"Unlocking Success:
Your Guide to Fair and Transparent Unit Elections"

This guide will cover the essential election rules for The American Legion Auxiliary, focusing on ensuring a fair and transparent governance process. We will explore the history of the Auxiliary, eligibility criteria for candidates, election procedures, the roles of elected officials, and methods to maintain transparency.

Elections help ensure transparency and accountability, making sure leadership reflects the voices of those they serve. Within any organization, especially one like the Auxiliary where mission-driven values are key, democratic practices foster trust and unity among members.

Setting clear eligibility standards helps maintain integrity and ensures that leadership remains aligned with the core mission and values of the Auxiliary. When members see that candidates are held to thoughtful criteria it builds confidence in the election process and the leaders it produces.

Eligibility Criteria to Run for Office in an Auxiliary Unit

To uphold the values and mission of the American Legion Auxiliary, candidates must meet the following basic criteria:

Membership: Candidates must be members in good standing of the American Legion Auxiliary Unit they intend to represent. This requirement affirms their ongoing commitment to the organization's values, goals, and activities.

Definition of Good Standing:
For the purposes of candidacy, a member in good standing is one whose dues for the current membership year have been paid in full. This financial commitment reflects ongoing involvement and support for the American Legion Auxiliary's mission, programs, and initiatives.

Qualifications and Leadership Expectations
While each leadership position within the Auxiliary may require specific qualifications—such as prior experience or active involvement in Auxiliary programs—these criteria serve as a foundation for selecting capable and committed individuals. However, leadership is not solely defined by past titles. Many members bring exceptional leadership skills, even if they haven't previously held formal roles. What matters most is a genuine passion for serving our veterans and a deep commitment to the Auxiliary's mission.

True leadership means leading by example—embracing the responsibilities, challenges, and service opportunities firsthand. As the saying goes, you can’t lead where you aren’t willing to go.

Nomination Process:
The nomination process is intended to be open, inclusive, and transparent—giving members a voice in proposing candidates who meet established eligibility criteria. This process encourages active engagement and reinforces the Auxiliary’s commitment to democratic practices.

Methods for Accepting Nominations:Units may determine the method that best fits their structure and membership, such as:

From the Floor during a designated meeting

Via a Nominating Committee, which reviews and recommends eligible members

By Sign-Up Sheet, allowing volunteers to express interest

Through Letters of Intent, submitted in advance

Any member in good standing—defined as having paid dues for the current membership year—is eligible to run for office. Additional restrictions on who may seek office are not permitted, as they would conflict with the National and Department's Governing Documents.

This ensures fairness and opens opportunities for all committed members to serve.

Nominating Committee:

Does Your Unit Have a Nominating Committee?

Is it included in your Governing Documents?

Committee Composition

The standard number of committee members is 3, but your unit can decide what works best for your needs.

Selection Process:

Election of the nominating committee is required unless the Unit's governing documents specify an alternate method of selection.

Who can serve on the Committee:

Eligibility shall extend to any member in good standing, except as restricted by the Election Rules

Nomination Period

- Nominations should open approximately 2 to 3 months prior to the election, depending on what best suits the Unit's meeting schedule and member engagement.
- This window allows sufficient time for announcements, outreach, and candidate preparation.

Nomination Committee Disbandment

- The Nomination Committee typically disbands after its final report is given and nominations are formally closed.
- If the Unit's Election Rules do not specify otherwise, disbandment may occur at the election meeting or immediately following it.

Closing Nominations

- Nominations officially close at the meeting where the election is held, unless alternate timing is prescribed by the Unit's governing documents.
- Late nominations are generally not accepted to preserve fairness and consistency.

Nominations by a Committee

Using a nominating committee to identify willing and qualified candidates for office is a valuable approach that benefits members when selecting their leaders. When the committee fulfills its responsibilities thoughtfully, the membership gains confidence that nominees:

- Have expressed interest in the role
- Have agreed to serve if elected
- Meet the stated qualifications for the office

Role of the Nominating Committee

The committee's primary duty is to identify the most suitable candidate for each elected office. It is not required to present multiple candidates per position unless stipulated by the governing documents. Likewise, individuals serving on the committee may be nominated for office, unless expressly prohibited by the Unit's bylaws or Election Rules.

To fulfill its task, the committee should receive the following from the secretary:

- Current membership list
- Governing documents (bylaws and Election Rules)
- Description of responsibilities for each office
- Eligibility requirements

Important: No individual should be nominated without their consent, as elected

Committee members must carefully review eligibility criteria and ensure all nominees meet those requirements. If a nominee is found to be ineligible after being elected, that election shall be considered null and void.

