
Minnesota State Student Association

GENERAL ELECTIONS RULES

(Last Revised for 2013-2014)

Preamble: These elections will conform to the MSSA Constitution, its Bylaws, and all University policies.

Article I: Eligibility

1. Any Minnesota State University, Mankato student may seek Elected Office, provided Article I of the General Election Rules is satisfied.
2. Newly elected officials must satisfy the specific requirements of their constituency, by the first day of Fall semester of the academic year.
3. No person may run for more than one Senate seat or Executive Officer position (President or Vice President) concurrently.
4. All candidates are required to attend a candidate rules meeting conducted by the Elections Committee at the beginning of the Campaign Period, to read over these rules and to ask any questions.
 - a. Candidates unable to attend the rules meetings must schedule a time to meet with an Elections Committee member to discuss the election rules, prior to the elections date.

Article II: Elections Publicity

1. The Elections Committee shall distribute posters advertising upcoming elections, vacant positions, and candidacy filing procedure.
2. The Elections Committee shall work with the Office of Student Affairs to distribute an all - student email inviting students to informational meetings regarding involvement in the MSSA.
3. The Elections Committee will hold a minimum of two (2) rules meetings for candidates prior to Election Day.

Article III: Filing

Section A

1. All candidates must file a *Candidacy Application* in order to be placed on the General Election Ballot. All *Candidacy Applications* shall be available on the MSSA MavSync page. Candidates for Executive Office (President and Vice President) must file no later than two weeks prior to Election Day. Candidates for all other elected positions must file no later than one week prior to Election Day.
2. Candidates must file *Candidacy Applications* in order to be active during the Campaign Period, outlined in Article III of these Elections Rules.
3. When candidates file, they will receive a copy of the General Election Rules and notice of their required attendance at a candidate rules meeting.
4. The Elections Committee shall compile a voter guide consisting of candidates who choose to submit a personal profile summarizing their qualifications and stances on various issues. The guide shall be available at the MSSA online voting booth and on the MSSA website.

Section B

1. Endorsing groups shall be defined as groups or individuals that are officially sponsoring or campaigning for a candidate(s). Endorsing groups are limited to Recognized Student Organizations and other groups or individuals approved by the Elections Committee.

2. Endorsement activities include, but may not be limited to any combination of: the donation of funds, goods, or services to a campaign, the volunteering of time to a campaign, or the granting of permission to use an individual or organization name indicating sponsorship of a campaign.
3. Official endorsement is determined by a vote and formal declaration, via an affidavit of endorsement, by a group.
4. Approved groups officially supporting at least one candidate may not solicit campaign donations or funds, or spend money on a campaign unless an *Affidavit of Endorsement* has officially been filed with the Elections Committee. The Affidavit of Endorsement form shall be available in the Senate Office, and through the MSSA website.
 - a. Endorsing groups will only be allowed to use private funds in support of candidates. No Student Fees or University expenditures will be allowed in support of specific candidates.
5. When approved endorsing groups file an *Affidavit of Endorsement*, they shall receive a copy of the General Election Rules and notice of their suggested attendance at the candidate rules meeting.

Section C

1. Any write-in candidate that is elected to office must file a *Candidacy Application* within 48 hours of being notified of their election by the Elections Committee. The Elections Committee will send a notice letter the day following Elections to the address on file with the Registrar's Office. If the Elections Committee is unable to contact the candidate within five days the runner up will take office.

Article IV: Campaigning

1. Campaigning may begin fifteen (15) calendar days prior to the second Tuesday in April, provided the proper applications have been filed with the Elections Committee.
2. Campaigning shall be defined as:
 - a. The public distribution or posting of any material or information promoting a candidate or candidates for office.
 - b. Speaking before an organized group, except as allowed in Section 4 of this Article, or in a public place or forum with the purpose of promoting a candidate or candidates for office.
 - c. Any program or activity requesting the vote of a constituent for a specified candidate or candidates for office.
 - d. Any attempts to discredit an opponent.
3. Encouraging voting in general, without specifying a particular candidate or group of candidates, is NOT campaigning.
4. Campaign Recruitment
 - a. Recruitment shall be defined as:
 - i. Seeking support for campaign promotion or volunteer work
 - ii. Seeking of endorsement, by groups or individuals, of campaign
 - b. Recruitment must be done in a private manner
 - c. There is no limit to the number of people that can take part in recruitment
 - d. Recruitment events cannot be publicized, except by word of mouth
 - e. Recruitment may take place beginning one month, by calendar date, prior to Election Day.
5. Campaign publicity:
 - a. Campaign material shall be defined as literature, posters, advertisements, banners, flyers, printed material, web sites, emails, etc. by an individual or endorsing group.

