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Introduction

This document was created to guide LPA Election Committees on how to conduct an election. However, the fundamental requirements of an election are always dictated by the current LPA Bylaws and LPA Policy Manual. This document should be considered as an addition to these two documents, and describes how to implement mail-in ballot voting for national officers, approval of bylaw amendments, and selection of the site for a national conference. Any given election may include only one of these votes, or any combination of the three, as called for by the LPA Bylaws and the Board of Directors. Always consult the latest version of the Bylaws and Policy Manual before embarking on an election.

This document may also serve as a guide for conducting elections for District or Chapter officers by mail-in balloting.

Accepting Candidacies for National Officers

The requirements for election of national officers are defined in the Bylaws. Beginning in 2017, approximately one-third of the officers are elected each year for three-year terms, so there is now a national election every year, using mail-in ballots. Candidates must make

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their intent of running for a national office known to the President or Election Committee 120 days prior to a national election. This requirement is currently interpreted to mean 120 days before the beginning of a National Conference, and a National Conference is currently defined to begin at the time of the first General Assembly of the membership, or Monday morning the week of the Conference, if no Assembly has been scheduled.

Soliciting Candidacy Statements

After the 120 day deadline before the National Conference has passed, the Election Committee requests statements from each announced candidate regarding their reasons for running for office and their plans for the LPA, to be published with the election ballot. The Committee should set a word count limit on these statements, to be applied to all candidates equally. This limit has typically been set at 750 words, but may be changed at the Committee's discretion, as required by factors like printing costs as evaluated for that year. The Committee should review the statements, and if there are questions about the appropriateness of content, they should be brought to the Board of Directors for resolution.

The Committee also requests a photo of each candidate, for inclusion with their candidacy statement. The photo should be a head shot, submitted in whatever electronic data format the Committee requires for the ballot preparation, or it can be mailed to the Committee for scanning if necessary.

Accepting Proposals for Amendments to the Bylaws

The requirements for amending the Bylaws are defined in the Bylaws, and mail-in ballots are to be used. The Election Committee must consult the latest version of the Bylaws before embarking on an election.

A resolution for amendment shall have been submitted to the Board of Directors 120 days prior to the National Conference. This requirement is currently interpreted to mean 120 days before the beginning of a National Conference, and a National Conference is currently defined to begin at the time of the first General Assembly of the membership, or Monday morning the week of the Conference, if no Assembly has been scheduled.

The format for submission of Bylaw amendments should be as follows:

Proposed changes should be marked in legislative format, with a ~~strike through~~ showing text that is proposed for deletion and underlining showing text that is proposed for addition. [Existing text unchanged] should mark a section where no text change is being proposed.

Example of a Bylaw amendment proposal:

#1 – ARTICLE XXXX:

The text of the Bylaw to be amended, including the ~~sections to be deleted~~ and the sections to be added.

PROPOSED BY:

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Member name – Office held and/or District

Member name – Office held and/or District

REASON FOR PROPOSED CHANGE:

Text provided by the proposing members, explaining the reason for the proposal.

Soliciting Statements Supporting and Opposing Amendments to the Bylaws

After the 120 day deadline before the National Conference has passed, the Election Committee should solicit supporting and opposing statements from the membership regarding the proposed Bylaw amendment(s), to be published with the election ballot. The Committee should set a word count limit on these statements, to be applied to all statements equally. This limit typically is set at 250 words, and two supporting and two opposing statements are allowed for each amendment, but this limit may be set at the Committee's discretion, as required by factors like printing costs as evaluated for that year.

To facilitate this process, the Election Committee should combine all of the amendments into one document, and place them in order according to the Articles of the Bylaws that they would act upon, to make it easier for a reader to consider each proposal while working their way through the Bylaws. This document should be forwarded by e-mail to all members of the Board of Directors, with instructions that they forward them on to any members that may be interested in submitting statements regarding the amendments. The accompanying note should invite legal members of the LPA to submit their statements to the Election Committee prior to a date set to allow time for review and inclusion in the ballot document. This deadline should be about 90 days before the National Conference, consistent with the statements for candidacy of national officers, in order to allow both sets of materials to be prepared for the ballot document.

If possible, this invitation and the proposed amendments document should also be posted on the LPA website, for the awareness of all of the members. The proposed amendments also should be included in an issue of LPA Today, if one is to be published in a timeframe that would allow members to receive it before the balloting cut-off dates.

