Campaign and Election Regulations for TEA Officers

Introduction

The TEA Constitution, Bylaws, Standing Rules and Board Policies set forth the requirements for candidates seeking positions created by the TEA Constitution. The purpose of this campaign regulations booklet is to ensure that candidates have all information needed to comply with these requirements. Relevant passages from the TEA Constitution and Bylaws, Standing Rules and Board Policies are quoted where appropriate. Candidates for NEA Director positions must also comply with NEA’s Campaign and Election Regulations for NEA Officers. Some of these Regulations are incorporated in this document. In NEA Director elections, NEA’s Campaign and Election Regulations for NEA Officers shall supersede TEA governance documents. Each candidate is responsible for ensuring that all individuals working on behalf of his or her campaign are aware of and abide by these campaign regulations. If any unauthorized or prohibited campaign activity is conducted on behalf of the candidate, the candidate must notify the chairperson of the Election Committee, in writing, within forty-eight (48) hours of knowledge of the prohibited activity.

Any questions regarding the contents of this document should be referred to the Executive Director or his/her designee.

1. CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS PROVISIONS-

1. Constitution Article X- Elections

The president, vice president, members of the Board of Directors, state NEA directors, teacher contacts to the Board of Trustees of the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System and teacher contacts to the Local Education Insurance Committee shall be elected by the delegates of the Representative Assembly according to the provisions of the Bylaws. (See Bylaws Article X.)

2. Bylaws- Article X Elections

SECTION 1. Election Districts: The delegates to the annual Representative Assembly shall elect persons to fill all positions created by the Constitution, with the exception of the STEA president, in the following manner:

   a. The president and vice president shall be elected at-large;
   b. The three administrators shall be elected at-large—one each from the Eastern, Middle, and Western Grand Divisions of the state;
   c. The new classroom teacher member, the higher education classroom teacher member, the state special schools member; and the active ESP member shall be elected at-large;
   d. The three TEA contacts to the Board of Trustees of the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System and the Local Education Insurance Committee shall be elected at-large—one each from the Eastern, Middle, and Western Grand Divisions of the state;
   e. The three Black classroom teacher members shall be elected at-large—one each from the Eastern, Middle, and Western Grand Divisions of the state;
   f. The state NEA directors shall be elected at-large according to requirements of the National Education Association; and if Tennessee qualifies for three or more NEA
directors, at least one position must be filled by an ethnic minority member beginning with the first opening after August 31, 1976; 
g. The fifteen TEA classroom teacher district board members shall be elected by the delegates from the respective districts as defined below:

District 1: The first TEA board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Carter, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington.

District 2: The second TEA board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Hamblen, Jefferson, and Sevier.

District 3: The third TEA board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Anderson, Campbell, Cumberland, Loudon, Morgan, Rhea-Dayton, Roane, Scott, and Union.

District 4: The fourth TEA board district shall include all local associations within the county of Knox.

District 5: The fifth TEA board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Blount, Bradley, McMinn, Monroe, and Polk.

District 6: The sixth TEA board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Bledsoe, Hamilton, Meigs, and Sequatchie.

District 7: The seventh TEA board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Cannon, Clay, Coffee, DeKalb, Fentress, Franklin, Grundy, Jackson, Macon, Overton, Pickett, Putnam, Smith, Trousdale, Van Buren, Warren and White.

District 8: The eighth TEA board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Cheatham, Dickson, Robertson, Sumner, and Wilson.

District 9: The ninth TEA board district shall include all local associations within the county of Davidson.

District 10: The tenth TEA board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Bedford Giles, Lincoln, Marshall, Moore, and Rutherford.

District 11: The eleventh TEA board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Hickman, Lewis, Maury, and Williamson.

District 12: The twelfth TEA board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Benton, Decatur, Henry, Houston, Humphreys, Montgomery, Perry, and Stewart.

District 13: The thirteenth board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Chester, Hardeman, Hardin, Haywood, Henderson, Lawrence, Madison, McNairy, and Wayne.

District 14: The fourteenth board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Carroll, Crockett, Dyer, Gibson, Lake, Lauderdale, Obion, Shelby (municipals), exclusive of the
affiliated local education association representing the members in the Shelby County School System, and Weakley.

District 15: The fifteenth board TEA board district shall include all local associations within the counties of Fayette, Shelby (excluding the Shelby County municipals), and Tipton.

h. The Eastern, Middle, and Western Grand Divisions as used by the Association shall conform to the geographic areas officially designated by the State of Tennessee.

i. The TEA district boundaries shall continue through June 30, 2026. The Board of Directors shall bring a report with recommendations to the 2025 Representative Assembly to cause the district to be equitably apportioned.

