

United States Coast Guard Auxiliary



Election of National Officers Through the Use of Electronic Means

Standard Operating Procedures



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MEMORANDUM

Reply to S. Minutolo
Attn of: (202) 372-1267

From: S.L. Johnson, CAPT /s/
COMDT (CG-BSX)

To: Distribution

Subj: ELECTION OF NATIONAL OFFICERS THROUGH THE USE OF ELECTRONIC
MEANS STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Ref.: (a) Auxiliary Manual, COMDTINST M16790.1 (series)
(b) The Standing Rules of the National Board of the Coast Guard Auxiliary
(c) ALAUX 018/20 of 02 Jun 20, National Board Meeting Attendance Allowance
(d) ALAUX 007/20 of 01 Apr 20, Auxiliary Telephonic/Electronic Meeting Waiver
(e) ALAUX 013/20 of 02 Jun 20, National Board Meeting Attendance Allowance

1. PURPOSE. To establish Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the conduct of elections of Auxiliary national officers through the use of electronic means in accordance with provisions of references (a)-(d).

2. ACTION. Auxiliary national elected leaders and all those involved with elections of Auxiliary national officers shall adhere to this SOP whenever such elections employ electronic means.

3. DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. None.

4. BACKGROUND.

a. Circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need to maximize use of telephonic and electronic means for Auxiliary units and committees to conduct their meetings. Reference (e) amended reference (a) by authorizing facilitation of the conduct of electronic voting by the Auxiliary National Board.

b. In order to also address the potential inability of a National Board member to attend a regular or in-person meeting, reference (c) authorized the Chief Director of Auxiliary (CHDIRAUX) to approve the request of a member of the National Board to fully participate in an election by electronic means given certain circumstances.

c. Reference (d) waived both the requirement for Auxiliary units to adopt associated Standing Rules Telephonic/Electronic Meeting appendices and the requirement for the Director of Auxiliary (DIRAUX) and District Commodore (DCO) to approve the District Electronic Meeting Plan.

5. DISCLAIMER. This SOP is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is intended to provide guidance for Auxiliary personnel and is not intended to nor does it impose legally binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.

6. MAJOR CHANGES. None.

7. DISTRIBUTION. No paper distribution will be made of this SOP. An electronic version will be posted on the CG-BSX-1 and Coast Guard Auxiliary web sites: <http://agroup-bx.wow.uscgaux.info/content.php?unit=BX-GROUP&category=sop> and <http://www.cgaux.org/>, respectively. All websites in this SOP are the most current available. If the cited web link does not work, then access should be attempted by copying and pasting or typing the web site address into the user's internet browser.

8. REQUEST FOR CHANGES. Units and individuals may recommend changes via the cognizant Auxiliary chain of leadership and management. Relevant portions of this SOP will be incorporated into the next changes to references (a) and (b).

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Encl: (1) Election of National Officers Through the Use of Electronic Means SOP

Dist: Auxiliary National Board, DIRAUX

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1. Introduction.

- a. This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) establishes procedures for electing National Officers of the Coast Guard Auxiliary through the use of electronic means when the Chief Director of the Auxiliary (Chief Director) has determined after consultation with the National Commodore in accordance with reference (d) that special circumstances make it impractical for the National Board of the Coast Guard Auxiliary (the Board) to convene an in-person meeting.
- b. This SOP also establishes the procedures for electing National Officers during an in-person meeting of the Board when the Chief Director has, pursuant to reference (c), approved the absence of one or more voting members of the Board from that meeting with leave to fully participate in the election by electronic means. This type of election is referred to herein as a “hybrid” election.
 - (1) Reference (c) amends section 4.E.5.b of reference (a) by conferring discretion upon the Chief Director, after consultation with the National Commodore, to approve the request of a voting member of the National Board to be absent from an in-person meeting of the National Board while still fully participating by electronic means in the election of National Officers conducted during that meeting.
 - (2) If an absent District Commodore (DCO) has not been authorized to participate in the election by electronic means, or if so authorized chooses not to do so, the provisions of reference (b), Article 2 Rule 2.5 authorizes one of the elected district officers identified therein to attend, act, and vote in place of the DCO.
- c. The procedures set forth herein apply only to elections of National Officers at virtual meetings of the National Board or at in-person meetings of the National Board at which absentee members have been authorized to vote. These procedures do not apply to votes taken on motions during the regular course of business of the National Board where one or more members are participating by electronic means.
- d. Nothing in this SOP shall conflict with any policy or procedure contained in reference (a).
- e. Nothing in this SOP shall conflict with any policy or procedure contained in reference (b) or other guidance document with respect to the qualification of candidates for National Office, the procedures to be followed by candidates seeking National Office, the manner in which candidates may be nominated, or the discretion afforded the Chief Director of the Auxiliary to waive any provision affecting the election of National Officers.
- f. This SOP is intended to modify only the procedures specified by reference (b) for casting, tallying, and reporting the votes for the election of National Officers to the extent required in order to utilize electronic polling software