Submitted statements should be of the form:

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT:

Text, not to exceed the stated limit.

PROPOSED BY:

Member name – Office held and/or District

Member name – Office held and/or District

STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION:

Text, not to exceed the stated limit.

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PROPOSED BY:

Member name – Office held and/or District

Member name – Office held and/or District

If more than the allowed number of statements are received for an amendment, the Election Committee should append all of them into one document, send that document to all of those who contributed to the submission, and request them to work together to create a statement or statements which conform to the Committee's stated requirements.

The Committee is not responsible for ensuring that a balanced number of statements are received for each amendment. The Committee must simply publish those statements that are received by the deadline and conform to the stated requirements.

The Committee may decide at their discretion whether to redistribute statements as they are received, to invite rebuttal statements from others. This may be a complex and contentious process, which the Committee may choose to avoid if there is a limited time before preparation of the final ballot.

The Committee should review the statements received, to ensure that they are limited only to relevant discussion of the amendment they address, and not to other matters of the LPA election or policy. If there are questions about the appropriateness of content, they should be brought to the Board of Directors for resolution. The Committee should not allow the statements to be altered by any party after the submission cutoff date, except to remedy any issues regarding the appropriateness of content.

Accepting Bids for a National Conference Site

The LPA Bylaws and Policy Manual allow for competing bids to be submitted for a national conference site. This has not occurred in a number of years, but if it does, the final choice will be determined through a popular vote of the membership conducted by mail-in ballot. No timeline for the balloting process is defined, so a mail-in ballot may be called for at any time by the Board of Directors, independent of any timing relative to the next National Conference.

Soliciting Conference Site Descriptions

When the Board of Directors calls for a mail-in ballot to select the site of a future National Conference, the Election Committee should establish a deadline by which each of the Committees representing the competing sites must submit a description of their site to be published with the ballot. The Election Committee should set a page count limit on these statements, to be applied to all sites equally. The Committee should review the descriptions, and if there are questions about the appropriateness of content, they should be brought to the Board of Directors for resolution.

The descriptions should contain at the minimum the information listed below to allow the membership to make an informed decision.

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- City
- Dates of the Conference
- Conference hotel name and location
- Conference hotel room rate per night
- Distance from airport
- Cost of hotel parking
- General outline of site-specific activities at the Conference
- Website(s) for the city and local attractions
- Contact information: Chair's phone number and e-mail address

Mail-In Ballot Preparation

With all of the candidacy statements, Bylaw amendment statements and/or conference site descriptions received, the Committee should then proceed with the preparation of the mail-in ballot. The following is an outline of the suggested process to follow, which the Election Committee may alter as needed to meet the needs of that particular election.

- Set up a post office box to receive the mail-in ballots, near the home of the Election Committee member who has been designated to collect the ballots. The rental of the post office box will be paid by LPA.
- Agree on a cut-off date by which valid ballots must be postmarked. This should be about 30 days before the beginning of the National Conference, to allow the counting of the ballots and announcement of the results before the Conference, but should be at least 2 to 3 weeks after the ballots packages are mailed to the members, to allow them time to consider and discuss their votes. Thus, the ballot package must be prepared for mailing quickly once all of the statements have been received.
- Include the "Mail to" address in the ballot instructions.
- If the ballot is included in an issue of the "LPA Today" magazine, place a banner on the cover of the magazine: "Ballot Inside."
- If multiple Bylaw amendments are submitted which read on the same section of the Bylaws, and which would conflict if both were approved, include a statement in the amendment description that a member may approve one or the other, but not both, and that if both are marked "Approve", neither will be counted. Likewise, note if one amendment is contingent on another to be approved in order for it to be enacted. These notes should be made on the ballot as well, as in the example given below.
- Place all of the ballot responses on one side of a sheet in the following format, to make it easier for those who will count the ballots. Candidates should be listed in alphabetical order according to their last names, conference sites should be listed alphabetically by city, and bylaw amendments should be numbered and ordered as they appear in their descriptions.

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Officers

President ___ Candidate 1
 ___ Candidate 2

Senior Vice President ___ Candidate 1
 ___ Candidate 2

Director of TBD ___ Candidate 1
 ___ Candidate 2

National Conference

___ Site 1
___ Site 2

Bylaw Amendments

#1 ___ APPROVE ___ DISAPPROVE
#2 ___ APPROVE ___ DISAPPROVE

Alert: If both #3 and #4 are marked "APPROVE", neither will be counted.

