



## Appendix E1: Democrats Abroad Country Committee Election Procedures

This document is designed to provide Democrats Abroad (DA) Country Committees with a set of procedures to assist in organizing and conducting successful elections for DA Country Committee Officers. The following procedures are minimum standards based on the election practices of the Democratic Party Committee Abroad (DPCA or simply 'Democrats Abroad') and the Democratic Party of the United States (Democratic National Committee or DNC). Specific terms in Country Committee bylaws may vary from these minimum standards to fit local needs. However, where a Country Committee's bylaws are in substantive conflict with these procedures, the committee should consider amendment of its bylaws to reflect these standards.

### 1. General

Country elections should be held every two years in odd numbered years, preferably within the first quarter (i.e., by March 31st) and not later than the second quarter (i.e., by June 30th) in order to align with DPCA and DNC election schedules.

Committees which have gained full committee status and held formation elections in an even numbered year should hold another election again in the next odd numbered year (no later than the second quarter) to move committee elections into the odd year schedule.

An election meeting must be called every two years. Depending on a country committee's bylaws, this meeting can be held in conjunction with an annual general meeting. Minutes of the election meeting must be reported to the International Secretary, along with copy to the Regional Vice Chair, and together with complete contact information for elected officers. This must occur no later than 15 days after the election. A copy of the committee's current bylaws should also be forwarded by January 31<sup>st</sup> of each year, or subsequent to any amendments. Officers may not serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office. (See Section 5.2, DPCA Charter.)

An officer who was elected mid-term and has served for over a year and a day is deemed to have served a full term.

A meeting is defined as an official gathering of members in one room or area to transact business. The quorum requirements in a country's bylaws must be met. Members may be present in person, by proxy or by video or teleconference. (see Chapter IV, Section 8 of Robert's Rules of Order 10<sup>th</sup> Edition and Section D of this document: Ballots and Proxies)

Elections should be conducted by an Election or Nominations Committee specifically appointed by the Country Chair in consultation with the Country Committee Executive Committee.

### 2. Elections Committee

a. The Elections Committee (in some Country Committees these are termed "Nominations Committees") should be composed of at least three members. They must all be members of the country committee. Their appointment by the Chair or Executive Committee should take place no less than 45 days from the date set for the election meeting and are to be announced in the election notice not less than 30 days prior to the election.

b. No member of the Elections Committee may be a candidate for office.

c. All actions of the Elections Committee shall be taken by a majority vote of the committee members.

d. An appointed Elections Committee's ability to carry out its duties shall not be delayed or hindered in any substantive manner by the Country Committee Chair or ExCom.

e. The Election Committee (one member) must be granted limited administrative access to the country membership database for membership notification and for verification of membership status regarding voting. This access shall be communicated by the Country Chair to the responsible IT database volunteer and the appropriate Confidentiality Agreement submitted. Any problems in securing such access for the Elections Committee should be brought to the immediate attention of the Regional Vice Chair whose responsibility it will be to assure that



access is obtained. If access cannot be granted to an Elections Committee member for whatever reason, an IT Team member will be assigned by the Regional Vice Chair to send all election notices. Communications through the IT Team volunteer shall originate solely from the Elections Committee.

### 3. Duties of the Elections Committee

- a. Give notice of the election meeting and keep the minutes of that meeting.
- b. Accept written nominations.
- c. Verify candidate eligibility.
- d. Ensure that all candidates are informed of nominations, seconds, elections calendar, and the process for posting candidate statements
- e. In cases where no nominees has come forward for an open Executive Committee position, Election Committee members may reach out to solicit candidates and nominations from the general country membership.
- f. Issue a list of candidates for office.
- g. Write and distribute a ballot.
- h. Ensure that the election meeting is run by a member of the Elections Committee.
- i. Be the recipient of any electronic ballots, transport these to the election meeting and be responsible for opening these.
- j. Be the recipient of all proxies, verify the validity and proper execution of each proxy and confirm the membership status of all proxy givers.
- k. Collect ballots and count the votes.
- l. Verify the final election tally.
- m. Report the results to the gathered membership immediately and again via a DA country webpage by posting to all committee members, to the International Chair, the appropriate Regional Vice Chair and the International Secretary.
- n. Hear and adjudicate any election disputes.
- o. Monitor the election to ensure a public, open and fair process.

