

ELECTION STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES FOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS AND LEADERSHIP IDENTIFICATION



ELECTION STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

FOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

The strength of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is directly related to the quality of its leadership. Our ability to attract candidates with appropriate leadership skills will be enhanced by the clarity and availability of information regarding the nomination process. Any member (excluding Associate members) can self nominate for a leadership position.

Chapters play an important role in this process. Chapter Nominating Committees carry the responsibility of identifying candidates for chapter elections and are an important source for nominations for national leadership positions. All of these sources — members, chapters, and Chapter Nominating Committees — are essential as sources of recommendations to the National Committee on Nominations and Leadership Identification (NCNLI) which carries out its vital function of developing the slate for national elections and recommending persons for appointed positions.

The NCNLI, authorized by Article VIII of the NASW Bylaws, is composed of 13 persons, one elected from each electoral region. Alternates shall, in each case, be the candidates receiving the second largest number of votes in each electoral region. (Article VIII.B.1.a. The NCNLI, with the support of NASW staff, has responsibility for:

- a. Selecting at least two candidates for each position in an election of Association officers, Board members, and NCNLI members.
- b. Certifying to the Secretary of the Association the completed slate of candidates for compliance with affirmative action standards.
- c. Accepting and reviewing nominations by petition.
- d. Monitoring the election process and providing oversight for any alleged violation.

I. NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS & LEADERSHIP IDENTIFICATION

A. Committee Members

There shall be one representative from each of the 13 electoral regions.

1. Term of Office

Members of the NCNLI are elected for three-year terms. Four members shall be elected in each of two years and five members in the third year. Members will not be eligible for re-election until one full year following the expiration of his/her term on the committee. Members of the National Board of Directors may immediately run for NCNLI once their Board term has concluded.

2. Orientation

An orientation conference call, initiated by the NCNLI Chair, is scheduled prior to the final mailing of the call for nominations. Outgoing NCNLI members are encouraged to welcome and brief those members who are replacing them.

B. Committee Alternates

Persons receiving the second highest number of votes for NCNLI positions, will be considered alternates. In the event that the regular member is unable to participate at the meeting at which the slate is developed, NASW staff or the Chair will ask their alternate to participate in their place. The regular member is encouraged to maintain close contact with their alternate throughout their term.

C. Chairperson

1. Election

The chair shall be selected from among the NCNLI members serving their last year on the committee. Prior to the election scheduled to begin in March and end in April, staff will provide all NCNLI members with the biographical and platform statements of those being considered for chair. The vote shall be held electronically. The new chair assumes office on July 1.

2. Responsibilities

The NCNLI Chair assumes the following responsibilities:

- a. Presides at all meetings of NCNLI.
- b. Prepares meeting agendas, correspondence, and materials in consultation with the NCNLI members and the designated NASW staff.
- c. Orients newly elected NCNLI members prior to the in-person meeting held in late November.
- d. Acts as NCNLI liaison to the Board of Directors and other groups, as necessary.

- e. Initially reviews matters brought to the NCNLI's attention and involve the participation of NCNLI members as warranted. Actions taken between NCNLI meetings shall be subject to ratification at the next full meeting of the committee.
- f. Ensures that all assigned tasks are performed in a timely, efficient manner.
- g. Works closely with the designated NASW staff.

D. Subcommittee

1. Election Practices

The Election Practices Subcommittee will be a standing subcommittee of the NCNLI and be composed of NCNLI members in their third year and one member in their second year. Members of the subcommittee will monitor and review compliance with the election process guidelines. The subcommittee will:

- a. Review potential and alleged election practice violations.
- b. Review campaign financial reports.
- c. Make recommendations to the NCNLI for sanctions or other actions to be taken on violations of election process guidelines.

E. Relationship of NCNLI to National Board of Directors

- 1. The NCNLI shall carry out its duties related to the selection of candidates as an autonomous body. The NCNLI is subject to the policies set forth in NASW Bylaws and by the Board of Directors.
- 2. In the event of any necessary interpretation of Bylaws, NCNLI shall submit requests for bylaw interpretations to the Board of Directors and/or to legal counsel.