#3 ___ APPROVE ___ DISAPPROVE
#4 ___ APPROVE ___ DISAPPROVE

Alert: Proposal #5 can only become effective if #2 is approved

#5 ___ APPROVE ___ DISAPPROVE

- Either the left or bottom edge of the ballot should include spaces for the member to write in the following verification information:

- Member name
- District Number
- Date of Birth: mm/dd/yy
- Signature

This information should be arranged such that this section may be easily removed from a stack of ballots with a bulk paper cutter, if the information is to be removed for confidentiality after the ballot is verified, but before the ballots are counted.

- The body of the ballot should include spaces for:

- District Number:
- Verification Date:

These will be filled in by the Election Committee when receiving and verifying the ballot. This information must stay with the ballot after the member information is removed.

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- At least two copies of the ballot should be included in the package, with instructions that additional copies can be made for all members of a household.
- Ensure there are no statements supporting or opposing the election issues on the last page before and facing the ballot(s) – this should be either a blank page, or preferably the ballot instructions.
- The last ballot should not be placed on the inside back cover of the publication, as the member’s mailing address label may be on the back, which would identify the voter.
- Include instructions for completing the ballot after the officers and bylaw amendments statements and before the ballots. These instructions should include:
 - The cut-off date by which returned ballots must be postmarked
 - The post office box address to return ballots to
 - Description of the legal voting members in a household
- Refer to recent previous election ballots for examples of format.
- The mail-in ballot package must be sent to all currently paid households in the LPA membership database, the same set as the LPA Today magazine is sent to. Only one package per household is sent, not one to each legal member. This saves on printing and postage costs, and multiple copies of the ballot are included to provide for multiple members in a household.
- Once the ballot packages have been sent, a notice should be posted on the LPA website, for the awareness of all of the members, and with instructions that if a member did not receive a ballot, and feels that they should have, please contact the LPA National Headquarters, and they will verify your membership status and send a ballot.

Process for Determining Eligible Voting Members

To verify the ballots received, the Election Committee should obtain from the LPA National Headquarters a spreadsheet of all paid members on the date when the ballots are mailed to the membership, and again on the last date that ballots can be mailed. To be valid, a voter must appear in at least one of these lists, and must be 18 years of age by the last date that ballots can be mailed. Legal members are defined in the LPA Bylaws.

Preparation for Counting Votes

- Prepare a tally sheet for counting the votes. Examples for officer elections and Bylaw approvals can be obtained from previous elections. Make the boxes in the table as large as possible and still fit the table on one page. This will allow vote counters to accumulate the most counting marks per page before starting a new page.
- The tally sheet should include an “Abstain” box for each position. If a voter does not mark a choice for an officer position, then a mark is placed in the “Abstain” box. The sum of the Abstain box and the candidates should be the same for all positions, verifying that

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all of the votes were recorded correctly.

- Make at least one copy of the sheet for each of the Districts – more copies if counting will occur periodically as the ballots are received.
- Create a Totals Spreadsheet, for summing the votes across the Districts. Examples for officer elections and Bylaw approvals can be obtained from previous elections.

Process for Counting Votes

The following is the process for counting the votes for the national officers, national conference sites, and proposed bylaw amendments. This process may change, depending on whether the bylaw amendments are enacted which affect these processes. Therefore, the Election Committee must always consult the latest version of the LPA Bylaws before establishing a counting process.

Before beginning, create a copy of the membership spreadsheet, and add a “Vote” column on the left edge. When a ballot is received, place a “1” in this column next to the voter’s name. This will ensure that a person does not vote twice, and the sum of this column can also be checked against the sum of the voting results later. Note that some families only have one HOH (Head of Household) entry in the database, yet there are multiple eligible family members. In these cases, put the total number of ballots received for that household in the Vote column.

