TO:    ALA Executive Board

RE:    Election Process Task Force

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:
For information only

CONTACT PERSON:
Courtney L. Young, chair, Election Process Task Force

DATE: April 1, 2016

BACKGROUND:
Update on the work of the task force.

ATTACHMENTS:
Election Process Task Force

The charge of the task force is to review the process for conducting ALA elections and make recommendations for new and/or revised policies as needed. The review might include but is not limited to:

- The timing of the election process, from the time of eligibility (or the work of the Nominating Committee) through the final counting of ballots, including the length of time people may self-nominate.

- Review and possible revision of ALA information on ALA nomination vs. self-nomination process.

- Review and possible revision of the number of names needed on petitions by petition candidates.

- Review and possible revision of the content of communication, regarding confidentiality during Nominating Committee correspondence with potential nominees.

The task force has met three times since being appointed. Once during the ALA Midwinter Meeting in Boston, MA, and via conference call in February and March. The task force has also worked via a closed task force listserv. JoAnne Kempf and Lois Ann Gregory-Wood also provided us with a number of documents from past groups tasked to tackle similar issues to provide additional context for our work.

At our initial meeting, we discussed our charge and prioritized our work. We framed our discussion in a very practical way: What problem are we trying to solve?

1. "Review and possible revision of the number of names needed on petitions by petition candidates."

The task force members considered the current policy regarding the minimum number of names (signatures) needed to run by petition for ALA President-elect, ALA Treasurer, and ALA Councilor-at-large. The majority of task force members felt 25 was still an appropriate number for those seeking to run by petition for Councilor-at-large. When we make our recommendations to the board in our report during the ALA Annual Conference in Orlando, we will not recommend a change to this number.

We were, however, split on the minimum number of names (signatures) needed to run for ALA President and ALA Treasurer. Some felt a higher number would be more appropriate given the responsibilities of the positions. Others also factored in the work of the Nominating Committee to bring forward two candidates. While some potential signature numbers were mentioned, ranging from one hundred to one thousand, the task force asked JoAnne Kempf provide the group with some petition signature data to inform its potential recommendation. We will affirm our recommendation during our next conference call and forward that information in our final report.
2. "Petition versus nominated candidates."

The task force agreed that after the initial announcement of a candidate running by position for ALA President-elect or ALA Treasurer, there was no need for any other communications to indicate the candidate is a petition candidate. JoAnne has sent us several ALA officer candidate information documents. We considered ways to make it clear how these paths to nomination differ with regards to becoming a candidate and the relevance of that path once someone is a candidate. The task force recommended the press release for any petition candidates be enhanced for equity. JoAnne Kempf put together a draft of such a release for the task force to review.

The task force also felt any candidate documentation on the ALA Election Information page could be enhanced to clarify the petition process and how it does or does affect the "type" of candidate. The chair feels this could also make for a very good infographic.

3. "Review and possible revision of the content of communication, regarding confidentiality during Nominating Committee correspondence with potential nominees."

Much of our discussion in this area was related to the need for confidentiality and its impact on the Nominating Committee doing its work effectively. This is of particular concern with potential candidates for President-elect. Larry Neal, Tyrone Cannon, Barbara Ford, and Aaron Dobbs volunteered to 1. review the current process (as informed by our conference call conversation) and bring recommendations to the task force and 2. review a new script for contacting prospective candidates and make any recommendations. The small group made several recommendations that were affirmed by the task force. These will be included as a part of our final report.

4. “Election Time Line”

In our investigation of the election time line, the task force members were particularly interested in the deadline for running as a petition candidate for ALA President-elect and ALA Treasurer; time between the end of voting and the announcement of winners; length of the open voting period; announcement of nominated candidates.

JoAnne Kempf provided us with a time line for the nomination and election process as it currently stands. This provided us with a picture of the process allowing us to make recommendations that do not "break" the process in such a way to cause unforeseen disruption to the work of ALA staff, particularly as it relates to Division and Round Table candidates.

There was agreement the deadline for running by petition should be the same for ALA President-elect, Treasurer, and Councilor-at-large.

The task force felt this would be the most challenging, complex, and critical part of our discussions and recommendations. We have begun our conversation on the time line via email and will have a thorough discussion of it during our next conference call, scheduled for April 25, 2016.
A common question about the election process is "why does it take a week to get election results?" JoAnne Kempf checked with SBS, the ballot company, regarding how long it takes to get results once the ballot has closed. The SBS contact provided a very thorough answer noting “the length of time to complete the ALA election reports can be summed up by saying, it is an extremely large election with many different moving parts to it.” Major contributors to this include “size and complexity given the number of ballots, candidates, bylaws, and write-ins” and “Officers ballot Report and Division/Section/Round Table reports are sorted into their separate files for delivery to ALA, in a manner for ALA to distribute to appropriate Directors.”

5. “Candidate Endorsements”

We had a lively discussion regarding candidate endorsements. There was agreement any endorsements taking place on an ALA email listserv should come from an individual and only be signed using that person's name. If they want to add credentials, they may include "ALA Personal Member". Guidelines or tips might want to suggest those writing such a message double check their email signature settings to avoid accidentally adding any ALA leadership affiliation credentials.

Many task force members also felt there should be a very clear list of those who cannot endorse a candidate when they are in a particular role. This list includes:

Current ALA President
Current ALA President-elect
Current ALA Immediate Past President
Current ALA Executive Board members
ALA Nominating Committee chair
ALA Nominating Committee members
All ALA Staff

A question was raised whether the list of those who cannot endorse should include members currently seated on any elected board across the association (divisions and round tables). The task force will discuss this question during an upcoming conference call.

Respectfully submitted,

Courtney L. Young, chair
Tyrone Cannon
Aaron Dobbs
Tyler Dzuba
Barbara Ford
Sarah Ann Long
Larry Neal
Jim Rettig
J. Linda Williams

JoAnne Kempf, ALA Staff Liaison
Lois Ann Gregory-Wood, ALA Staff Liaison