

Minnesota State Student Association

GENERAL ELECTIONS RULES

(Revised 2008-2009)

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 are 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 Senator position, President or Vice President concurrently.
4. All candidates are required to attend a candidate 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 informational meetings must schedule a time to meet with an Elections Committee member to discuss the election rules.
5. Potential President and vice President Candidates must demonstrate at least a minimal level of previous experience with the Minnesota State Student Association.
 - a. Previous experience shall consist of holding a senate seat for a minimum of six meetings, participation in an appointed or elected MSSA committee for at least six meetings or one semester of participation as a delegate from Minnesota State University, Mankato to a MSUSA conference.
6. If failing to meet experience requirements, candidates desiring to run for executive positions may petition to be on the ballot if they meet the following conditions:
 - a. The petitioning person(s) must then gather 100 signatures of current MNSU students and each must provide their class standing, major and school email address. This petition needs to be presented to the Elections committee by 5:00 pm on the filing deadline day.
 - i. At the moment the petition has been submitted, it is considered to be official unless otherwise challenged.
 - b. This petition is a matter of public record and should be available in the same manner as campaign finance records.
 - c. Challenges to the legitimacy of any signees of this petition must be made within 72 hours after the filing deadline and may be made by any MNSU student.
 - i. Challenges must be made against specific signees not against the petition as a whole.
 - ii. If any signatures are found to be invalid, the entire petition is invalid and the petitioner's candidacy is rejected without prejudice.

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 informational meetings for potential candidates.

Article III: Filing **Section A**

1. All potential candidates must file a *Candidacy Application* to be placed on the General Election Ballot. All *Candidacy Applications* shall be available in the Senate Office and through the MSSA website.

Potential candidates for President and Vice President may file no later than two weeks prior to Election Day. All other potential candidates may file no later than one week prior to Election Day.

2. Potential candidates must file *Candidacy Applications* to be active during the Campaign Period, outlined in Article III of these Elections Rules.
3. When potential candidates file they will receive a copy of the General Election Rules and notice of the mandatory candidate meeting.
4. The Elections Committee shall compile a voter guide consisting of election 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. Supporting groups shall be defined as groups that are officially sponsoring or campaigning for a candidate(s). Official support is determined by an official vote or declaration by a group. Supporting groups will be limited to: Recognized Student Organizations, and other groups approved by the Elections Committee.
2. Approved groups officially supporting at least one candidate may not solicit campaign donations or funds or spend money on a campaign unless a *Support Application* has officially been filed with the Elections Committee. All Support Applications shall be available in the Senate Office, and through the MSSA website three weeks prior to Election Day and will be available until one week prior to Election Day.
 - a. Supporting 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.
3. Individuals who are running for a seat or office will be excluded based on a violation of these Elections Rules.
4. When approved supporting groups file a *Support Application* they shall receive a copy of the General Election Rules and notice of the recommended candidate meeting.

Section C

1. Any write-in candidate that is elected to office must file a *Candidacy Application* within 48 hours after being notified by the Elections Committee. The Elections Committee will send a notice letter the following day of 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 anytime after March 17, providing the proper applications have been filed with the Elections Committee. However, no poster hanging will be allowed prior to 8:00 AM March 24th.
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 or in a public place with the purpose of promoting a candidate or candidates for office.
 - c. Any activity requesting the vote of a constituent for a specified candidate or candidates for office.
 - d. Any and all attempts to promote one's candidacy in a public forum.
 - e. 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-recruitment shall be defined as:
 - a. Seeking support for campaign work
 - b. Being 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 can take place prior to applications being filled with the Elections Committee
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 supporting 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 or supporting groups e-mail address of the contact person.
 - c. Announcements to Recognized Student Organizations must announce a disclaimer that the candidate is not endorsed by the Senate nor represents the University.
 - d. Poster Guidelines:
 - i. Must contain a disclaimer and a contact person, including the e-mail address of the contact person.
 - ii. Standard posters shall not exceed 11”x17”.
 - iii. Large posters may be allowed in specifically designated areas. Large posters shall be no smaller than 11”x17”, and no larger than 4’x4’. Large posters may be one single poster or may be multiple small posters tabbed together on the back.
 - iv. One large poster is allowed per candidate per wall, in the designated areas allowing large posters.
 - v. Two posters for the same candidate may not be closer than 22”.
 - vi. All Campaigns shall follow University poster guidelines as stated in the General Elections Rules.
 - vii. All posters must include the URL for the online election on the poster.
 - viii. Within 48 hours of verification of the election results, all candidates must remove and recycle all posters.
 - e. Student Newspaper advertisements must follow the same guidelines as posters.
 - f. 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.
 - g. A candidate or candidates who create a web page 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.
 - h. A candidate or candidates who use social networking websites to promote candidacies must provide access to all groups and events to the MSSA 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 campaign will be allowed up to \$0.50. 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 may only be posted in designated area on the sheet rock in the CSU.
 8. Through the Office of Student Affairs all campaigns will be allowed one all-student email to promote their candidacies.
 9. The MSSA Elections Committee will facilitate official debates between all Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidates.
 - a. These debates shall occur at 12:00 and 1:00 for the President and Vice President respectively on the Wednesday before Election Day.

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 Gage Complex, Carkowski Commons, Julia A. Sears Residence Hall, 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. While candidate or supporting groups will be able to table at least 15 feet from voting booths in the CSU, no candidate or supporting group voting booths will be allowed.

Article VI: Finances

1. All candidates shall disclose all contributions received and expenditures incurred during the campaign.
2. A financial report must be submitted to the Elections Committee by 4:30 p.m. on March 21st, 28th, April 4th and April 11th.
3. The report shall include all expenditures and all donations relating to the campaign. The report may be verified by the Elections Committee.
4. Any joint expenditures by candidates will be divided as an expenditure for all candidates. Joint expenditures must be shown on the expense report of each candidate.
5. Expenditures for a single candidate shall not exceed \$500. Combined expenditure for a single party/group shall not exceed \$750.
 - a. Individual expenditures do not count against the combined group expenses if they do not mention any other candidate or the party as a whole.
 - b. Group expenditures must feature either multiple candidates or only the groups designated name or logo.
 - c. Any material that mentions a party or group of candidates counts against the limit provided for group expenditures.
6. Campaign contributions from supporting groups or individuals shall be limited to \$200 each.
7. Contributions shall be defined as monetary donations or goods and services provided without charge.
8. 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 to sanction any candidate party formation, supporting group, or campaigning individual at anytime for violation of these Election Rules, the MSSA Constitution, or Bylaws 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 supporting 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 5 hours after notification the candidate or supporting 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 budget spending 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.

Section B

1. No campaigning is to take place in the Senate Office. The Senate Office is a neutral zone to be used only by the Elections Committee for the operations of the Election and the approval of campaign material.
2. No campaigning is allowed within fifteen feet of a voting station on the day of elections.

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 Vice President or President, a runoff election will take place.
 - b. Runoff Election rules:
 - i. An additional election will take place one week following the general election.
 - ii. One polling place will be open in the Centennial Student Union.
 - iii. Voting times will be the same as for the general election.
 - iv. General election rules will remain the same with the exception of:
 1. The candidates campaigning materials may remain up until 48 hours after the runoff election.
 2. An extra \$100 in campaign spending will be allowed for the candidates.
 3. No extra funding from support groups will be allowed.
 - v. If the position in question is that of a Senator, 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 refuses office, the seat shall be declared vacant and 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 CSU 280, except for the Election Committee members and judges.

2008-2009 MSSA Election Committee