

THE RULES AND BYLAWS COMMITTEE MEETING, A PRIMER

So, Jane and I are at the DNC Rules and Bylaws Committee meeting this morning, expecting to see a day of high tension and cranky moods. While we're waiting to begin, I thought I'd explain what's going on—and what to expect, both today and as we go forward.

As you no doubt know, MI had a clusterfuck (that is, a primary which only half the candidates attended) and FL had a primary in which neither candidate won. From the beginning, the stated rules said that neither state's delegation would be seated. At the same time, the expectation has been that MI's delegation would be seated, but in a way that it couldn't affect the election.

So now we're at the point where the party has to decide how to seat both delegations. But the problem is that the decision, arguably, could have an effect on the election—precisely what wasn't supposed to happen.

The Two Plans

Today, a muckety muck from FL (Jon Ausman) and a muckety muck from MI (Mark Brewer) will present their proposal for how the delegations should be seated.

Ausman will argue the FL elected delegates should all be seated, but with half a vote each. He will argue that all the super-delegates should be seated with a full vote. There's a technical reason for this seemingly arrogant stance: the DNC rules say that charter members shall (must) be seated, though Ausman expands the reading of the rules so as to argue that ALL the supers—and not just the DNC member supers—should be seated, where as the DNC rules say that only the DNC member supers, and not the elected official supers, shall be seated. In any

case, Ausman's proposal essentially boils down to halving the delegation.

Brewer will argue that MI elected delegation should consist of 69 Hillary supporters and 59 Obama supporters (currently, 55 Hillary supporters and 36 "uncommitted" supporters, most of whom are Obama supporters, have been selected). The 69-59 number is the halfway point between seating the delegates based on the results of the January 15 Clusterfuck and seating the delegates in a 50-50 split. But it also is just about what a number of other solutions would work out to be. In addition to the 69-59 split, he would seat all the super-delegates. The challenge for Brewer, though, is that he will propose seating a full-strength delegation, not a halved delegation like Ausman is proposing.

What Will Happen

The day will start with Ausman presenting FL's challenge then Brewer will present MI's challenge. Each candidate and state also get to make a presentation in response to the challenge.

That'll take us to lunch.

Then, the RBC members will spend the afternoon arguing about what to do.

I suspect the committee will decide to seat a half-strength delegation from both states. I think it likely that the elected super-delegates will receive only a half vote, while the DNC super-delegates will get a full vote (because of the way the rules read). The FL delegation will be seated based on the outcome of their primary. As to the MI delegation? Your guess is as good as mine. On Wednesday, when I first saw the DNC analysis of the situation, I thought they might base it on the Clusterfuck results as well, with the added joy that we'd need to re-do our District Conventions so Obama could have some say on who got elected. But there are rumors that there will be some other resolution—perhaps closer to 50-50.

What Will Happen Going Forward

Understand, though, that this is really just a five-day solution.

On Tuesday, the final primaries will be held. At that point, Obama will have a clear lead in the elected delegates. On Wednesday, enough super-delegates will endorse Obama to allow him to reach whatever new "win" number comes out of today (they have to add the delegates that they decide to seat into the total). On Thursday or Friday, Hillary will likely concede. Once that happens, Obama will then graciously decide to seat both delegations at full strength.

So really, the important outcomes of today will simply be determining what the "win" number will be after Tuesday. And getting us into a position to close this thing out, hopefully by the end of next week.