

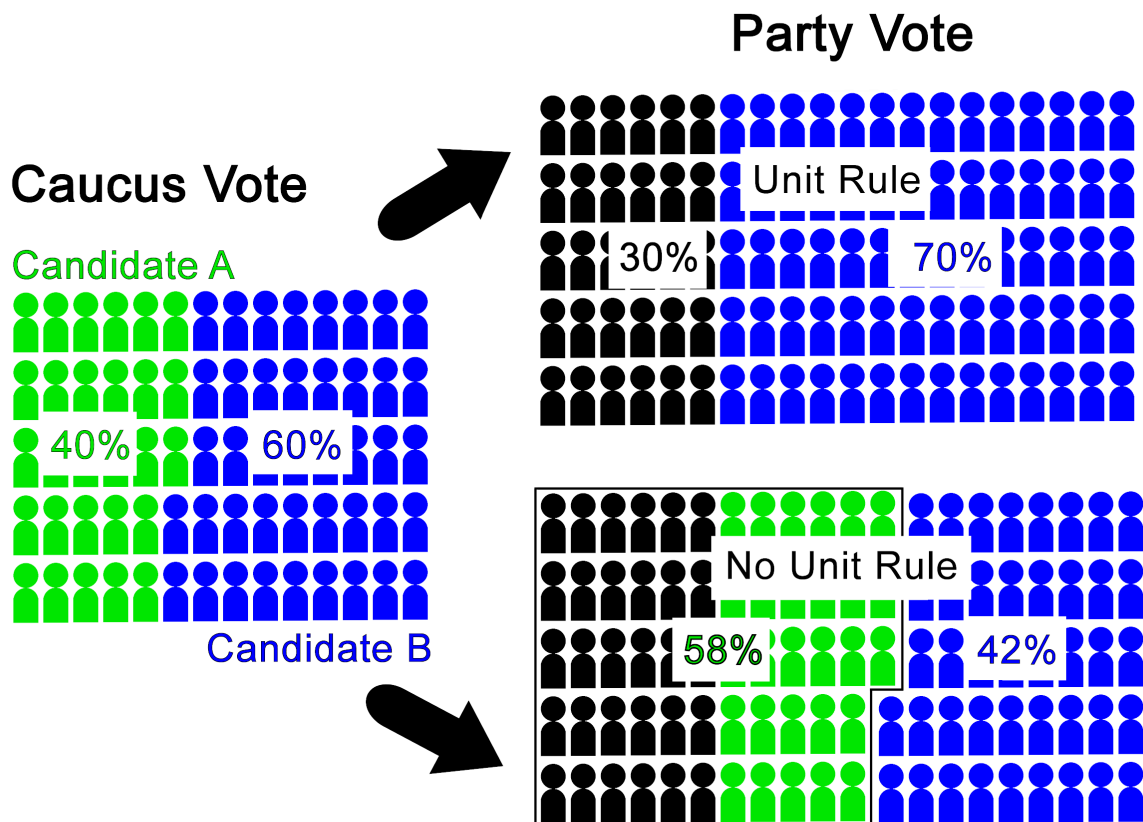
The Unit Rule Explained

Every organization under the umbrella of the Michigan Democratic Party is called a “unit”.

[MDP Rule 2.1](#) reads in full,

The Michigan Democratic Party (MDP) shall consist of Precinct, County, District and Statewide organizations established by these rules (hereinafter referred to as units).

The unit rule is used by some caucuses **before** a party vote. The majority of the caucus **forces the minority** to vote **against their judgment** in the party vote. Here’s a diagram showing the caucus vote and then the party vote with and without the unit rule.



The caucus voted 40% for candidate A and 60% for candidate B. Under the unit rule, the 40% **must** vote for candidate B when the whole party votes. Without the unit rules, the 40% are free to vote according to their judgement for their preferred candidate.

The punishment for disobedience varies, it could be censure, or expulsion from the unit, or something else. But as Tim Hughes, Chair of the Appeals Committee put it:

“Whether it’s the labor caucus, the progressive caucus, the education caucus, they **frequently** have votes where they say if you want to be part of this caucus, then you’re **bound** by the outcome of the caucus ... I don’t think it’s the role of the Party to tell the caucuses how to run their votes” (emphasis added).

According to the Chair of the Appeals Committee, to remain a member of the labor caucus or the education caucus, you are “bound” **by the decision of the majority**. I haven’t seen the caucus bylaws for the labor caucus or education caucus. I’ve heard that they aren’t officially caucuses of the MDP, they don’t have a charter or bylaws, but I haven’t been able to confirm. I’ve confirmed with the progressive caucus that they never do this. It’s banned in their bylaws exactly as it’s banned in the MDP bylaws.

[MDP Rule 2.18](#) reads in full:

No rule shall be adopted by any MDP unit that would require any person to cast a vote or be recorded as voting contrary to that person’s judgment. The Unit Rule (the practice of a unit reporting a unanimous vote when the vote within that unit was not unanimous) shall be prohibited in all units.

The unit rule was used by Party bosses to keep people in line from around 1830 until it was banned at all levels of the Party, from the DNC down, after the debacle of the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago. Except in the Michigan Democratic Party, where the Chair of the Appeals Committee - the Committee charged with enforcing the rules - knows it’s used “frequently,” but doesn’t think it’s the party’s business to enforce our own rules.