### 4. Recusal of Candidates from Election-Related Matters

- a. The use of local independent Elections Committees is an essential part of maintaining the integrity of and avoiding any appearance of impropriety in our Country Committee elections. It is therefore essential that all candidates for office, especially incumbent holders of officer or At-Large positions, be recused from all aspects of election administration. A significant number of problems, misunderstandings and disputes can be tied to even well-meaning attempts by Country Committee leadership to assist with election-related matters.
- b. Election-related communications should only be performed by and released in the name of the Elections Committee. This relates to use of the [www.democratsabroad.org](http://www.democratsabroad.org) website, membership-mailing resources, as well as any Internet or social-media sites used by a Country Committee to reach its members.
- c. Moderation of social media attached to the committee (country Facebook pages, as an example) must be overseen by the Election Committee. Fair posting and moderating practices must prevail.
- d. Matters pertaining to the collection, handling and counting of ballots are especially sensitive and are to be left exclusively to the Elections Committees.

### 5. Rules Governing the Election

- a. *Eligible Voters*
  - (1) Voters must be registered members of Democrats Abroad in the Country Committee or chapter for which elections are being held, prior to the election. Registration deadlines may vary depending on the type of election and balloting:
    - (a) for ballots submitted via in-person voting at the meeting: the day before the election meeting; or if the committee chooses same day registration, no less than 1 hour before the scheduled meeting time;
    - (b) for ballots submitted by proxy or mail: no less than 14 days prior to the election meeting.



- (2) Many relevant bylaws require that membership in a particular Country Committee or local chapter automatically ceases upon a Democrats Abroad member's no longer residing within the relevant country. The career, family and other needs of many Democrats Abroad members requires that they may travel, have temporary work assignments in another country, or have more than one home. However for purposes of voter validity, the totality of the circumstances should be evaluated in determining a primary residence. Where a question of voter residency arises, a determination should include a majority affirmative of the following:
- (a) Does the voter maintain a bona-fide residential home within the relevant country? (e.g., not merely storage of items but an actual residential home address)
  - (b) Does the voter have an office or primary place of work within the relevant country?
  - (c) Does the voter have a specific personal or work telephone landline within the relevant country at which he or she can be reached?
  - (d) Does the voter have a specific personal or work mobile phone within the relevant country at which he or she can be reached?
  - (e) Did the voter spend at least a plurality of days within the past year within the relevant country? (i.e., did they at least spend more time there than in any other country?)
- b. Notification of Election Meeting
- (1) No less than 30 days prior to the election meeting, the Election Committee will notify the membership of the location and time of the meeting and a listing of positions to be elected by email and other means necessary to provide reasonable notification. The notice should include an explanation of the nominations process, methods for voting, relevant deadlines and dates. In addition to any other methods of notification, the Election Meeting Announcement must be sent to all country committee members through the Country Committee database through the Democrats Abroad website and be posted on the [www.democratsabroad.org](http://www.democratsabroad.org) Country Committee webpage.
  - (2) Voting may take place in person (by voice, show of hands or written ballot), by written proxy, by absentee ballot or any combination thereof.
- c. Nominations
- (1) The country officers to be elected are: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Legal Counsel. A country committee's bylaws may contain other offices such as Chapter Chairs, country boards, Members At-Large, etc.
  - (2) The Chair and Vice Chair must be of opposite gender. This is a Democratic Party rule and cannot be changed.
  - (3) Nominations for an office shall be made in writing by a member and seconded by another member, either in the same or separate writings sent to the Elections Committee, or from the floor of the election meeting in the case of fully in-person elections. The Elections Committee may also make nominations directly.
  - (4) Each nominee shall confirm his or her willingness to stand and serve as soon as possible after receiving a nomination.
  - (5) Nominations should be received no later than 17 days before the election. Floor nominations are allowed in fully in-person elections conducted via meeting without ballots cast via absentee or email balloting.
  - (6) If any office does not have a candidate, nominations may be made from the floor at the election meeting. However, if the committee opts for voting by mail (i.e., absentee voting) and all offices have a candidate, floor nominations are not allowed, as those voting absentee will not have the same opportunity to vote for candidates nominated from the floor and voting will already be in process.



