



GUIDE TO PHILOPTOCHOS CHAPTER ELECTION PROCEDURES

**The Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society, Inc.
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The goal of this handbook is to address frequently asked questions and to assist Philoptochos chapters in conducting smooth, transparent elections and to do it in an informal question and answer format. If, after reviewing the handbook, you have additional questions, please forward your inquiries in writing or by email to the National Philoptochos Office and we'll respond as soon as we can.

This guide will also be posted on the Society's website, at www.Philoptochos.org and we hope that you will check there for any additions or corrections.

The goal of chapter elections is to smoothly transfer authority from one Board of Directors to another.

Speaking very broadly, chapter elections involve a ten step process. Before we go on to more particularized questions, let's review those steps.

- Step 1: Elections shall be conducted in the month of May.
- Step 2: Four months prior to the Election meeting, the Screening Committee is appointed. Their task will be to determine who is eligible to serve as a Board member.
- Step 3: The Election Committee is appointed. The Election Committee will determine who may vote in the election. The Committee Chair will also preside at the Election meeting.
- Step 4: Thirty days (30) before the Election Meeting, written notice of the meeting is given to all members of the chapter.
- Step 5: The Election meeting is held and the chapter Board is elected. Please remember that you must have an odd number of members on the Board for voting purposes.
- Step 6: Within 14 days of the election of the chapter Board, the names of the newly elected Board members are sent to the National Office for ratification.
- Step 7: The Parish Priest and the Election Chairman must sign and submit the Election Cover form at the same time as the newly elected Board list in order to be ratified.
- Step 8: Upon written receipt of ratification by the National Office, the Parish Priest administers the Oath of Office.
- Step 9: The newly sworn in Board shall convene to elect the chapter Officers.
- Step 10: The list of Officers will be sent to the National Office. Please keep in mind that the term of office is for two years and an elected officer cannot hold the same position for more than two consecutive terms.

With that outline in mind, let's now turn to some of the most commonly asked questions about elections.

When should a chapter schedule the election meeting?

The Society's Bylaws, Article V, Section 4, Paragraph 1, require that the "Chapter Board shall be elected at a general meeting, held for that purpose, in the month of May, in the year prior to the National Philoptochos Biennial Convention."

The reasons for setting this narrow time frame are twofold:

- First, the schedule was adopted to insure that the chapter president who represents the chapter at the National Philoptochos Biennial Convention, held in even numbered years, will be experienced in her role and will be able to provide meaningful representation to her chapter, as she effectively evaluates issues presented to the convention.

- Second, the ratification process places great demands on the National Office and it is **absolutely necessary** that elections fall within the period reserved for that purpose.

For these reasons, the National Philoptochos Board adopted a very firm position on this issue and chapters whose elections fall outside the prescribed period must be vigorously urged to conform to the stated schedule.

How many Directors should a chapter elect?

The total number of members in your chapter determines the number of Directors to be elected. Article V, Section 3, Paragraph 1 of the current Bylaws provides that a chapter shall have a Board of Directors “with an odd number of Directors of not more than twenty one and not less than seven members.” That section further provides that:

<u>If the general membership is:</u>	<u>The chapter shall elect:</u>
Less than 20	7 Directors
21 to 49	not less 7 and not more than 15 Directors
50-99	not less than 7 and not more than 17 Directors
100 to 199	19 Directors
More than 200	21 Directors

Please note that the immediate past president is a member of the Board of Directors by operation of the Bylaws. Accordingly, the number of Directors to be elected is usually one less than the number authorized.

What has to be done before the election?

There are a number of things that need to be done in advance of the election meeting, all of which contribute to a fair election process.

4 months prior to the election, the President must appoint a Screening Committee. The Screening Committee is responsible for determining whether a member is eligible for election to the Board of Directors. (Article V, Section 4, Paragraph 2b).

Prior to the election meeting, the Chapter President must also appoint an Election Committee, comprised of a Chair and two tellers, none of whom may be a candidate for election to the Board. The Election Chair shall also act as the Presiding Officer at the Election Meeting. (Article V, Section 4, Paragraphs 2c and 2d).

Finally, notice of the Election Meeting must be given, in writing to all members, 30 days prior to the date of the Election Meeting. (Article V, Section 4, Paragraph 2a).

Who can the Screening Committee declare as eligible to serve as a Director?

