

# **Official AGA Election Committee Protocols**

**Effective June 2006**

This document specifies the general regulations, and Election Committee procedures, for the management of nominations, balloting, counting and certification for the election of AGA Board Members as specified in the AGA bylaws.<sup>1</sup>

## **I. Formation and composition of the Committee**

The President appoints the Election Committee Chair. The Chair will assemble a Committee composed of 3 additional members, one from each region. If such membership is not possible when needed, the Chair may appoint more than one member from any region to staff the Committee. The members of the Committee may not run for any position in an election pending before the Committee.

## **II. Duties of the Election Committee**

The Election Committee will initiate the election process by announcing the following:

1. opening of nominations,
2. positions open for nomination,
3. period for making nominations and engaging in campaigning activity,
4. dates by which ballots will be mailed out and return dates, and
5. the address to which they must be returned.

The details and time requirements for this announcement are specified below in section VI. Nomination announcements.

The Election Committee will receive nominations, check to ensure that the candidate meets the requirements, and is willing to serve, and will publish the names of the eligible candidates on a weekly basis in the American Go E-Journal and on the AGA website.

The Election Committee will respond to questions raised by candidates or others regarding procedures, and voting protocols.

The Election Committee will create the ballots for regional directors, and mail them out to the chapters. One ballot will be sent for each vote to which the chapter is entitled according to the specifications in the AGA By-laws. See section VI. Ballot Allocation. Separate ballots will be created for the at-large director. At the discretion of the Committee, these may be sent to eligible members by email, or by regular mail. Ballots for members without a valid current email address will be sent to their last known street

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<sup>1</sup> Incorporates changes mandated by the AGA By-laws changes approved in 2005

address. Any member may receive their ballot by regular mail on request made not less than 14 days prior to the deadline for returning ballots.

The Election Committee will receive the ballots, keep them sealed until the time designated for counting, count them, and report the results at the Go Congress.

If the provisions of the By-laws are insufficient to resolve a problem arising from the election process, the Election Committee will resolve it in a manner they believe to be most consistent with the intent of the By-laws. Such decisions may be appealed to the Appeals Committee. The Appeals Committee shall be set up by the Election Committee Chair in advance of the election. None of the Appeals Committee members may be on any ballot for election nor be a poll watcher. The ruling of the Appeals Committee is final.

The Election Committee Chair will provide a report to the National Assembly after each election. This report will provide the following:

a. A full statement of election results: This includes the number of votes cast for each candidate (including write-ins), a list of the chapters that cast votes, and the number of ballots cast by each chapter. If the at-large director is on the ballot, Election Committee will report the actual number of votes counted for each candidate.

b. A report describing how the election was managed. This includes a summary of the ballots sent out, the number received, number of invalid votes cast, and any other material information on the election process. The report may also include a description of how and why the Election or Appeals Committee varied from accepted procedures.

c. Recommendations: The report may contain, if the Election or Appeals Committee so decides, recommendations for changes in future elections procedures.

### **III. Nominations**

#### **Who may nominate**

For the at-large board position - Any AGA member may nominate any full AGA member, including self-nomination.

For a regional director position - Any member affiliated with an AGA Chapter may nominate any full AGA member to be a director to represent the region in which that chapter is located. (A member must specify a single chapter affiliation for AGA voting purposes even though the member may be a member of more than one chapter.) Members not affiliated with a chapter may nominate a regional director for the region in which they reside.

Note: Virtual chapters may have members residing in all regions, and/or outside the US. For voting for regional directors, purposes, virtual chapters will be considered resident in the region of its mailing address in the AGA database as of January 1 each year.

## **How to nominate**

Nominations must be made in writing. They must be sent to and received by the person nominated as well as the Election Committee during the period specified. The nomination must include the candidate's name, chapter affiliation, residential address, phone number and email address(if any).

## **IV. Candidates**

A candidate may run for only one position. If a candidate should be nominated for two positions (i.e. regional and at-large), the candidate must choose which nomination to accept and advise the Elections Committee in writing of the choice.

To be eligible for election, by the calendar deadline for making nominations, each candidate must meet all of the following criteria:

- a. Be at least 21 years of age.
- b. Be a full member in good standing for a period of at least one year.
- c. Have been resident in the USA for at least six of the last twelve months. Residence offshore as a member of a US Military service will be regarded as US residence.
- d. Declare in writing a willingness to run and perform the duties of office.
- e. Declare in writing that they have read the AGA Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.
- f. For regional directors, a candidate must be a resident of the region they wish to represent.
- g. For at-large directors, a candidate may reside anywhere in the United States, including the territories.

## **V. Campaign Regulation**

The Election Committee will provide the opportunity for all candidates to promote their candidacy through AGA supplied media, such as the AGA website. Candidate statements (limited to 500 words maximum) will be posted on the AGA website. Links to non-AGA websites are allowed.

The Election Committee will exercise no restriction on material presented by the candidates outside of the media venues provided to all candidates.

The Election Committee will not collect financial information about any candidates, nor restrict or influence the amount of money a candidate may spend, or solicit from others, to finance the campaign.

The Election Committee will provide each regional candidate with an organized list of contact information for all the chapter representatives in the relevant region.

The at-large candidate may send email to eligible voting members a maximum of once per week during the campaign period. The email shall be submitted to the Election Committee for forwarding to the general membership at least 5 calendar days prior to the requested mailing date. Mailing labels will be provided to the candidates for AGA members without email addresses. The candidate is responsible for all costs of mailing campaign statements to such members.

