The decision to allow mail, email, or online voting should be made at the time a PTA sets its goals and objectives for the upcoming PTA year (July – June). This allows a local PTA or council to complete the preliminary work of amending the standing rules and collecting relevant membership information. A PTA that has taken these steps will be prepared to act if there is poor turnout for either of the meetings to elect the nominating committee or officers.

1. Amend the Standing Rules
   - Refer to *Washington State PTA Bylaws* [Article 5, Local PTAs and Councils; Section 4, information about absentee, mail, or electronic voting].
   - Amend the standing rules to include instructions on voting by mail and electronic transmission.
   - Sample standing rule: XYZ PTA may allow voting by email, online voting tool and/or by mail for election of the nominating committee and/or officers.
   - Present the standing rules to the members for approval before the membership form is updated.

2. Membership Registration Form
   - Prepare a membership registration form prior to the fall membership drive.
   - Include spaces for collecting mailing address and email address on the form and note why this information may be needed for future voting.
   - Each member must supply a unique email address.
   - The member signature on the membership form provides consent for receipt of the electronic or mail-in ballot.
   - Members who prefer not to vote by electronic or mail-in ballot should be provided an opt-out option on the membership form.
   - Washington State PTA recommends proper use of public resources. Taxpayer-funded email addresses, such as those ending in .gov, .ed, or .edu, should not be used for electronic voting.

3. Budget
   Prepare the budget to include line items for postage, paper, mailing labels, envelopes, printing of the mailed ballots, or the cost of online voting tools.

4. The Election Meetings
   It is recommended to hold a meeting to elect the nominating committee. For election of officers, it is recommended to post the slate of candidates fifteen days before the meeting. Allow candidates to be nominated or declare candidacy from the floor. Allow time for a floor vote (with ballots) if the standing rules allow for a floor vote as well as an electronic/mail-in vote. Set the parameters of the election – the final due date for votes and the due date for the tellers report – and state these for the record in the meeting. It should be quite clear to all members when and how results of the election will be announced.
Note: The subsequent election is actually a part of the meeting.

5. The Tellers Committee
As with any election done by ballot, the president appoints a tellers committee to count the votes. The tellers committee will need to exercise extra care concerning the confidentiality of electronic votes. It is possible to mail ballots in an unmarked envelope inside the PTA-provided envelope, thereby ensuring the voter’s identity and privacy. For electronic voting methods, the ballot itself will include the voter’s email address.

- We recommend that the tellers sign a non-disclosure agreement with the PTA upon agreeing to count the votes, stating that they will keep the results of the voting confidential except in the case of the report provided to the president.
- The tellers committee must verify that each ballot is from a paid member.
- The tellers report will be added to the minutes of the membership meeting at which the election was initiated. The meeting will officially adjourn upon receipt of this report.
- The tellers must count votes and must also count quorum.
  - Each completed ballot counts toward quorum.
  - Blank ballots may count toward quorum. A blank ballot is similar to an abstaining vote.
  - If a ballot is unreadable, or is in any way ambiguous, it may count toward quorum but not as a vote.
- At the completion of the election, all ballots shall be destroyed by the tellers committee, including the deletion of electronic member communications containing ballots.

6. Resources
RCW 24.03.080: Notice of members’ meetings.
RCW 24.03.085: Voting.
RCW 24.03.009: Notice by electronic transmission; Consent required, when effective.

Washington State PTA: www.wastatepta.org

6.1 Voting by Mail
It is also recommended that elections held by mail utilize a ballot that must be returned within a PTA-provided return stamped addressed envelope that contains the member identification number on the outside of the envelope, rather than on the ballot. Ballots that are not returned in the provided envelope are unverifiable and shall be disqualified.

All PTA members in good standing must be mailed a paper ballot, unless the member has signed a written waiver. The ballot shall include a return address and ballot deadline clearly identified. Only one ballot may be returned per envelope.

When the election includes balloting conducted at a physical polling place (meeting) and by mail:
1. The notice of election must include:
   a. Date, time and place of meeting.

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b. Announcement of ALL voting methods being utilized.
c. Date that by mail ballots will be mailed to members in good standing.
d. Deadline for return of ballots.

2. The same paper ballot shall be utilized at both the polling place (meeting) and by mail.

3. All ballots mailed to members in good standing shall include a brief description of the voting procedure and ballot return deadline.

4. The names of all candidates brought forth by the nominating committee and any self-declared candidate(s) meeting eligibility requirements for election shall be printed on the ballot.

5. A record of all members casting a ballot at the physical polling place (meeting) shall be established by the tellers committee and kept as part of the record of election.

6. The tellers committee shall tally and record the total votes cast at the physical polling place (meeting).
   a. Ballot results shall NOT be announced until all voting concludes and a final tally can be reported.
   b. All ballots shall be retained until all votes have been counted and the tellers committee has presented an election report.

