

AFA-CWA  
Election Handbook



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Democratic elections, with secret ballots, are at the heart of the democratic process. In theory, they legitimize both the elected leaders and the policies they advocate on behalf of the membership or populace. But rarely, in any country or organization, is the election process that simple or straightforward.

Election procedures are established so that all parties involved are aware of the rules and to ensure fairness, with all candidates required to play by the same rules. Some rules for labor union elections are required by federal law.

The Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRA) of 1959, which is commonly known as the Landrum-Griffin Act, protects the rights of union members to nominate and vote for candidates for union office, to attend union meetings, and to participate in the deliberation of union business. With respect to union elections, the Landrum-Griffin Act establishes the maximum length of office for a union officer, guarantees members in good standing the right to vote and specifically prohibits the use of union or company funds to promote the candidacy of any person running for union office.

Every union is required by the Act to incorporate these election safeguards into its constitution bylaws. If a violation of the constitution is alleged, a member can seek to enforce the union's duties through the union's constitution and bylaws internal dispute resolution procedures and, if still unresolved after exhausting that process, through the Department of Labor.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a quick reference guide for candidates and campaign workers about the rules in AFA-CWA's Constitution & Bylaws for Local Council elections. It is not intended to supplant the actual constitutional language. References are provided throughout this handbook for your convenience in locating exact language for Local Council elections in AFA-CWA's Constitution & Bylaws.

## **I. Local Council Structure**

{Article III C.}

AFA-CWA's Constitution & Bylaws provides for Local Councils to have the following elected officers: President, Vice President and Secretary. Additional officer positions designated as "Local Council Representatives" may be established by action of the Council.

## **II. Nomination and Election Process Overview**

{Article VIII; Section IX}

AFA-CWA utilizes both a paper ballot system and an electronic ballot system for officer elections and contract ratification ballots. Both means of voting outlined in our Constitution & Bylaws follow the strict guidelines set forth by the Department of Labor.

AFA-CWA's policies provide for a two-step ballot process. The first is a nomination ballot which is an electronic ballot where you indicate the name of your nominee through the search engine provided on the balloting site. Please ensure that the person you nominate wishes to serve in the position! The second step is the election ballot, which bears the names of the persons nominated who are committed to serve in that office. The nomination process is like a primary election, while the election process is like a general election.

### ***A. The Nomination Process***

{Article VIII C.1.; Section IX.F}

The nomination process begins four to five months before the start of a new term of office. A complete schedule for elections can be found on the AFA-CWA Election website [www.afacwa-elections.org](http://www.afacwa-elections.org) . The International office mails a letter of instruction, a nomination ballot and a "Commitment to Serve" statement to each active member of a local council where an election is required.

If you are an active member in good standing, you have the right to nominate one person who is committed to serve for each position being elected. It is your responsibility to determine whether your proposed candidate is committed to serve. Your candidate's name cannot be placed on the election ballot unless she or he has signed a Commitment to Serve statement or checked the block provided for this purpose on the return envelope for the nomination ballot.

You may also nominate yourself for a position by signing the "Commitment to Serve" statement and writing in your name for the office you wish to fill.

In order to appear on the election ballot, each person must have a minimum of two (2) nominations.

### ***B. Contacting Nominated Candidates***

{Article VIII C.1.f (2)}

When a member receives at least two nominations and has completed a Commitment to Serve statement, that member will automatically be placed on the election ballot. If the member has not completed a Commitment to Serve statement, the AFA-CWA Membership Services Department will contact the individual by phone and/or email. The member must contact the AFA-CWA Membership Services Department within 14 days or their name will not appear on the election ballot.

### ***C. Officers at Newly Organized Carriers***

{Article III A.2.; Article VIII C.1. a}

When a new carrier's flight attendants vote to affiliate with AFA-CWA, two transitional local council officers are appointed until a successor is elected. The term of office for the Transitional Local Council President and Secretary shall commence upon certification of the election results and expire upon certification of the election of regular Local Council Officers or three (3) years, whichever occurs first.