F. Relationship of NCNLI to Chapters

- 1. NCNLI maintains its relationship with chapters through the members of the NCNLI in the designated regions.
- 2. NCNLI representatives have primary responsibility to serve the interests of the entire Association relative to issues of leadership, nominations and identification.
- 3. NCNLI representatives serve as conduits for information to members, the National Board, and chapters.
- 4. NCNLI representatives will utilize resources such as formal meetings and training workshops as well as information networking to connect with chapter leadership.

G. Staff Responsibilities to NCNLI

The major function of staff is to provide for the services necessary in the management of the operation of the NCNLI through the provision of programmatic and administrative support.

1. Assigned staff responsibilities include:

- a. Assists the chair in planning the substance and organization of the meetings of the NCNLI.
- b. Keeps the chair informed of budgetary and programmatic issues.
- c. Directs the provision of administrative and logistical support to the NCNLI.
- d. Participates in the meetings of the NCNLI.
- e. Implements specified portions of the program including the “Call for Nominations,” the creation of the online dissemination and ballot materials, etc.
- f. Provides technical assistance to nominees, candidates, and chapters.
- g. Serves as liaison to other NASW units and coordinates activities with other national and chapter staff members.
- h. Assures the development and maintenance of appropriate records and reports.
- i. Maintains regular communication with the chair, as well as ongoing contact with NCNLI members between meetings.

2. General Counsel

General Counsel will be available to the NCNLI to assist in resolving complex legal questions.

II. ELECTION STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES

The following statements include provisions of the NASW Bylaws and policies of the Board of Directors.

A. Candidates

1. Eligibility

- a. All regular and student members in good standing are eligible for nomination for election to national office. Associate members are not eligible. Members currently being sanctioned by the National Ethics Committee are not eligible.

2. Experience

- a. Candidates for officer positions should have a history of commitment to NASW and significant national leadership experience relevant to the position being sought.
- b. Candidates for the Board of Directors and the NCNLI should have a history of commitment to NASW and significant chapter or national leadership experience relevant to the position being sought.
- c. Candidates for student positions should be chosen primarily on the basis of interest and potential.

3. Affirmative Action

NCNLI should seek to submit an election slate for certification that meets the affirmative action goals of the Association including the following:

- a. That women comprise a percentage of the national board and voluntary units no less than their representation in the Association membership
- b. That people of color comprise no less than 30 percent of the membership of the national board and voluntary units, and to achieve within this percentage equitable representation of the various groups.
- c. People of color refers to African Americans or Blacks, American Indians and Native Alaskans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Chicanos or Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other Hispanics. These categories and designations may be modified to conform with changing designations promulgated by the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission.
- d. That self-identified lesbians, gay males, bisexual, and transgender members comprise no less than 10 percent of national elected and appointed leadership.
- e. Affirmative Action goals of the Association constitute minimum goals and should not be interpreted as quotas or maximum goals.

4. Students

Two student representatives shall be elected to the Board, one of whom shall be an undergraduate student in a social work degree program and one of whom shall be a graduate student in a master's degree program in social work. Undergraduate and graduate student representative candidates must be matriculating social work students for at least one of the two years of their term on the Board of Directors. The school of social work attended must be accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. Both full time and part time students may be considered for nomination.

5. BSW Representation

At least one member of the Board of Directors shall be a person whose current most advanced degree in social work at the time of election or appointment to the Board is the baccalaureate degree.

6. Former NASW Staff

Individuals who have held a national or chapter staff position may be eligible for nomination for election two years after their last day of employment with NASW.

7. Officers and Members of the Board of Directors

- a. Officers and board members may not immediately succeed themselves in the same office.
- b. No officer or board member will be permitted to serve in any capacity for a third consecutive term on the Board of Directors.

8. NCNLI Members

- a. NCNLI members, other than alternates, are not eligible for nomination or re-election within one year of the expiration of their term on the NCNLI.
- b. NCNLI members may not be considered for a national office during the first year following the end of a NCNLI term. Only in the second program year following a NCNLI term may a former NCNLI member run for national office.

9. Special Interests

Special interests, in a very broad sense, refer to other considerations such as the diversity of practice fields, academic areas, policy concerns, size of chapter, urban/rural, age and disabilities.