## **VI. Election Procedures**

### **Nomination announcements**

The notice of the open nomination period, and other dates, shall be announced in the American Go E-Journal in each (weekly) issue during the nominating period and be posted on the AGA website. Chapters shall be reminded by email at least twice during the voting period. The Election Committee will provide a means to provide a ballot to any chapter that has not received one through the regular mail.

If a vacancy is created when no election is scheduled, the election to fill that vacancy will be separate from the election to fill positions normally being filled in the scheduled election. That is, there will be a set of candidates running for the normal two-year position and another set of candidates running for the position to fill the vacated position. Nomination announcements will reflect this.

### **Nomination Period**

The Election Committee shall specify a nominating period of not less than 30 nor more than 60 days, and in any case ending no later than June 15. A full slate of candidates shall be published as soon as practical, but not more than 7 days after the close of nominations and no later than June 22.

### **Ballot Distribution**

The Election Committee shall specify a date by which ballots will be sent to the chapters, and members (for at-large candidate voting) no later than July 1, and the date by which they must be mailed or otherwise returned, and the date on which they will be counted.

### **Ballot Allocation**

The number of ballots sent to each chapter is based on the number of affiliated members for that chapter, as specified in the by-laws. (1 vote for 2 members, 2 votes for 5 members, 3 votes for 10 members, plus an additional vote for each additional 10 members. 20 = 4, 30 = 5, etc.) This number shall be calculated as of the date on which the ballots will be sent to the chapters.

NOTE: Votes are based on Chapter members' affiliation, not chapter members' residency. Therefore, all votes that a virtual chapter is entitled to will be cast for the candidate running in the region in which the virtual chapter votes, regardless of chapter members' residency.

## **Ballot counting**

The Election Committee will conduct the voting as a secret ballot. Normally, the count will take place on the Sunday or Monday prior to the end of the Congress. The ballots will be counted by not less than two members of the Election Committee. It shall record the names of the chapters voting and the number of ballots cast by each, but shall not record the votes by chapter. To accomplish this, one person will record the name of the chapter, remove the ballots, and hand them to another person, who shall count, but not record them, and inform the first person of the number of ballots. The first person will then confirm that the number of ballots is valid for the membership of the chapter. (That is, equal to or less than the chapter's entitlement.) Chapters with more than one vote may split their vote in any manner they choose. Each ballot will be marked with a code number on the back in order to allow tie breaking by weighted chapter membership. If tie breaking is not required, these code marks will be destroyed after the election is certified. The ballots will then be placed in a box. When all ballots have been verified valid, the votes will be counted. If the difference between candidates is less than 5%, they will be recounted.

## **Poll Watchers**

Each candidate may appoint one poll watcher to physically observe the ballot counting. The poll watcher must be a current full AGA member, and must not be a candidate for any office on the ballot. The time of counting will be announced by the Election Committee Chair 24 hours beforehand, and poll watchers must arrive on time. Poll watchers arriving more than 5 minutes late may be prevented from observing the counting at the discretion of the Election Committee. Poll watchers will be provided with a copy of this document and may inquire about interpretation and protest if they wish. The Election Committee will hear the protest, and rule. If the ruling is satisfactory to the protester, no further action is taken. If it is not, the nature of the protest is recorded, and the Election Committee will record its response. The counting procedure will continue as the Election Committee has ruled. Further appeal, if made, must be to the Appeals Committee as described above in II. Duties of the Election Committee. , and after the election results are announced. The announcement in such a case will include the fact and general nature of the protest.

Poll watchers may observe the counting procedure, but shall not participate in the counting. They may protest at any time, and the Election Committee will rule and act as stated above regarding this policy document. Poll watchers must not reveal the results to anyone until the Election Committee has informed the candidates on site directly.

## **Validation of ballots**

If the meaning of any portion of a ballot is uncertain, the Election Committee may determine intent by whatever means it chooses, or declare that vote invalid, however the remainder of the ballot which is readable, will remain valid and be counted. Write-in votes are valid.

The Election Committee shall report the results as specified in the original election announcement. Normally, this will be the morning after the counting. The AGA policy is that for the at-large position, a plurality of at least 33% shall be required to win the election, and for the regional positions a plurality of at least 40% shall be required. If these conditions are not met, the Election Committee shall hold a runoff election between the top two contenders as soon as it is feasible to do so.

## **Certification of the election results**

The Election Committee will record and certify the election results. The Election Committee will then notify each of the candidates of the results as soon as possible by any means, and request their acceptance of the results. If a material protest or claim is made against the result or the procedures, the Election Committee will devise and execute a means of resolution. Then each winning candidate, or a designee will be asked to verify their willingness to serve. If all agree, the election is certified, and will be announced as such. Protests or claims will be handled as in II. Duties of Election Committee above.

## **VII. Inability or unwillingness to serve**

Should an elected person be unable or unwilling to begin serving as a Director after the election results are reported, but before the results are certified, the election will be decided on the basis of the other votes cast. For purposes of meeting plurality requirements, the votes cast for the person unable or unwilling to serve will be deducted from the total. The declaration of inability or unwillingness to serve must be stated to the Election Committee after the count has been completed and reported to the person, or a designee.

Should a person become unable or unwilling to serve after the election results are certified, the person will be regarded as elected, and the provisions of the bylaws regarding vacant Board positions will apply. The AGA Secretary will commence to arrange for a special election to fill the vacancy.