After an initial contract is ratified the election process for regular officers will be initiated.

### ***D. The Election Process***

{Article VIII C.2.; Section IX F, L and H}

Election ballots or electronic voting instruction and notifications are mailed to each Flight Attendant before the start of a new term of office with the names of the nominees for each Local Council office listed in alphabetical order. Where no one is nominated or only one flight attendant has indicated a Commitment to Serve, you will see a blank or only one name.

Even at this point, you can decide to be a candidate for office by announcing a write-in campaign. If a paper ballot is being used your name will not appear on the election ballot and must be handwritten in the space provided on the ballot. If the elections are being conducted via electronic ballot, the members wishing to vote for you must search for your first or last name in the search function of the online ballot system. Running a successful write-in campaign requires extra effort on your part because your flying partners will need to be informed about your candidacy.

On the count date, ballots are validated and tallied by AFA-CWA staff serving on the [Ballot Certification Committee](#). The count can be witnessed by any interested Member in good standing who attends at her or his own expense. The eligible candidate receiving the greatest number of election votes will be certified as the officer-elect. There is no requirement that the successful candidate receive a majority of the valid ballots returned.

In the event of a tie between two or more nominees in the election process, a third secret mail ballot will be circulated as soon as practical after the initial balloting is completed.

Certified election results for all category elections are mailed to successful candidates. Members may access the results via the AFA-CWA Election Website [www.afacwa-elections.org](http://www.afacwa-elections.org)

### **III. Voting Procedures**

#### ***A. Right to Vote***

{Section IX B.2}

All active members in good standing have the right to vote. Ballots or Voting Notices and Instructions are mailed to every member including those members on a leave of absence. Flight attendants with a contract, who have fallen behind on dues, can bring themselves into compliance before the ballots are counted (Paper ballot) If you were not an active member in good standing when the ballots were mailed, your status and dues standing will be verified on the count date.

If your elections are being conducted with an electronic ballot, all flight attendants in your Local will receive the Voting Notice and Instructions. While you may be permitted to cast a ballot via the telephone or Internet, your status and standing prior to the mailing will determine your eligibility. A member not in good standing during the vote can make themselves eligible by updating their status or standing. . If you have questions regarding your standing or status, please contact the AFA-CWA Membership Services Department.

You only have a right to vote in local elections in the council where you hold your membership.

#### ***B. Secret Ballot***

{Section IX F.12.b(3)}

1. PAPER BALLOT: You receive from the International Secretary-Treasurer two envelopes and a letter of instruction.

One envelope is boldly marked

"Ballot." The other is marked "Transmittal," is pre-addressed to AFA-CWA, and bears your voter identification label.

The same actions are required for both the nomination and election processes.

You put your ballot into the envelope marked "Ballot," seal it and then put the envelope into the transmittal envelope. The transmittal envelope must have your voter ID label to be valid. In case of a duplicate ballot, your legible signature and printed name must appear on the envelope.

Before opening any transmittal envelopes, the vote count process begins with verifying the eligibility of each voter.

This is why the voter ID label must not be removed or, in the case of a duplicate ballot, your signature and printed

name must appear on the transmittal envelope. During the actual count of the ballots, the transmittal envelope, the only item with identifying information, must be opened and completely separated from the Ballot envelope before the Ballot envelope is opened.

2. ELECTRONIC BALLOT: Each member receives the Voting Notification and Instructions (VNI) just prior to the polls opening. This notice contains a personal 16-digit personal activation code which allows the member to enter the ballot. A new activation is needed for all ballots. Once the activation code is entered into the ballot system, a username will be generated, the member then creates a password. Using these credentials the member then enters the ballot and casts their vote. Once a member casts a vote, that vote is final and cannot be changed..

\*\*Note: Interim participation reports will not be provided for LEC Officer Elections.