Nomination Process

The committee should meet to:

- Review the membership list
- Identify members they believe would serve effectively
- Assign a member to contact each prospective nominee

Nominees must consent to run for office. If someone declines, the committee must seek another candidate. If a position remains unfilled, the committee may:

- Leave the position open for nominations from the floor at the election meeting
- Announce that there is no nominee, allowing interested members to volunteer

Nominating Committee Report

When called upon to report, the Chair of the Nominating Committee formally presents the slate of candidates. A sample report may be stated as:

Chair of Nominating Committee:

"Madam President, the Nominating Committee respectfully submits the following slate of nominees:

- For President: [Name]
- For Vice President: [Name]
- For Secretary: [Name]
- For Treasurer: [Name]

...and so forth for each office to be filled."

Committee Disbandment & Continued Service

- The Nominating Committee is customarily discharged upon delivering its official report, unless the Unit's procedures require ongoing service.
- In some Units, the committee provides monthly progress reports between its formation and the election to enhance transparency and member engagement.
- The committee should remain active until nominations are officially closed, ensuring flexibility for late-stage candidate outreach or vacancy resolution.

Opening the Floor

After the Nominating Committee delivers its report, the presiding officer announces:

President:

"The Nominating Committee submits the following nominations:

- For President: [Name]
- For Vice President: [Name]
- For Secretary: [Name]
- For Treasurer: [Name]

Nominations are now open from the floor. Are there any further nominations for President?" and so on.

Open Nominations / Nominations from the Floor

This is one of the most widely used methods for selecting candidates and promotes direct member participation. The process is governed by key procedural principles:

Rules for Floor Nominations

- Recognition by the chair is not required to make a nomination. However, for orderly conduct, many Units adopt a more formal process.

- Seconding a nomination is not required.

- Self-nomination is permitted.

- For offices with multiple seats, a member should only nominate one person at a time, allowing others the opportunity to nominate.

- Unless prohibited by bylaws, a candidate may be nominated for more than one office — though this is typically discouraged. Encourage nominees to focus on the role that best matches their passion and skills.

- Nominees should be present during nominations to affirm their willingness to serve.

- The presiding officer may continue to preside, even if they are nominated for an office.

- Nominees may decline immediately during the process if they do not wish to serve.

- After each nomination, the chair repeats the name to the assembly for clarity.

- Nominations are taken in the order offices are listed in the bylaws.

Closing Nominations

- No formal motion is needed to close nominations. When no additional nominations are offered, the chair may declare them closed.

- Customarily, the chair calls for nominations three times before closing, but this is not mandatory.

- According to Robert's Rules, a motion to close nominations is out of order while any member still wishes to nominate.

Recording Nominations

- The secretary enters all nominations into the minutes.

- If both a nominating committee and floor nominations are used, the secretary first records the committee's report, then lists floor nominations in the order presented.

Can a Member Run for Multiple Offices?

Yes — unless prohibited by governing documents. However, Units should encourage each nominee to focus on the office that best aligns with their commitment and qualifications. We'll address procedures for handling dual election outcomes later in the presentation.

Election procedures shall be thoroughly defined in the Unit's Governing Documents, accessible, and communicated to all members in advance. This ensures transparency, consistency, and orderly conduct during the nomination and voting process.

Voting Methods in the Auxiliary Election Process

The Auxiliary may utilize various voting methods, including ballot, voice vote, or show of hands, depending on its governing documents and the nature of the election.

Electing by Ballot

Ballot voting is the most secure and impartial method, allowing members to express their choices freely and confidentially. There are two common approaches:

Option 1: Ballot After Nominations Are Complete

- Nominations for all offices are completed before any voting takes place.

- This method allows elections to occur at a convenient time and location, possibly outside of a regular meeting.

- Candidates may be nominated for — and elected to — multiple offices. If elected to more than one position, the individual must choose which office to accept

Option 2: Ballot After Each Office's Nominations

-Nominations and elections are held sequentially, office by office.

-Members vote on one office at a time, allowing results from earlier elections to inform later choices.

-This method offers deliberative flexibility but takes more time, so it's best suited for smaller Units.

Additional Guidelines for Ballot Voting

-Elections follow the order listed in the Unit's bylaws.

-Write-in votes are permitted unless the name is illegible, unidentifiable, ineligible, or fictitious.

-Voting "yes," "no," "for," or "against" is not permitted in ballot elections — members must vote for a candidate or abstain.

Establishing a Clear Election Timeline

A well-defined timeline for the election process — including nomination deadlines, voting periods, and announcement of results — is essential to ensure transparency, fairness, and broad member participation.

