

NAHJ CHAPTER ELECTIONS GUIDE

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION



of HISPANIC JOURNALISTS

Reformatted for Election Season 2026

NAHJ 2026 Chapter Elections Guide

This guide provides Regional Directors and Elections Chairs with the full process, timeline, and resources to manage the 2026 Chapter Elections efficiently.

How do chapter elections work, from beginning to end?

For chapter elections to happen each chapter needs a chapter election committee. Each chapter election committee is led by a committee chair and staffed by two chapter members.

The chapter election committee chair recruits the two working members from the local chapter, people who are not running for election nor are endorsing or campaigning for anyone in the local election.

The chapter election committee (the Committee) holds a training with the national election committee, including Bella, Jaime, and Julio, to run through the process.

Each Committee will use the NAHJ-provided nomination and voting system.

Each Committee then sends out the call for nominations to their chapter members. The link to the nomination form is provided by Bella to all election committees. Not all positions may have candidates ready, and the committee should try to identify and recruit people to run (but cannot campaign for candidates). There is a **minimum of 2 members needed per board**, an absolute **minimum of a president and one secretary/treasurer, otherwise the chapter will become inactive**.

The call for nominations should include the list of all local board positions. The bylaws establish chapter boards including a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and General At Large. Chapters are allowed to add voting seats to their boards, however there cannot be 2 board positions with the same title or responsibilities.

Members fill out their nomination form. Bella will update chairs on their signature progress every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

Committees update their candidates on their signature progress. Each candidate **needs 5 signatures from a voting chapter member to make it on the ballot**.

Voting members for chapters include regular, academic, and retired members only. These are the only members who can run for office, nominate, and vote. Associate members are allowed to run, nominate, and vote for the single General At Large seat if one exists. The General At Large seat, if it exists, is open to all regular, academic, retired, or associate members.

As people gain signatures the Committee begins their vetting process. They confirm that the candidate is eligible to hold the seat they want to run for. The Committee must confirm that the candidate physically lives or works in the chapter area, is eligible for a regular, academic, or retired membership, and has a paid up-to-date NAHJ membership.

The Committee updates the candidates once they have been vetted and approved and once they have reached the 5 signature requirement for nomination.

If a candidate is vetted and found to not fulfill one of the eligibility requirements the candidate must be told immediately to give them time to fix what can be fixed (paid membership) or to inform them that their candidacy cannot go through because of eligibility (for example, physical work/residency or an ineligible membership class). **Do NOT use the word qualified.** Many people are qualified to run for these positions. Eligibility does not mean they are not qualified, simply that the circumstances do not allow them on the ballot. If a candidate is not eligible, encourage them to run for an eligible position or serve the chapter in a different non-board capacity.

Student members who are highly-involved in the chapter AND are also established, paid employees of a newsroom are eligible to change their membership to regular if they are eligible for it. For example, a student member who works as a weekend reporter at a paper or station and makes 51% of their income from journalism, even if it includes freelance reporting, would be eligible for a regular membership if they want one. A student who is a paid intern at a newsroom would not be eligible and would have to remain a student member.

All candidates must be vetted before the nomination deadline. Start vetting people as soon as they get a second signature so it is all done before nominations close.

Once nominations close, inform the candidates and the Committee will then announce the candidates publicly to the entire chapter. The candidates are free to campaign up to and through the voting period.

If the Committee chose to have a candidate forum it is held during the campaign period, before voting begins.

On September 9 voting begins. The Committee must email the voting link to all chapter members. We recommend a pre-scheduled email to chapter members. This email should go out to members no later than 5 pm ET on the day elections open. **This is a HARD deadline.** Voting opens at 5 pm ET. We recommend a scheduled email for 5:00 pm ET

The Committee will then help any candidates or members who have questions during the voting period. Candidates can still campaign during the voting period, there is no blackout.

Some chapters choose to vote in person on a single day. If this is the method chosen a link must still be sent out at the start of the voting period to allow anyone who cannot vote in person on a specific day to vote. Frankly, we recommend just voting electronically, but it is up to each Committee. Everyone must have an equitable chance to vote.

On Friday, November 13, voting closes at 5 pm ET. Make it clear to everyone that it is NOT 5 pm local time.

At 5:05 pm ET Bella will email the voting results to each Committee. The Committee then announces the winners to the chapter membership.

Congratulations! You just ran your chapter's election!

