

Background and Q&A NEA 2020 Virtual Representative Assembly (RA)

Rationale:

People in the United States and countries around the world are suffering serious illness and death in a deadly and highly contagious coronavirus pandemic. The best medical advice at this stage to decrease the spread of the disease is for people to remain in “social distance” (6 feet) from each other until a treatment or vaccine is found. It is hoped that people will gradually be able to return to work, school and public places. However, there is no evidence to suggest that groups as large as the NEA Representative Assembly will be safe to convene in the next several months. A virtual meeting is our safest option given the uncertain health situation and how long social distancing rules will continue. But a virtual meeting will have its limitations. A typical RA convenes between 8,000 and 10,000 delegates. Available technology cannot guarantee that we can replicate thousands of delegates conducting rigorous debate on hundreds of issues virtually. Further, due to the differences among delegates in their access to sophisticated technology, and reliable WIFI and phone service, NEA could not guarantee every delegate the ability to fully participate in a virtual RA debate and vote.

Because of the limitations of virtual debate and voting, we are unable to replicate a complete RA virtually. We are restricted in the types of actions we can put before delegates to important presentations, limited debate and final votes that can be delivered and returned by mail ballots.

Therefore, the proposal to the NEA Board of Directors was:

- *Convene the 2020 RA virtually and not in-person*
- *Limit business, presentations and debate*
- *Vote by paper, mail-in ballots*
- *Postpone all other business to the 2021 RA*

Outcome of Board Action

- The board passed by 99% the first motion to move the 2020 RA currently scheduled in Atlanta to a virtual convening with a limited agenda and votes taken by mail ballot, given the on-going global pandemic of coronavirus infections resulting in a growing number of COVID-19 illnesses and deaths and the medical advisory against large group gatherings and non-essential travel on commercial transportation.
- The board passed by 99% the 2nd motion to suspend the NEA Standing Rules in their entirety for the duration of the 2020 virtual convening of the Representative Assembly and adopted temporary Rules of Procedure for the purpose of conducting business at the emergency virtual convening of the **2020 Representative Assembly being held on July 2-3, 2020.**

What are the Temporary Standing Rules?

1. CREDENTIALS

The Credentials Committee, as detailed in Standing Rule 1.A.1, shall remain in place, but the deadline under Standing Rule 1.A.2 for complaints or questions regarding the issuance of credentials shall be extended to June 15, 2020. The procedure for the certification of delegates and successor delegates shall remain as set forth in Standing Rule 1.B except for reasonable extensions of the April 10th and May 15th deadlines shall be granted upon request.

The Credentials Committee shall submit its preliminary report in writing by June 25th. That preliminary report shall be posted on the website for delegates. Any challenge to the seating of a delegate or delegates may be made in writing by June 26, to Keira McNett (kmcnett@nea.org). The Credentials Committee shall review any such challenge and make a recommendation as to its disposition to the NEA Board of Directors, which shall have final authority over the matter.

2. REGISTRATION

Registration materials shall be sent to all delegates prior to the time of the virtual RA. Registration of delegates and successor delegates shall be on June 23rd- 24th, and shall be completed by the day prior to the virtual RA. No one shall be permitted to participate in the virtual RA other than registered delegates.

3. COMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS & RULES

The Committee on Constitution, Bylaws & Rules as detailed in Standing Rule 2 shall remain in place and shall serve as a resource to delegates considering submitting amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws and Rules for consideration by the 2021 Representative Assembly.

4. BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED

The sole items to be considered at the 2020 Representative Assembly, and the order in which those matters will be considered, will be:

- i. The election of the NEA President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, 2 members of the NEA Executive Committee, and the At-Large members of the NEA Board of Directors;
- ii. Delegate consideration of the endorsement recommendation from the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education for President of the United States in the 2020 general election;
- iii. The adoption of the NEA Strategic Plan & Budget for the 2020-22 fiscal year.

5. NOMINATIONS & CANDIDATE SPEECHES

Nominations for all offices to be elected at the Representative Assembly shall be submitted in writing to the Committee on Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules (CCBR) (CLewis@nea.org) by June 24th at 4:00 p.m. EDT. Nominated candidates shall be afforded the opportunity to speak to the virtual Representative Assembly on July 2nd for the time periods set forth below.

- i. Candidates for NEA President – 5 minutes each
- ii. Candidates for NEA Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, and Executive Committee – 3 minutes each
- iii. At-Large candidates for the NEA Board of Directors – 2 minutes each

The speaking order of candidates shall be determined by a lottery conducted virtually on June 25th at 7:00 p.m. EDT. Candidates shall be provided with the log-in information for the lottery by noon on June 25th.

The vote for NEA candidates will take place by secret ballot mailed directly to delegates' home addresses in the process detailed below. Final election results will be posted on nea.org/ra, and provided via email/mail to delegates.

6. PRESENTATION OF RECOMMENDATION TO DELEGATES FOR NEA'S ENDORSEMENT IN THE 2020 GENERAL ELECTION FOR UNITED STATES PRESIDENT.

