



The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order – USA

Regional Fraternity Election Procedures

The National Minister of the Secular Franciscan Order, per Article 67 of the OFS General Constitutions, has responsibilities regarding Elections and Visitations for Regional Fraternities. If unable to be present for the Region's Chapter of Elections, the National Minister may delegate someone to preside. The following election procedures were developed to assist both the Presider and the Regional Fraternity. These guidelines can be adapted for Local Fraternity Elections.

Review of Essential Documents: All who participate in a Chapter of Elections should be familiar with the sections regarding elections in the General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order (GC), the National Statutes of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States of America (NS), and the Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order (Ritual).

Nominations: It shall be the duty of the Nominations Committee to ensure that each candidate meets the qualifications for the office for which she or he is proposed, has reviewed the duties of that office, and is willing to serve if elected. (NS 11.3) The Presider will review all nominations, including those from the floor, to make sure they conform to the requirements outlined in the GC and NS.

During the elective Chapter, the Presider will make three calls for nominations. Ideally, if the elective Chapter is held over a period of time, the first and second calls are made early on, and are calls for nominations to *any* position. If time is limited, all three calls can be made immediately prior to the vote for that position. In any case, a final call for nominations to a particular office must be done *immediately before* the vote is taken for that position.

Only the voting members may make nominations from the floor.

Candidates nominated from the floor must be present to accept the nomination, or alternatively a dated and signed letter from the nominee indicating both the *willingness to run and acceptance of the election if elected*, must be presented upon nomination. A phone call to the nominee to confirm acceptance of the nomination and a second phone call after the election to determine acceptance of election, is also acceptable.

Preparations for the Election

The Region is asked to provide the following:

- A copy of the required audit, or financial review (Note: This document remains with the records of the Region after review by the Presider)
- A copy of Regional Guidelines for the Presider
- A copy of the Ritual for the Secretary of the Election
- A head table with 4 chairs facing the assembly

- A chalkboard, dry erase board, flipchart or similar, in view of everyone, on which to write the names of candidates for each office and to tally votes
- A large supply of *blank paper* for ballots (It is suggested you cut 8.5x11 paper into quarters to get approximately 4 x 5.5-inch ballots)
- Two baskets or other containers in which to collect the ballots
- A list of those eligible to vote (“roll call” list)
- Copies of the Ritual and the Creed for the members of the new council during the installation, or copies of an adapted installation ritual (refer to the Preface of the Ritual of the OFS, 4.21, page 7-8.)
- Several copies of the Report of Elections and the Ballot and Vote Count forms. (These can be downloaded from the OFS-USA website.)

Chapter of Elections

To begin the Chapter of Elections, the outgoing Regional Minister turns the meeting over to the President of the Elections.

The Presider prepares for the Election:

1. Greets the members of the Region. If applicable, the letter of delegation should be read.
2. Introduces the Ecclesial Witness. If applicable, the letter of delegation should be read.
3. Calls forward the members of the outgoing Executive Council and expresses appreciation for their service.
4. Separates voters from non-voters, rearranging seating as necessary.
5. Appoints a Secretary of the Election and two Tellers and directs them to their places at the head table. Note: these positions are filled by three professed *voting members* of the Chapter of Elections (GC 76.4.)
6. Asks the outgoing Secretary to provide the Secretary of the Elections the list of the voting members of the fraternity.
7. Ensures that the Secretary of the Election has the Report of Elections and the Ballot and Vote Count forms, and a copy of the Ritual.
8. Asks the Secretary of the Elections to call the roll; verifies that those called are eligible to vote; that all those eligible to vote were called; assures that there is a quorum; and assures “the broadest elective base” (GC Art.77.2.)
9. Establishes the number of votes needed for an absolute majority (half plus one), and the number needed for a 2/3’s majority, and directs the teller to write those numbers where all can see them clearly.
10. Explains National Statutes Art. 8.6 & Art. 28 as follows: A newly elected Council member, if not already a voter, immediately joins the electorate; and in that case it may be necessary to adjust the number needed for a majority vote on the next ballot.
11. Reviews with the electorate which positions on the council are being filled during this election as per the particular Region’s Guidelines.
12. Announces that should someone have a question about the fairness of what takes place they should speak up immediately, not after all is said and done.

13. Reminds everyone (1) that the election will begin with prayer after which there should be silence, (2) that if someone needs to leave the room during the election they need to inform the Presider and (3) asks all to hold applause until the election is confirmed by the Presider.

Prayer and Reflection Prior to Elections

- The time of prayer might begin with a song or prayer invoking the Holy Spirit.
- **The Ecclesial Witness** shares a selection from the Scripture or Writings of Francis and gives a homily, reflection or instruction.
- The **Presider** may give a brief reflection on the importance of this elective chapter for the life of the fraternity and the Order.
- **The Presider** leads the opening prayer from the Ritual (as on Page 41 or adapted) and calls for silence.

The Election proceeds as follows:

1. The Presider announces the election for each position, beginning with Minister.
2. The Presider asks one of the Tellers to write the names of those nominated on the board and directs the Secretary to write those names on the Ballot and Vote Count form.
3. The Presider asks three times for additional nominations from the floor.

Note: Depending on the schedule, the first and second call for nominations from the floor could be made earlier in the day, or the day before the elections. In any case there must be a total of three calls, with the final call coming just prior to the election for each position.

