

Post-Election Petition 2009

On the heels of the IPA elections in August of 2009, some concerned members composed and circulated a petition asking the Secretary and Vice-President for clarification of election procedures. The petition was presented to the Board at its fall meeting and the response to the petition was written in the days following. The full text of the petition and the response to the petition are printed below.

Petition for Procedural Clarity Re: IPA Presidential Elections

To: Warren Davis, Secretary, Bob Holmes, VP & former president

Aug. 29, 2009

In light of procedural questions arising the day after the 2009 presidential election, the members undersigned hereby petition for clarification of procedures, preservation of detailed records, and any other actions deemed appropriate/necessary due to insufficient records.

A main question concerns the unprecedented use of email BALLOTS. Were these new or old members? Were they informed of parties running or simply encouraged to participate in a quorum? Were they informed of the issues? How many email ballots were there? Were all IPA members informed of the candidates running for office and informed of their option to vote by email? If not, which members were informed? We request that this information be reported to the membership. Records of these email votes need to be kept.

Numbers of Absentee Ballots, other write-ins, and Proxies also need to be recorded. Re: PROXIES, a Board resolution was made at the 2000 (or 2001) Board meeting at Barbara Bryan's house (Larry King presiding) declaring that no board member could use more than 3 proxies (at any election/annual meeting). It may be in the archive-worthy decisions.

We respectfully request that these clarifications be made IN WRITING and published or made reviewable upon request.

Response to Membership Petition for Procedural Clarity Re: IPA Presidential Elections

Many of our members are aware that the 2009 election for IPA president was not an election by acclamation of the slate candidate, Harriet Geller, but an election between two candidates as Denise Kline declared herself a candidate at the eleventh hour. Here is how it all unfolded.

On the morning of Friday August 21, three days before the convention, I received an email from Denise in which she indicated her decision to run for president. She also mentioned that she wanted to contact Harriet and some others personally as well. Later that evening, in another email, Denise indicated that she was still trying to figure out how to tell Harriet (and the slate candidate for vice-president, Larry Schumer) as soon as possible, but that she might need to wait for the Convention at that point.

I read that email late Friday night and realized that I could not sit on this information, that the other candidate had a right to know she was in an election race now, and that I needed to let her know as soon as possible. Since I knew that Harriet had no active email at home at that time, I contacted her by phone Saturday morning and told her of Denise's decision to run for president. I also emailed Larry to let him know as well. It was too late for me to oversee an election campaign on such short notice and notify all the membership of Denise's intention to run. My thought was that it was now in the hands of the candidates and up to them to notify as many members as they possibly could. By 11:30 Saturday morning I had emailed Denise to let her know I had informed the two slate candidates of her intention to run, and wished her good luck in the race.

Some time later I received a call from Harriet, asking if email votes would be acceptable. I said yes. My reasoning was this:

- 1) There was nothing in the IPA bylaws that would preclude the use of email votes;
- 2) Email is considered to be a legitimate means of transmitting important information in many areas of society, and it seemed reasonable that we could use it this case;
- 3) The bylaws state that nominations can be accepted in person or in writing, and I reasoned that votes should be afforded the same consideration; and
- 4) The bylaws state that each member is entitled to one vote, but do not say anything about where or how those votes are to be cast. In order to allow for the maximum possible absentee votes to be cast, it made sense to me to allow votes to come in by email.

I asked Harriet to tell any members she might contact to email their votes directly to me.

Saturday evening I received an email from Denise in which she stated that she had heard that Harriet was asking people to email votes for her, and that she (Denise) wanted clarification of the procedures for mail-in votes. I emailed her back with the following comments:

“While I do not know the complete history of voting in the IPA, there is nothing in the bylaws that would preclude members from sending in their votes by letter or email. It would seem reasonable to me that if a written nomination and acceptance of candidacy can be sent to the President in absentia for presentation at the annual membership meeting, then surely votes of the membership should be afforded the same treatment.

I suggest that if there are members who support you and will not be at the meeting, then you can have them email me their vote. I will be bringing my computer, and getting my

email. Then all the votes can be counted at the election. I will not be campaigning for either candidate.

This is the best and fairest way I can think of to oversee this campaign on such short notice.”

Denise wrote back and indicated that emails would be coming and wished me a safe journey to the convention.

I received absentee ballots, both in person and by email, up to the day of the election. In fact, there was a ballot dated and received by email one day *after* the election, which, of course, was invalid.

In order to safeguard the integrity and anonymity of the absentee ballots, I numbered the ballots I received with a corresponding tear-off portion which went into the ballot box at the election. Each ballot cast with a number therefore has a corresponding piece in my possession saying who the member is and who that member voted for. During the election, the ballots collected were counted by Barbara Bryan and Warren Davis in front of me.

All absentee ballots were sent or given to me by existing IPA members in good standing. As far as I know, all senders of email ballots were aware of who was running for president, and made their choice. As for the question, “were they informed of the issues,” I do not know. It has never been a voting requirement that the members had to be informed of the issues in order to vote, although it would certainly be desirable. Presumably the candidates would have informed their possible supporters of the issues they believed were important during their respective campaigns.

There were eleven absentee ballots cast, nine of which were by email. There were no proxy votes or write-ins. I have retained the original absentee ballots which remain in my possession.

I trust that the foregoing clarification of procedures regarding the 2009 IPA presidential election has fully addressed the concerns of all the members who signed the petition.

Bob Holmes
IPA Vice-President and immediate Past President