



National Association of Judiciary Interpreters & Translators
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The Evolution of NAJIT Elections:

When NAJIT was created in the late 1970s, the voting process for board elections was very primitive: paper ballots delivered by snail-mail, votes returned in a numbered blank envelope and then stuffed inside a self-addressed stamped envelope provided by the Association and mailed back to Headquarters. Once the voting deadline had passed, the members of the Elections Committee would gather, count each ballot by hand, tally the results on paper and report the winning candidates to the members during the Annual Meeting. This time consuming and labor-intensive work performed by the Election Committee was crucial to ensure a fair process, and ultimately maintained the integrity of the election, and by extension, the Association as a whole.

As technology has advanced, so have NAJIT's processes. For nearly a decade, voting has been done electronically through the use of proxy ballots. The decision to move to proxy ballots was made on advice of counsel, who confirmed that other non-profits chartered in New York State operate in a similar manner to allow organization members to vote electronically. The legal firm consulted was experienced in providing guidance with these decisions having previously worked with other associations and organizations crossing over to the electronic medium. For several years members voted by logging into the member portal of the NAJIT website, a privilege reserved for eligible current members only. NAJIT's database, NEON, has the capability to schedule and carry out elections electronically with the added security feature that the system is designed to distinguish between who is a current member and who is not.

For the 2019 elections, the Board explored using an alternative voting system that would place greater distance between the member database and the actual voting process, and opted to use a third-party application to facilitate voting.

The Board ultimately voted for and approved the use of Election Runner (see minutes from April 2019). The application allows an administrator to import membership information into the application which then sends an email directly to members. The Board decided that NAJIT's administrator, Susan Cruz, should run new reports weekly in NAJIT's database to identify new or renewing members whose names needed to be manually loaded into the application. The application does allow for the removal of lapsed members from the system, however, in an abundance of caution, the Board decided not to authorize the NAJIT Administrator to remove anyone from the voting application, even if their membership were to be lapsed by the time voting concluded and the election results were announced.

The application itself has a specific start and stop date and time that must be entered before elections begin. Once that "start button" is pushed, nothing can be changed, and no results can be seen. The application itself sends out periodic reminder emails to those who are in the system, but who have not yet voted. For the current round of elections, the Board also voted to authorize, in advance, the cost of any additional email reminders that might be requested by the Elections Committee, and thus avoid potential delays resulting from having to seek approval. Once the voting period has concluded, the system itself tallies the results which cannot be changed and are then published.



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Additionally, Election Runner generates what is called a “fraud report” which verifies that each vote originates from a separate and independent IP address. In other words, were someone to somehow access members’ voting keys and attempt to commit election fraud by casting numerous illegitimate votes for a specific candidate, the system would catch it because it is designed to detect when more than one vote is cast using the same device.

This application was used by NAJIT for the first time in 2019, and resulted in the greatest level of member participation in the voting process in recent years. The ease with which eligible voters were able to access their ballot without needing to log into their NAJIT account made the process a breeze. You can read the reviews of other organizations and groups that have also used this application at <https://electionrunner.com/reviews>.

NAJIT rules and policies place the Board in an interesting position, because the Board as a whole (or by majority vote) must approve expenditures on behalf of NAJIT and therefore must decide which platforms to use. At the same time, the Board is charged with being as “hands-off” as possible when it comes to Elections and Nominations. Regarding the election under way, the Elections and Nominations Committees were never disbanded after the last election, and their renewed participation in this year’s election was confirmed by the Board.

The role of the Nominations Committees is to encourage members in good standing to run for the Board or urge them to nominate colleagues they feel are qualified to represent the profession and protect the interests of the Association. They carry out their responsibilities by presenting the slate of candidates to the Board, and then soliciting and posting questions to the candidates received from members on the website along with the corresponding responses from the candidates. The Elections Committee helps promote member participation in the voting process and is also apprised of the voting functionality. When this platform was chosen during the election cycle of 2019, the Elections Committee attended a walkthrough of the application and had the opportunity to observe its functionality firsthand. This process provides a greater opportunity for member participation. During the Annual Meeting, the Elections Committee performs its final task by announcing the results of the election to the membership.

Voting has changed a lot since the 1970s, and technology has advanced by leaps and bounds. The election process in use greatly reduces the intensive nature of the work that was required when the Association was first formed. Nevertheless, the Elections Committee does stand witness to the process, and is well informed to address any questions from members. The procedure followed today is intended to be a collaborative undertaking, allowing the Committee to ensure the integrity of the election while making it possible for the entire membership to participate in a virtual manner. Members should feel free to address any inquiries to elections@najit.org.

The NAJIT Board offers the preceding historical narrative on the NAJIT election process in good faith and for transparency.