

GUIDE TO PHILOPTOCHOS CHAPTER ELECTION PROCEDURES

The following guide provides detailed procedures for the local Philoptochos Chapter election of the Board of Directors and Officers of the Philoptochos Chapters of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society.

This guide on the election procedures supports the information on elections in the Bylaws of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, Inc., and is provided to assist you in the election process thereby ensuring a smooth and seamless transition of power from one Board of Directors to the next.

The guide was prepared and presented at a workshop of the 2006 National Philoptochos Biennial Convention in Nashville, Tennessee by the 2006 National Philoptochos First Vice President Maria Logus, Esq.

1. The Local Chapter Elections

A. QUESTION: WHEN SHOULD THE ELECTION BE SCHEDULED?

DISCUSSION: In accordance with the Society's Bylaws, Article V, Section 4, Paragraph 1, the election of a Chapter's Board of Trustees must be conducted in the month of May in the year prior to the National Philoptochos Biennial Convention.

This time frame was adopted to insure that the chapter president who represents the chapter at the Biennial National Convention, held in even numbered years, will be experienced and well versed in the interests and concerns of her chapter members and will therefore be able to effectively address and assess issues presented at the National Biennial Convention.

Additionally, the ratification process places great demands upon the National Office and it is absolutely necessary that all elections fall within the period specifically set aside for those tasks.

Therefore, the National Board takes a very firm position on the timing of chapter elections.

ANSWER: CHAPTER ELECTIONS MUST BE HELD IN MAY OF ODD-NUMBERED YEARS. ANY CHAPTER WHOSE ELECTIONS FALL OUTSIDE THAT SCHEDULE MUST BE VIGOROUSLY URGED TO CONFORM ITSELF WITH THE MANDATES OF THE SOCIETY'S BYLAWS.

B. QUESTION: WHAT IS IT THAT WE ARE ELECTING?

DISCUSSION: This question has a simple answer: The general membership of the chapter elects the Board of Directors. What hasn't been so simple is the **number** of Directors that need to be elected.

The Society's Bylaws, Article V, Section 3, Paragraph 1, provide that a chapter shall have a Board of Directors of not less than 7 and not more than 21 members. To determine just how many Directors your chapter should have, see below:

If the General Membership is:	Then you should elect:
Less than 20	7 Directors
21 to 49	not less than 7 and not more than 15
50 to 99	not less than 7 and not more than 17
100 to 199	19 Directors
more than 200	21 Directors

The Chapter must be careful to elect an **odd** number of Directors so that deadlocks are avoided. Additionally, please keep in mind that the immediate past president is automatically a member of the Board by virtue of her position as Advisor to the Board.

ANSWER: THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP OF EACH CHAPTER ELECTS A BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF BETWEEN 7 AND 21 MEMBERS.

C. QUESTION: WHAT HAS TO BE DONE BEFORE THE ELECTION?

DISCUSSION: Elections are more complicated than just casting a vote. There are a number of things that have to be done in advance of the election, all of which contribute to an efficient and fair election.

Four months prior to the election, a SCREENING COMMITTEE must be appointed by the Chapter President. That Committee is made up of the Chairman and 3 to 5 members. Their task is to determine the eligibility of each chapter member for election to the Board of Directors.

Prior to the election meeting, the Chapter President must also appoint an ELECTION COMMITTEE. The Committee is comprised of a Chairman and 2 tellers. They are responsible for (1) the Election Meeting itself and (2) for ascertaining whether a member can vote in the upcoming election. They should not be candidates for election; if no one is available in the chapter, look to neighboring chapters for assistance.

Notice of the election meeting must be given 30 days in advance and must be in writing.

ANSWER: FOUR MONTHS BEFORE THE ELECTION, THE PRESIDENT MUST APPOINT A SCREENING COMMITTEE. THE ELECTION COMMITTEE MUST BE APPOINTED IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING AND A 30 DAYS IN ADVANCE WRITTEN NOTICE OF THE ELECTION MEETING MUST BE GIVEN TO THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP.

D. QUESTION: WHO CAN THE SCREENING COMMITTEE QUALIFY AS ELIGIBLE FOR ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS?