### ***C. Duplicate Ballots – Spoiled or Not Received (Paper Ballot)***

{Section IX F.7}

1. Every active member in good standing has a right to a duplicate ballot. If you did not receive a ballot, or spoiled (mismarked) your ballot, you may request a duplicate from the AFA-CWA International office, who will distribute all duplicate paper ballots or activation codes for electronic ballots.

A record must be kept of all duplicate ballots and the reason they were issued. If two ballots are received from the same AFA-CWA member, the ballot with the most recent postmarked date is counted and the earlier ballot is voided.

### ***Replacement Activation Codes (Electronic Ballot).***

2. If you did not receive the ballot packet containing the personal 16-digit activation code you may contact AFA Membership Services for a replacement. This new code will be sent from the voting system to the email address on file with AFA-CWA.

### ***D. Void or Invalid Ballots***

{Section IX F.12.b(4); Section IX L.12}

1. PAPER BALLOT: AFA-CWA's Constitution & Bylaws has a specific list of 12 violations that will void a ballot. Part of the reason for these rules is to be able to distinguish between legitimate and voided ballots. Another reason is to ensure the secrecy of the balloting process. A violation of any one of these rules will void your ballot. The most common reasons for a ballot being voided are: late postmark; improperly marked; changed vote on same ballot; unidentifiable (transmittal envelope voter ID label has been removed); and ineligibility to vote. A full list of the 12 rules can be found on page 11 of this handbook. The AFA Ballot Certification Committee shall be the sole arbiter in

ruling a ballot valid or void Section IX.F.b(5). Whenever voter intent is clear and voter secrecy is maintained,, the BCC will rule to allow as many votes as possible.

2. ELECTRONIC BALLOT: A member's status and standing are determined prior to the ballot mailing. If determined to be eligible at this time, the member remains eligible for the entire voting period. If determined to be ineligible, the member may be able to update their status or standing prior to the count, and then will remain eligible for the entire voting period. Only eligible members may cast a vote therefore there are no voided ballots during the ballot count. Once the member casts their vote, the vote is separated from the voter's credentials. Therefore, the member may not revoke during that ballot, their first vote is final.

### ***E. Ballot Certification Committee***

{Article I O.; Section IX F.12.b(2); Section IX L.9}

The votes are counted at the AFA-CWA International office by AFA-CWA staff who serves on the Ballot Certification Committee. Only AFA-CWA staff may assist the Committee during the count.

### ***F. Observing the Vote Count***

{Section IX F.12.a(2); Section IX M.8}

Any active member in good standing is allowed to be present at a vote count provided they notify the AFA-CWA International Secretary-Treasurer in advance, are present at the beginning of the count and remain until the count has been completed. The count date is printed on your ballot.

Attendance at the vote count will be at the member's own expense.

## **IV. Running for Office**

### ***A. Minimum Qualifications Necessary to Run for Local Office***

{Article III C.2}

Under AFA-CWA's Constitution, you must be an active member in good standing from the Local Executive Council at the time of nomination and election. This is the only eligibility requirement in the AFA-CWA Constitution & Bylaws.

### ***B. Duties and Responsibilities of Local Council Officers***

{Article III C.3}

The duties and responsibilities of an LEC Officer are outlined in the AFA-CWA Constitution & Bylaws. However, the role of the officers is much more than can be written into any document. Members in good standing elect officers to represent them in all union business and to be their voice at the bargaining table. The Local Executive Council is charged with managing the affairs and business of the union at the Local Council level including establishing committees, conducting membership meetings, and processing grievances, to name a few. Ultimately these responsibilities fall upon the LEC President.

As a member of the Master Executive Council (MEC) and of the AFA-CWA Board of Directors (BOD), the LEC President has the ability to shape the union at every level. MECs, the highest governing bodies at each airline, direct union activity at their respective carriers and are ultimately responsible for the direction of negotiations. The AFA-CWA BOD, the highest governing body of our union, has ultimate responsibility for the direction of our union.

