

NON-RANKED VOTING BALLOT DESIGN AND COUNTING

Under the 2021 Virtual Conventions Model Rules, a convention elects party unit officers by a majority vote, unless ranked choice voting is used. Voting in the DFL is governed by Article III, Section 4, Subsection E of the State DFL Constitution and Bylaws, as well as certain provisions of the DFL Rule Book. This ballot design and counting procedure accommodate these documents. The tellers are collectively responsible for both the design and counting of all ballots.

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Ballot Design

Electronic ballots can be designed fairly easily using Google Forms or similar programs. This guidance is based on the layout and options in Google Forms. A separate form should be made for each office. An example Google Form is viewable at this link:

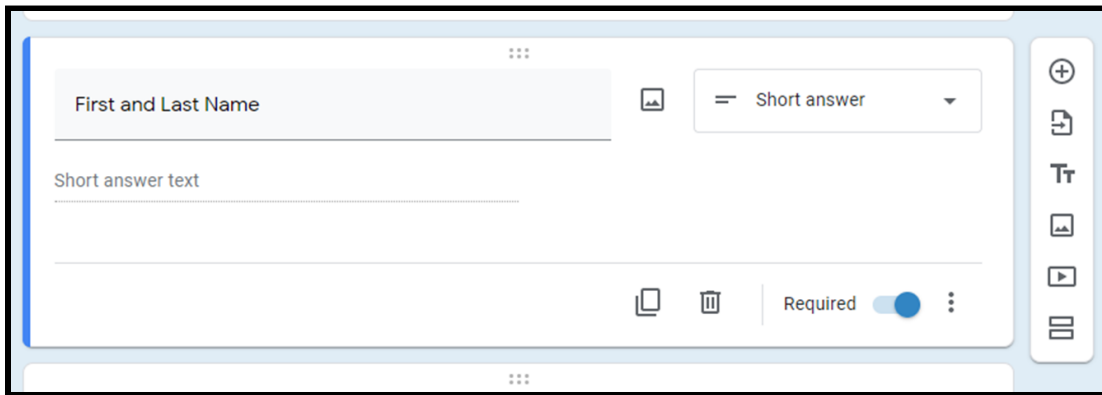
Title and Description

The title should clearly communicate the purpose of the ballot, e.g. “Ballot for [Office].” The form description should provide instructions to delegates for casting their ballot. The following is an example of a sufficient description:

Please use this form to cast your vote for [office]. Voting will close in five minutes. Once balloting is closed, the tellers will begin counting ballots. If on the first ballot one of the candidates receives a simple majority of the votes, then that candidate shall be declared the winner. If no candidate crosses that threshold, then the candidate with the lowest total number of votes shall be dropped from the ballot, and another vote will be taken.

First and Last Name

In Google Forms, the first question on the default form is multiple choice. The format for the first question should be changed to “Short answer,” the question should be titled “First and Last Name,” and it should be marked as “Required.” This question satisfies the DFL requirement that all ballots are not valid unless signed. It also helps prevent duplicate votes.