4. The Presider confirms that those nominated from the floor accept the nomination and are eligible to be elected to office.
5. The names of those nominated from the floor are added to the board by the teller, and to the Ballot and Vote Count form by the Secretary.
6. After the final call for nominations the Presider announces that the nominations are closed.
7. The Presider asks the nominees if they understand the responsibilities for the position they have been nominated for.
8. The Presider invites those nominated from the floor to address the voters as to their qualifications.

9. The Presider determines if any nominees are running for a third term in the same Council position, and if so announces that a 2/3's majority is required on the first ballot for their election.

10. The Presider asks a Teller to count out loud the number of ballots needed.

Note: it is helpful to have the ballots in pre-counted stacks, but for each election the ballots *must* be counted out loud *immediately prior* to distribution.

11. The Presider instructs the Tellers to distribute the ballots to the voters, including themselves and the Secretary of the Election.

12. The Presider instructs the voters to clearly write *one name* on the ballot, fold it over once, noting that ballots which are not clearly marked will not be counted.

13. After the ballots are marked the Tellers collect the ballots. One teller returns to the head table and – without opening the ballots - counts out loud the total number of folded ballots.

14. After the ballots are counted, one Teller opens each ballot and reads the name out loud; the second Teller marks tallies on the board in view of all; and the Secretary records the tallies on the Ballot and Vote Count form. The Presider and Ecclesial Witness confirm the names on the ballots and the tallies as they are recorded.

15. If there is an absolute majority (1 more than half the possible votes) there is an election. (Note: A two-thirds majority is needed for those running for a third term.) If there is no absolute majority on the first ballot the Presider directs all to proceed with a second ballot, repeating the steps above.

16. If no one receives an absolute majority on the second ballot the Presider directs all to proceed to a third ballot, however *only the two candidates who received the most votes on the second ballot* are candidates on the third ballot.

17. If there is a tie after the third ballot, the senior by profession is deemed elected; if both candidates were professed on the same day, the senior by age is deemed elected.

18. The Presider announces when an election has occurred. The Secretary announces the name of the person elected, according to the OFS Ritual (Ritual, page 42.) The Presider asks the newly elected Council member to stand and asks if he/she accepts the election (Ritual, p. 42.) The Presider then confirms the election (Ritual, p. 42). The Secretary of the Elections records each election on the Report of Election.

19. The newly elected Council member, if not already a voter, joins the electorate (cf. National Statutes Art. 8.6 & Art. 28) and the Presider confirms once again the number needed for an absolute majority (half plus one.)

20. The elections continue, following the same procedure as above for the positions of Vice-Minister, Secretary, Treasurer and Councilors, as well as Director of Formation, if an elected position.

Note: An absolute majority of votes of those present are required for the election of *each position* on the Council, per OFS National Statutes 14.4.

21. After all the positions are elected, the Presider thanks all who ran for office and asks for a motion to destroy the ballots.
22. Installation of the new council follows, ideally within 24 hours of the election.
23. The outgoing Executive Council members arrange for the transfer of files, records and other material to the new Executive Council.
24. If possible a photo of the new Council is taken to be included with announcement of election, and a photo of the new Regional Minister is taken and sent to the National Secretary.

Election Reporting:

At the completion of a Chapter of Elections for a Region the following steps take place:

1. The Secretary of the Election completes the Report of Election with the name, address, phone number and email address of each new Regional Council member. The report is then signed by the Secretary of the Election, the Presider, the Ecclesial Witness and the Tellers.
2. The Ballot and Vote Count form is attached to the Report of Election.
3. The Secretary of the Election provides a hard copy of the Report of Election, including the Ballot and Vote Count form, to the Presider of the Election. (Note: if a copy machine is not available, a second original can be made.) The original Report of Election, including the Ballot and Vote Count form, is retained by the Region.
4. The Presider of the Election, as soon as possible, emails the Report of Election to (1) the members of the National Executive Council, (2) the National Commission Chairs and (3) each member of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA.) This can be done by scanning the original, or by typing out the information.
5. The Presider of the Election, as soon as possible, mails the hard copy of the Report of Election, with the attached Ballot and Vote Count form, to the National Election and Visitation Coordinator¹.

¹ The National Election and Visitation Coordinator is an elected member of the National Executive Council appointed to this position by the National Minister.

6. The National Election & Visitation Coordinator files the Report of Election and maintains a record of Regional Elections for the National Fraternity.

Addendum – National Secretary Duties

The National Secretary has the following additional responsibilities:

- a) Ensures that the new Regional Minister (RM) is invited to join the NAFRA-L and NAFRA-RM Listservs, and that the new Regional Vice-Minister (RVM) is invited to join the NAFRA-RVM Listserv.
- b) Contacts the new RM and RVM; provides them with information relative to joining the Listservs; and later verifies that they have joined their respective Listservs.
- c) After confirming that the new RM has joined the Listservs, announces the new RM to the National Fraternity via the NAFRA-L.
- d) Contacts the NAFRA Database Coordinator to update the Region's information in the National Database i.e., names of newly elected Council and Date of Election.
- e) Contacts the OFS Facilitator for 1-800-FRANCIS and provides contact information for the new Regional Minister and the new Formation Director of the Region
- f) Updates the National Directory.
- g) Sends a Report of Election to the Secretary of the CNSA