Roles & Scenarios

There are two possible scenarios for each Regional Director:

1. **Regional Director as Elections Chair**

- You directly manage the election for the assigned chapter(s).
 - Responsibilities include coordinating volunteers, sending all communications, overseeing nominations and voting, vetting nominees, and counting votes.

2. **Another Board Member as Elections Chair**

- Another board member is responsible for managing the election.
 - Your role is limited to introducing the assigned Elections Chair to the chapter members using the provided email template.
 - All other election-related tasks are handled by the Elections Chair and their volunteers.

You may also be managing a chapter outside your region in either scenario.

Key Deadlines & Election Timeline

- **Wednesday, August 26** – Send your introduction message using the applicable email template
 - **Friday, September 4** – Confirm 2 volunteers to NAHJ National.
 - **Wednesday, September 9** – All-committee training call with national committee
 - **Monday, September 21**: Announcement & Call for nominations.
 - **Sunday, September 21, 11:59pm ET**: **The date of record.** *Members must be in good standing by this date to be eligible to vote.* [Click here](#) to renew your dues.
 - **Sunday, October 4, 11:59pm PT**: Last day to submit nominations & Deadline to qualify for the ballot. (5 signatures required)
 - **Monday, September 21-Monday, October 5**: Vetting period conducted by the Elections Committee.
 - *The Elections committee will notify potential candidates where their nominations stand. Will also request a headshot, bio and 250-word campaign message.*
 - **Monday, September 28**: Candidate statements and candidate videos due to election committee
 - **Monday, October 5**: Election committee announces candidates. Email with candidates' messages will be sent to current members by the elections committee.
 - **Monday, October 19**: Candidates videos published
 - **Monday, October 26**: Candidates second campaign message is due to the elections committee.
 - **Monday, November 2**: Candidates second message will be emailed to current members by elections committee
 - **Monday, November 2**: Election begins. Polls are open for two weeks.
 - **Friday, November 13**: Elections close at 5:00 p.m. EST. Elections committee will announce winners immediately following.
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Election Process

1. **Introduction Message** – Send to members (see templates for both scenarios):
 - a. Regional Director + Elections Chair
 - b. Regional Director introducing another Elections Chair
 2. **Volunteer Recruitment** – Secure 2 volunteers to assist with counting and vetting nominees.
 3. **Call for Nominations** – NAHJ National provides nomination form link. Volunteers and Elections Chair review all submissions.
 4. **Nominee Vetting** – Confirm eligibility before finalizing the ballot.
 5. **Ballot Creation & Announcement** – NAHJ National provides ballot link. Elections Chair and volunteers oversee the voting process.
 6. **Vote Counting** – At the close of voting, NAHJ National sends results to Elections Chair and volunteers for final tally confirmation.
 7. **Final Report** – Submit confirmed winners to NAHJ National for official announcement.
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Communications Templates

Provided by NAHJ National for:

- Introduction to members/Call for Volunteers
 - Call for Nominations
 - Election Period Announcement
 - Candidate vetting script
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How To Vet A Candidate

Vetting candidates is one of the most time consuming parts of the Committee's work. It's easy, just repetitive and time consuming. Here are scripts for how to vet a candidate for different positions. You should send this to each candidate as soon as they get their second signature.

Congratulations NAME,

You now have 2 of the 5 signatures required to make it on your chapter's ballot for 2026 as a candidate for POSITION. Please keep asking for nomination signatures, as the deadline to reach 5 is Monday, September 1.

Please also send us the following information so we can vet you for eligibility:

- Do you have a current and paid NAHJ membership?
- What city do you physically live or work in?
- Where do you make at least 51% of your income and what are your responsibilities there?
- What should your membership class be? The NAHJ membership classes include Regular, Academic, Retired, Student, and Associate

OPTIONAL, EACH CHAPTER COMMITTEE DECIDES IF THEY WANT THIS. IF SO, INCLUDE IN FIRST EMAIL: As part of your candidacy please send us a 250 word candidate statement and a 250 word biography. The candidate statement should focus on what you hope to achieve if elected to your position and your vision for the chapter as a whole. This will be shared with the membership.

Thank you for stepping up and wanting to help lead NAHJ.

You may notice that for national elections we ask for employer contact information to do the vetting ourselves. At the chapter level, given that everyone is closer, we trust and rely on our members knowing each other, that way the candidates themselves can answer and committee members can verify from personal knowledge that the information is correct.

