



*Andhra People of Central Ohio (APCO)*

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# **Andhra People of Central Ohio (APCO)**

**Election Manual - 2024**

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## **1. Introduction**

Andhra People of Central Ohio (APCO), is a 501c3 non-profit cultural organization, conducts elections every year for electing office bearer roles of Executive Director and Trustees. Any unexpected and unscheduled vacancies in the office of President, Executive Director and Trustees, this team may have to conduct the elections under the direction of Board of Trustees. Constitution and Election Committee (CAEC) is responsible for conducting the elections every year in a fair and open democratic process. The election manual gives the details of the election process. Since the organization is in evolving path modifications to the process will take place until it becomes stable aligning with constitution and rights of general body. Its objectives are:

- a) to make the election process transparent and understandable to all the members
- b) to make it easy for the candidates to comply with all the rules governing the elections
- c) to enable the APCO election process comply with the By Laws. For any clarification on by-laws latest version of constitution document shall be referred.

Board Of Trustees (BOT) shall remain neutral in the election process. Article 12.3 gives the authority to CAEC to disqualify any individuals serving in committees for involving in election campaign and endorsements. However, the cooperation of Treasurer and Membership Committee is needed for conducting the elections. For example, the Membership Committee's help is required in validating membership, residence, experience criteria of candidates, for verifying the addresses and email details of member and spouse.

## **2. Nomination Process**

The committee is nominated by Board of Trustees with a three-year term. It's a 3-member autonomous body with a chairperson who acts as point of contact.

As per Article 9.2, CAEC shall verify all the membership rolls by August 31st to get ready for sending the election notification to general body. CAEC shall communicate with membership team to share the approved life member list with every detail of members and the status of life membership whether its full or partial by end of 1st week in the month of August. Information sharing shall take place via official means.



Membership list can be shared either by excel sheet or a web page with security credentials tied to election officer email address. For validation purposes CAEC will need three-year minimum membership data. Membership team shall also add a “member since” column for verification purposes in which year the individual became a member of organization. Membership Team shall send an email to entire general body to inform on reporting any address changes and full name updates matching the name and address on their valid photo ID by 1st week of July and then apply the updates in the system by end of July to get the membership rolls validated and certified by membership team and executive committee president as per constitution.

### **3. Budget**

CAEC provides an itemized budget estimate to BOT for approval to conduct the elections, that includes itemized list of cost, if there are elections. Elections can be in-person or electronic means. Postal ballot option is a outside possibility. CAEC will decide on mode of elections depending on influencing factors. Electronic balloting expenses including additional software and consulting costs may be included.

### **4. Election Schedule**

Election schedule will be decided by CAEC after reviewing with BOT, then communicated via email to general body along with election procedures and guidelines.

### **5. Membership Data Access**

- a) No address or name changes will be permitted once CAEC gets the data from membership team.
- b) CAEC shall obtain Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) from the nominees pertaining to the intellectual property of the Corporation. NDA shall state Membership list, email data, and such intellectual property of the Corporation shall not be misused by the candidate during the election. When a candidate misuses membership addresses, e-mail database, telephone numbers or when election committee receives complaints from general members for excessive



calling and/or emailing with campaign materials, such candidates may be disqualified.

- c) When any committee member with potential access to membership data (postal address or email ids or telephone number) decides to contest in the upcoming elections, he/she shall notify the CAEC immediately of the intention. CAEC shall remind the potential candidate of the NDA referred above. Any deviation from the By-laws or NDA or usage of the APCO membership data during elections shall be considered as breach of contract and disqualifies the candidates.

### 6. Eligibility Criteria for Each Role

Eligibility requirements to contest between a trustee or executive director differs slightly. See By Laws Articles 5.1 and 6.1. A non-refundable nomination fee of \$250 shall be remitted via Zelle to apcotelugu@gmail.com with the memo content “Nomination Fee and Candidate Name”. If there is no access to Zelle, cashier’s check for \$250 payable to “Andhra People of Central Ohio” must be remitted in-person with president or treasurer(s) before the nomination cut-off date.

