



OFS- 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 OFS General Constitutions (GC), the National Statutes of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States of America (NS), and the Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order (2024 edition).

Nominations

The Regional Executive Council (REC) designates a nominating committee and chairperson four months in advance of the elections. It shall be the duty of the Nominations Committee to solicit nominations and 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). It is strongly recommended that nominees submit resumes outlining their qualifications for the office, and that these resumes be distributed to the voters prior to the election. 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 for nominations to any position are made earlier in the Chapter. 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 for 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. The voting members have active voice, that is, they can elect, and passive voice, that is, they can be elected. The perpetually active professed Secular Franciscans of that specific region have passive voice (GC 77 1,2).

NOMINATIONS GUIDELINES

1. Nominee on the Slate and Present at the Election

A member who has been nominated prior to the election, appears on the official slate, and is present on the day of the election is eligible to be elected for office.

2. Nominee on the Slate but Unable to Attend

A member who has been nominated prior to the election and appears on the slate but cannot be present may still be eligible to be elected for office **provided that:**

- The member submits a written acceptance (letter or email) to the nomination committee chair **before the day of the election.**
- This written acceptance must clearly state that the member accepts the nomination and will accept the office if elected.

3. Nominee From the Floor and Present

A member may be nominated from the floor during the election if that member is present. In this case:

- Eligibility to hold office must be verified before the nomination is accepted.
- The nominee will be asked to briefly state qualifications for the office.

4. Nominee From the Floor and Not Present

(See NS 14.2)

A professed member may be nominated from the floor even if that member is not present, under the following conditions:

- Eligibility to hold office must be verified before proceeding.
- The Presider must call the member immediately by phone to ask whether that member accepts or declines the nomination.
- An immediate reply (accept or decline) must be spoken by the member at the time of the call. During the same call, should the member accept the nomination, the member must also state acceptance of the office if elected.

Preparations for the Election

The Region is asked to provide the following:

- A copy of the required 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
- Two head tables with five chairs facing the assembly (Presider may need extra space)
- A chalkboard, dry erase board, flipchart or similar (such as a digital display), 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 (REC & Fraternity Representatives) - "roll call" list
- Copies of the new Ritual for the members of the new council during the installation

- Several copies of the Report of Elections and the Ballot and Vote Count sheets. (These can be downloaded from the OFS-USA website. These will also be emailed by the presider prior to the election.)

Chapter of Elections

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

The Presider prepares for the Election:

1. Greets the members of the Region. If applicable, the letter of delegation is read.
2. Introduces the Ecclesial Witness. If applicable, the letter of delegation is 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 and ALL delegation letters from fraternity ministers.
7. Ensures that the Secretary of the Election has the Report of Elections and the Ballot and Vote Count sheets, 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 (presence of more than half of the active members who are not excused from attendance, NS 18.6).
9. Establishes the number of votes needed for an absolute majority (more than half), and the number needed for a two-thirds majority vote and directs the Teller to write those numbers where all can see them clearly.
10. Reviews with the electorate which positions on the council are being filled during this election as per the particular Region's Guidelines.
11. 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.
12. Reminds everyone that
 - the election will begin with prayer after which there should be silence,
 - if someone needs to leave the room during the election they need to inform the Presider,
 - 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 brief reflection. 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 (Ritual, pg. 68) 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 first and last names of those nominated on the board or digital display and directs the Secretary to write those names on the Ballot and Vote Count sheet.
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 and asks the nominees if they understand the responsibilities for the position they have been nominated for.
6. The first and last names of those nominated from the floor are added to the board or the digital display by the Teller, and to the Ballot and Vote Count sheet by the Secretary of the Election.
7. After the final call for nominations the Presider announces that the nominations are closed and may invite those nominated from the floor to address the voters briefly as to their qualifications.
9. The Presider determines if any nominees are running for a third term and, in such cases, a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote is required on the first ballot in order to be elected. *The Presider reminds the voters that the Secretary, Treasurer, Councilors and Formation Director (if an elected position) positions are all "Councilors" and that if a third-term nominee (for any Councilor position or combination of) does not obtain 2/3 majority vote on the first ballot, that nominee is prohibited from running for any subsequent position. This does not apply if a third-term Minister or Vice Minister does not obtain 2/3 majority vote on the first ballot. Should this occur, they still are eligible to be elected to any Councilor position without the 2/3 majority vote requirement on the first ballot.*

For a third and final successive election... (which includes every elected office...) a majority of two-thirds (2/3) of the votes of those present, which must be obtained on the first ballot, will be necessary. (NS 13.2).

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 first and last 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 or digital display in view of all. The Secretary of the Election records the tallies on the Ballot and Vote Count sheet. 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 (more than half) there is an election. (Note: A two-thirds majority on the first ballot 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 nominees 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 of the Election announces the name of the member elected, according to the OFS Ritual (pg. 69). The Presider asks the newly elected member to stand and asks if the member accepts the election results (Ritual, p. 69). The Presider then confirms the election (Ritual, p. 69). The Secretary of the Election records each election on the Report of Election.
19. The elections continue, following the same procedure as above for the positions of Vice Minister, Secretary, Treasurer, Formation Director (if this is an elected position) and Councilors, in that order. Note: An absolute majority of the votes of those present are required for the election of each position (NS 14.4).
20. After all the positions are elected, the Presider thanks all who were willing to serve and ensures the ballots are properly discarded.
21. Installation of the new council takes place ideally within 24 hours of the election.
22. The outgoing Executive Council members arrange for the transfer of files, records and other material to the new Executive Council.
23. A photo of the new Council is taken to be included with announcement of election, and a headshot 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 sheet 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 sheet, 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 sheet, 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
 - (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, sends the hard copy of the Report of Election, with the attached Ballot and Vote Count sheet, to the National Election and Visitation Coordinator. (Note: 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) Sends a Report of Election to the Secretary of the CNSA.

NUMBER OF VOTES CAST	MAJORITY VOTE	TWO-THIRDS VOTE
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	2	2
4	3	3
5	3	4
6	4	4
7	4	5
8	5	6
9	5	6
10	6	7
11	6	8
12	7	8
13	7	9
14	8	10
15	8	10
16	9	11
17	9	12
18	10	12
19	10	13
20	11	14
21	11	14
22	12	15
23	12	16
24	13	16
25	13	17
26	14	18
27	14	18
28	15	19
29	15	20
30	16	20
31	16	21
32	17	22
33	17	22
34	18	23
35	18	24
36	19	24
37	19	25
38	20	26
39	20	26
40	21	27
41	21	28
42	22	28
43	22	29
44	23	30
45	23	30
46	24	31
47	24	32
48	25	32
49	25	33
50	26	34

NUMBER OF VOTES CAST	MAJORITY VOTE	TWO-THIRDS VOTE
51	26	34
52	27	35
53	27	36
54	28	36
55	28	37
56	29	38
57	29	38
58	30	39
59	30	40
60	31	40
61	31	41
62	32	42
63	32	42
64	33	43
65	33	44
66	34	44
67	34	45
68	35	46
69	35	46
70	36	47
71	36	48
72	37	48
73	37	49
74	38	50
75	38	50
76	39	51
77	39	52
78	40	52
79	40	53
80	41	54
81	41	54
82	42	55
83	42	56
84	43	56
85	43	57
86	44	58
87	44	58
88	45	59
89	45	60
90	46	60
91	46	61
92	47	62
93	47	62
94	48	63
95	48	64
96	49	64
97	49	65
98	50	66
99	50	66
100	51	67