B. Solicitation of Nominations

1. Publication of Notices for Elections

- a. The *NASW News*, the Association website, and social media outlets shall serve as the major vehicles for announcing the annual election process and election results.
- b. First “Call for Nominations” — Membership and NCNLI

Immediately following the election, a list of positions open for the next election shall be published in the *NASW News* and other forms of media. This announcement shall include:

- 1) request for nominations
 - 2) election timetable
 - 3) statement of affirmative action
 - 4) regional composition
- c. Second “Call for Nominations” — Membership, NCNLI, Chapter Executives, Chapter Presidents, Chapter NLI Chairs.

Ninety (90) days prior to the meeting of the NCNLI, a second “call for nominations” shall be published in the *NASW News* and online with a specific cut-off date (usually 30 days prior to the meeting of the NCNLI) for receipt of nominees. The cut-off date is set to allow sufficient time for receiving and processing information provided for each candidate’s nomination. When the deadline is announced, it should be made clear to those members who self nominated after the deadline, that names received by the national office after the cut-off date will not be considered by the NCNLI.

2. Information provided by Association Staff to NCNLI Members

In order to execute the role of the NCNLI Representative, the following information will be provided.

- a. Policies and operating guidelines of the NCNLI.
- b. Ten year overview report of chapter representation on the board and NCNLI by geographical distribution and chapter size (small, medium, large, mega).
- c. Lists of individuals nominated for two prior election cycles and appointments to national units.
- d. Election timetable.

3. Suggested NCNLI Approaches to Outreach

NCNLI members are encouraged to:

- a. Contact chapter presidents and executive directors, Chapter Nominating Committee chairs, and schools and departments of social work in their region to review with them the process of nominating candidates, specific expectations and qualifications being sought, and the timetable for the election.
- b. Encourage chapters to publish articles in chapter newsletters or other means of media such as web sites, list serves, etc., regarding the need for nominees.
- c. Contact other leaders in their regions and encouraging them to submit nominees.
- d. Contact national leadership to solicit recommendations from outstanding members for consideration.
- e. Contact NCNLI alternates to assist with contacts of potential nominees.
- f. Contact past NCNLI representatives to provide information.

4. Online Application

The online application serves as a request for consideration to be a nominee for elected and/or appointed positions. The information will be used by the NCNLI for the selection of national candidates and appointees. The online application must be received on or before the published deadline.

5. Nominee Confirmation

- a. The membership status of prospective nominees is verified by NASW National Office utilizing membership records and by staff in the office of Ethics and Professional Review.
- b. Nominees will receive and complete a “Memorandum of Intent” confirming their willingness to be a candidate.
- c. NCNLI representatives will seek to obtain information about potential candidate’s qualifications for the identified office.

C. Selection and Announcement of Candidates, and Petition Process

1. Selection

- a. The NCNLI shall select at least two candidates for each position in the regular election.
- b. The NCNLI shall meet virtually at least once a year to develop a slate for each year's election. The NCNLI shall notify the membership of the date of the meetings at which the NCNLI proposes to develop the slate by notices on the Association website at least 60 days before the meeting.
- c. To successfully complete the slate, the NCNLI may contact any eligible member of the Association in good standing inquiring if they are interested in nominating themselves as a candidate for election.
- d. The NCNLI chair or designee shall lead the online voting process except for regional nominees where the voting process may be led by the member of NCNLI from the region.
- e. NCNLI members, staff, and others present at the NCNLI meetings shall keep committee deliberations confidential. Other than notifying candidates, the slate shall be kept confidential until officially certified by the Secretary of the Association.
- f. Slate Development Approaches
 - 1) For each office, each nominee may be discussed in terms of criteria such as the nominee's expertise, previous association experience, affirmative action, and the needs of the Association, etc.
 - 2) The NCNLI may begin by slating officers beginning with the highest office to be filled, then regional representatives, then students, and finally members at large.
 - 3) If necessary to fulfill affirmative action goals, candidates may be slated against like candidates.
 - 4) In selecting nominees for regional representatives, the NCNLI may slate nominees from small states against others from small states to ensure small state representation.
 - 5) For "at large" positions, the NCNLI may consider nominees from states not already represented in the regional positions previously slated.
 - 6) Voting may be either by open or secret ballot.