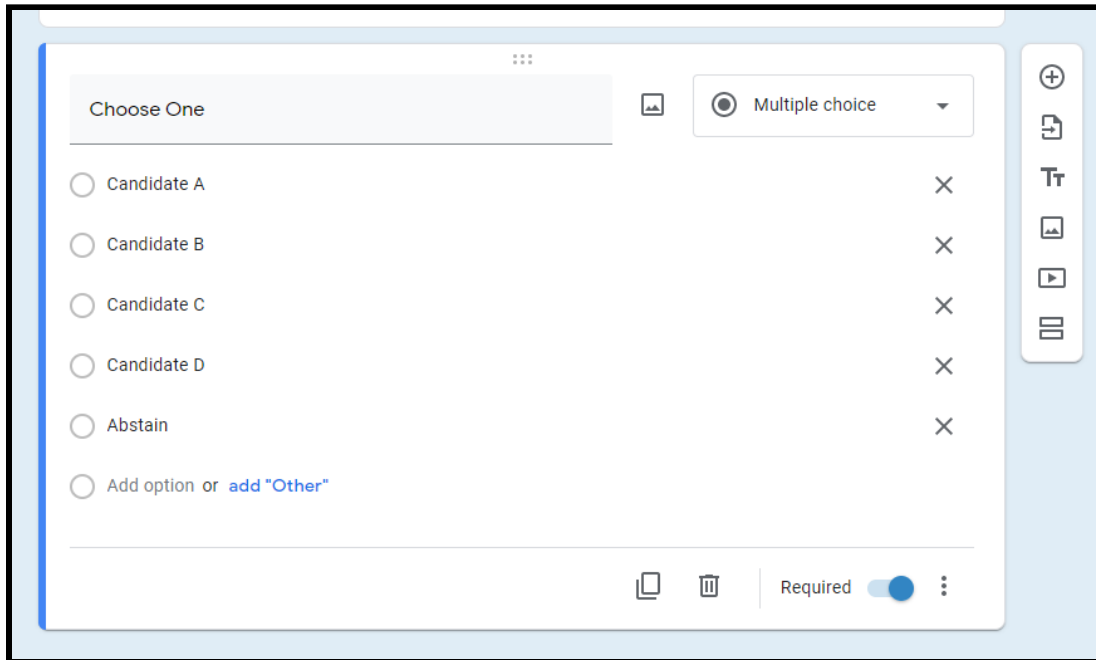


PIN Assignment

If a unit wishes to further tighten security of their ballots, the tellers can issue unique personal identification numbers (PINs) to each delegate and alternate eligible to participate in the convention. PINs can be assigned, for example, using a random number generator like [random.org](https://www.random.org), generating a simple list of integers (non-decimal numbers), and assigning each number to a delegate or alternate in alphabetical order. A new section should be added (click “Add section,” the icon that appears as two horizontal rectangles) to place the form title, description, and identification questions on a separate page from the voting questions. The PIN submitted with each response can be used during counting and verification to remove duplicate and ineligible votes.

Candidate Choice

The next question can be added by clicking on the plus sign at the right of the first question. The type of question should then be changed to “Multiple choice.” The text of the first choice question should be “Choose one” or something similar. The options should list the full names of all candidates as well as “Abstain.” The order of candidate names should be determined impartially (e.g. alphabetical order, the order in which candidates were nominated, or by lot), with abstain listed last, and the order should be the same for all voting questions. The candidate choice question should also be required.



Form Settings

The settings on the form should be adjusted to deactivate the option that provides the link to submit another response after completing the form. This option is found in Google Forms by clicking the gear icon in the upper-right corner, navigating to the “Presentation” tab, and unchecking the “Show link to submit another response” option. Participants should be prevented from viewing other responses. The unit may choose to limit their ability to edit a previous response. Responses should not be limited by requiring participants to sign into Google. Settings should not allow participants to view raw results.

Convention organizers can customize their ballots in appearance by clicking the “Customize Theme” button, which appears as a paint pallet in the upper-right corner of Google Forms. The Google Forms Settings window allows the unit to collect email addresses with submissions, which may be useful for verification and volunteer contact purposes. The designers of the ballot may wish to alter the confirmation message that appears when participants finish entering and submitting their responses. The default message reads, “Your response has been recorded,” which can be changed under the “Presentation” tab in the Settings window.

Settings

General Presentation Quizzes

Collect email addresses

Response receipts ?

Requires sign in:

Limit to 1 response

Respondents can:

Edit after submit

See summary charts and text responses

Cancel Save

Settings

General Presentation Quizzes

Show progress bar

Shuffle question order

Show link to submit another response

Confirmation message:

Your vote has been recorded. You may edit your response or submit another to replace this one until balloting is closed. Only the last response you submit will be counted. For information on the method used to count ranked choice ballots, please refer to the "Ranked Choice Voting Procedures" section of the Official Call.