DISCUSSION: The Screening Committee can only qualify those members who satisfy the requirements of the Bylaws.

The Society's Bylaws, Article V, Section 3, Paragraph 2, provide that a candidate for election to the Board of Directors must:

- a) Be a full member of the Society;
- b) Be a member in good standing with the Parish and the Chapter for one year prior to the date of election to the Chapter Board;
- c) Have attended at least 4 meeting of the chapter in the previous year, and
- d) Be present at the election meeting unless reasonable cause for such absence is provided.

These requirements insure that the candidates for election to the Board of Directors are (1) experienced members who are fully aware of chapter projects and interests; (2) women who have evidence their willingness to attend meetings on a regular basis; and (3) members who are sufficiently well known to other members so as to allow for an intelligent choice.

These provisions can only be waived in the most dire situations and requests to deviate from them should be discouraged. Any request for waiver must be made in writing to the National Board and will only be permitted where the National Board is persuaded that only a waiver will serve the best interest of the chapter.

ANSWER: A MEMBER IS ELIGIBLE FOR ELECTION TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, IF SHE IS A MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING WITH PARISH AND THE CHURCH FOR AT LEAST 1 FULL YEAR PRIOR TO THE ELECTION AND HAS ATTENDED A MINIMUM OF 4 CHAPTER MEETINGS IN THE YEAR PRIOR TOTHE ELECTION MEETING.

E. QUESTION: WHO CAN THE ELECTION COMMITTEE QUALIFY AS ELIGIBLE TO VOTE IN THE ELECTIONS?

DISCUSSION: The Election Committee is responsible for determining who, in accordance with provisions of the Bylaws, can vote in the election.

To be eligible to vote in the election for the Board of Directors, a member must have satisfied the current year's stewardship. In the case of a new member, a person can only vote if she became a member more than 3 months prior to the election meeting.

ANSWER: A MEMBER CAN VOTE IN THE ELECTION IF SHE HAS BEEN A MEMBER FOR AT LEAST THREE MONTHS PRIOR TO THE ELECTION MEETING AND SHE HAS SATISFIED THE CURRENT YEAR'S STEWARDSHIP.

F. QUESTION: SOME OF THOSE TERMS ARE CONFUSING, WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY ONE YEAR PRIOR TO THE ELECTION MEETING?

ANSWER: ONE YEAR PRIOR TO THE ELECTION MEANS THE PERIOD BETWEEN AND INCLUDING THE PREVIOUS MAY AND THE APRIL MEETING IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING THE ELECTION MEETING. IN SHORT, MAY TO APRIL, PRECEDING THE ELECTION.

G. QUESTION: ALL RIGHT, WHAT ABOUT A MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

ANSWER: BE GENTLE AND COMPASSIONATE HERE. IF THE PARISH AND THE CHAPTER CONSIDERS THE MEMBER TO BE IN GOOD STANDING, WE WILL GLADLY ACCEPT THAT EVALUATION.

H. QUESTION: WE'RE READY FOR THE ELECTION MEETING. IS THERE A MANDATORY PROCEDURE FOR ELECTIONS?

DISCUSSION: The answer requires a choice between two methods for conducting elections, (1) by a slate or (2) through nominations from the floor of the meeting. Under both techniques, the nomination process is separated from the election itself.

METHOD #1: THE SLATE: Under this procedure, as the Screening Committee determines the qualification of each member for election to the Board, it will also ascertain the member's willingness to serve. Therefore, the nominee need not be present at the nominating meeting (having already indicated an interest in running) but must nevertheless be at the election meeting.

METHOD #2: THE NOMINATIONS MEETING: Following this procedure, the candidate must be present at both the nominating meeting (so that she can accept the nomination) and the election meeting. In this scenario, the Screening Committee will have served the more limited function of only determining eligibility.

ANSWER: THE CHAPTER CAN CONDUCT THE ELECTION MEETING IN ONE OF TWO METHODS, BY SLATE OR BY NOMINATIONS.

I. QUESTION: WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE UNDER THE SLATE METHOD?

DISCUSSION: There's not much to discuss so here's the answer.