- 7) It is recommended that each NCNLI member shall cast the number of votes for their top choice as there are candidates for the office and then in descending order, to last choice. For example, if there are three candidates remaining for a position, the member shall cast three votes for their top choice, two for second choice and one for last choice candidate. Votes shall be tallied, and the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes are chosen. Ballots shall be repeated as necessary, until two candidates are clearly chosen.
- 8) Should either of the candidates withdraw, the person receiving the third highest number of votes shall be the designated alternate candidate.

2. Slate Certification

- a. The NASW Affirmative Action Officer notifies the NCNLI Chair whether the slate complies with the Association's affirmative action and other representational requirements and is in conformity with the policies of the Association.
- b. NCNLI shall certify the completed slate to the Secretary of the Association. When nominations have been made by petition, NCNLI shall re-certify the amended slate to the Secretary of the Association.

3. Notification of Candidates

- a. A "Memorandum of Intent" confirming their willingness to run must be obtained from each candidate prior to the December meeting (see 5.b. on page 9).
- b. If a candidate cannot run, the alternate candidate for the position shall be notified.
- c. After the entire slate is certified, each nominee will receive notification of their candidacy in writing. A copy of this communication shall be sent to the chapter executive director, chapter president, and the chapter CNLI chair.

4. Announcement of Candidates and Petition Process

- a. The Association shall announce the slate to the membership at least 30 days before electronic voting opens via the *NASW News* and appropriate media outlets.
- b. Petitions must be received in writing within 30 days following the announcement of nominated candidates and contain signatures as specified in the bylaws of the Association.
- c. Petitions may only be submitted for those persons whose names have been submitted the same year to NCNLI for consideration for nomination to the same office for which petition is made.
- d. The NCNLI chair shall submit the slate as amended by petition to the Secretary of the Association for recertification. When petitions have been placed on the slate and recertified, the amended slate will be published again in the *NASW News* with an indication of who is on the slate by petition.
- e. In addition to publishing the election slate, the *NASW News* shall publish biographical data for the candidates for officer positions.
- f. Each candidate shall submit the following materials for distribution:
 - 1) Biographical Statement — (150 words or fewer) including information about the candidate’s present employment, NASW activities, professional affiliations, and awards received.
 - 2) Platform Statement — (150 words or fewer) stating the candidates’ commitment to the Association and position. Limited editing will be done on the information received from the candidates. Candidates shall receive a copy of the edited material for approval prior to printing.
 - 3) Photograph — preferably a high resolution (300 dpi) JPEG, EPS, or TIFF file.
 - 4) Endorsements — the names and job titles of no more than three endorsers for officer candidates only.

D. Campaigns

1. General Conduct of Campaigns

A campaign for election shall be conducted in keeping with the ethical standards of the profession as articulated in the NASW Code of Ethics. A candidate shall conduct him/herself in a manner that is professional and within the highest standards of personal decorum. A candidate may not speak against an opponent in a personal manner or disparage the opponent in any way.

2. Endorsements

Candidates for officer positions may seek members to endorse their candidacy and announce endorsements as a means of providing evidence of qualifications for a position and support for their candidacy.

Candidates must obtain clear and specific written permission to use the name of any person as an endorser and must explain to the endorsing person the exact manner in which the endorser's name will be used orally or in writing. The current elected or appointed NASW position of an endorser shall not be mentioned in any endorsement statement or list of endorsers. **Current members of the NCNLI, the national board, national and chapter staff are prohibited from endorsing any candidate.** Units of the Association (e.g. chapters, committees, or Specialty Practice Sections, etc.) are also prohibited from endorsing candidates.

3. Materials

Campaign materials must be in keeping with the professional nature of the organization. Normally the content of materials will be limited to a picture of the candidate, a statement of positions, a listing of credentials and qualifications, and names of endorsers. Materials may not include comments regarding an opposing candidate.