SECTION 2. State Delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly: State delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly shall be elected in keeping with the requirements of the NEA Constitution and Bylaws with the procedure to be determined by the TEA Board of Directors.

SECTION 3. Nominations: Nominations for the positions listed in Article X of the Constitution shall be made by affiliated local associations or upon petition of 50 active members provided that nominations for positions to serve districts shall be made only by affiliated local associations or upon petition of 50 active members within the district to be represented by said nominee. Nominees for any position on the Board of Directors shall be active members of the Association in good standing and must have held membership for three consecutive years. Each nominee shall be certified by the president and secretary of the affiliated local association making said nomination or by petition signed by 50 active members and sent to the executive director of the Association no later than sixty days prior to the date set for the convening of the Representative Assembly. The executive director shall cause to be printed a picture and biographical sketch of each candidate in a publication of the Association that is mailed to every active member at least twenty days prior to the Representative Assembly. Additional nominations for statewide positions may be made by affiliated local associations from the floor of the Representative Assembly at the session designated for nominations provided each nomination is accompanied by a written certification from the president and secretary of the affiliated local association making the nomination. Additional nominations of candidates for district board positions shall be made by affiliated local associations in meetings of the delegates from the respective districts provided each nomination is accompanied by a written certification from the president and secretary of the affiliated local association making said nomination. The incumbent Board members, or in the absence of the incumbent a Board member named by the president, shall preside at these district meetings.

SECTION 4. Withdrawals: An announced candidate or nominee may withdraw at any time prior to the closing of nominations for the respective race by notifying the president or executive director either in writing or personally. Once nominations for a race have been closed, one cannot withdraw from the ballot.

SECTION 5. Voting: The positions to be filled pursuant to this article shall be voted upon by secret ballot or voting machine only by official delegates to the Representative Assembly. In the event the name of only one nominee is presented, said nominee shall be elected by voice vote.

The district board member will be voted upon by the delegates of the district that said nominee is to serve, but will be voted upon at the same time and manner as the statewide nominees, except that in the event the name of only one nominee is presented, said nominee shall be elected by voice vote at the
district meeting. All positions to be filled by election shall be by majority for the total votes cast for the position, except state NEA directors shall be according to NEA requirements. If no candidate receives a majority of the total votes cast for the position, there shall be a runoff election between the two candidates receiving the largest number of votes. In case of tie votes or disputed elections, the Board of Directors shall be empowered to act.

SECTION 6. Election Committee: An Election Committee shall be appointed by the president from the delegates to the Representative Assembly and shall be charged with the duties of verifying candidates, conducting the election, counting the votes, and certifying the results.

SECTION 7. Challenges and Recounts: A request for a recount can be made verbally by the candidate to the chairman of the Election Committee prior to the adjournment of the assembly. A challenge, or a request for a recount after the assembly has adjourned, must be made in writing by a candidate in the race in question to the president or the executive director within thirty (30) days following adjournment. The president and executive director shall establish a time, place, and procedure for the recount. A challenge must contain the specific provisions of the TEA Constitution and Bylaws, Standing Rules, or Election Committee policy which was allegedly violated. The Executive Committee shall review all challenges and rule upon them. The decision of the Executive Committee shall be provided in writing to each candidate involved in the challenged election. Any candidate in the challenged election may appeal the decision of the Executive Committee to the Board of Directors by filing a written request to the president within thirty (30) days following receipt of the decision of the Executive Committee. The decision of the Board shall be final. For a challenge to merit being sustained, the election being declared void, and a vacancy declared, its validity must be established and clear evidence must show that the outcome of the election could have been significantly altered or reversed. In the event a challenge is sustained and a vacancy is declared such shall be filled according to Article VI of the Constitution or Article VII of the Bylaws. Any Board member whose election is challenged shall not participate in the decision on the challenge.

SECTION 8. Optional Election Procedure: A board district comprised of only one local association shall have the option of electing its board member according to the procedure set forth in this Article, or it may establish a plan whereby the board member shall be elected by vote of all members in said district. Such plan shall be submitted for approval by the president and executive director of the Association no later than ninety (90) days prior to the date set for the convening of the Representative Assembly. The president and executive director shall notify the local association in writing of the approval or disapproval of the plan no later than 14 days after its receipt. The plan shall include a procedure for nominations, campaigning, publicity, secret ballot voting, vote tabulation, challenges, and recounts. The board member elected shall be announced at the Representative Assembly and shall take office on July 1 next. Said board member shall be subject to all applicable provisions of the Constitution and Bylaws. This section shall not apply to filling vacancies as defined in Bylaws Article VII, Section 2.