ANSWER: THE PROCEDURES UNDER THE SLATE METHOD ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. THE ELECTION CHAIRMAN VERIFIES THAT ALL MEMBERS PRESENT AT THE MEETING ARE QUALIFIED TO VOTE.
2. ELECTION CHAIRMAN RECITES THE RULES REGARDING QUALIFICATIONS FOR VOTING AND ELIGIBILITY FOR ELECTION.
3. THE SCREENING COMMITTEE PRESENTS A SLATE TO THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP.
4. THE ELECTION CHAIRMAN CALLS FOR ADDITIONAL NOMINATIONS FROM THE FLOOR.
5. AS EACH NOMINATION IS MADE AND PRIOR TO THE SECOND, THE SCREENING COMMITTEE REPORT IS CHECKED TO VERIFY THE NOMINEES ELIGIBILITY TO RUN.
6. MOTION TO CLOSE NOMINATION AND BEGIN BALLOTING.
7. BALLOTING.

J. QUESTION: ARE THERE ANY DIFFERENCES UNDER THE NOMINATIONS METHOD?

DISCUSSION: #1 AND 2 ARE THE SAME BUT THAT'S WHERE THE SIMILARITY ENDS.

ANSWER: THE PROCEDURES UNDER THE NOMINATIONS METHOD ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. THE ELECTION CHAIRMAN VERIFIES THAT ALL MEMBERS PRESENT AT THE MEETING ARE QUALIFIED TO VOTE.
2. ELECTION CHAIRMAN RECITES THE RULES REGARDING QUALIFICATIONS FOR VOTING AND ELIGIBILITY FOR ELECTION.
3. ELECTION CHAIRMAN CALLS FOR NOMINATIONS FROM THE FLOOR. A MEMBER MAY ONLY MAKE ONE NOMINATION UNTIL EACH MEMBER HAS AT LEAST ONE OPPORTUNITY TO ACT.
4. PROPOSED NOMINEE ACCEPTS OR REJECTS THE NOMINATION.
5. AS EACH NOMINATION IS MADE AND PRIOR TO A SECOND, THE SCREENING COMMITTEE REPORT IS CHECKED TO VERIFY ELIGIBILITY TO BE ELECTED.
6. MOTION TO CLOSE NOMINATIONS AND BEGIN BALLOTING.

7. BALLOTING.

K. QUESTION: NOW WE KNOW HOW TO GET THE ACTUAL BALLOTING. WHAT HAPPENS THEN?

DISCUSSION: There are a couple of twists in balloting that members should be warned about. Obviously, great caution must be taken to insure that only qualified voting members cast ballots.

The National Board therefore recommends that the secretary read the report of the Election Committee setting forth the names of the eligible voting members. As each name is called, a prepared ballot is given to the member.

Voters should be warned that voting for more than the available number of slots will cause their ballot to be invalidated. They may however vote for less.

At the close of balloting, the members should bring their ballot to the tellers and places the ballot in the box. The tellers should exercise great care that only authorized ballots are entered in the ballot box. Should an unauthorized ballot be submitted, the entire process will be invalidated.

The tellers then tabulate the results and present the results only (not the ballots) to the Election Chairman. After the results are announced, the ballots should be immediately destroyed.

ANSWER: DURING BALLOTING, THE SECRETARY CALLS THE ROLL, GIVES EACH ELIGIBLE VOTER A BALLOT WHICH IS LATER COLLECTED BY THE TELLERS WHO THEN TABULATE THE RESULTS AND PRESENT THEM TO THE ELECTION CHAIRMAN FOR ANNOUNCEMENT.

L. QUESTION: WE HAVE A BOARD, WHAT'S NEXT?

DISCUSSION: The next step is the installation of the Board which is accomplished by the administering of the Oath by the Priest.

The BYLAWS (Article V, Section 5, Paragraph 1) state that "following the election, the Parish Priest shall install the newly elected Board of Directors by administering the Oath of Office."

The Oath should be administered as soon as possible after the election. If your priest is unavailable for a short period, the chapter will not collapse and the prior administration will simply continue until the Oath is given.

ANSWER: THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE RESULTS OF THE ELECTION IS FOLLOWED BY THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE OATH BY THE PARISH PRIEST.