4. Association Resources

- a. Association (national and chapter) resources including the Association name, letterhead, staff time, postage, e-mail, faxes, etc. may not be expended for the purpose of supporting one candidate over another.
- b. The use of Association newsletters to report the candidacy of chapter members and electoral area candidates is encouraged, provided that:
 - 1) The report is included as a news article or an announcement in the regular association publication.
 - 2) The candidacy of all chapter and electoral area candidates is reported.
 - 3) The candidates' opponents are informed at least two weeks in advance of the deadline for receipt of copy so that they may insert material of their own if they wish. The names of the opposing candidates shall be included in the article or announcement whether or not the opponent submits material to be included in the article.

- c. Mailing lists of members may be sold to candidates, either by national or by chapters, at the usual and customary fee as long as the requests (for labels etc.) meet all other mailing list request policies.
- d. Association resources such as telephone trees and special interest networks may be used to encourage members to vote if they are used impartially.
- e. Listservs may be used to encourage members to vote and to dialogue with/or about candidates, but not to endorse.
- f. Association postal permits are not permitted to be used by candidates or on behalf of candidates.
- g. The Chief Executive Officer and Chapter Executive Directors, share responsibility for ensuring that association resources are used appropriately.
- h. Promotion, other than the above, of any candidate should be available only at private cost to the candidate (including advertising space, cost of mailing, mailing lists, etc.). Every advertisement should include the statement “This is not to be construed as an endorsement by the Association for an individual.

5. Personal Appearances

In keeping with the policy that chapters may not endorse candidates, candidates for the same office must be offered equal access to chapter and national functions. If a candidate requests or is invited to appear or speak at a chapter or national function in the capacity of a candidate, the same access must be actively offered to the opposing candidate. In the event that the opposing candidate cannot appear, he/she must be offered the opportunity to submit a written statement of an appropriate length to be read by a member of his/her choice or presented in written form at the same occasion.

6. Cost

While there are certain inevitable inequities by virtue of professional position or circumstances of any given candidate, potential candidates for NASW office should not be excluded or unduly disadvantaged by the costs of the campaign. To maintain campaign expenses within reasonable bounds, thereby facilitating fair access to leadership positions in the Association, there is a \$5000 limit on campaign expenditures. These expenditures include:

- a. All election materials, mailing costs, telephone costs and travel costs.
- b. Expenditures by supporters, is limited to \$50.00.

Information concerning the amount of time spent on election activities must be reported by the candidate, but is not included in the statement of costs.

7. Campaign Financial Report

A report of campaign costs is essential to ascertain compliance/non-compliance with the expenditure guidelines. A Campaign Financial Report shall be sent to candidates at the time of their notification of candidacy and must be submitted by the candidates to the National Office by May 5.

Failure to submit the Report may result in a candidate's election being forfeited and the position could be filled by the runner-up.

8. Monitoring

The Board has charged NCNLI with the responsibility of monitoring campaign activities. A request for a review of a complaint of a potential or alleged election practice violation can be made by any member or unit of the Association. In the event of such a request (or complaint), the Chair will immediately notify the Election Practices Subcommittee. If the Subcommittee concludes that a violation has occurred, the Chair will notify the Board President, who, in concert with the Chief Executive Officer, will consider the next steps.

9. Violations

The NCNLI Election Practices Subcommittee shall determine whether a violation has occurred and, if so, whether the violation is of major or lesser degree. The determination of whether a major violation has occurred will be based on the following:

- a. Degree of departure from the guidelines
- b. Degree of harm to the opposing candidacy
- c. Closeness of the election
- d. Relationship between the departure/violation and the election results.

A violation might also be deemed “major” if it clearly involved a knowing, willful and deliberate disregard of the guidelines, disregard of generally accepted notions of fairness, or a violation of ethical standards. In such instances, the candidate’s behavior rather than its impact on the election would be the prime consideration. “Lesser” or “minor” violations would include technical and inadvertent breaches of the guidelines which in the opinion of the Election Practices Subcommittee had little or no effect on the outcome of the election.

10. Sanctions

If a violation is found to have occurred, the Election Practices Subcommittee will report this to the NCNLI with recommendations for sanction(s) or other actions that might be imposed. In the event of a finding of “major” violation, the Subcommittee could recommend that the candidate be disqualified from assuming office.

