



Democratic Party of Hawai'i Procedure for Filling Midterm Vacancies

Approved by the State Central Committee on January 10, 2026

1. **Purpose:** To implement the provisions of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i Constitution, Article VIII, Section 10, Process to Identify Candidates to Fill Midterm Vacancies.

2. **Governing References**
 - a. Hawaii State Constitution Art. 3, Sec. 5, Hawaii Rev. Stat., §17-3, and Hawaii Rev. Stat. § 17-4, If there is a vacancy in the Hawaii State Legislature, the governor is responsible for appointing a replacement. For all vacancies, the governor must appoint a replacement within 60 days after the vacancy happens. The candidate is selected from a list of three prospective candidates submitted by the political party that last held the vacant seat. The party has thirty days after the vacancy to submit a list of prospective candidates. If the person leaving the seat is an independent (no party affiliation), the governor must select a resident from the vacant district that is not a member of any political party. Note: The inauguration of the Governor takes place on the first Monday in December.

 - b. DPH Constitution, Article VIII, Section 10, Process to Identify Candidates to Fill Midterm Vacancies which states:

“When any vacancy occurs in the United States Senate, State Senate or State House that is held by a Democrat, the following process shall be followed to identify candidates who may be recommended to the Governor to fill the vacant office:

 - (1) The District Council shall select candidates if the vacancy is for an office representing a State Representative District.
 - (2) The respective officers of the Precinct Clubs and District Councils affected shall select the candidates if the vacancy is for an office representing a State Senate District.

(3) The State Central Committee shall select the candidates if the vacancy is for an office representing the entire State.”

- c. Democratic Party of Hawai‘i Bylaws, Article IX, Section 5. Process to Identify Candidates to Fill Midterm Vacancies which states:

“5A. For a State House or State Senate vacancy, the Party Chairperson shall notify the appropriate County Chair of the announced vacancy, who in turn shall notify the appropriate selection body as identified in Section 10(1) and 10(2) of the Constitution of the Democratic Party of Hawaii. The selection body shall make a call for candidates who are members in “good standing.” A list of at least three (3) names shall be provided to the County Chair to transmit to the Party Chairperson within twenty-one (21) calendar days. The Party Chairperson shall transmit the list of names to the Governor’s Office within three (3) business days of receipt of names.

A member in “good standing” means that the candidate shall have been a member of the Party for a minimum of six (6) months prior to either the date on which the event occurs that creates a vacancy during the term of the office or the public announcement of the office holder of his/her intent to vacate the office during the term, whichever is appropriate and that the candidate is not currently under reprimand pursuant to Article I of the Constitution of the Democratic Party of Hawaii. No candidate shall be recommended who does not meet all the qualifications for office set by law for candidates who file to run in an election for the vacant office.

5B. The selection process for a State House or State Senate vacancy shall be conducted in a place accessible to District Party members. Prospective candidates are to provide to the County Chair for dissemination to the appropriate selection body (as defined in Section 10(1) and 10(2) of the Constitution of the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i a written application including the following:

- (1) Credentials and reasons for consideration for appointment to the position;
- (2) Evidence of party participation;
- (3) Verified signatures of at least five (5) Party members within the District where the vacancy has occurred.

5C. If for any reason, the body most immediately affected by the vacancy is unable to fill the vacancy within the stated timeframe, the County Chairperson

shall recommend the names for an office within the County or the Party Chairperson shall recommend the names for a statewide office.”

- d. DPH Constitution, Article III, District Council, Section 1, Organization and Definition which states:

“There shall be a District Council in each Representative District which shall consist of all the District Chairperson, District Vice-chairperson, District Secretary, District Treasurer, and eleven (11) at-large Directors, with at least every precinct having the opportunity for representation on the District Council. State Central Committee Senate Representative that resides in the Representative District shall be a non-voting, ex-officio member of the District Council and not count towards quorum for District Council meeting.

1B. Definition: The District Council shall be the basic unit of the Party organization. There shall be one District Council in each Representative District, as defined by law.”