The LEC Vice President works at the direction of the LEC President and, in the case of the LEC President's absence, assumes responsibility for the work of the Local Council, MEC and BOD.



The LEC Secretary assists the President in administering Local Council funds, maintaining Council records and any other duties as assigned by the President.

The Local Council Representatives (Council Reps) assist all officers of the Local Council. Council Reps shall not succeed to any vacant office in a Local Executive Council.

The role of a union officer is more than just a title; it is a whole host of responsibilities.

**\*\*NOTE:** New Officer Training will be offered in 2 separate sessions prior to taking office. A 2-day New Officer *Orientation* will be scheduled during the 2<sup>nd</sup> full week of May and the 2<sup>nd</sup> full week of November during election cycle years. The orientation session will be followed after taking office by a second session entitled New Officer *Training*. The training sessions will be scheduled during the 2<sup>nd</sup> full week of August and the last week of January during election cycle years.

### ***C. Experience and Skills Important to Being an Effective Officer***

Experience is extremely important and having held previous union positions is certainly useful. As with most other careers, you will not usually start at the top but begin in an entry level position. For AFA-CWA that means gaining experience by serving on a committee that interests you or volunteering to work in an unofficial capacity. Through hands-on experience you learn the structure of AFA-CWA and what representing your co-workers involves. Work experience from a past job or from volunteer work outside the union may well provide useful technical skills to support your candidacy. It is possible for a member with no previous AFA-CWA experience to get elected and be an effective leader, but it requires hard work and time to learn the job.

The flight attendant membership will expect a union officer to be familiar with the contract or, in the case of a newly organized carrier, with what the flight attendants hope to secure in a first contract. They will want their leaders to care about solving problems on and off the line. Understanding the carrier's goals and needs will help in working out problems with the company management.

The local council office must administer and maintain a budget, provide oversight and direction to flight attendants on local committees and ensure these committees function properly, be knowledgeable of business communications procedures, understand the functioning of office equipment, and be willing to acquire new skills at AFA-CWA leadership training seminars.

The actual job requirements will vary from council to council primarily because the size of AFA-CWA councils varies significantly. For a full understanding of the workload of your local council, you can talk with current local officers.

Finally, commitment is essential. At times, the hours are long and the challenges trying. The support of your family will be critical. If you are determined that these difficulties will not get you down and if you are dedicated to solving problems and resolving disputes, you may find union leadership very rewarding.

## ***D. Campaigning – Overview***

{Article VIII D.1}

There is no general guide for how much time is required to run a campaign or how much money a campaign will cost. Generally, the larger your council, the more work will be required if you want to win! About five to six months prior to the new term, a nomination ballot will be mailed to you. It is best for you to decide before, or very early in the nomination process, if you are going to seek office. As soon as you make your decision, let your friends and flying partners know you are interested in holding office and ask for their support.

To run an effective campaign, you will need to sacrifice a portion of your free time during the nomination and election months. Some candidates use a fellow flight attendant as a campaign coordinator to help with the work. Telephone calls, flyers, and special mailings to the members all cost money, so you will need to tap your personal funds or raise money from friends and family. Fundraising is where campaign coordinators can be a big help. Specific rules govern record keeping of campaign contributions.

Airport rules almost always require permits that specify when and where you can hand out literature on airport property. Using the U.S. Postal Service to mail campaign literature to flight attendants' homes may be an option, but will be a considerable cost at a large domicile.

There are specific AFA-CWA Constitutional rules governing the financing of campaign activities and the distribution of campaign literature. Following these rules ensures fair campaigns and election results.

## ***E. AFA-CWA's Role in Campaigns***

{Article VIII D}

AFA-CWA can help a campaign in three ways: mail campaign literature at the candidate's expense; post a written statement on the union bulletin board; and make time available at a local union meeting. At no time can the AFA logo be used in any campaign material.

