

## Iowa GOP Seeks to Suppress Occupy's Push for 'Uncommitted' Caucus Voting

Written by John Nichols | The Nation  
Tuesday, 27 December 2011 00:00

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Dubuque—lo



wa caucus voters have frequently rejected announced candidates and chosen uncommitted delegate slates.

It's a way of protesting the paucity of appealing candidates, and of maintaining options as the race evolves.

Since the caucuses became a national phenomenon in the 1970s, "Uncommitted" [slates have won](#) two Democratic contests and secured a second place finish as recently as 1992. Republican contests have [frequently featured credible finishes](#) by "Uncommitted" slates and "No Preference" votes—in 1988, they beat Alexander Haig; in 1980, they beat Bob Dole.

But the Republican Party of Iowa now wants to shut down the "Uncommitted" option.

The party has signaled that it will not count "Uncommitted" and "No Preference" votes. According to KCRG-TV, the ABC affiliate in eastern Iowa, "Because it is a Republican caucus, only votes for a Republican candidate will be counted. Write-in votes for undecided or uncommitted are counted and sent to Des Moines, but the GOP does not send uncommitted delegates to the nominating convention."

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“There’s no candidate named ‘undecided’, so we’re voting for candidates,” [says](#) Black Hawk County Republican Party chairman Mac McDonald.

That’s a new standard, apparently developed in response to [a movement by lowans](#) who object to the compromises both parties have made on economic issues.

“Essentially that’s saying ‘Yes, we believe in freedom to vote and the right to choose a person to lead the country unless it’s something we didn’t approve of,?’” [argues Tyler Vincent](#), an activist with the Occupy Cedar Valley group, which has been organizing lowans to participate in the Republican and Democratic caucuses.

Occupy Iowa groups issued a statement condemning what they described as voter suppression by the state GOP.

We are dismayed to learn that the Iowa Republican Caucuses on the evening of January 3rd plan not to count “Uncommitted” or “No Preference” ballots. This is in contradiction of past caucuses where those votes were counted in the GOP caucuses. We condemn this and all other attempts at voter suppression and planned electoral fraud at the Iowa Caucuses. We agree with Governor Branstad when he said: “I think it’s tragic that you’ve got people trying to do this—prevent other people from expressing their freedom of speech and participating in the electoral process. We have a long and proud tradition in this country and in this state of open, honest elections and we want to do all we can to make sure that the Iowa precinct caucuses—which are very important in our nation’s history because this is where the presidential selection process starts—and we want to make sure that they are open and accessible and they’re not disrupted by any groups.”

Refusing to count votes and report accurate vote totals is something that happens in Putin’s Russia or Ahmadinejad’s Iran, not Iowa. We call on both parties to keep the Iowa Caucuses a democratic process where all voices can be fairly heard and respected. We also ask Governor Terry Branstad, Senator Chuck Grassley, Representative Steve King, and Representative Tom Latham to clearly reiterate that the Iowa Caucuses are a fair, open, and honest process where all votes are counted.

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Signing the statement were the [Occupy Iowa Caucus](#) campaign, Occupy Cedar Valley, Occupy Des Moines and Occupy Ames/ISU.

Shutting qualified voters and legitimate opinions out of the caucuses is not just undemocratic, it's bad strategy. The caucuses are already considered to be narrow and unrepresentative by many critics. To further narrow them only emphasizes the problem.

Iowa Democrats appear to recognize that fact. While there are a number of campaigns going to encourage "Uncommitted" voting at the caucuses, so far there is no evidence of an effort to deny or dismiss dissent at Democratic gathering.

Link to original article from [The Nation](#)