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- g. Unauthorized deviation from the procedures contained herein may result in the nullification of an election by the Chief Director, requiring a repeat election for that office.
2. Responsibilities, Oversight, Management, Expense.
- a. Board members will be required to access the voting website identified in an Electronic/Remote Voting Plan (see paragraph 2.h.(10)) via their personal device (PC, MAC, Android, or iOS) and log into the email system using their assigned registered email address identified in the voting plan no fewer than ten (10) days before the scheduled election. Initial email default passwords will be provided by the Administrator. Upon login, the user will be required to change their default password to one of their choice provided it meets security requirements. Twenty four hours before the election, the authorized voter will receive, via the registered email, a voter ID and voter key specific to the individual voter. It is the responsibility of the voter to make a note of this information as it is required to cast a vote.
 - b. The Chief Counsel shall be responsible for the overall management and supervision of an election utilizing electronic means subject to oversight by the National Commodore. If the National Commodore is eligible for election to a National Office, oversight shall be maintained by the Chief Director. All references to the Chief Counsel and Chief Director herein shall include their respective designees.
 - c. An Election Administrator (Administrator) shall be appointed by the National Commodore unless the National Commodore is eligible for election to a National Office, in which case the Administrator shall be appointed by the Chief Director. The Administrator shall not be a candidate for election to a National Office or a member of the National Board. If for any reason the National Commodore is eligible for election to a National Office, the Administrator shall be appointed by the Chief Director.
 - d. If a hybrid election is being conducted, a Tally Committee consisting of three (3) Auxiliarists who are present in person but not eligible to vote shall be appointed by the National Commodore unless the National Commodore is eligible for election to a National Office, in which case the Tally Committee shall be appointed by the Chief Director.
 - e. The Chief Counsel will consult with the Administrator to review the terms of use of the polling software selected for the election and confirm that it will, to the extent reasonably practicable, protect the personally identifiable information (PII) of Auxiliary members as required by the Privacy Act of 1974 and reference (a) and will facilitate the election of the National Officers while assuring compliance with all election policies mandated by references (a) and (b).
 - f. The Chief Counsel will consult with the Administrator to review the features of the polling software selected for the election to confirm that it is suitable for use, able to accommodate the required voting procedures, can prepare blind results, and has sufficient user capacity.

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- g. The Chief Counsel will be in real time communication with the Administrator at all times during the election until the election of all candidates for office has been completed, the votes tallied, and the winners declared by the National Commodore.
- h. The Administrator shall:
 - (1) Manage the online polling software and conference line during the election.
 - (2) Ensure that only authorized voters are provided credentials to access the voting portal.
 - (3) Ensure that only one ballot per authorized voter is cast.
 - (4) Prepare blind results for delivery to the Tally Committee or National Commodore.
 - (5) Provide technical support during the election to members of the Board as needed.
 - (6) Create the online voting site and initial ballot for eligible voters in consultation with the Chief Counsel.
 - (7) Add or remove a candidate's name from the ballot during the election as directed by the Chief Counsel in accordance with this SOP and reference (b).
 - (8) Provide credentials to allow Chief Counsel to view only the polling portal in real time.
 - (9) Create runoff ballots as required during the course of the election.
 - (10) Create and circulate to the members of the Board, no less than 20 days before the election, an Electronic/Remote Voting Plan identifying the polling software platform that will be utilized and providing instructions for its use by the voting members of the Board.
- i. "Blind results" as used herein means that only the Tally Committee shall be aware of the number of votes received by each candidate. The Tally Committee shall advise National Commodore only whether a candidate has received the majority of the votes cast or whether a run-off election is required. No one other than the Tally Committee, Administrator, and Chief Counsel shall be aware of the number of votes cast for a candidate unless there is a challenge to the election brought within the time permitted therefore.
- j. During an election solely by electronic means, or a hybrid election, the voting members of the Board shall simultaneously participate in a real time video or telephone conference on

