

**TO:** ALA Executive Board

**RE:** ALA Election Process

**ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:**

Information Report

**ACTION REQUESTED BY:** N/A

**CONTACT PERSON:** ALA President-Elect Julie Todaro, [jtodaro@austincc.edu](mailto:jtodaro@austincc.edu)

**DRAFT OF MOTION:** N/A

**DATE:** October 16, 2016

**BACKGROUND:**

This document is intended to summarize election process issues that I feel have a negative outcome on ALA and the election process. These issues are representative of numerous discussions I have had with Jamie Larue and a few discussions I have had with Joe Janes. These opinions are not intended to represent them specifically nor anyone else but I DID have a number of discussions – both before and after the election with others who supported some of these ideas and had other issues to share as well. Also, while I am sure that these guidelines were critical at one time – I suggest that we look through the lens of an “all electronic” election since all balloting take place electronically and – I was told – there are a miniscule number of votes that have come in “in print” in recent years.

Please also note that some of these ideas are “we already do this” ideas; however, because some of these issues are reoccurring, there may be enhanced or different ways of carrying things out. Also note, I don’t have solutions for all of these!

**1. The length of voting time is too long. (This coming year is a 5 weeks and I think 4 is better and not ever more than 4.)**

Why does voting “go on” for so long? We feel shaving at least one or two weeks off the process will bring in the same number of votes. I also asked about when the largest number of votes are cast and the largest numbers are NOT in the last two weeks. I think the # of reminder emails can be the same, however, just not spread out over 5 or 6 (?) weeks. The thought is also that a shorter timeline gives the successful candidate more time to make cost effective travel plans to ALA. This is especially important because candidates are told that there really aren’t roles and responsibilities for newly elected because they don’t “take over” their position until after Annual; however, I received a very full and valuable schedule of suggested events for ANNUAL to attend – all of which were very helpful in me getting a quicker start and so much so, that I would tell successful candidates that they SHOULD absolutely attend a few events such as a Council, observation at Board, etc.

- 2. The length of time people may self-nominate is too long – up to 1/29.** (Or is it that member groups are instructed to be fair and they must hear from all candidates equally?...that is, I had some say to me “I can’t schedule you until we hear from all candidates...then when they didn’t hear from someone because the candidate chose not to contact that group...they would say...well, we will reach out to them because we have to hear from all of you...then it was often Midwinter before the times were settled – if then.)

This timeline is from fall (end of September or even before that) for self-nomination – through the end of Midwinter. What happens is that ALA groups and library press want to be fair (understandably) so the ALA candidates end up waiting for times for “speaking at Boards, etc” until the last minute so all candidates can have a shot at speaking (even though I was often the only one who contacted them) AND I ended up speaking, then completing an entirely new set of answers to questions if not all candidates showed up AND I ended up answering multiple sets of questions for online forums such as blogs. So – yes, I wanted to run and to win, but the effect of multiple candidates is that our members want comparisons so candidates who “hang in there” often answer the same questions in person, in writing, etc. multiple times.

The question for me is “why through the end of midwinter?” A Council issue? If someone waited until the last day of Council they don’t get to take advantage of any forums anyway. So – because everyone is urged to be completely fair and hear everyone out, that’s fine, but then the repetition is not fair on earlier candidates.

Theoretically one should be able to throw one’s name in the hat at any time, but if the “voters” are instructed to be equitable for all candidates, it ends up being “Ground Hog’s Day.”

**3. Lack of clarity on ALA nomination (individual) vs. self-nomination (individual)**

Believe it or not, I must have answered the following question (phrased a few different ways) 20 times. AND I’m talking about these (almost exact) questions coming from ALA groups ... (read like Roseanne Roseannadanna)

- So are you an ALA candidate or not?
- Are you a “real” candidate or not?
- What’s the difference between an “ALA” candidate and the other candidate (self-nomination?)
- Does it matter if you are a “real” candidate or not?
- Which one of you is which? Does it matter?

I think the ALA Governance/Elections website <http://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/alaelection/> has good information but perhaps a little more careful narrative about “the difference” in the process. Providing more narrative – especially since we now have petition candidates more regularly – would be helpful and then we could refer people to that information. Perhaps in the form of a FAQ separate from the roles and responsibilities FAQ information posted now?

And someone else suggested (and I don't know how it could be done OR if I think it's appropriate) "What if the press releases could distinguish between ALA candidates and petition candidates more than they do?"

**4. Number of names needed by petition candidates**

Twenty-five names seems to be too few to require as a minimum. I think more names are needed to run for other ALA areas. In addition, I can't tell if the same 25 people could also sign another petition as well.

**5. Scripts needed by committee for clarity of contacts with possible nominees**

While I think verbal sharing from chair to chair is excellent and there are numerous opportunities for them to discuss how to handle situations, I think an FAQ or scenario in writing that gives wording is needed. While it was completely clear to me that someone was asking me to put my name in for consideration by the committee ...others have told me that their exchange was NOT as clear....in fact, couldn't a follow up email be even better? It could repeat it in clear language and if someone felt they could not answer questions as needed, a specifically-worded follow-up email would work as well.

Also – an issue I was asked to add, even though "it's America" and it might never be appropriate to change...

**Petition candidates "can" know who they are running against, but ALA candidates do not know.** Is it possible to alter that? And I'm sure there are MANY ways to alter that, such as, a short list of names given to the person being asked? Rather than "you are being asked to run against x," a short list of "possible names" might also assist with the fact that may say "no" when asked....or a profile..."you are being asked to run against another academic or public or school, etc.

There may be other issues but I think we can easily do some of these, others maybe or maybe not and some absolutely NOT, but at least we can start a discussion I know we have had before but might be time to have again.