- b. All publicity must include a disclaimer visible to the naked eye, with the words “sponsored by” to be followed by the name of the individual candidate, party/group, or endorsing group and the e-mail address of the contact person.
- c. Any publicity on behalf of a candidate who is a member of a party/group must indicate the candidate’s affiliation with that party/group.
- d. Announcements to Recognized Student Organizations must include a disclaimer that the candidate is not endorsed by the Senate nor represents the University.
- e. Poster Guidelines:
 - i. All posters must contain a disclaimer as noted in Section 5b above
 - ii. Standard posters shall not exceed 11”x17”
 - iii. Large posters may be allowed in specifically designated areas, as defined by CSU Operations
 - iv. Two posters for the same candidate OR party/group may not be closer than 36”
 - v. All Campaigns shall follow University poster guidelines
 - vi. All posters must include the URL for the online election on the poster
 - vii. Within 48 hours of verification of the election results, all candidates must remove and recycle all posters.
- f. Student Newspaper advertisements must follow the same content guidelines as posters.
- g. All material must be logged and stamped by an Elections Committee member including a carbon copy of the approved campaign email which is to be sent to mssa@mnsu.edu.
- h. A candidate or party/group that creates a webpage to promote their candidacy must provide the URL to the Elections Committee.
 - i. Promotion of the website will not be allowed until the campaigning period begins.
 - i. A candidate or party/group that uses social networking websites to promote candidacies must provide access to all groups and events to the Elections Committee.
 - i. Use of social networking sites to campaign will not be allowed prior to the campaigning period.
- 6. Campaign items that will have value after the election will be allowed up to \$0.50 per item. Coupons will be logged as having the value of the item on the coupon. All items are subject to Elections Committee approval.
- 7. Campaign materials posted in the CSU must abide by CSU guidelines.
- 8. Through the Office of Student Affairs, all campaigns will be allowed one all-student email to promote their candidacies. Candidates running as part of a party/group will not be allowed individual all-student emails if an email is being sent on behalf of the party/group.
- 9. The Elections Committee will facilitate official debates between all Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidates.
 - a. These debates shall occur at 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm for the President and Vice President respectively on the Wednesday before Election Day.
- 10. No campaigning is to take place in the Senate Office or while Senate business is being conducted. The Senate Office is to remain a permanent neutral zone to be used only by the Elections Committee for the operations of the Election and the approval of campaign material.
- 11. No campaigning is allowed within fifteen (15) feet of a designated voting station, as determined by the Elections Committee on the day of elections.
- 12. No campaigning is allowed in the Memorial Library.

Article V: Voting

1. All currently enrolled students shall be eligible to vote online using a valid tech ID between 8:00 am and 6:00 pm on Election Day.
2. The MSSA Elections Committee will be responsible for staffing a voting station at the Centennial Student Union for the entirety of Election Day, as well as voting stations including but not limited to the Margaret A. Preska Residence Community, Carkoski Commons, Julia A. Sears Residence Community, MSU Library entrance, and the Taylor Center hallway as able to staff.
 - a. No student, faculty or staff member involved with a campaign will be allowed to staff the voting booth.
 - b. Candidate(s) or endorsing groups will be able to table, but must be at least fifteen (15) feet from voting booths, in the CSU.
 - c. No candidate or endorsing group will be allowed to host voting booths.