The Screening Committee can only declare those members who satisfy the requirements of the Bylaws, as eligible to serve on the Chapter Board. Article Section 3, Paragraph 2, of the Bylaws provides that a

candidate for election to the Board of Directors must be a full member of the Society, who is in good standing with the Parish and the Chapter for one year prior to the election; and who attended at least 4 meetings of the chapter in the year prior to the Election Meeting.

These requirements insure that the candidates for the Board of Directors are: 1) experienced members who are fully aware of chapter projects and interests; 2) women who have demonstrated their willingness to attend meetings on a regular basis; and 3) members who are sufficiently well known to other members so as to allow for an intelligent choice.

In order to be elected the member must also be present at the Election Meeting unless reasonable cause for the absence is shown. What constitutes reasonable cause for the absence is left to the discretion of the chapter, but caution should be taken to not render the requirement meaningless.

The Bylaws can only be waived in the most extreme circumstances. A request for waiver must be in writing and will be approved only when the National Board is persuaded that only a waiver of the Bylaws will serve the best interest of the chapter. Waivers should be a rarity.

Finally, always keep in mind that a person may be a member of more than one chapter, but can only serve on the Chapter Board of one chapter. (Article V, Section 3, Paragraph 3)

Some of those terms are confusing. For the purpose of determining who may serve as a Director, what do you mean by one year prior to the elections meeting?

One year prior to the election has been interpreted to mean the period between and including the previous May meeting and the April meeting immediately preceding the Election Meeting. It does not include the Election Meeting itself.

With respect to the qualifications to serve as a Director, what does a “member in good standing” mean?

At the very least, a member in good standing is one who has fulfilled her financial commitment to Stewardship for the current year. The Bylaws provide that member’s financial commitment to membership “shall be fulfilled on a Fair Share Christian Stewardship basis according to each member’s faithfulness and willingness to give.” (Article V, Section 10, Paragraph 1)

Good standing may bring other issues to mind. Our recommendation is to be gentle and compassionate here. If the parish considers the member to be in good standing, we gladly accept that evaluation.

Who can the Election Committee qualify as eligible to vote in the elections?

The Election Committee is responsible for determining whom, in accordance with the provisions of the Bylaws, can vote in the elections.

To be eligible to vote in the election for the Board of Directors, an existing member must have fulfilled her financial commitment to Stewardship for the current year. We’ve just discussed that, but it bears repeating that a members’ financial commitment to membership “shall be fulfilled on a Fair Share Christian Stewardship basis according to each member’s faithfulness and willingness to give.” (Article V, Section 4, Paragraph 3)

We're ready for the Election meeting. Is there a mandatory procedure for elections?

No, there is no mandated procedure. In practice however, the chapter has a choice between two methods for conducting elections. 1) through nominations from the floor of the meeting; or 2) with a prepared slate. Under both techniques, the nomination process is separate from the election itself.

#1: The Nominations Method: Following this procedure, the candidate must be present at both the nominating meeting (so that she can accept the nomination) and the election meeting. In this scenario, the Screening Committee will have served the more limited function of only determining eligibility.

#2: The Slate Method: With this procedure, at the same time as it determines the qualification of each member for election to the Board, the Screening Committee will also ascertain the member's willingness to serve. At the Election Meeting the Screening Committee will also prepare a slate of proposed Directors. The nominees need not be present at the nominating meeting (having already indicated an interest in running) but must nevertheless be at the election meeting.

What is the procedure in the nominations method?

1. The Election Chair verifies that all members present at the meeting are qualified to vote.
2. The Election Chair recites the rules regarding qualifications for voting and eligibility for election.
3. The Election Chair calls for nominations from the floor. A member may only make one nomination until each member has at least one opportunity to act.
4. The proposed nominee accepts or rejects the nomination.
5. As each nomination is made and prior to a second the screening committee report is checked to verify eligibility to be elected. If the person nominated is eligible, a second is requested and taken.
6. A motion to close nominations and begin balloting is made and adopted.
7. Balloting proceeds.
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Are there differences in the slate method?

Steps 1 and 2 are the same, but that's where the similarity ends.

1. The Election Chair verifies that all members present at the meeting are qualified to vote.
2. The Election Chair recites the rules regarding qualifications for voting and eligibility for election.
3. The Screening Committee presents a slate to the general membership
4. The Election Chair calls for additional nominations from the floor.
5. As each nomination is made, and prior to the second, the Screening Committee report is checked to verify the nominee's eligibility to run. If the person nominated is eligible, a second is requested and taken.

6. A motion to close nomination and begin balloting is made and adopted.
7. Balloting proceeds.

Now we move on to the actual balloting. What happens then?