However, in considering possible sanctions(s), the Subcommittee and the NCNLI should be guided by the principle that the purpose of the guidelines is to insure fairness in the election process. Any consideration of sanction(s) should be within the context of achieving an equitable result and/or heightening awareness of members regarding the applicable rules. Sanctions should not be employed by the NCNLI for the sole purpose of holding people accountable for their actions. In addition, if a candidate’s conduct is believed to have violated the Code of Ethics, the matter should be referred to the National Ethics Committee for appropriate action.

The NCNLI shall act on the report of the Subcommittee by recommending to the Board President that it be accepted, rejected, or by modifying the recommended sanctions/actions. The NCNLI Chair shall communicate the decision to the Board President.

The Board President or the Chief Executive Officer shall communicate NCNLI’s decision to the candidate and the chapter. Sanction(s), if any, shall take effect unless an appeal is made to the Executive Committee.

11. Appeal of Decision and/or Sanction

An appeal to the National Executive Committee may be made in writing to the Association President by any of the parties involved with a copy to the NCNLI within 15 days of their notification of sanction stating their reason(s) why the decision and/or sanction should not be applied or why it should be modified.

The Executive Committee shall consider the appeal at its next regularly scheduled meeting or earlier if warranted. The Executive Committee may request further information from the candidate(s), from the chapter, from the NCNLI or from any other person, but need not do so if the information on hand is sufficient for its purposes. The Executive Committee may uphold the NCNLI action or grant the appeal in whole or in part. The decision of the Executive Committee on the matter shall be final.

E. Elections

1. Ballots

- a. The election shall be held through a ballot available via electronic means to each member listing the names of all persons nominated. The ballot for election of the officers and board members and the biographical document accompanying the ballot shall be available online to each member not less than forty days prior to the election to the address in the official files of the Association. The marked ballot shall be sent by the member to a place designated by the Board of Directors.
- b. Candidates for national office shall be listed on the ballots in alternating alphabetical order. For example: First position A to Z, second position Z to A, and so forth. The alphabetical sequence of these positions shall be reversed each year.
- c. There will be no reference on the ballot as to which candidates appear on the ballot by petition.

2. Voting

The following members who are in good standing are eligible to vote:

- a. Regular members
- b. Associate members with five years of continuous membership
- c. Student members

3. Vacancies

- a. All vacancies for unexpired terms of officers or members of the Board of Directors, or members of the Executive Committee shall be filled by the Board of Directors, except in the case of the President, where the vacancy shall be filled automatically by the Vice President. In the case of representatives from electoral regions, these appointments shall be made with the advice and consent of the majority of chapter presidents and executive directors within the particular electoral area.
- b. In the event of a vacancy on the NCNLI, the vacancy will be filled by the elected alternate from the region.
- c. An elected national board member or NCNLI member representing an electoral region who moves out of the electoral area during his/her term of office automatically vacates the office. The vacancy thus created shall be filled by the runner-up or a person living in that area in a manner provided in paragraph 3a or b above.

4. Election Results

- a. Election results are forwarded to the National Board of Directors and the NCNLI.
- b. Candidates for all positions should be notified of the results of the election before the results are publicized.
- c. Following the election, the *NASW News* and NASW online outlets will publish the outcomes including the number of votes received by each candidate.

F. Nominee Recommendations

Names of nominees not slated should be considered as possible recommendations to the President for committee appointments. NCNLI representatives will be informed in writing when persons from their region are appointed to committees.

For more information, contact governance@naswdc.org.



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ABOUT NASW

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is the largest organization of professional social workers in the world. More than 145,000 members participate in 56 chapters throughout the United States, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and the international community.

The Association works to enhance the professional growth and development of its members, to create and maintain professional standards, and to advance sound social policies. NASW provides a variety of membership benefits including professional credentials and specialty certifications, special interest practice sections, affordable insurance, job search and advocacy tools, and multiple vendor discounts. The NASW Press, which produces the *NASW News* and *Social Work*, as well as three other peer-reviewed journals and numerous books each year, provides many professional development resources for social workers.

For more information on NASW membership or programs, visit the NASW website at SocialWorkers.org or call 202.408.8600.