Article VI: Finances

1. All candidates shall report all contributions received and expenditures incurred during the campaign. The report may be verified by the Elections Committee.
2. All financial contributions and expenditures related to the campaign shall be validated and documented by a member of the Elections Committee prior to their being used for their campaign.
 - a. The spending limit for candidates for Executive Office (President or vice President) shall be \$300, and the spending limit for candidates for any other office shall be \$150. The spending limit for any party/group of two (2) or more candidates shall be determined by adding the individual spending limits for affiliated candidates together, up to a maximum limit of \$1000 for the party/group.
 - b. Any material that mentions a party or group of candidates counts against the spending limit provided for group expenditures.
 - c. Any expenditure made on behalf of a candidate who is part of a party/group shall count against the spending limit provided for group expenditures.
 - d. For the purpose of spending limits, any joint expenditures by individual candidates shall be divided equally among all candidates involved in said expenditures, and equal portions shall count towards each candidates spending limit
3. Campaign contributions from endorsing groups or individuals shall be limited to \$250 each.
 - a. Contributions shall be defined as monetary donations or goods and services provided without charge.
4. Financial Reports must contain receipts. If material or service is donated, or acquired, or acquired significantly below the market cost, the candidate shall make a reasonable estimate as to the value of the material or service. That estimate shall be approved by the Elections Committee and shall be recorded against the expenditures on the financial report.

Article VII: Violations

Section A

1. The Elections Committee reserves the right through the end of Spring term to sanction any candidate party formation, endorsing group, or campaigning individual at anytime for violation of these Election Rules, the MSSA Constitution, or Bylaws, or University policy due to a campaign violation.
 - a. The Elections Committee is the sole body authorized to adjudicate alleged violations.

- b. Any dispute with Elections Committee decisions may be brought before the MSSA but can only be overturned by a 3/4 majority decision.
2. It is the responsibility of the candidate to educate any and all campaign workers and affiliates as to the rules set forth by these Election Rules. Candidates will be held responsible for any actions of those assisting with the campaign. Candidates will be held responsible for any actions committed with the consent or knowledge of the candidates.
 - a. A representative for each approved endorsing group or independent candidate(s) is advised to check in at the Student Senate office no later than 11 a.m. every working day of the campaign period. If there are violation citations, the alleged violation must be corrected by the end of the working day (working hours are 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.). Following five (5) hours after notification the candidate or endorsing group will be held responsible for the violation. Exceptions may be granted by the Elections Committee.
3. Penalties for violations will depend on whether a violation is determined to have occurred.
 - a. If no violation is found to have occurred, the claim is set aside and no further actions will be taken.
 - b. If a violation is found to have occurred, the severity of the claim must be determined prior to sanctions being applied.
 - i. Violations should be labeled as either Minor or Major.
 - ii. The severity of the claim will be determined by the Elections Committee on a case by case basis.
 - c. Minor violations should be considered as small offenses not substantially affecting the outcome of the election.
 - i. The consequence of a first minor violation should be a verbal reprimand to the candidate and documentation placed in the election file.
 - ii. At the Election Committee's discretion, subsequent minor violations may result in a reduction in campaign spending limit of \$50.
 - iii. At the Election Committee's discretion, excessive minor violations may be considered a major violation and result in the removal of the candidate's eligibility for election.
 - d. Major Violations should be considered as major offenses substantially affecting the outcome of the election.
 - i. A major violation should result in the removal of eligibility for election.

Article VIII: Election Returns

1. In the event of a tie between two or more candidates:
 - a. If the position in question is the office of President or Vice President, a runoff election will take place.
 - i. Runoff Election rules:
 1. An additional election will take place one week following the general election.
 2. One polling place will be open in the Centennial Student Union.
 3. Voting times will be the same as for the general election.
 4. General election rules will remain the same with the exception of:
 - a. The candidates' campaigning materials may remain up until 48 hours after the runoff election.
 - b. \$100 shall be added to the individual candidates' spending limits.
 - c. No extra funding from endorsing groups will be allowed.

- b. If the position in question is that of a Senator or board position, the candidates who are tied will be elected by the current Student Senate in the Senate meeting immediately following the general election.
2. In the event an elected candidate chooses, within 48 hours of the election's conclusion, to refuse office:
 - a. A runner up, defined as the candidate receiving the second highest number of votes, shall be offered the seat.
 - b. If there is no clear runner up (i.e.: multiple candidates are tied), or if the clear runner up refuses office, the seat shall be declared vacant and will be filled at the next scheduled vacancy election.
3. During the time that the Election Committee meets to approve election results, there shall be no one else in the room where the Election Committee and judges are meeting, except for the Election Committee members and judges.

2013 MSSA Election Committee