Obviously, great caution must be taken to insure that only qualified voting members cast ballots. Accordingly, the report of the Election Committee, setting forth the names of eligible voting members, should be read. As each name is called, a prepared ballot should be given to the member.

Voters should be warned that voting for more than the available number of positions will cause their ballot to be invalidated. They may however vote for less than the total number of vacancies.

At the close of balloting, the members should place their ballot in a specially designed box. The tellers should exercise great care that only authorized ballots are entered in the ballot box. Should an unauthorized ballot be submitted, the entire process may be invalidated. Additionally, under no circumstances should the identity of the voter be reflected on the ballot.

The tellers then review the ballots and report the results only (not the numbers) to the Election Chair. After the results are announced, the ballots should be destroyed.

We've elected the Board, what's next?

Within 14 days of the election, the names of the newly elected Board members should be emailed to the National Office at elections@Philoptochos.org for ratification. The form can be found at www.Philoptochos.org under the resources tab. The Election Cover letter statement must be signed by both the Election Chair and the Parish Priest: if, for some reason, one of the signatories is unavailable or declines to sign the statement, please include an explanation.

What about challenges to the election? How is it done and when?

The Bylaws permit any member to challenge or contest an election. (Article V, Section 4)

The protest must be: 1) in writing; 2) signed by the challenging or contesting member; 3) made within 7 days of the election; 4) set forth the grounds for the challenge; and 5) mailed to the National President (at the National Office). (Article V, Section 4, Paragraph 4 a-b)

After an investigation, the National President shall render a final decision. (Article V, Section 5, Paragraph 2)

When is the Oath of Office administered?

Election of the Board must be ratified by the National Philoptochos Office and approved and signed by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios. The Oath of Office shall be administered by the Parish Priest upon receipt of ratification letter.

The existing Board will continue to fulfill its function until the new Chapter Board is ratified and members have taken the Oath of Office.

What about officers, when do we elect them?

After the Oath of Office is administered to the Chapter Board, the newly sworn in Board shall promptly convene at a specially called meeting of the Board to elect its officers.

The Officers of the Chapter are the President, First and Second Vice Presidents, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer.

The meeting is conducted under the supervision of the Advisor to the Board, the immediate past-president.

What are the rules about electing officers? Are there any additional requirements? Can anyone serve?

Please keep in mind that the Bylaws require that elected officers serve only two consecutive terms in the same office. (Article V, Section 5, Paragraph 4) Many chapters have sought to have officers serve for more than the authorized period of four years, particularly smaller chapters with limited candidates. Of course, no person can serve in more than one office, at the same time. (Article V, Section 4b)

The National Philoptochos Board takes a very strong stand on these issues and will require all chapters to comply with the provisions of the Bylaws.

In the rare situation where no other member is available to serve, the National Board may entertain an application for a one-time waiver, and will require that all other Board members indicate in writing that no other person is available or capable of serving. Any decisions for a waiver will be made in consultation with the Metropolis President. It must be emphasized that a waiver should be a rarity.

With regard to additional qualifications, only a candidate for the presidency must satisfy the additional requirement of having served on the Board of Directors for two years prior to election as president.

We've elected our board, we've taken oath, we've even chosen our officers. Is there anything else?

Immediately, after the election of Officers, the new Corresponding Secretary should complete the online form (found at www.Philoptochos.org under the resources tab) with the list of the Officers and email to elections@philoptochos.org at the National office for review.

To use a familiar phrase, "that's all folks", but just for good measure let's recap eligibility- eligibility to vote and eligibility to serve, one more time:

In order to be eligible to vote in the election of the Chapter Board of Directors, a member must satisfy the following qualifications:

1. Must be a full member of the Society; and
2. Be in good standing with the Chapter. New members must have been enrolled at least three months prior to the election.

To serve as a member of the Board of Directors, a member must satisfy the following qualifications:

1. Must be a full member of the Society; and
2. Be in good standing with the Parish and the Chapter for one year prior to the election;

3. Must have attended at least 4 meetings of the chapter in the year prior to the election meeting;
and
4. Must not be serving as a Director of another chapter.

CONCLUSION

There will surely be a chapter that will come up with what appears to be a unique and altogether unforeseen complication. In those cases, establish the facts as clearly as possible and turn to the Bylaws. The answer is probably in there. Please feel free to contact the National Office or Metropolis President whenever you need to- we've probably seen the problem at least once before. We'll discuss the matter with you and together we'll come to an appropriate result. Elections are an exciting process and with some patience, should be fair and transparent.