exposed flaws in the two-step system.

"The turnout exceeded expectations," she told *The Llano County Journal*. "We were doing business in the parking lot of the church under streetlamps. It was a little chaotic."

Others said that the caucus disenfranchised the disabled, the sick, and the working poor who could not participate because of work obligations and lack of childcare.

Leeder was one of several speakers who

suggested the party eliminate the caucuses as a method of delegate selection and go with a straight primary system.

The caucus' main function then would be to help set party goals and planks for the state platform.

Wendle Scott, editor of the *Cow Country Courier* in Nixon, Texas, wrote a resolution to that effect.

"This resolution provides justice to primary voters," he told *The Llano County Journal*. He said that the caucus system gives party insiders too much sway in the delegate selection process.

"Party bosses have to

give up a little power," he said.

Bill Brannon, co-chair of the Hopkins County Democratic Party and a member of the panel hearing the testimony, said that the caucus system is the "ultimate" mechanism to prevent insiders from taking over the party.

"It brings tons and tons of new blood into the party," he said.

State Senator Royce West, the advisory committee chair, said that there will be three more hearings on the subject in Houston, San Antonio, and Dallas.

"It is my intent to conclude these hearings and report our findings (to the TDP) by the first of the year," he said.

Lula Flores of Austin,