### **1. Distribution of Campaign Literature {Article VIII D.1}**

Any distribution of campaign literature which uses membership rosters or mailing labels must be handled by the International office. AFA-CWA must treat all candidate requests for material distribution equally. AFA-CWA cannot discriminate among candidates. AFA-CWA must comply with all reasonable requests of a candidate to distribute campaign literature at the candidate's expense. AFA-CWA will estimate the cost of complying with the request and the candidate or the candidate's spokesperson must pay this cost before the distribution is made.

Candidates may furnish campaign material ready for mailing labels to the International office.

Nothing in the Constitution & Bylaws prohibits a candidate from distributing campaign materials on her/his own, providing that union membership rosters and mailing labels are not the source of the addresses.

## **2. Use of Union Bulletin Boards. {Article VIII D.3.b}**

a. All candidates for office must be given an equal opportunity to use the union bulletin board for a written statement. Candidate postings cannot be larger than an 8 ½" x 11" piece of paper. Postings may only contain the candidate's name, the office the candidate seeks, and a brief resume of the candidate's qualifications. This is not the place to make campaign promises or describe the differences between/among the candidates.

b. The list of qualifications that may be posted on an AFA-CWA bulletin board or **social networking site** is defined as:

- AFA-CWA elected offices held & term(s) of office
- AFA-CWA appointed committee position(s) held & term(s) of office
- AFA-CWA trainings attended
- Other union offices & positions held
- Other union trainings
- Flight attendant career; airlines, dates
- Education

The bulletin board posting is not meant to be a place for campaigning. It was developed for the members to view your qualifications. Campaign literature can be distributed by other means in accordance with Article VIII D.

## **3. Use of Electronic Communication. {Article VIII D.3.b and d}**

Members campaigning for AFA-CWA officer positions may wish to use computer forums to address issues with voting members. The use of computer forums is a legally acceptable means to provide information regarding candidates and to exchange information regarding candidates, as long as company or union funds are not being used to make use of the forum. At no time may the AFA-CWA logo be used. The AFA-CWA Constitution & Bylaws permits candidates for union office to use AFA-CWA's computer forum. However, at no time may such use be financed by AFA-CWA or company funds. The rules for using the AFA-CWA computer forum or email service can be found on last page of this handbook.

The Constitution & Bylaws also allows AFA-CWA's computer forum to post the names of candidates for LEC union office positions. The Ballot Certification Committee will post the results of each nomination ballot count onto AFA-CWA's computer forum. The posting of initial results will include the airline, council number, geographic location and detailed results of each available position with the names of all candidates that received nominations for each

position. The final certified results will be posted once the 14-day period has elapsed, and will only show the names of those candidates whose names will appear on the ballot. In the event that nomination process has failed to produce a nominee, the position will be listed followed by the message, "No candidate was successfully nominated for this position."

#### 4. Appearance at a Local Union Meeting. {Article VIII D.3.a}

Here too, all candidates must be treated equally. If Local Council is to be used for candidate debates, literature distribution or other campaign purposes, all candidates must be given equal access to the meeting. Likewise, all candidates should be notified of the planned meeting date no later than the general meeting notice. Flight pay loss for candidates may not be used for such a meeting.

#### ***F. Prohibited AFA-CWA Assistance***

{Article VIII D.2.a}

AFA-CWA's Constitution specifically prohibits the use of union funds, facilities, materials, or equipment (including use of union offices, copy machines, telephones, letterhead/AFA-CWA logo or newsletters) to promote anyone's candidacy for local office. Use of telephone lists (and unlisted numbers) where such lists are not available to the entire membership is not permitted. Current office holders are responsible for keeping their required duties distinctly separate from campaign activities. This applies both to campaign workers as well.

These are important prohibitions. AFA-CWA members want to know that their dues are dedicated to running the union – negotiating contracts and filing grievances, securing job protection, communicating important information to the membership, and protecting aviation safety.