- 3. The above provisions of the Democratic Party of Hawai‘i Constitution and Bylaws make clear the process for filling midterm vacancies, except to assure clarity and uniformity, the following procedures and interpretation of the DPH Constitution are provided:
 - a. Regarding the application of the DPH Constitution, Article VIII, Section 10(2) to precincts, this provision will only apply when the County Committee designates precincts. In that situation, only the officers of those precincts as specified by the County, along with the full District Council members, who reside in the Senate District will constitute the body to identify and recommend the three candidates to the Governor through the Party Chairperson.
 - b. Regarding the application of the DPH Constitution, Article VIII, Section 10(2) as related to District Councils, the voting body for purposes of filling midterm vacancies are the District Council members who are residents of that Senate District. The District Council consists of District Chairperson, District Vice-chairperson, District Secretary, District Treasurer, eleven (11) at-large Directors, two additional vice-chairs and one additional secretary.
 - c. The Hawaii Revised State Statute §17-3 and §17-4 requires a "list of three prospective appointees" NOT a minimum of 3 names as stated in our Constitution. Thus, if the list submitted to the State Party Chair has MORE than three names then

it will be at the discretion of the State Party Chair to determine which three names are transmitted to the Governor.

d. For a State House Seat the responsibility for the “call for candidates” is the Chair of the District Council. The Chair shall use the Party’s e-mail system, and electronic, print media, radio, or TV for the “call for candidates.” Further, the responsibility for setting a meeting date, procedures for conducting the meeting and transmitting the names to the State Party Chair are the responsibility of the Chair of the District Council. The meeting must meet the requirements set in the Party’s “Calling a Party Meeting” Policy. The more transparent, open, democratic, and objective the process the more engaged members will feel.

e. For a State Senate Seat, the following requirements shall be followed:

(1) The respective Chairs of the District Councils or the County Chair shall send out a “call for Candidates” via the Party’s email system and through any other methods jointly agreed upon (i.e. social media, print media, radio or TV). The Chairs of the District Councils would then work together during the vetting process as well.

(2) The respective Chairs of the District Councils shall meet to determine a date, procedures for conducting the meeting and transmitting the names to the State Party Chair. The more transparent, open, democratic and objective the process the more engaged the members will be able to feel from all the respective precincts and districts.

(3) The Chairs of the District Councils shall hold a single meeting with all of the District Councils and respective Precinct Officers, where applicable, in attendance rather than separate meetings. This provides the opportunity for all members to hear the debate and discussion on all candidates put forth for consideration. Candidates would only need to attend one meeting if the process calls for the prospective candidates to speak to the decision-makers.

(4) If a Chair of the District Council resides in a precinct outside of the Senate District boundary said Chair of the District Council’s responsibilities are retained though they DO NOT VOTE. ONLY A

MEMBER who lives in a precinct in which that precinct is within the Senate District can participate and vote in the process of filling the Senate vacancy.

- f. For any vacancy, the process used to narrow the list of candidates to three (3) shall be done by a roll call voice vote, where every member eligible to vote is given three votes to be used when their name is called. Per Party rules, no secret ballots are allowed. Each voter can vote for 1, 2, 3, or none of the candidates, provided that each vote is for a different candidate. Minutes shall be kept by the acting secretary, to be submitted with the three (3) candidate names to the Party Chair.
 - g. ALL selection bodies shall provide each candidate with the Party “Candidate Statement Form” prior to the meeting of the selection body. This form can be used as a tool to determine the commitment an individual candidate has to the Party Platform and resolutions.
 - h. The DPH secretary will check the eligibility of candidates prior to their being considered by the District Council(s).
 - i. No individual seeking appointment to fill a midterm vacancy may preside over, chair, or otherwise direct the proceedings of any District, County, or State body responsible for selecting nominees.
 - j. For a US Senate vacancy the responsibility for the “call for candidates” is the Chair of the Party. The Chair shall use the Party’s e-mail system and social media platforms, and should use print media, radio, or TV for the “call for candidates.” Further, the responsibility for setting a meeting date, procedures for conducting the meeting and transmitting the names to the Governor is the State Party Chair. The meeting must meet the requirements set in the Party’s “Calling a Party Meeting” Policy. The more transparent, open, democratic, and objective the process the more engaged members will feel.
 - (1) Only voting members of the State Central Committee that are present at the meeting called for the filling of this vacancy shall be allowed to vote.
4. These procedures supersede the DPH Procedures for Filling Legislative Midterm Vacancies that was approved by the SCC at the January 2023 meeting.