Voting Hours

There are that Units conduct elections on the day of a scheduled meeting, often extending voting hours (e.g., 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM) to:

- Accommodate diverse member schedules

- Maximize voter turnout and engagement

- Uphold each member's right to cast a ballot before polls officially close

Who Gets to Vote

Balloting may occur:

- During official meetings

- During designated polling periods — even if no meeting is in progress

Regardless of timing, the following procedures should be upheld:

Voter Verification & Ballot Access

- Only members in good standing are eligible to vote

- Verify voter eligibility through membership cards or approved verification methods

- Election officials should maintain a checklist of voting members

- Distribute ballots only to qualified voters; they must deposit their ballots in approved receptacles or return them to designated counters

Ballot Management

- Appoint reliable ballot counters to manage ballot distribution, collection, and vote tabulation

- Ensure ballot counters are impartial and familiar with election procedures

Presiding Officer Voting Rights

- The presiding officer votes along with all other members — their vote is treated equally and does not override or replace the membership's decision

Counting the Ballots

Accurate and impartial ballot counting ensures integrity in the election process. Ballot counters must follow these essential rules:

Valid vs. Invalid Ballots

| Blank ballot =Treated as scrap paper; does not count at all

| Illegal vote from legal voter = Counts toward total ballots cast, but not toward any candidate

| Illegal vote from illegal voter = Entirely excluded; not counted in any total

| Unintelligible, fictitious, or ineligible = Invalid — does not count for any individual

| Two marked ballots folded together = Counted as one illegal vote

| Marked + blank ballot folded together = Marked ballot counts as legal; blank is discarded

Ballot Nuances & Voter Intent

- Each question on a multipart ballot is counted separately. Blank sections do not invalidate completed ones.
- Voting for more choices than seats available = illegal vote
- Voting for fewer choices than seats available = valid vote
- Minor errors (e.g., spelling mistakes or incorrect mark types) do not invalidate a vote if intent is clear

⚠ Illegal Voter Impact

- If illegal votes affect the outcome and cannot be separated from the count, the election must be nullified and retaken

Teller Guidelines & Reporting

- Each candidate selects one teller; the Chair also selects a teller
- Tellers distribute, collect, and count ballots, ensuring all voting procedures are followed
- Tellers prepare a complete report of the results, which must be recorded in the official minutes

Teller's Report should include:

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- Vote count per candidate
- Any discrepancies or procedural notes

After the Vote

Reporting Election Results

- Once vote counting is complete, the lead ballot counter reads the results aloud to the membership — without declaring winners or sharing the individual vote totals.
- The presiding officer then reads the report again and formally declares the result.
- The complete Teller's Report must be included in the minutes for transparency and official recordkeeping.

Determining the Winner

Unless your bylaws specify otherwise, elections are decided by majority vote, which means:

- A candidate must receive more than half of the legal votes cast.
- Voice vote results are typically immediate and determined audibly.
- For ballot elections, a position is not filled until a candidate reaches the required threshold (majority).

Tie Votes & Run-offs

- If only two candidates tie, repeat balloting until one receives a majority.

- If more than two candidates are running and no majority is reached, the top two vote-getters proceed to a run-off election.

- Candidates polling fewer votes are not required to withdraw; members may still support them as a compromise candidate.

"Majority" vs. "Highest Number of Votes"

- Majority = 50% + 1

- Example from Robert's Rules of Order, 12th Edition:

If 19 votes are cast, a majority (more than 9.5) is 10.

If 20 votes are cast, a majority (more than 10) is 11.

If 21 votes are cast, a majority (more than 10.5) is 11

Ballot Retention & Recount Considerations

- Ballots should be retained for a period that allows for a potential recount, based on Unit standing rules and Department guidelines.

- A brief retention period may be adopted to align with National's recommendations.

- Units may decide ballot retention duration during the election meeting.

Certification of Unit Officers

- Immediately following the election, a Certification of Unit Officers Form must be completed and submitted to Department Headquarters.

- Submission is required even if no leadership changes occurred.

- No membership cards will be issued until this certification is received.

Additional Points Concerning Elections

Quorum Requirements

- A quorum must be maintained throughout the election process.

- If the quorum is lost (e.g., members leave), voting for remaining offices must be postponed to an adjourned or future meeting.

Ballot Counter Protocols

- Ballot counters cast their votes along with the assembly, not before or after.

- They should be trained thoroughly, including how to guide members in using the ballots properly.

Accepting Office

Candidate Acceptance

- If an elected candidate is not present and has not pre-consented, they should be contacted promptly to confirm acceptance.

- If declined during the meeting, a new vote may take place immediately.

- If declined after the meeting, a new election is required — unless the bylaws provide clear direction for such cases.

Eligibility Issues

- If a candidate is later found ineligible, their election is null and void, even if they have already started serving.

- A replacement must be elected according to standard procedures.

Preferable Use of Recess

- If ballot counting is expected to take time, the assembly should recess rather than adjourn, preserving procedural continuity.

Adjournment & Recess Rules

Proper Timing for Adjournment

- A motion to adjourn is out of order during active voting or vote verification, except when voting is by ballot and ballots have been collected.

- If adjourned before vote announcement, results must be presented at the next scheduled meeting as the first order of business.