

## Outline Procedures for Election Voting

The cornerstone of democracy is a citizens' right to vote. Voting is used not only to select people and institutions to govern but in organizations, neighborhood associations, church councils, clubs, and societies. All familiar functions in our society but we need to understand and follow the proper procedures to exercise our vote correctly. Familiar phrases such as *majority vote*, *two-thirds vote*, *plurality vote* all refer to the numbers necessary for voting. How we vote can be stated in voice vote, rising vote, show of hands, ballot vote, machine vote, roll call, absentee vote and general consent. An outline of these terms will help you understand the mechanics of voting.

**Majority vote.** Most decisions are made using this means, which is more than half the number of voting members. No specific number is used as that varies by situation. A "simple majority" means just that. There can also be a "majority of the membership" which is the majority number of the entire membership, not just those in attendance.

**Two-thirds vote.** It is simply two-thirds of the votes cast. This type of vote can be made by voice vote, unlike a majority vote that requires a count by standing, hands, or ballots. Typically this type vote is used for motions that change/interfere with the rights of members.

**Plurality vote.** In three or more choices of candidates, plurality is the greatest number of votes for a specific candidate. If a majority vote is required for candidates, a plurality that is less than a majority cannot elect. It is not wise or democratic to elect or pass anything that receives fewer than half of the votes cast.

**Voice vote.** Simply the familiar "aye" and "no" vote.

**Rising vote.** Any two-thirds vote should be a rising vote. The presiding officer, secretary, and parliamentarian all take separate counts of those standing.

**Show of hands.** This is an alternative to a voice vote or a rising vote that is usually faster than a rising vote and more accurate than a voice vote.

**Ballot.** A vote by ballot keeps preferences secret. It can be a piece of paper that a member writes on or a printed form prepared in advance. A process for honest and accurate distribution, collection, counting, and reporting votes is essential. Ballots must be kept until there is no chance they may need to be recounted.

**Machine vote.** A mechanical ballot that is fast and accurate. It also gives students practical experience in using a voting machine for local, state, and federal elections.

**Roll call.** This vote records how each member votes and is not done in secret. Voting by a signed ballot is a variation because each member's choice is recorded.

**Absentee vote.** If a member will not be present for the vote, he or she can submit a sealed ballot vote prior to the actual vote.

**General consent.** When minutes are approved as read, they are approved by general consent. It is not used to pass a main motion, elect officers, or decide other important issues.

### Election Committee Responsibilities

#### Clearly State the Rules

- Set a specific limit on the amount of money a candidate may spend.
- Require a written disclosure of all expenses and value of donated materials to be provided before elections.
- Determine how, where, how many campaign materials can be given out or exhibited.
- Approve candidate speech or skit and set maximum time.
- Set deadline for candidates to remove campaign materials after elections.
- Hold a mandatory candidate meeting to go over rules.

#### Set a Schedule

- Use the constitution to set the election date and identify what offices are open for candidates.
- Establish a timeline of election events (such as poster hanging, meetings, speeches, rehearsals, etc.) and notify students, administration, and faculty.
- Publicize the elections.

#### Nominate

- Publish criteria for nomination to an office.
- Encourage students to run for office and distribute nomination forms.
- Review completed forms, check eligibility, and compile an official ballot slate of officers.
- Print ballots.

Source: Nat'l Assoc. of Student Councils -Officer Guides  
NASSP, 2006

## Assembly

- Determine and organize method for candidate presentations to the entire school, selected portions of the school, or through public announcement addresses.
- Plan and carry out the candidate assembly presentation. Get administration approval, inform candidates, hold rehearsals if needed, and set up any required equipment.

## Voting

- Check on use of voting machines.
- Order Scantron forms or other ballots early.
- Remind students to vote and to do so responsibly.
- Register students to vote or use a computer list of all students from the administration as a check-off.
- Plan voting schedule and place(s) to vote (home-room, gym, cafeteria, etc.)

- Contact administration and faculty to help monitor voting and counting.
- Prior to voting, select the method that will be used to announce the results.

## Follow-up

- Plan a system for clean up and to check that candidates are completing the process.
- Plan a social event/reception for all candidates after the election and encourage those who were not elected to remain involved in council activities and committees.
- Organize and produce installation ceremony of new officers.
- Thank all those that participated and helped with the campaigns and voting.
- Evaluate the process for possible improvements, changes, or additions.