Presentation of the recommendation of the NEA Fund for Children & Public Education to NEA delegates for NEA's endorsement in the 2020 general election for President of the United States. The recommended candidate will be allowed to address delegates.

Vote on PAC-recommended U.S. presidential candidate for NEA endorsement will take place by secret ballot mailed directly to delegates' homes addresses in the process detailed below.

7. PRESENTATION OF THE NEA STRATEGIC PLAN AND BUDGET DEBATE AND VOTE PROCEDURE

Due to limitations in technology to facilitate virtual debate among thousands of delegates, there will be no motions from the floor, no amendments of any kind and no voting during the virtual sessions of the 2020 Representative Assembly. This includes a motion to "move to close debate" as we have no reliable way to count votes virtually.

There will be limited debate on adoption of the NEA Strategic Plan & Budget according to the following procedure:

Delegates wishing to speak in favor or in against the motion to adopt the Strategic Plan & Budget shall be instructed to call-in in order to get in the electronic queue to speak. To the maximum extent possible given technological limitations, speakers will be heard in the order in which they called in, alternating between those speaking in favor of the motion and those speaking against the motion.

As no Motion to Close Debate is possible, we will end debate when all in the queue have spoken or after 2 hours of debate, whichever comes first.

Vote on the NEA Strategic Plan & Budget will take place by paper ballot mailed directly to delegates' home addresses in the process detailed below.

8. ALL ACTION ITEMS TO BE DECIDED BY MAIL BALLOT

Because of the technical limitations of remote voting, and concerns regarding the accuracy and equity of remote voting with such a large number of delegates, all of the action items at the 2020 Representative Assembly shall be decided by mail ballot.

9. ELECTIONS PROCEDURE

The Elections Committee and its Chair as defined by Standing Rule 11.A shall be appointed by the NEA Board of Directors on the basis of recommendations from the state affiliates.

Elections shall be by mail ballot to be sent out by July 6th to the home address of each delegate as submitted on their delegate registration form. Mail ballots must be returned by August 4th to be counted in the 2020 Representative Assembly elections.

Candidate names shall be placed on the first mail ballot in the order determined by lottery held on June 25th supervised by the Elections Committee Chair and the CCB Chair. All candidates shall be provided with login information for the lottery by noon on June 25th. Should runoff elections be necessary, the order of candidate names shall similarly be determined by lottery.

The order of the lottery shall be as follows: For placement on the first ballot, the Chair of the Election Committee shall draw on behalf of each candidate in the alphabetical order of each candidate's state. For placement on a runoff ballot, the candidates shall draw in order of the highest number of votes received on the previous ballot.

Runoff elections shall be held as necessary by subsequent mail ballots until there is an election for each position by a majority vote.

Candidates shall be briefed on the mail ballot procedure and shall be provided with the opportunity to observe the procedure, either in-person or virtually. Candidates shall be provided at least 7 days advance notice of the time and place for the counting of the ballots and shall be given the opportunity to observe that process virtually or in person as the pandemic situation allows. The Elections Committee shall have the authority to set procedures for ensuring observability, secrecy, and election integrity. The Elections Committee shall also have the authority to make reasonable adjustments to the election timelines.

Candidates for President, Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, Executive Committee, and At-Large Board of Directors shall file both the preliminary and final reports called for in Standing Rule 11.B.4(b). Preliminary reports shall be submitted to the Elections Committee by July 2nd and final reports shall be submitted to the committee within thirty (30) days following certification of the election results.

The committee shall report to the Representative Assembly, prior to nominations, whether any candidate has in any manner violated the election rules and regulations. The final report shall be made available for inspection by any member by means of an appropriate NEA electronic publication.

The Elections Committee shall report the results of the election after the ballots are counted on August 5th. If a runoff election is needed, the Election Committee shall report the results of the election after the ballots are counted on September 4th.

The prohibition in Standing Rule 11.B.4a against the use of any union or employer money or resources in any campaign shall remain in effect throughout the virtual Representative Assembly. The representative requirements by job category and ethnic-minority identification in Standing Rule 11.B.7(d-h) shall also remain in effect.

Elections shall be administered according to the definitions in Standing Rule 13, which shall remain in effect.

10. OTHER STANDING RULES SUSPENDED

All other Standing Rules shall be suspended during the 2020 Virtual Representative Assembly.