7. The tellers committee shall review each ballot returned by mail to ascertain:
   a. The ballot was cast by a member in good standing.
   b. The voter intent is clearly recognized/understood.
   c. Spoiled or unrecognizable ballots are disqualified (but may be counted for the purpose of determining quorum).
   d. Under votes (no candidate selected) are counted for quorum purposes.
   e. Over votes (ballots with more than the valid number of candidates selected for a position) are disqualified (but may be utilized for establishment of quorum).
   f. The ballot was received by the voting deadline – ballots should be date stamped when received.

8. Mailed ballots received after the postmark deadline shall not be counted nor used for establishment of a quorum.

9. The tellers committee shall create a record of all members casting a ballot by mail:
   a. This record shall be compared to the record of all members casting a ballot at the physical polling place (voting in person at a meeting).

10. Ballots received by mail from members who are on record as having voted in person shall be disqualified and not counted for purposes of election to office or meeting quorum.

### 6.2 Voting by E-mail

*WSPTA Uniform Bylaws [Article 5, Section 4]*

Absentee, mail, or electronic ballots are prohibited with two exceptions: election of officers and election of nominating committee positions. The standing rules of a local PTA or council may provide that voting for officers or nominating committee positions be by electronic transmission if the name of each candidate is contained in the notice of meeting.

The following is an example of a procedure a PTA might follow when running an election by email.

All PTA members in good standing who have provided a private email address to the PTA membership chair shall be sent a notice of election announcement. The announcement must identify the voting method(s) to be utilized for the election (physical polling, mail ballot, electronic ballot).
When utilized, electronic ballot notices shall be delivered to each PTA member in good standing who has consented to electronic voting. Members who have not provided a written consent shall not be sent an electronic ballot.

When the election includes balloting conducted at a physical polling place (meeting) and by electronic mail:

1. The notice of election must include:
   a. Date, time and place of meeting.
   b. Announcement of ALL voting methods being utilized.
   c. Date that by mail ballots will be mailed to members in good standing.
   d. Deadline for return of ballots.

2. A comparable ballot shall be utilized at both the polling place (meeting) and by electronic mail.

3. All ballots mailed electronically to members in good standing shall include a brief description of the voting procedure and ballot return deadline.

4. The names of all candidates brought forth by the nominating committee and any self-declared candidate(s) meeting eligibility requirements for election shall be printed on the ballot.

5. A record of all members casting a ballot at the physical polling place (meeting) shall be established by the tellers committee and kept as part of the record of election.

6. The tellers committee shall tally and record the total votes cast at the physical polling place (meeting).
   a. Ballot results shall NOT be announced until all voting concludes and a final tally can be reported.
   b. All ballots shall be retained until all votes have been counted and the tellers committee has presented an election report.
   c. Electronic mail messages containing member ballots shall not be forwarded under any circumstances. Paper copies of electronic balloting messages created by the tellers committee must be destroyed.

7. The tellers committee shall review each ballot returned by electronic mail to ascertain:
   a. The ballot was cast by a member in good standing.
   b. The ballot is returned from the member electronic mail address on record.
   c. The voter intent is clearly recognized/understood.
   d. The electronic mail message containing the ballot was received by the specified voting deadline.

8. Ballots received via electronic transmission after the announced deadline shall not be counted nor used for establishment of a quorum.

9. The tellers committee shall create a record of all members casting a ballot by electronic mail:
   a. This record shall be compared to the record of all members casting a ballot at the physical polling place (voting in person if balloting was also conducted at a membership meeting).

10. Ballots received by electronic mail from members who are on record as having voted in person shall be disqualified and not counted for purposes of election to office or meeting quorum.

11. Ballots distributed via electronic mail must be return via electronic mail to the specified electronic mail address included on the announcement of election.

6.3 Using Online Voting Tools

A number of online tools exist that could be used to take an electronic vote for nominating committee or officers. There are tools specifically written for voting, and those intended for surveys that will suffice.
Ideally, your PTA will select the tool at the time it approves changes to its standing rules. Costs of tools vary so your PTA will want to choose a tool that best fits its needs and budget. If the cost of an online tool is an obstacle, PTAs in a council may consider asking the council to make an annual investment, so that all PTAs may use it.

**Note:** The WSPTA does not recommend using a survey tool owned by the school district.

The following list is meant as a reference, and in no way implies an endorsement of any of these online tools by the Washington State PTA: polldaddy.com; surveymonkey.com; zoomerang.com; votenet.com.

Send your survey link to the email addresses of your members via the state membership database. If your tool won’t show you the address used to send the response, you can have the survey include the email address of the voter as a question in the survey. Be sure to set a deadline for receiving votes via your online tool.