Now to begin:

- Check the postmark on the envelope – if after the cut-off date, place in a “discard” pile, but do not actually throw away until the election is completely over
- For envelopes with a valid postmark:
 - Open the envelope and discard any letters or notes accompanying the ballots which talk about LPA politics and such. Some may request updates to their address or other data – forward these to the National Office for them to update the membership database.
 - Verify the name on each ballot against the checklist of valid members.
 - If the name is not on the list, place the ballot in the Invalid pile, to be handled later using the “Process for Verifying Ballots Which Appear to be Invalid” described below.
 - If an invalid ballot is found in an envelope which also contains a valid ballot, record the name of the valid member’s name on the invalid ballot before placing it in the Invalid pile.
 - If the name is in the list, verify that the District number is correctly marked on the ballot, and if not, mark with the District number from the list. If there is uncertainty, note if the postmark on the envelope is consistent with the District

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- number.
- Verify that the date of birth on the ballot is consistent with that given on the checklist, and is before the cutoff date to be 18 years of age.
 - If the ballot is valid, mark it as “Valid,” and mark the “Vote” column in the checklist.
 - Place the ballot in the “Pre-Count” pile for that District.
 - Place the empty envelope in a “discard” pile, but do not actually throw these away until the election is completely over.
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- Counting may be done either periodically as the ballots come in, or all at once after all have been received.
 - Counting should be done by District, processing all of the ballots in one District’s Pre-Count pile and moving them to the Counted pile before moving to the next District.
 - For each District, label a Tally Sheet described above with the District Number, the date, and the name of the counter.
 - Take each ballot from the Pre-Count pile, mark the votes for that ballot on the Tally sheet, and place the ballot in the Counted pile when done. Mark all Abstain votes in addition to actual choices. Mark the ballot to indicate it has been counted.
 - When all of the ballots in the Pre-count pile have been processed, total up each box on the Tally Sheet, then attach the Tally Sheet to the group of ballots that it represents.
 - At least a week should be allowed after the ballot postmark cut-off date for all valid ballots to arrive at the post office box, before the final counting is closed.
 - Any ballots received at LPA National Headquarters should be immediately forwarded to the election post office box.
 - When the counting is complete, sum all of the Tally Sheets for each District, and fill in the results in the appropriate boxes in the Totals Spreadsheet described above.

Process for Verifying Ballots Which Appear to be Invalid

- To ensure fairness to the membership, any ballots accumulated in the Invalid pile per the process above should be evaluated before the election is closed. These ballots are often the result of the member’s birth date being incorrectly recorded in the database, or their name not being correctly linked to the other members of the household
- Create a list of the invalid names, with the District number for each. Also include the name on any valid ballot accompanying the invalid ballot in the envelope for cross-referencing. This list is most clearly formatted as follows:

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1. A first column listing the names from ballots which are not on the validation checklist.
 2. A second column listing the District number for each.
 3. A third column listing the name(s) on any valid member(s) ballot which were in the same envelope for each.
- Send the list to the Membership Database Coordinator at the LPA National Headquarters, asking them to check the list of names. If they verify that any on the list should be considered valid voting members, the Election Committee should be notified in writing.
 - Those ballots which have been verified as valid should be removed from the Invalid pile, added to the tally for their District, and placed in the District's Counted pile
 - Any ballots which are not verified should remain in the Invalid pile, and should not be included in the count

Determining Results of Voting on Officers

When the election counting has been closed and the Totals Spreadsheet has been completed and verified, then the Committee may proceed to the final calculations of results.

The candidates will be elected by simply totaling the votes for each candidate across all 13 Districts, and the candidate receiving the most votes will be determined the winner. No minimum percentage of the votes is required by the LPA Bylaws.

Determining Results of Voting on National Conference Site

When the election counting has been closed and the Totals Spreadsheet has been completed and verified, then the Committee may proceed to the final calculations of results.

The conference site will be selected by simply totaling the votes for each site across all 13 Districts, and the site receiving the most votes will be determined the winner. No minimum percentage of the total votes is required.

Determining Results of Voting on Bylaw Amendments

When the election counting has been closed and the Totals Spreadsheet has been completed and verified, then the Committee may proceed to the final calculations of results.

The LPA Bylaws currently require: "To become effective, any amendment must receive a two-thirds favorable vote of the District Directors with each Director voting as instructed by a two-thirds favorable vote of the district members that submit a ballot."

Therefore, a Bylaw amendment must receive $> 2/3$ of the votes within the District to be approved by the District, and then be approved by 9 of the 13 Districts to be enacted. ($2/3 \times 13 = 8.666$)

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The percentage received within each District is determined by dividing the number of "Approves" by the sum of the "Approve" and "Disapprove", without including "Abstain" votes recorded for that amendment.

If a proposed amendment is not approved by nine (9) Districts, it is not enacted.

Announcing the Results of the Election

Once the Totals Sheet has been completed and verified, the Election Committee should notify all of the candidates for office of the results of the election, and distribute the Totals Sheet to the Board of Directors as the record of the election.