#### ***G. Prohibited Employer Assistance***

{Article VIII D.2.b}

AFA-CWA's Constitution also prohibits use of employer funds, facilities, materials or equipment in anyone's candidacy. This prohibition refers to any employer of a candidate, not just the airline.

Where there is an established, pre-existing practice at a carrier of permitting all flight attendants employed by the carrier to have uncensored, nondiscriminatory access to company mailboxes for the purpose of communicating with other flight attendants generally (and not merely for communication of union election campaign materials), company mailboxes may be used for the distribution of campaign materials.

All AFL-CIO unions are free and democratic and legally separate from management. Perception of improper influence can be nearly as important as the actual use of improper influence. Employees have the right to run their own unions, free of company influence.

### ***H. Fundraising***

#### 1. Solicitation for Contributions {Article VIII D.2.c}

You may seek contributions for your campaign from your fellow flight attendants, friends and family. The only prohibitions on soliciting funds refer to union or corporate funds and material assistance. Soliciting contributions would be subject to the same restrictions described for campaigning activities.

#### 2. Maintaining Records {Article VIII D.2.c}

If you solicit funds from others, or if people supporting your campaign solicit funds from others, a record of all collections and disbursements must be maintained. Should questions about your campaign finances arise in the future and you have to produce your records, it will be essential that these financial records are complete, well-organized and accurate.

### ***I. Conclusion***

We hope that this handbook will be helpful throughout the nomination and election process at your Council. If questions arise that you cannot get answered at the local level, you may contact the AFA-CWA International Secretary-Treasurer for assistance.

### **What Voids a Paper Ballot?**

{Section IX F.12.b.(4)}

1. The voter cannot be identified on the transmittal envelope. Removal of the voter ID label voids the ballot.
2. There is no member signature on the transmittal envelope for a duplicate ballot.
3. The transmittal envelope has been opened or tampered with.
4. The flight attendant is ineligible to vote because she or he is in bad standing (dues are delinquent).
5. The flight attendant has ceased paying dues because she or he is off the line on an extended medical or other leave and has not chosen to leave and remain active (i.e., continue to pay dues).
6. The ballot was received after the count was completed.
7. The ballot was not marked according to the instructions on the ballot.
8. The ballot was signed or identifiable as from a specific person.
9. The voter wrote comments, drawings or other notations on the ballot which were not specifically required by the

ballot instructions.

10. There were written notations on the ballot envelope or the ballot for the Committee's attention.
11. The ballot was not enclosed in a separate ballot envelope.
12. The ballot was postmarked after the postmark deadline, known as the postmark date.

### **AFA-CWA Computer Forum and Email Blast Rules:**

1. Email blasts must be written and proofed by the candidate. AFA-CWA will not edit for grammatical errors or design errors.
2. AFA-CWA will not lay out the design or provide any assistance in layout.
3. AFA-CWA will review the document to ensure compliance with the AFA-CWA Constitution & Bylaws and that the document does not contain the AFA logo.
4. The current fee per email is \$75.00 and must be paid prior to the email being sent to the membership.
5. The fee must be paid via the AFA-CWA website: Dues Payment Site.
6. The email blast once received and paid for, will be sent within two business days. Specific times cannot be established for the emails to be sent.
7. Email blasts will only be sent to the members with deliverable addresses on AFA-CWA International lists.

### **Using the EMAIL BLAST**

- Send your document to [bkenia@afanet.org](mailto:bkenia@afanet.org).
- All documents must be received in one of the following formats: PDF or WORD . If possible, campaign message documents should be converted to PDF format in order to maintain the desired fonts, colors, images and other formatting. AFA-CWA will not be responsible for formatting changes from documents created on different computers or different computer programs if not converted to PDF.
- Provide an email address that will be used within the email blast for members to contact the candidate.
- The **\$40\*** fee must be paid via the AFA-CWA website: [www.afacwa.org/payment](http://www.afacwa.org/payment)
- The email will be sent in the order it was received.

**\*Please note the reduction in fee charged to send a campaign email blast.**