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a platform selected and managed by the Administrator. Any cost for the use of such platform shall be paid by the Coast Guard Auxiliary Association (AuxA.)

- k. Any expense incurred by a member of the Board or the Administrator in order to gain access to the polling portal or conferencing software shall be reimbursed through the AuxA upon submission of a receipt in the form required by the AuxA.

3. Conduct of the Election.

- a. Nominations for the election of National Officers shall be conducted as stated by reference (b) Article 2, Rules 2.0 and 2.1 (a)-(j). "Present" as used in Rule 2.1 (g) of reference (b) shall mean either physically present at an in-person meeting of the Board or virtually present and participating in the election pursuant to authorization granted by the Chief Director as permitted by reference (c).
- b. For the election of the National Commodore and Vice National Commodore, each member of the Board shall be entitled to vote for one (1) candidate on each ballot for each of these offices. The election of Deputy National Commodores shall be by those District Commodores in their respective Areas, plus the National Commodore, the Vice National Commodore, the Immediate Past National Commodore, the respective area Deputy National Commodore, and the Chief Director. Each of these shall be entitled to vote for one (1) candidate on each ballot.
- c. Voting shall be by separate secret ballot for Deputy National Commodore-Atlantic (East), Deputy National Commodore-Atlantic (West) and Deputy National Commodore-Pacific.
- d. If a hybrid election is being conducted, the Administrator shall prepare a tally showing the number of votes cast for each candidate and deliver it to a member of the Tally Committee. After counting the ballots cast, including the tally of votes cast by electronic means, the ballots and tally sheet from the Administrator shall be presented to the National Commodore in a sealed envelope on the outside of which the Tally Committee shall certify in writing the result of the balloting. The result shall thereupon be announced to the National Board by the National Commodore. The number of votes cast for each candidate shall not be disclosed.
- e. If the election is being conducted only by electronic means, the Chief Counsel shall immediately notify the National Commodore by email or text message whether a candidate has received the majority of the votes cast, or whether a run-off election is required. The result shall thereupon be announced to the National Board by the National Commodore.
- f. If there is only one (1) nominee for an office, the requirement of written and/or electronic ballot may be waived by the National Commodore and the vote may be by voice, (or by voice and show of hands if a hybrid election), provided, however, it shall remain the duty

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of the National Commodore to ascertain and declare that the sole candidate is elected by at least a majority of the members voting.