II. ELECTION-RELATED STANDING RULES OF THE 2021 VIRTUAL TEA REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY

1. Standing Rule 10- Elections Procedures

The nomination, campaign, and election of candidates to TEA offices and TEA contacts to the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System Board of Trustees and Local Education Insurance Committee shall be governed by the provisions of Bylaws Article X.
2. Standing Rule 11- Candidate Publicity

Candidate publicity shall be governed by Board Policy 3700 series and Bylaw X.

3. Standing Rule 12- Campaign Expenditures

A public disclosure of campaign expenditures in accordance with Board policies shall be made by the deadline designated in the approved agenda and made available in writing to delegates.

4. Standing Rule 12- Nominations

1. All state and district nominations made by petition must be received by the executive director of the Association sixty (60) days prior to the representative assembly.
2. Nominations made sixty (60) days prior to the Representative Assembly will be announced by the chair. 

Additional nominations for statewide positions may be made by affiliated local associations by 5 p.m. on the day before the scheduled start of the Representative Assembly provided each nomination is accompanied by a written certification from the president and secretary of the affiliated local association making the nomination. Additional nomination of candidates for district board positions shall be made by affiliated local associations in meetings of the delegates from the respective districts provided each nomination is accompanied by a written certification from the president and secretary of the affiliated local association making said nomination.

3. Nomination acceptance speeches for positions of president and vice president shall be limited to four (4) minutes. Nomination acceptance speeches for other positions filled by statewide vote of the Assembly, shall be limited to three (3) minutes. Acceptance speeches of nominees elected by acclamation shall be limited to one-half the time allotted for the office sought. If a nominee cannot be present to accept the nomination, a member designated by the nominee may speak on his or her behalf for the same amount of time allowed the nominee.

5. Standing Rule 14- District Board Meetings

1. The TEA Board district meetings during the Representative Assembly shall be used for nominations and speeches of candidates seeking the position of district Board member or FCPE representative from their respective districts. The incumbent Board members, or in the absence of the incumbent a Board member named by the president, shall preside at these district meetings.
2. Display and distribution of materials on behalf of said candidates shall be acceptable at these meetings.
3. Statewide candidates (or their representatives) shall not be introduced, shall not speak, and shall not distribute materials at these Board district meetings.
4. The Standing Rules which govern the Representative Assembly shall also govern the Board district meetings held for the purpose of nominating district Board members. The TEA Board of Directors is also authorized to develop any other necessary rules to ensure the orderly procedures of these meetings.

6. Standing Rule 15- Voting

1. All positions to be filed by election shall be voted upon by secret ballot by official delegates to the representative assembly. In the event the name of only one nominee is presented, said nominee shall be elected by acclamation.
2. District Positions- The district board member will be voted upon by the delegates of the district that said nominee is to serve, but will be voted upon at the same time and same manner as the statewide nominees, except that in the event the name of only one nominee is presented, said nominee shall be elected by acclamation at the district meeting.
3. All positions to be filled by election shall be filled by majority of the total votes cast for the position, except state NEA directors shall be according to NEA requirements. If no candidate receives
a majority of the total votes cast for the position, there shall be a runoff election between the two candidates receiving the largest number of votes. In case of tie votes or disputed elections, the Board of Directors shall be empowered to act.

4. The names of the candidates shall be placed on the ballot in alphabetical order.

5. The date, location, and voting time shall be established by the Board of Directors.

6. The votes received by each candidate shall be announced by the Elections Committee chairperson when the election results are announced. In any election in which the top two (2) contenders are separated by five (5) or fewer votes, the votes shall be recounted before any announcement of results is made.

7. Challenges of accuracy or improper procedure registered by the poll watchers shall be made prior to the announcement of election results. Challenges by the candidate should be made prior to the close of the Representative Assembly. However, a candidate may officially register a challenge any time within thirty (30) days after adjournment of the Representative Assembly. All challenges shall be made to the Elections Committee chairperson, except that those challenges made after adjournment of the Representative Assembly shall be made to the TEA president.

8. As soon as feasible after the results of the elections are certified, the results will be presented to the delegates.

9. All ballots, credentials, stubs, registration books, and other election records shall be kept for one year after the election. Thereafter, only a record of the election results shall be kept.

