

Planning for upcoming elections



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Each year around this time, branches that are in an election year begin preparing for the process of conducting nominations and holding elections for branch offices. The methods specific to a branch's nominations and elections are set forth in the branch bylaws. The rules for conducting branch nominations and elections are found in the federal law known as the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA) and incorporated in the *NALC Constitution*.

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic has raised new challenges for state associations and branches in navigating nominations and election procedures. NALC President Fredric Rolando, on behalf of the NALC Executive Council, offered a series of measures to state associations and branches in response to the coronavirus outbreak. While the letters from President Rolando address several scenarios pertaining to overall administration, this article is intended to focus on those specific to the nomination and election functions of the state associations and branches.

The first such letter, dated March 11, 2020 – Re: Dispensation for branch and state events schedule changes due to coronavirus, provided the following in pertinent part:

For any branch or state association that decides to postpone or cancel an event scheduled in calendar year 2020 due to the coronavirus outbreak, and dictated by its by-laws, this letter will serve as dispensation to do so.

In a follow-up letter dated March 18, 2020 – Re: Extension of dispensation for all branch and state gatherings due to coronavirus, President Rolando, consistent with guidance provided by the LMRDA, provided in pertinent part the following, as it pertains to nominations and elections:

Consistent with this guidance, Branches may postpone scheduled nominations and elections without requesting dispensation from the President to do so.

Postponed nominations and elections should be rescheduled as expeditiously as possible.

State Associations may postpone scheduled nominations and elections until their next convention. Alternatively, State Associations, at their option, may permit delegates to nominate and elect officers by mail.

The full text of the referenced letters can be found in the

“Latest news & updates” section under the News & Research tab of the NALC website.

On June 1, an update regarding branch elections referencing the March 18 letter to state associations and branches was posted on the NALC website, informing branches that requests for dispensation to implement alternative election procedures should be submitted to President Rolando. In the update, branches were advised that any such alternative procedure must be consistent with the *NALC Constitution* and the *NALC Regulations Governing Branch Election Procedures*. For example, branches must ensure that an election committee is appointed and capable of supervising all aspects of the election; that all eligible active and retired members have a reasonable opportunity to nominate candidates for any office; and that all eligible active and retired members can vote by secret ballot. Branches must also have processes in place sufficient to accommodate observers.

A timely notice of nominations and election must be mailed to all members that accurately describes the alternative procedures. The notice must be mailed at least 10 days before nominations and at least 45 days before the election.

“Branches must ensure that an election committee is appointed; that all eligible active and retired members have a reasonable opportunity to vote; and that all eligible active and retired members can vote by secret ballot.”

The *NALC Regulations Governing Branch Election Procedures* provides a compliance road map to conducting elections. Branches should become familiar with election regulations well in advance of the election date. Members appointed to serve on election committees should review the procedures manual to ensure that they are properly fulfilling their role. Proper advance preparation and thorough review of the *NALC Regulations Governing Branch Election Procedures* will help ensure compliance with our democratic process.

The guide can be downloaded at nalc.org. Go to “Union Administration,” click on the Secretary-Treasurer’s page and select “Election Information.”

If any branch needs advice or assistance in developing alternative nomination and elections procedures, it may contact my office.