- g. If more than two (2) candidates are nominated for any one (1) national office and no candidate receives a simple majority (more than 50%) of those members present and voting on the first ballot, the candidate receiving the least number of votes on the first ballot will be dropped out of the voting on the second ballot. If there is a tie for the least number of votes received on the first ballot, then the second ballot for that office will be a run-off between the candidates for least votes on the first ballot. The winner of the run-off will continue as a candidate on the third ballot, along with the candidates who received higher numbers of votes on the first ballot. Elimination of the "low-vote" candidate will continue on the third and subsequent ballots until one (1) candidate receives at least a simple majority of the votes cast.
- h. If three successive ballots for any position result in a tie vote, there shall be a short recess for such informal discussions as may be practical in person or by whatever electronic means are chosen by the members of the Board. If after the reconvening of the National Board a fourth ballot results in a tie vote, and the election is being conducted by electronic means only, the Chief Counsel shall, while being observed by those using the online conferencing software, place the names of the tied candidates on separate slips of paper in a receptacle and blindly draw from that receptacle one name which shall then be discarded. The remaining names shall then be announced and the election shall continue in accordance with the procedures established by reference (b) and this SOP.
- i. If after the reconvening of the National Board a fourth ballot results in a tie vote, and a hybrid election is being held, the National Chief Counsel shall blindly draw from the ballot receptacle one ballot and such withdrawn ballot then shall be discarded. The remaining ballots then shall be counted by the Tally Committee and the election shall continue in accordance with the procedures established under Subsection 2.2(d) of the Standing Rules. The Board members participating in the election by electronic means will be unable to observe the process unless private arrangements are made for the use of a video platform such as Skype or Face Time.
- j. If a hybrid election is being held, an unsuccessful candidate who wishes to challenge the outcome of the vote based on the vote count must do so immediately after the results of each ballot are announced. The Chief Director, National Commodore and Chief Counsel shall then together inspect the ballots. The National Commodore will then either confirm the announced result or announce a modified result based on the inspection. The vote count shall not be disclosed. The ballots shall then be delivered to the Chief Counsel for immediate destruction.
- k. If the election is being conducted as a hybrid or by electronic means only, the results will be archived by the Administrator for 24 hours and then permanently deleted. An unsuccessful candidate who wishes to challenge the outcome of the vote based on the vote count must do so immediately after the results of each ballot are announced. The

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Administrator shall forward the results of the challenged election to the Chief Director, and National Commodore who shall then inspect the physical ballots, if any, and the electronic tally in consultation with the Chief Counsel. The National Commodore will then either confirm the announced result or announce a modified result based on the inspection. The vote count shall not be disclosed. The archived results will then be permanently deleted by all who have received them.

4. Loss of Connectivity During an Election Being Held Solely By Electronic Means.
 - a. In the event that connectivity with the polling or conferencing software is lost by a voting member of the Board during an election being held solely by electronic means, the Board member shall immediately notify the National Commodore by text message. The National Commodore shall pause the election for a period of up to ten (10) minutes while the Board member attempts to reestablish connectivity.
 - b. If the member is unable to reestablish connectivity within the time provided, the Board member may either (a) choose to vote by informing the Administrator by email of the candidate for whom he or she wishes to vote as each election is held, or, (b) continue to try and establish connectivity while the election proceeds.
 - c. If more than two voting members of the Board simultaneously lose connectivity with the polling or conferencing software, they shall immediately notify the National Commodore by text message. It shall be assumed that the software platform has failed and the election shall be paused until connectivity can be reestablished.
 - d. The National Commodore, in consultation with the Chief Director, shall determine for how long the election shall be paused. If connectivity cannot be reestablished within the stated period, the election shall be rescheduled to a date and time selected by National Commodore in consultation with the Chief Director.
5. Loss of Connectivity During a Hybrid Election.
 - a. In the event that connectivity with the polling or conferencing software is lost by a voting member of the Board during a hybrid election, the Board member shall immediately notify the National Commodore by text message who shall pause the election for a period not to exceed 10 (ten) minutes while the Board member attempts to reestablish connectivity.
 - b. If the member is unable to reestablish connectivity within the time provided, the Board member may either, (a) vote by informing the Administrator by email of the candidate for whom he or she wishes to vote as each election is held, or, (b) authorize the DCOS or a DCAPT from the Board member's district, if present at the meeting, to vote in the Board member's place, or, (c) continue to try and establish connectivity while the election proceeds.

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- c. If the Board member chooses option (a), the Administrator shall add the member's votes to the tally to be given to the Tally Committee. If the member chooses option (b) the votes shall be cast at the same time and in the same manner as the Board members present voting in person.
- d. If more than two voting members of the Board simultaneously lose connectivity with the polling or conferencing software, they shall immediately notify the National Commodore by text message. It shall be assumed that the software platform is faulty and the election shall be paused by the National Commodore for up to ten (10) minutes while the members attempt to reestablish connectivity. If the members are unable to reestablish connectivity within 10 minutes the absentee members shall select one of the options described at paragraph 5.b. herein and the election shall continue.