Cancel Save

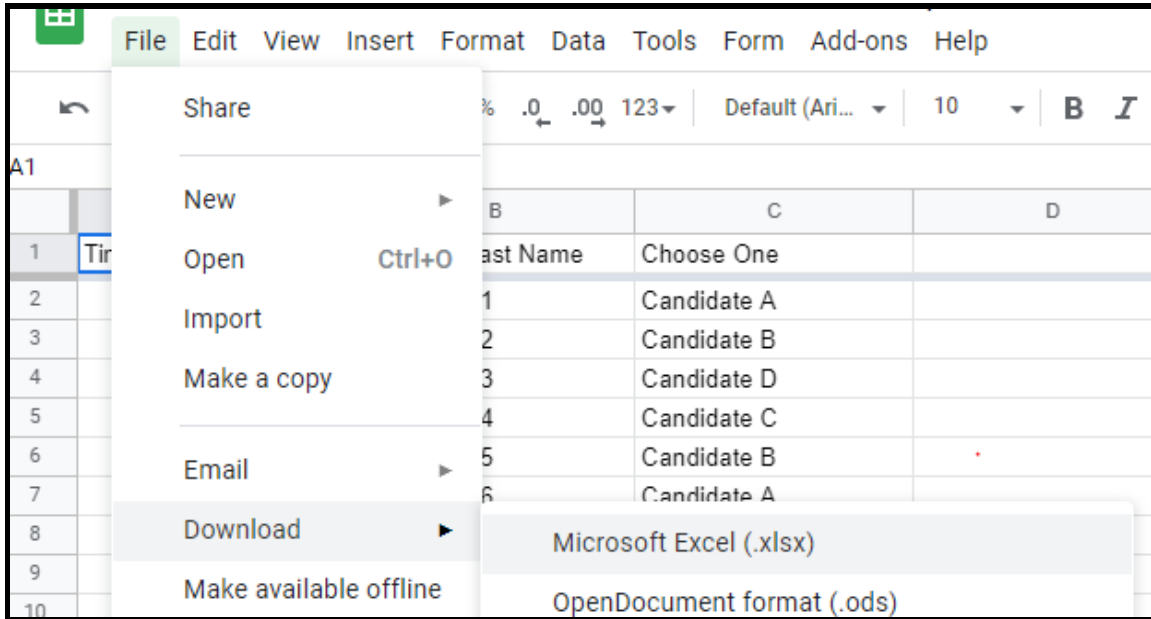
Final Preparation and Distribution

During the convention, tellers should fill in the names of candidates as nominations take place. Once nominations are closed, spelling of names has been verified, and all other formatting and settings have been finalized, the tellers should attempt to test the form using the “Preview” feature, which appears in the shape of an eye. Once the chair opens balloting, tellers may begin distributing these ballots using the “Send” button in the upper-right corner. From there, they may send eligible delegates and upgraded alternates an email with the ballot link and an editable message inviting them to complete the ballot. They may also obtain a link they can copy and paste into the chat for all participants to click on. The method used for distribution of ballots will depend on the security preferences of unit leaders.

Verification of Votes

Once balloting is closed, a teller with collaborator/editor control of the Google Form should close the form to responses. In an in-person convention, two tellers count paper ballots in view of the candidates or their representatives, who do not participate or comment while this occurs. A virtual convention can provide a similar setting by placing the tellers and the candidates or their representatives into a breakout room. Once in the breakout room, a technology assistant should share their screen to display the Google Form.

Results can be obtained by selecting the “Responses” tab and clicking on the Google Sheets icon, which generates a spreadsheet of results in a new tab. The teller should first download a copy of the raw results as a Microsoft Excel or comma-separated values sheet as a backup: File → Download → Microsoft Excel (.xlsx) or Comma-separated values (.csv, current sheet). The first column of the sheet contains the timestamp for each response; the second and subsequent columns contain the answers to each question in their order of appearance on the Google Form.



