

To: Central Committee Members, and Party Activists

Concerning: **Nominations for Congress at the January 30th Central Committee Meeting**

From: Dwight Pelz
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Many questions have arisen about the State Party's process for nominating Congressional candidates in 2010; particularly in light of Brian Baird's announcement that he will not seek re-election. This memo is an attempt to answer several questions about the process.

- 1) Why is the State Party "Nominating" Candidates for Congress in 2010?
- 2) Which Congressional Nominations will we / should we consider in January?
- 3) How should we handle the race in the 3rd CD to replace Brian Baird?
- 4) How do we handle the Nomination for Patty Murray?
- 5) Why is the Central Committee is the appropriate body to make our Congressional Nominations?

Why is the State Party "Nominating" Candidates for Congress in 2010?

We are nominating candidates for Congress, and other partisan offices, as part of the State Party's response to the Supreme Court decision upholding the Top Two Primary.

In 2008 the State Party nominated candidates for Congress, for the first time in history. In the past the State Party had never "nominated" or "endorsed" any candidate for office. We did not nominate nor endorse Maria Cantwell in 2000 or 2006; Patty Murray in 1998 or 2004; or Chris Gregoire for Governor in 2004. Prior to 2008 we had never nominated nor endorsed Brian Baird, Norm Dicks, Adam Smith, Jim McDermott, Rick Larsen, or Jay Inslee for Congress.

The voters had always nominated our candidate for Congress and other partisan offices through a "nominating primary". A "nominating primary" chooses the nominee for the Democratic Party and the nominee for the Republican Party. The Top Two Primary replaced the "nominating primary" with a "winnowing down primary" similar to the process in non-partisan city primaries which will winnow down the number of candidates for a given seat to two.

As a State Party we have maintained that the voters need to know who the "nominated Democrat" is in a race, so in 2008, for the first time, we "nominated" candidates for partisan office, including statewide offices (Governor, Attorney General, etc.) the Legislature, and Congress.

Which Congressional Nominations will we / should we consider in January?

The Central Committee voted in September in Walla Walla that the power to nominate our candidate(s) for Congress would reside with the Central Committee.

That was not a decision that **all nominations** would have to take place at the January, 2010 meeting.

In fact, there will be three opportunities for nominations to occur – in the January or September State Committee meetings, or at the June Convention. (The Convention always has the power to conduct the business of the Party.)

There are strong reasons for an early nomination (January) for those Congressional candidates we are likely to support. It is time to get started on the 2010 Coordinated Campaign. Our incumbent members of Congress cannot be expected to commit to the Coordinated Campaign until they receive the Party's nomination.

I would expect our Party to readily nominate our incumbent members of Congress, unless they had taken a position against a major Party priority. I would have expected spirited debate around a proposal in January to nominate Rep. Baird, given his vote against the health care bill.

In addition, I think we should be ready to nominate Suzan Delbene in the 8th; and possibly Jay Clough in the 4th. We do not have a candidate in the 5th yet.

How should we handle the race in the 3rd CD to replace Brian Baird?

At this writing we have three strong Democrats who have announced their candidacy, and several others still considering a run. We do not know which candidates can run a strong campaign, including the hiring of a team, recruiting early volunteers, gathering endorsements, and raising money. We will know more by April or May.

I do not believe the State Party should wage in with a nomination at this time, and, if we have two or more strong Democrats running. I believe we should consider making our nomination at the June Convention, or the September Central Committee meeting, after the Primary.

How do we handle the Nomination for Patty Murray?

Perhaps we erred in not including Senate or other statewide races as also being the responsibility of the Central Committee. I believe in regards to Patty, we have two choices:

- 1) Waive the Rules, or Amend the Rules, at the January meeting, and nominate her; or
- 2) Nominate Sen. Murray at the June Convention

Why is the Central Committee is the appropriate body to make our Congressional Nominations?

In 2008 we piggy backed Congressional District (CD) Nominating Conventions onto our Congressional Delegate Selection Caucuses. In 2008 those CD Caucuses were packed with about 250 people, each hoping to be chosen as a Delegate to the Denver Convention.

The Central Committee voted in September in Walla Walla that the power to nominate our candidate(s) for Congress will reside with the Central Committee. At a Central Committee meeting, the state committee men and women from each CD will caucus, then choose whether to send a name forward to the floor for approval by the Central Committee.

I favored this proposal. If we had repeated the same process this year of holding individual CD Nominating Conventions, then I believe only about 40 PCO's would travel one hour or more to such a Convention – many motivated by the sole purpose of voting against the incumbent. At stake is the Nominee of the Washington State Party, and I do not believe that 40 PCO's, voting say 25 to 15; should have the power to choose the Nominee of the State Party. I believe that power more correctly lies with the State Central Committee.

I hope this has been helpful.