PRECINCTS, COUNTIES, & LEG. DISTRICTS
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All Idaho political parties are defined and regulated under Title 34 of the Idaho Code. According to those rules all parties start at the neighborhood precinct level.

County commissioners must define, or redefine, at least two precincts, within their counties, by the 15th of January preceding a general election. Each precinct is defined by having a polling place and boundaries that are wholly within the county, and within one legislative district. Precincts are normalized by the commissioners for practicality of population, distance, and facilities. Each party can elect a Precinct Committee Person from each precinct during the primary held prior to a general election.

Since the Precinct Committee Person (or Precinct Captain) is the elected official closest to the voters on a neighborhood basis, they are used as the basis from which to re-organize the political party. The intent, apparently, was to force the re-building of each party from the bottom to the very top every two years just before a general election in order to most accurately reflect the current mood of the people; and to acknowledge and facilitate the creation of new alliances, networks, and movements in the party structure. Revolution over stability or seniority was apparently the ideal.

Idaho Code requires the precinct captains to gather twice within 11 days after the primary election. They meet once to re-organize a county central committee and again to re-organize another central committee for their legislative district. Elected precinct captains are the only voting members of both the county central committee and the legislative district central committee during these re-organizations.

The precinct captains elect their central committee officers. Central committee chairs and county state committeemen and state committeewomen represent their committees in re-organizing and electing officers at the state central committee level. The precinct captain is the core foundation for organizing our whole state party every two years.

Central committees, no matter which constituency, have only two official functions: 1) provide an organizational base and resource for that party's candidates running at that level. And 2), the only action actually required, and authorized, in the code is to nominate candidates to the Governor in the event of a resignation, death, or other vacancy in an elected office within their sphere of responsibility. The county committee also has an additional responsibility, that of being the local representative of the party. Democrats are, largely, what the county party actually does and says locally.

But, why two separate central committees at the local level? Prior to the mid 1960s there were no Legislative Districts in Idaho politics. At that time most states with bicameral legislatures organized themselves similar to the national model. We elected one senator and two representatives on a County by County basis to the legislature.

This resulted in an Idaho senator from Camus County representing 951 people while another from Ada County represented 93,400, in the 1960;s. Disproportionate ratios like this in Idaho and other states lead to the Supreme Court "One-Man-One-Vote" decision (Reynolds v. Sims) requiring states to change their legislative political districting to ensure equal representation. In the summer of 1966 a special session of the Idaho Legislature was called to solve this Constitutional crisis.

They needed a political 'home' for the nine county level elected candidates. The county offices were only concerned with equal representation within their county, so that structure was left unchanged. And that is still the basis for the most dominant central committees in the state. However, another structure was needed for the candidates who ran for the state legislature's Senators and Representatives, but one that would conform to the "One-Man-One-Vote" rule.

The solution they came up with was to add Legislative Districts, which are created separate from county boundaries for the sole purpose of electing state legislators (one senator and two representatives) from each district. Legislative districts are re-apportioned (re-districted) every ten years by special commission established by the State Legislature to maintain an equal balance within the changing populations. This results in some counties, like Bonneville County, hosting multiple legislative districts. And other legislative districts like Legislative Districts 8, 28. and 31 encompassing several counties. It also makes for some strange combinations and alliances. Take a look at LD 35 which connects Teton county, Swan Valley/Palisades Lake portions of Bonneville County together, while adding Ammon to Caribou and Bear Lake Counties.

In LD 33 we're lucky, we could walk the district while LD 35 can barely even drive their district without leaving their district, or maybe the state, to get to the other component counties. That would be bad enough to organize if they were in North Dakota where everything is as flat as a billiard table. But here we live in a land of drainages, valleys separated by mountain ridges where you go around – not over or through. This increases the mileage and the organizational difficulties like an mathematical exponent. Preston and Malad are only some 30 some miles apart, but you'll drive an hour to an hour and half to get from one to another.

The level of robustness of organization of the County Central Committees and the Legislative District Central Committees depends upon the perceived needs. In LD 33 we maintain a modest organization, tending to put our energies mainly into the county organization. But for those LDs like 28 or 35, they may find they have need to maintain a more robust committee and treasury at their LD level in addition to those county committees. And in Ada county the need is also reversed, because they host nearly a dozen legislative districts. State code authorizes each central committee organization to determine it's needs and to configure itself appropriately.

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