Once at least two tellers and all candidates/representatives who wish to be present are in the breakout room, the teller should begin the count by reviewing the list of names or PINs in response to the first question. This review should eliminate any duplicate responses by keeping only the latest response given by each participant. If possible, the teller should compare the names of voters against the list of registered delegates and upgraded alternates provided by the Credentials Committee. The teller may wish to retain the responses eliminated through this verification process in a separate sheet in the same Google Sheets file. The teller can click the “Add Sheet” button that appears as a plus sign in the lower-left corner. They can then copy/cut all ineligible and duplicate responses, paste them into this new sheet, and title this new sheet “Spoiled Ballots.” Spoiled ballots have no effect on quorum or the majority vote threshold.

Counting Process

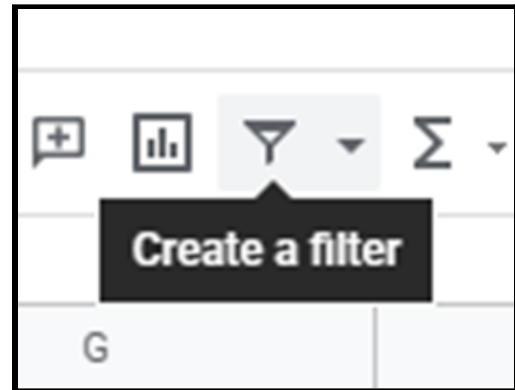
The teller can then begin counting the valid votes. Results are tabulated by first counting all first-choice votes for candidates. If on the first round one of the candidates receives a simple majority of the votes, then that candidate is declared the winner. Under the Model Rules, if no candidate crosses that threshold, then the candidate with the lowest number of votes is dropped from consideration, so long as no fewer than two candidates remain on the ballot (Rule 31.a). Another ballot is then taken with only the remaining candidates. Abstentions are counted towards quorum but are not included in the total number of votes used to determine a majority. If after all the ballots are counted, a candidate has received a simple majority of the votes cast, that candidate shall be declared the winner.

Votes should be counted using a spreadsheet of the results. This guide uses Google Sheets to perform the count for the example set of responses. That spreadsheet can be viewed here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1s8Pd-Z82HC3uQF7UVxe5_ogXIDX-PX3ziDe2PSmFJmY/edit?usp=sharing

Using the summary of results provided within Google Forms may mislead the tellers if delegates chose the “Abstain” option. If that occurs, then the percentages shown for each candidate will not correctly reflect the percentage of votes that candidate earned, as absentions are not votes. Instead, results counted using spreadsheets. A few rows below the responses, create a small table listing each candidate’s name, followed by the total number of votes counted, the number of abstentions, and the total number of ballots cast. Another column can be added to calculate the percentage vote share each candidate earns; this column makes it easy to see whether any candidates have earned a majority of votes. This table should appear as below.

54				Vote Share
55	Round 1	Candidate A	0	%
56		Candidate B	0	%
57		Candidate C	0	%
58		Candidate D	0	%
59		Total Voting	0	100.00%
60		Abstentions	0	
61		Blanks	0	
62		Total Ballots	0	