III. Election-Related Procedural Policies of the TEA Board of Directors

Policy 3701 Philosophy

The Board of Directors of the Tennessee Education Association acknowledges the value of members seeking and actively campaigning for TEA offices. Furthermore, the Board accepts its responsibility in formulating policies that will:

1. Make it easy for members to seek office.
2. Stimulate interest in TEA elections.
3. Provide opportunities for candidates to equitably, fairly, and efficiently pursue TEA offices at the least possible expense.
4. Help members become adequately informed.

The following policies are designed to carry out this philosophy in all elections stipulated in the TEA Constitution and Bylaws, including the TEA contacts to the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System Board of Trustees and the Local Education Insurance Committee. 10/16

Policy 3702 Exclusions

The following organizations are excluded from these policies but may choose to use these policies as a guideline:

1. Local education associations.
2. Groups holding meetings not sponsored by the TEA.

Policy 3703 TEA Meetings Other Than the Representative Assembly

Candidates for positions to be filled by election at the next TEA Representative Assembly are welcome to attend any TEA-sponsored workshops, leadership conference, or other meeting. Upon request by the
candidate, the presiding official of any such TEA-sponsored function shall introduce the candidate, but the candidate shall not use the meeting time to address the participants relative to his/her candidacy and shall not distribute materials during the meeting or in the meeting room. 7/79

Policy 3704  TEA Building

Candidates for positions to be filled by election at the next TEA Representative Assembly or their supporters may pass out materials when attending meetings at the TEA headquarters, but no campaign materials shall be posted in or on the TEA Building and campaign materials shall not be distributed during the meeting or in the meeting room. 7/79

The use of tables or easels to display campaign materials may be permitted at the discretion of the Executive Director, and in no case shall campaign activities obstruct pedestrian traffic in and around the TEA building. 10/16

Policy 3705  TEA Representative Assembly Delegate Briefing Sessions

1. Candidates for positions to be filled by election at the next TEA Representative Assembly or their representatives may attend the TEA-sponsored meetings for briefing delegates to the TEA Representative Assembly.
2. Each candidate may be introduced by name and the office being sought.
3. Candidates or their representatives may distribute materials only before or after the meeting. Candidates or their representatives desiring to address the delegates may be allotted two minutes at the discretion of the presiding officer. 7/79, 10/16

Policy 3706  Representative Assembly Action on Campaign Expenditure Limits

In an effort to hold campaign expenditures to a level that will allow any affiliate to adequately support a candidate, the following maximum expenditures have been established by the Representative Assembly:

1. President: $3,000
2. Vice President: $3,000
3. Other statewide officers: $1,500
4. District officers: $750


The above limits are placed upon the total of the candidate's travel expenses and actual cost of posters, handouts, or other materials either from donations or personal funds given to the candidate or to his/her campaign. A public financial disclosure shall be made at the Representative Assembly prior to the opening of the polls. (See Policy No. 3707) The enforcement of this policy is contingent upon each delegate's being appropriately influenced by the public disclosure of expenditures.

Policy 3707  Candidate's Report of Expenditures

All candidates for positions to be filled by election at the next TEA Representative Assembly shall comply with a financial disclosure and reporting procedure established by the 1977 Representative Assembly. The reporting form shall be given to candidates in advance of the Representative Assembly. The reporting period shall begin when funds are first expended for any campaign travel or materials. The report shall be completed, signed, and presented to the designated TEA staff person prior to the
end of the first session of the Representative Assembly. Candidate expense reports shall be kept on record for review by any TEA-RA delegate upon request. 10/16

Policy 3708 Release of List of Voters

Upon written request of a governing body of a local affiliate within thirty (30) days after the adjournment of a Representative Assembly, a list of those who voted in the election from that affiliate shall be provided the body requesting the information. 10/79

Policy 3709 Opening Sealed Ballot Boxes

When an election is completed and the counted ballots and other appropriate materials are sealed in the ballot box, the box shall be stored in the TEA headquarters building for twelve (12) months. The box shall be opened only under the supervision of the TEA President and Executive Director. However, each candidate whose election information is contained in said box or his/her designee shall be offered the opportunity to be present if the box is opened. 7/79

Policy 3710 Drawings or Door Prizes as Campaign Expenses

The definition of "handouts" as used in the report of expenditures of candidates for TEA positions does not include drawings or door prizes; therefore, it is not necessary to report such drawings or door prizes as expenses under that particular section of the report. 1/82

Policy 3711 Pledge of Allegiance/National Anthem

The first session of each TEA Representative Assembly will begin with the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance and singing of the National Anthem or other appropriate patriotic song. 10/82, 1/84