**M. QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT CHALLENGES TO THE ELECTION?
HOW IS IT DONE AND WHEN?**

DISCUSSION: The Bylaws permits any member to challenge or contest an election. (Article V, Section 4).

The protest must be:

1. in writing;
2. signed by the challenging member;
3. made within 7 days of the election;
4. set forth allegations of impropriety or illegality in the election process;
and
5. mailed to the National President c/o of the National Office with a copy to the Elections Chairman.

After an investigation, the National President renders a decision which shall be final and binding.

ANSWER: ANY MEMBER CAN BRING A CHALLENGE TO THE ELECTIONS WITHIN 7 DAYS OF THE ELECTION WHICH SHALL BE INVESTIGATED AND DECIDED BY THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT.

**N. NOW THAT WE HAVE ELECTED OUR BOARD, WHEN DO WE ELECT
THE OFFICERS?**

DISCUSSION:

The Officers of the Chapter (the President, First and Second Vice President, the Corresponding and the Recording Secretary, the Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer and the Advisor to the Board) are elected at a specially convened meeting of the Board immediately after the taking of the Oath. (BYLAWS, Article V, Section 5, Paragraph 2).

The meeting is conducted under the supervision of the Advisor to the Board, the immediate past-president.

Please remember that no person can serve in more than one office.

ANSWER: THE OFFICERS OF THE CHAPTER ARE ELECTED AT A SPECIALLY CONVENED MEETING HELD IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE OATH IS ADMINISTERED.

O. WHAT ARE THE RULES ABOUT ELECTING OFFICERS? ARE THERE ANY ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS, CAN ANYONE SERVE?

DISCUSSION: It's very important that you keep in mind that the Bylaws require that elected officers serve only two consecutive terms in the same office. (Article V, Section 5, Paragraph 4). This has caused great angst and sometimes unnecessary difficulty, particularly for the smaller chapter with a narrower group of candidates. Special care should be taken to make sure that new members are cultivated with a view toward becoming officers.

Many chapters have sought to have officers serve for more than the authorized period of four years. The National Philoptochos Board takes a very strong stand on this issue and will demand that all chapters comply with the provisions of the Bylaws.

In the rare instance where there is truly no other person available to serve, the National Board will entertain an application for a single, one-time waiver. The Board will further require that all other Board members sign a document indicating that no other person is available or capable of serving.

With regard to additional qualifications, only the position of the presidency has the additional requirement that the candidate have served on the Board of Trustees for two years prior to election.

ANSWER: WHEN THINKING ABOUT ELECTED OFFICERS, THE RULE OF THUMB IS AS FOLLOWS: ONLY TWO CONSECUTIVE TERMS. THE RULE ABOUT ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATION IS JUST AS EASY. ONLY THE PRESIDENT.

P. QUESTION: WE'VE ELECTED OUR BOARD, WE'VE TAKEN OUR OATH WE'VE EVEN CHOSEN OUR OFFICERS. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE?

DISCUSSION: Only ratification and it's easy.

Here comes ratification in a nutshell: After the officers are elected, the new Corresponding Secretary forwards a list of the new Directors and the new officers to the National Office. The statement must be signed by both the Election Chairman and the Parish Priest.

That's it. Now you just wait for the National Board to review the ratification application and more often than not, the notice of ratification will soon be received and finally the new board and officers are on their way.

ANSWER: THE LAST STEP IN THE ELECTION PROCESS IS THE RATIFICATION WHICH REQUIRES ONLY THAT THE CHAPTER SUBMIT A LIST OF NEW DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS IN A

STATEMENT SIGNED BY THE PARISH PRIEST AND THE ELECTION CHAIRMAN.

CONCLUSION

Well, that's the election process in a nutshell. There will surely be a chapter that will come up with what appears to be a peculiar, unique and altogether unusual situation. In those situations, establish the facts as clearly as possible, keep calm, and turn to the BYLAWS. The answer is probably in there; you just have to be willing to look and think creatively.

Please feel free to contact the National Office whenever you need to – we've probably seen any problem at least once before. We'll discuss the matter with you and together we'll come to an equitable result. Elections are an exciting process and with some patience, we can make it fair and fun.

Thank you and good luck.