

Here's Why We Ask You To... Learn

## About Lodge Elections

Some new (or veteran!) members assume that they'll see a notice posted calling for Lodge officer nominations in plenty of time to get on the ballot. But that's not required, and as a result, too many potential leaders may miss their chance. Read this now, and you won't!

> Why do we elect Lodge officers? The answer may seem obvious—to provide direction and leadership for the Lodge and its facility (the latter through their service as the House Committee). However, it's also a legal requirement: every Lodge is incorporated in the state or province in which it is located, and all those jurisdictions require the election of corporate officers.

Those legal corporate officers are President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer; our fraternal names are Governor, Jr. Governor, Administrator and Treasurer, respectively. The election of officers is essential because Lodge members are, simultaneously, electing both its corporate and fraternal officers. The corporate officers are legally responsible for the corporation that is the Lodge; they have a fiduciary responsibility (meaning that of a trusted representative) to protect and preserve its corporate assets.

Every spring, Moose members ask in their Lodge, or ask us at Moose International, about the election of officers—only to learn that it is too late to do anything until the following year.

Too many members assume that all election notices, nominations, etc., must be posted within the Lodge or published in the Lodge newsletter. And although such full disclosure of information is encouraged, the General Laws do not require it. However, notice is posted of all Lodge meetings, where election matters must be discussed; attend Lodge meetings and you will be informed.

The annual election process in every Moose Lodge must begin no later than February. The Governor first appoints a Nominating Committee of 18 members—the eight elected officers, plus the five most recent Past Governors (by order of their juniority by service in the Lodge) and five additional members who are either appointed officers, committee chairmen, or other Past Governors (either by service or honorary) of that Lodge. The names of men appointed, plus time and place of Nominating Committee meetings must be announced verbally during the last Lodge meeting in February. Additionally, a written copy of that announcement must be included in the Lodge meeting minutes.

Who is eligible to be a Lodge officer? The only requirement for the offices of Treasurer and Trustee is that the member be in good standing. For the offices of Prelate, Jr. Governor and Governor, membership of at least six months duration in that Lodge is required. And for Governor, the member must have served in another elected office (not a combination of offices) in that Lodge for a full 12-month term.

A member wanting to be considered for nomination to an elected Lodge office must submit his name to the Nominating Committee no later than one week prior to the last Lodge meeting in March—when the Committee must make its report. The Committee is to meet at least once during that week to consider members whose names have been submitted; the Committee may also, on its own, consider and recommend candidates whose names were not submitted, but who they consider qualified. The Committee should interview all prospective nominees before deciding on the nominees for each office. After making its report at the last March meeting, a written copy must be attached to Lodge minutes.

What if a member—meeting the qualifications for a given office and who submitted his name for nomination—isn't nominated at the last March meeting? He may then (and only then) begin the petition process. To run on petition, the member must have submitted his name for the specific office, again, no later than one week before the Nominating Committee's report. He may obtain a petition from the Administrator, and may run by petition only for the specific office he sought. The completed petition must be returned to the Administrator no later than one week before the day of the election; if the petition is completed correctly and contains the required number of valid signatures, the member's name should be placed on the ballot.

What constitutes correct completion of a petition, and how many signatures are required? Members who sign a candidate's petition must also print their name, their Moose identification number, and the date they sign the petition. Legibility is very important, so that the Administrator can verify that all signers of a petition are good-standing members of the Lodge. Number of signatures required depends on the number of good-standing members in the Lodge. For Lodges with 500 or fewer good-standing members, 10% of the total is required. For Lodges of more than 500 good-standing members, the required number is 10% of the first 500 (or 50), plus 5% of the number of good-standing members over 500. For example, if a Lodge has 800 members in good standing, the number of valid petition signatures is:

10% of the first 500, or 50; plus  
5% of the remaining 300, or 15,  
. . . for a total of 65 signatures.

Unless the Lodge is utilizing the "Australian ballot," the election must be held during the first Lodge meeting in April—but no less than two weeks after the report of the Nominating Committee (giving potential petition candidates at least seven days to get the signatures they need).

What's the "Australian Ballot?" If a Lodge has a significant number of members who are shift workers, it may choose to accept ballots for an extended period of hours on the day of the Lodge meeting. This is permissible only if the Lodge has voted at least two weeks prior to the regular election date to accept ballots in this manner. The election must still take place and conclude on the day of the first regular meeting in April; it cannot be conducted on any other date.

The Governor appoints an Election Committee of three good-standing members who are neither officers nor candidates for elective office. This Election Committee is responsible for the conduct of the election, for the counting of ballots, and for the safeguarding of ballots for 48 hours, in case of a written challenge. After the votes are tallied, the Election Committee prepares a report to be read, either by its Chairman or by the Governor, prior to the completion of the Lodge meeting. Again, the Administrator must attach a written copy of this report to the meeting minutes.

Copies of Moose International's new pamphlet, *So, You Want To Be a Lodge Officer?* were sent to each Lodge by the Supreme Secretary's office in the January 2003 Quarterly Certified Report mailing. Limited copies are still available on request from that office. Chapter 35 of the General Laws and the "Election of Lodge Officers Handbook" explain the election process in much greater detail, and should be available from your Lodge Administrator. If not, copies may be ordered from the Catalog Sales Department at Moose International.

Why do we ask you to be aware of, and knowledgeable about the election process in a Lodge? Because an informed member, who knows and understands the correct process will be a more supportive member, and is more likely to submit his name and become involved in the Lodge's success.

Why is this process frankly a bit involved and detailed? Because having a member become a candidate "on a lark" in anger, or during an evening in the Social Quarters, is generally not the best way to get qualified candidates on the ballot. Electing qualified leaders is crucial to the success of every Moose Lodge.