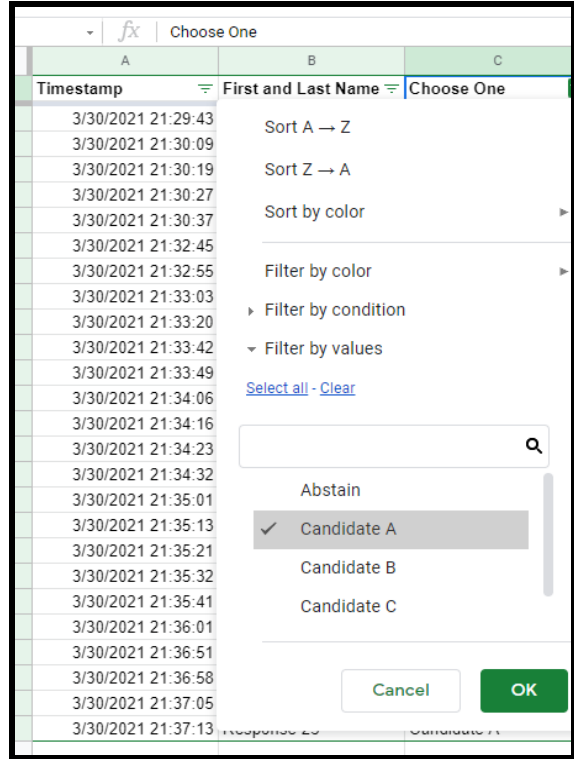
To count totals for each candidate using filters, highlight all results columns and rows, including the top row, and select the option called “Create a filter,” which appears as an icon shaped like a funnel. This function, as with most others discussed in this guidance, is available in Google Sheets, Microsoft Excel, and most other spreadsheet software. Enabling the filter option should allow the teller to click on a drop-down menu in each cell of the top row. This menu allows the teller to sort and order all results in the filter range according to the data in that column.



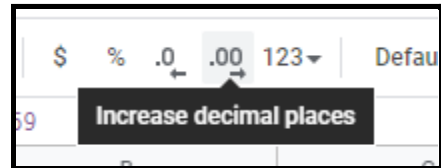
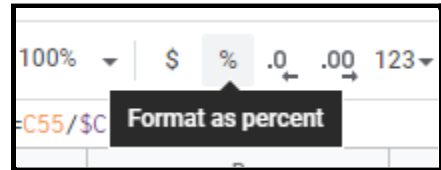
Once the filter is created, click the drop-down at the top of the column containing candidate votes. The “Filter by values” option allows the teller to show or hide rows based on the data in the column, using check marks next to each value that appears in that column. A value that is checked will be visible; one that is unchecked will be hidden. Click the “Clear” option to uncheck all values and check the name of the first candidate on the ballot.

Scroll back to the top and count the number of visible rows. This count can also be obtained by selecting the visible cells in the candidate choice column and noting the “Count” number that appears in the lower-left corner of the window. That count is the number of first-choice votes for the first candidate and should be entered next to that candidate’s name in the count table. The process is repeated for each candidate by unchecking the previous candidate’s name, checking the next name, and counting those rows/cells, and entering those counts into the table. The total of all votes for candidates should be entered in the “Total Voting” row.

The vote share for each candidate can be calculated by dividing the number of votes the candidate earned by the total number of participants voting. These vote shares can be displayed as percentages down to the hundredth of a percent by selecting all cells in the Vote Share column, and clicking the “Format as percent” and “Increase decimal places” buttons, both located in the toolbar and shown below. This calculation can easily show whether any candidate has earned the required threshold of greater than 50% of votes. The Google Sheets filter will also list entries in the column for “Abstain.” These should be counted and noted separately from candidate votes. Abstentions are not votes and are not counted when determining whether a candidate has earned a majority of votes. The total number of ballots cast should be the sum of the total votes and abstentions. This number determines whether a quorum is present. If this number is less than a majority of registered delegates and upgraded alternates, then a quorum is lost, and an election cannot result from the ballot.



If any candidate receives a majority of votes, that candidate is elected. If not, then the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes is eliminated (provided at least two candidates remain on the ballot), and another ballot is taken. Using the example sheet provided above, the count for the first round of votes should appear as below, and Candidate A is the winner.



	Count	Vote Share
Candidate A	14	60.87%
Candidate B	4	17.39%
Candidate C	2	8.70%
Candidate D	3	13.04%
Total Votes	23	100.00%
Abstentions	2	
Total Ballots	25	