

The 2024 Democratic National Convention Is Here. What to Expect

August 19, 2024 by Dan McCue



Chicago. Aug. 19, 2024 (Photo by Dan McCue)

CHICAGO — It seemed like it was never going to arrive.

After weeks of twists and turns that no one could have anticipated when Iowa Caucus goers kicked off the 2024 race for the White House on a bitterly cold night in January, the campaign “pre-season” is officially coming to an end in this midwestern city on the shore of Lake Michigan.

From here on out, the march toward Election Day will be relentless. As reporters have been saying to each other for weeks, “Get ready to buckle up and keep plenty of coffee handy.”

Though she’s already prevailed in a virtual vote by the delegates, when Vice President Kamala Harris appears on stage at the Democratic National Convention this week, she will still be making history — standing before all of America for the first time, in prime time, as the first Black woman and first Asian American to head a major party ticket.

And to think, as recently as July 20, she likely had no idea this day was coming.

It was the following day, a Sunday, that President Joe Biden dropped out of the race, and less than 20 minutes later, endorsed Harris to succeed him.

Since then, the vice president’s life has been a whirlwind. As one party leader after another lined up behind her, she began a relentless schedule of appearances, routinely drawing 14,000 or 15,000 reenergized Democratic voters at each stop.

Even more remarkably, she’s almost effortlessly raised over \$300 million while also managing to fit in a barnstorming tour of multiple battleground states with her newly minted running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz.

As of this morning, all eyes are on Chicago where as many as 50,000 people — including party regulars, advocates of all

stripes, reporters, police and, yes, protestors — are expected to gather for **Democratic National Convention**.

The big event runs from Monday, Aug. 19 through Thursday, Aug. 22.

For those keeping count, this is the 26th political convention the city of Chicago has hosted since 1860, when the Republican party nominated Abraham Lincoln for president.

While there's no suspense at the top of the ticket — Harris's nomination was confirmed on Aug. 5 in order to satisfy the ballot deadlines of several states — Democratic delegates still have a lot left to do and a jam-packed schedule to navigate.

Their main task will be to adopt a party platform that stakes out a clear vision for the future, enabling Harris to be her own woman, while still embracing the successes of the Biden-Harris administration.

Then of course, there's the role they will play in what will essentially be a four-day, made for television infomercial intended to whip up and sustain support for the Harris-Walz ticket.

Convention Chair Minyon Moore said last week that Democratic delegates “will celebrate this historic ticket with a ceremonial roll call and tell the story of Vice President Harris, Governor Walz, and the Democratic Party as we prepare to defeat Donald Trump once again.”

Harris and Walz are both scheduled to deliver speeches. The vice presidential candidate will address the crowd on Aug. 21, and the presidential candidate will close out the event on Thursday.

Personality politics will be dominant. Much will likely be made of Harris being the daughter of Jamaican and Indian immigrants, especially given how poorly Republicans have done in trying to define her persona in the early going.

With former President Donald Trump, the Republican nominee, wrongly claiming that Harris only recently started identifying herself as black, and other GOP officials denigrating her as a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion hire, many arriving in Chicago believe this is a rich vein to tap for shoring up support among Blacks and other Americans of color.

Of course, this being politics, no messaging is set in stone. On Thursday, a number of Republican lawmakers participated in a virtual call in which they discussed new avenues to pursue “to define Harris.”

Among the reported suggestions — that she’s a “San Francisco radical” and that she’s been the Biden administration’s so-called “open border czar.”

In regard to the latter, expect to hear a lot about how the administration never appointed a “border czar” of any kind, and that Harris’s task, vis-a-vis the border, was to lead diplomatic efforts to reduce poverty, violence and corruption in Central America’s Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, and to better engage with Mexico on the issue.

One can also expect to hear a lot this week about abortion, an issue that has galvanized women voters since the moment the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* with its 2022 decision in the case *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*.

Anger over that decision was considered the main driver behind Democrats' surprisingly strong performance in the 2022 midterm elections. The hope now among Democrats is that it will prove equally persuasive to women voters this presidential year.

Monday night is slated to be Biden night at the United Center. No doubt his prime time speech will be chock full of reminders of his signature accomplishments, like the Inflation Reduction Act, the CHIPS bill, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, and last week's announcement of the completion of Medicare's first-round of negotiations of prescription drug prices.

The president is also expected to speak at length about his belief that Democracy is at stake in this year's election, and that reelecting Trump could well end the American experiment as we know it.

Though some expected that rhetoric to be chilled by Trump surviving an assassination attempt ahead of the Republican National Convention last month, so far, neither Biden nor Harris appears ready to cede that issue.