General Questions and Answers

1. **What are the dates and times of the virtual RA?**
 - a. July 2-3, 2020, Times TBD
2. **Will this change impact the rotation of cities for the RA?**
 - a. It will not. The upcoming cities for the RA are Denver, Dallas, Philadelphia, and Orlando.
3. **Will there be an NEA RA website for resources and materials this year?**
 - a. Yes we will utilize [NEA.org/ra](https://nea.org/ra) for resources and materials
4. **Will there be an RA app?**
 - a. Plans are underway for an RA app.
5. **When and how will delegates receive information for participating in the virtual RA?**
 - a. All delegates should expect to receive that information by mid-to late June.
6. **Will there be NBI's, Amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws, Resolutions, and Legislative program?**
 - a. NBI's, revisions to the Resolutions and Legislative programs, Constitutional and Bylaw Amendments will be delayed until the 2021 RA.
7. **How do we welcome our new President of the NEA in a way that everybody can be involved?**
 - a. Center for Governance is creating a plan. More information to come.
8. **Will the recommended candidate for president be able to address delegates in the virtual RA?**
 - a. We will extend an invitation but don't have any specifics for the invite yet.
9. **Will the mail ballot be "mail back" only or will there be an option to vote online with a dedicated delegate ID?**
 - a. As NEA elections are LMRDA compliant, there is no option for voting on-line.
10. **Given the challenges with overseas mail, how will those delegates receive their mail paper ballots for voting?**
 - a. Overseas ballots will be express mailed to those delegates, with a pre-paid express mail return of the secret paper ballot.
11. **What ballots will Ex-Officio Delegates receive?**
 - a. We will create a separate ballot for ex officio delegates which will only have the presidential endorsement and strategic plan and budget. Additionally, we will be certain they do not vote in the runoff election if there are any.
12. **How do I get Campaign and Candidate Materials Information?**
 - a. Contact Carrie Lewis in Center for Governance at clewis@nea.org

13. **How do we elect at-large members to the board?**
 - a. At-large candidates will be included on the mail paper ballot.

14. **What support will there be for locals/states who have not finished voting for delegates to the RA because of school shutdowns?**
 - a. We have received information that states and locals are able to move forward with electing their delegates and meeting the May 15th deadline. A few states have been granted extensions to report their delegates by June 1st. We are monitoring that data on a weekly basis. If states/locals have any questions, they should reach out to Center for Governance. At satines@nea.org.

15. **How will the move to virtual RA effect the pre-conferences with elections (Retired, and Aspiring Ed)?**
 - a. Regarding NEA Directors for NEA-Retired and Aspiring Educator categories, elections would be conducted through their respective virtual meetings.
 - i. Plans for conducting the elections for these governance positions will be coordinated with constituency leaders, NEA Center for Governance and the Office of General Counsel so as to be in compliance with policy and regulation.
 - b. Regarding Resolutions Committee members for NEA-Retired and Aspiring Educator categories, NEA Center for Governance and the Office of General Counsel recommends using our vacancy appointment procedure to fill vacancies.
 - i. For NEA-Retired, any vacancies resulting from terms currently being served by committee members that end in 2020, Standing Rule 7.B.7 and NEA-Retired Bylaws permit the NEA-Retired Executive Counsel to fill by appointment vacancies that arise in regular committee positions between Representative Assemblies.
 - ii. For NEA Aspiring Educators, any vacancies resulting from terms currently being served by committee members that end in 2020 allows the Advisory Committee of Aspiring Educators or the Chairperson to fill by appointment vacancies that arise in regular committee positions between Representative Assemblies.

16. **Who do I contact if I have questions regarding Resolution Elections?**
 - a. Contact Paul Birkmeier (pbirkmeier@nea.org) in NEA Center for Governance.

17. **Will RA sessions be live streamed and posted on NEA member portal so that delegates can review sessions when they run into logistics issues?**
 - a. Center for Governance is beginning to work with our vendor on audio-visual platform capacities for a virtual RA. We will share details as soon as they are available.

18. **Will locals be out the hotel costs or will any hotel cost cancellations be passed back down to locals?**
 - a. Our goal is to negotiate as best we can to waive or substantially reduce cancellation fees for our affiliates. We believe we will be largely successful in doing so, as we want to try to hold our state and local affiliates as harmless as possible.

19. **How will delegates with technology challenges or no technology available, receive all pertinent information regarding the RA.**
 - a. The Center for Governance is assessing several possibilities for ensuring information is received by all delegates. In addition to sending electronically, as in past practice, we will mail information to those delegates who identify in the RA registration process, technology challenges.

20. **Will NEA reimburse delegates who might have paid or made deposits on travel?**
 - a. Most travel agencies and airlines are giving reimbursement for travel booked previously.

21. **How will we recognize HCR Award Winners?**
 - a. Information on the plan for the HCR Awards will be posted at www.nea.org/hcrawards in the upcoming weeks.

22. **What happens to the pre-RA Conferences**
 - a. Information on the Conference on Racial and Social Justice can be found at <http://www.nea.org/grants/JointConference.html>
 - b. Information on the Aspiring Educators Conference can be found www.nea.org/aspiringeducator

23. **Will NEA recognize the Teacher, ESP and Higher Ed of the Year at the RA?**
 - a. Plans are underway to include those recognitions in the virtual RA.

24. **Will Women's Suffrage be recognized?**
 - a. NEA is still planning on commemorating the 100th Anniversary of Women's Suffrage. More details to come.