The candidate's on-file membership class may not always reflect what their membership class should currently be. For example, a person who used to work in communications and was an Associate member may have since moved to work on the news side of a newsroom. If this person wanted to run for Secretary, the vetting process might show that they have an Associate membership, which is not eligible

for that position. However, what matters is the person's actual job, even if our database hasn't been updated. In this case both you and the candidate should jointly contact Bella and request that the person's membership class be changed to the appropriate one. Likewise, if someone went from working in a newsroom to working in communications they would no longer be eligible for most positions and should be updated accordingly.

Vetting responses by candidates should be reviewed by all members of the Committee for approval.

Inform your candidates of the results of the vetting as soon as possible.

Additional Notes

- **Member & Non-Member Rosters** are provided for outreach. Non-members are included to help you re-engage them, encouraging participation at the local level can also motivate them to renew or join NAHJ.
 - All steps must follow the **detailed timeline** exactly to ensure consistency across all chapters.
 - If assigned to a chapter outside your region, or if someone else is Elections Chair for a chapter in your region, follow the template instructions to clarify roles in your communications.
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Classes of Membership

The membership classes of the Association, and the voting rights and eligibility to serve as a director or officer of the Association of the members of the respective classes, shall be as follows:

1. Regular Members

- Regular Members consist of working journalists for whom the majority of their verifiable income (at least 51 percent) is derived from journalistic work, including the gathering, editing, or presentation of news and supervising of news creation. Regular Members may not be government employees or employees of a state-owned news organization.
- A Regular Member has the right to vote in all membership and election matters and the right to serve as a director or officer of the Association.

2. Academic Members

- Academic Members consist of persons who are educators of journalism in educational institutions, including universities, colleges, and high schools. An Academic Member has the right to vote in all membership and election matters and the right to serve as the Academic at-large officer of the Association.
- Academic members who are verifiably practicing the gathering, editing, or presentation of news and supervising news creation for the general public are eligible to serve as a director or officer of the Association.

3. Retired Members

- Retired Members consist of persons who were previously eligible for Regular or Academic Memberships for the majority of their careers but have permanently left the workforce.
- A Retired Member has the right to vote in all membership and election matters. A Retired Member has the right to serve as the General At-Large Officer of the Association.

4. Associate Members

- Associate Members consist of any members of the Association, with a proven dedication to the mission of the Association, who are not eligible for Regular, Academic, Student, or Retired memberships.
- An Associate Member has the right to vote for the national General At-Large Officer and the right to serve as the General At-Large Officer of the Association.

Job Descriptions for NAHJ Chapter Officers

President

- Ensures the chapter works to fulfill the strategic plan on the local level.
- Carries out requirements to maintain chapter certification, including submitting the annual report.
- Makes statements on behalf of the chapter and presides at most chapter events.
- Serves as the primary contact person for potential members.
- Works with chapter leaders to recruit new members and retain existing members.
- Is acquainted with most chapter members and works to meet their needs within the NAHJ mission. It is often the president's vision that guides the programming at the chapter level and helps develop the national organization through chapter work.
- Grooms a successor through outreach, recruitment and skills building. It is often the case that you will need to ask people to run for office, tell them what the job entails and encourage them with some examples of how it has benefited you.
- Facilitates, supports and assists with activities intended to support the mission of NAHJ, as managed by the NAHJ staff and approved by the Board of Directors.
- Keeps members informed of chapter activities through newsletters, e-mails, and social media.
- The president or any other board member from the chapter board must attend the annual conference. (Chapter may use its funds to pay for all or part of the conference expenses, however this is up to the chapter board's discretion). Convening with other chapter presidents once a year is important. This meeting can also help with leadership training, skills building and networking.

Vice President

- In the absence of the president, the vice president shall perform all duties of the president.
- When so acting, the vice president shall have all the powers of and be subject to all the restrictions on the president.
- The vice president shall assist the president and shall have other powers and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the chapter board.

Treasurer

- Responsible for submitting an annual chapter budget to the national office and completing annual financial reports.
- Recipient of the chapter's bank statements
- Keeping the local bank account open and in good standing
- Issuing checks from the local bank account to pay for chapter expenses.

Secretary

- Taking minutes at meetings and sending them to chapter leaders and members.
- Greeting attendees at NAHJ events and asking them to sign in and make a nametag.
- Writing chapter newsletters, e-mails or other communications.
- Creating fliers, signs or other communication materials for the chapter as needed.

*Chapters may opt for additional elected leadership roles, including but not limited to: social media coordinator, web master, job fair chair, etc. The chapter may appoint members to non-elected positions based on its needs.

Questions?

Reach out to Isabella Di Giglio, idigiglio@nahj.org