Policy 3712 Fundraising at TEA Representative Assembly

No local affiliate fundraising shall be allowed in conjunction with the TEA Representative Assembly in the area rented by TEA. 1/93

Policy 3713 Challenges, Recounts and Alleged Violation of Campaign Rules

1. Challenges and recounts shall be handled pursuant to Bylaws Article X - Elections.
2. Alleged violations of Campaign Rules shall be submitted in writing to the Executive Director by any member or local affiliate.
3. Upon receipt of an alleged violation, the Executive Director will conduct an investigation and report to the Executive Committee the name of the person/persons filing the complaint, his/her findings and recommendations for action by the Executive Committee up to and including disqualification of the candidate. If either the candidate or the member filing the complaint is a sitting member of the Executive Committee, they must recuse themselves from the meeting during the Executive Committee’s discussion and vote on the matter.
4. Pursuant to Bylaws Article X, Section 7, any candidate may appeal such actions of the Executive Committee to the TEA Board of Directors. Appeals to the Board of Directors under these provisions must be filed with the president within thirty (30) days of receipt of the Executive Committee’s action. The decision of the Board shall be final.
5. Steps for addressing any alleged violation of campaigning rules at or before the Representative Assembly:
Level 1 – Simple error, not flagrant violation
(1) At the direction of the Executive Committee, the Executive Director will notify the candidate to correct the problem to the extent possible.

Level 2 – Willful/unethical violation
(1) At the direction of the Executive Committee, the Executive Director will warn/reprimand the candidate – further violation could lead to censure or disqualification.
(2) The candidate must correct the problem to the extent possible after communication with the Executive Director.
(3) There will be an announcement from the podium of the Representative Assembly that the candidate has violated the campaign rules.

Level 3 – Continuing Violation
(1) At the direction of the Executive Committee, the Executive Director will notify the candidate of the Executive Committee’s determination that the violation has continued.
(2) The Executive Committee shall recommend to the Representative Assembly that either:
   (a) The candidate be censured;
   (b) The candidate be disqualified.
(3) Delegates to the Representative Assembly shall vote on the Executive Committee’s recommendation, by secret ballot, as soon as possible after receipt of the Executive Committee’s recommendation.

6. Steps for addressing alleged violation of campaign rules after the Representative Assembly:
a. Results of the investigation by the Executive Director will be reported to the Board of Directors.
b. The Board of Directors may:
   (1) Censure;
   (2) Declare the election null and void and call for a new election;
   (3) Rule the position vacant, disqualify the member, and call for a new election. 6/12, 10/16

Policy 3714 Use of the TEA Logo on Campaign Material
Candidates for TEA and NEA office may not use the TEA’s logo on campaign materials. 6/12

Policy 3715 Candidate Publicity

1. Candidates for any election established by the TEA Constitution may have their photographs, biographical statements, and platforms printed in the Representative Assembly issue of a TEA publication, provided such candidates have been officially nominated and have provided pictures, biographical and/or platform material to the executive director at least sixty (60) days prior to the date set for the convening of the Representative Assembly.

2. Biographical and/or platform information shall be typed in narrative form. Names of organizations shall be written in full. The editors reserve the right to edit for length. Biographical and/or platform information submitted by candidates for TEA president and vice president shall not exceed 550 words. Biographical and/or platform information submitted by candidates for other association offices and candidates for the contacts to the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System Board of Trustees and the Local Education Insurance Committee shall not exceed 260 words.
III. ADDITIONAL ELECTION REGULATION CONCERNING
NEA STATE DIRECTOR ELECTIONS

Majority Vote Required-

A majority vote of those voting shall be necessary to elect an NEA Director. Except as otherwise provided in Article V of the Constitution, members of the Board of Directors shall be elected by secret ballot for each individual office (i) by the Active NEA members within each state or (ii) by the NEA members elected to serve as delegates to the state representative body, but only if all Active NEA members in the state who meet all other relevant requirements are eligible to vote for and serve as delegates to the state representative body. Retired directors shall be elected by secret ballot for each individual office by the duly elected retired delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly. Aspiring Educator directors shall be elected by duly elected aspiring educator delegates to the NEA Representative Assembly. In an election for NEA director, if there is only one (1) candidate for the position, the election may be waived, and the candidate declared elected.

Nominations of directors shall be open, except where limitations are required to comply with the provisions of Article V.

The Board of Directors shall adopt procedures for challenging the election of a director.

Terms of the directors shall be staggered except for aspiring educator directors.

NEA Bylaw 5-1.