- (7) Should a country committee wish to accept nominations from the floor for all offices (i.e., including those with nominees in place prior to the election meeting), voting can only take place in person or by proxy, noting a member may only carry two proxies. (See Section 3.9 Proxy, DPCA Charter.) The carrying of more than two proxies is not allowed under the DPCA Charter. If country bylaws contain a more liberal proxy interpretation, these should be revised to conform to DPCA policy.
  - (8) All candidates for office shall be permitted to post a statement on the Country Committee's page of the DA website ([www.democratsabroad.org](http://www.democratsabroad.org)).
- d. Ballots and Proxies
- (1) If the committee opts for voting by absentee ballot, the written ballot shall be sent by email to all members not later than 14 days prior to the election meeting. Members without email shall receive a ballot by post or hand delivery.
  - (2) The ballot should also be available for download from the country committee's page on the DA website.
  - (3) The ballot shall clearly set forth the postal address and/or email address for the return of the ballot and the date, time and location of the election meeting.
  - (4) All ballots must be signed by the voting member. This is a Democratic Party rule requiring open ballots and cannot be changed. Any voting method which does not involve a physically signed ballot must be brought to the Regional Vice Chair and International Counsel for prior approval.
  - (5) Any ballot returned by email attachment or scanned attachment must be sent from the member's registered email address and must be signed. For purposes of a ballot being deemed "signed", a voter's email signature in a typed form sufficient to identify themselves shall serve as a personal signature.
  - (6) Any ballot returned by post, hand delivery or email attachment must be received no later than the day prior to the elections meeting. Otherwise, voting must take place in person or by written proxy at the election meeting.
  - (7) A proxy shall be in writing, shall name the member to whom the proxy is given and shall be limited to voting in the election. The proxy may not be transferred by the proxy holder.
  - (8) To encourage active participation, a member shall not hold more than two proxies. This rule refers to standards set and described in the DPCA Charter and supersedes any varying number of proxies allowed in Country Committee bylaws. Country committee bylaws may also opt to disallow the use of proxy voting in elections.
  - (9) A proxy may be revoked at any time prior to the call to order of the election meeting on determination of the Election Committee or by the issuing member.
- e. Vote Counting
- (1) All eligible ballots shall be counted at the elections meeting by the Elections Committee members or its appointed tellers present at the meeting. Such verifications shall include but are not limited to:
    - (a) late registrants, which shall not be counted;
    - (b) late-submitted ballots, which shall not be counted;
    - (c) unsigned ballots, which shall not be counted;
    - (d) blank or partially blank ballots, which shall not be counted for the purposes of any position for which the ballot is blank but shall be counted for any positions for which a candidate is selected;
    - (e) ballots indicating a vote for multiple candidates where only one may be voted for shall not be counted for the purpose of that position.
    - (f) ballots submitting a non-member as a write-in candidate or submitting a write-in candidate for a position where, under the country committee bylaws a write-in candidate would not be permitted.



- (2) The candidate with the most votes shall be considered elected into the position.
  - (3) If there is a tie for an elected position, the Elections Committee shall call an immediate, on-the-spot runoff election with the participation of those present at the meeting. Proxies may again be voted if they are general to the election and not limited to a specific candidate who is not a candidate in the run-off round.
  - (4) The results of the election shall be announced at the election meeting, sent by email to the membership and posted on the website, unless a challenge has arisen.
- f. *Election Questions and Challenges*
- (1) To ensure prompt resolution of election-related concerns, Country Committee members (whether voters or candidates) should raise their questions regarding election matters to the Elections Committee at the time that such issues first arise or are discovered. Challenges to the Election Committee must be made within 15 days of the election meeting.
  - (2) The Elections Committee shall attempt to address questions and to hear and adjudicate challenges on the local level. The Elections Committee may consult with the International Counsel about the legal requirements and possible solutions to issues raised. The Election Committee (with guidance from the International Counsel) is solely responsible for resolution of such challenges. Such matters are not to be adjudicated by or interfered with by the country Executive Committee or any of its sitting or newly elected officers.
  - (3) Challenges to an election result or process may be filed by any eligible voter, should be made in writing and include a statement of the legal and factual basis for the challenge. Challenges should be filed with the Elections Committee, and a copy sent to the Regional Vice Chair, International Counsel and International Chair, no later than 15 days after the adjournment of the election meeting.
  - (4) If the Elections Committee cannot resolve a challenge to an election result or process within 15 days following receipt of the challenge, such dispute documentation shall be referred through the International Counsel and Regional Vice Chair (with a copy sent to the local Elections Committee) for adjudication to the International Chair in conjunction with the International ExCom, with options including remanding the matter for handling by the local Elections Committee, submitting to the International Counsel for a determination on legal issues, dismissal of the challenge, or, if warranted, requesting that the matter be submitted to the International Chair and Executive Committee as Formal DPCA Credentials Challenge described and outlined as a formal procedure under the Rules of Procedure of the Democratic Party Committee Abroad in addressing the challenge.

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