The full rundown for the televised portion of the convention, with each night centered on a particular theme, is as follows:

Monday, Aug. 19: For the People — The thrust will be on saluting Biden as someone who put the American people's interest above his own. The night, as already mentioned, will focus, in the words of the Democratic National Committee "on the results Biden delivered for people, with Harris by his side."

Tuesday, Aug, 20: A Bold Vision for America's Future — Tuesday will be the night the Democrats begin drawing a sharp contrast between Harris's vision for the future of America and that of Trump.

Wednesday, Aug. 21: A Fight for Our Freedoms — The night will focus on Harris and Walz as champions of America’s working families and staunch defenders of the fundamental freedoms the nation was founded upon.

Thursday, Aug. 22: For Our Future — The main message: America can’t afford to put Trump back in the White House — “because a second Trump term would be even more dangerous and more extreme than the first one,” the DNC says. The emphasis will also be on showcasing Harris and Walz as the only candidates in the race ready and able to lead the nation into a brighter, more hopeful era.

Of course, with so much attention focused on Chicago, there will also be scores of celebrities on hand, including, reportedly Bradley Whitford, John Legend, Octavia Spencer, Jon Stewart, Joan Jett and the Blackhearts, Anthony Anderson, Lil’ John, Jon Cryer, Uzo Aduba, Jimmy Eats World, Chad Michael, Uma Thurman and the stars of “RuPaul’s Drag Race,” among others.

In addition to the nightly programming, the Democratic National Committee has also announced that it will be hosting a slate of training sessions, panels, and other programming called “DemPalooza” in Chicago’s McCormick Place every day of the convention.

Programming for DemPalooza will be led by the DNC, Harris for President, and other partner organizations on a broad range of topics and in various formats, from training sessions on how to use organizing tools like the Reach app and issues-focused messaging panels, to polling briefings and skills building workshops.

“These are part of the DNC and Harris-Walz campaign’s strategic efforts to organize and reach voters in an evolving

media environment, and give Democrats the opportunity to take their learnings back to the communities who will decide this election,” the party said in a press release.

DemPalooza will also feature a vendor and allied partner expo, showcasing the neighborhoods of Chicago, vendor booths, and an interactive space for participants to make friendship bracelets, get a ‘Kamala Harris’ manicure, listen to a podcast recording, or watch a performance from a local artist.

McCormick Place will also host 33 caucus and council meetings over the course of the convention that will be led by caucus and council chairs from across the country.

Speakers include Massachusetts Sen. Ed Markey, New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, Maryland Gov. Wes Moore, Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey, New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham, Rep. Maxwell Frost, Rep. Morgan McGarvey, Tucson, Arizona Mayor Regina Romero, Tennessee State Rep. Justin Pearson, Maryland Democratic Senate Candidate Angela Alsobrooks, Reproductive Freedom for All President Mini Timmaraju, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, United Farm Workers President Teresa Romero, and more.

Another thing to watch will be the scale and impact of protests.

Chicago is home to one of the country’s largest Palestinian American communities in the United States, and in the wake of college protests over the unconditional U.S. support for the war in Gaza last spring, marches are expected to be large and vocal.

Despite this, most agree that nothing that plays out on the streets of the Windy City this week will approach the mayhem that accompanied the Democratic National Convention in 1968,

when police unleashed by Mayor Richard Daley clashed with protesters over the Vietnam war.

The Coalition to March on the DNC, a coalition of activist groups, has planned marches on Aug. 19 and 22.

“Biden’s entire administration, together with high ranking members of the Democratic Party from all over the country, has spent the last ten months wholeheartedly supporting the genocide in Gaza with our tax dollars,” the coalition said on its website.

Live Stream on Social Media and Digital Platforms

The Democratic National Convention will be broadcasting Monday Aug. 19 through Thursday Aug. 22 from 6:30 p.m. to 11 p.m. ET (5:30 pm CT) each evening.

The full list of platforms is as follows:

Computer + Tablet + Mobile Device

- [DemConvention.com/watch](https://demconvention.com/watch).
- YouTube.com/demconvention.
- x.com/demconvention.
- tiktok.com/@demconvention.
- instagram.com/demconvention.
- Facebook.com/demconvention.
- Twitch.tv/demconvention.
- Amazon Prime Video.

TV Device Apps (search for “Democratic National Convention” or “2024 DNC”)

- AppleTV
- RokuTV
- FireTV

TV Providers

- Comcast Xfinity X1
- Comcast Xfinity Flex
- DIRECTV via Satellite
- DIRECTV satellite-free and DIRECTV STREAM
- U-verse TV

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