Requirements table for each role is listed below

Role	Number of Positions	Requirements
President**	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shall be a local resident of Central Ohio,</li> <li>• A life member with membership dues paid in full on or before June 30th of the election year and an active member of the organization for three consecutive years including current year,</li> <li>• Served in any committee mentioned in the constitution for a minimum of one full year prior to filing nomination.</li> </ul>
Executive Director	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shall be a local resident of Central Ohio,</li> </ul>



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A life member with membership dues paid in full on or before June 30th of the election year and an active member of the organization for two consecutive years including current year,</li> <li>• Served in any committee mentioned in the constitution for a minimum of one full year prior to filing nomination.</li> </ul>
Trustee	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shall be a local resident of Central Ohio,</li> <li>• A life member with membership dues paid in full on or before June 30th of the election year and an active member of the organization for three consecutive years including current year,</li> <li>• Served in any committee mentioned in the constitution for a minimum of one full year prior to filing nomination.</li> <li>• An Indo-American from Andhra Pradesh origin that served in the community for minimum of 5 years, must have had a distinguished record of community service, experience working with non-profit organizations and/or community-at-large.</li> </ul>

\*\* President role will not be in the election from 2025 unless it is required due to vacancy.

## 7. Nominations and Requirements

Nomination forms for all positions are prepared and maintained by CAEC. The “Call for Nominations” are Emailed to general body. As per article 4.1 in the constitution general body consists of all active life members. Members other than life are not included in general body. Candidate eligibility requirements per the current By Laws and Nomination Form, are posted on the APCO website by the due date.



Nomination requirements are listed below:

- a) Every nominee shall read and understand the eligibility criteria mentioned in section 6 before submitting nomination.
- b) A list of all approved life members who paid in full will be shared with general body. There will be a column mentioning about full payment on or before June 30<sup>th</sup>. The ones who paid in full after June 30<sup>th</sup> in the election year are also eligible as proposer and seconder.
- c) Completed nomination form shall be signed by a proposer and a seconder who are all fully paid life members of CAEC as of November 1st, 2024. Only one member from the same family (member, spouse) is eligible to nominate or second a candidate. A family member cannot propose or second a candidate from the same family. Both proposer and seconder must be part of membership list shared in the email. Otherwise, nomination will be declined.
- d) Any nominee shall submit nomination for one position only. Multiple submissions by a nominee for different positions will lead to disqualification.
- e) No group nominations will be accepted.
- f) Nominee shall sign in the box provided in the Nomination form to confirm the information submitted is valid and accurate.
- g) Email addresses, phone numbers mentioned in the form must be valid and election officers may use these as a mean for candidate verification purposes.
- h) A current trustee or president or executive director shall not be a proposer or seconder.
- i) Nominations must be filed electronically as a pdf file and emailed to election officers before the deadline.
- j) All fields in the nomination form are required and must be filled.
- k) Please make sure to mention the experience relevant to constitutional committee roles (Ex: Executive Committee, Sub Committees, Working Committees, Board of Trustees and Advisors). Experience mentioned with committees not aligned with constitution will be declined. General volunteer experience is not considered. Experience mentioned in the form shall be validated along with performance of the individual with respective officials serving during that time. Experience for namesake may not be accepted.
- l) Proposer and seconder may receive verification email from election officers to reconfirm their support for the candidate. Nominations without reconfirmation



from proposer and seconder will be declined. In addition to email, election officers may also call the number listed in the nomination form for proposer and seconder,

- m) Half-Page profile with passport size picture mentioning about you, your service in the community to APCO. Please mention about your goals and objectives if you get elected for the role.
- n) A non-refundable nomination filing fee of \$250 shall be remitted via Zelle, payable to [apcotelugu@gmail.com](mailto:apcotelugu@gmail.com) before nomination cut-off date. If Zelle is not available, filing fee can be remitted in person with President or Treasurer(s) in the form of a cashier's check payable to "Andhra People of Central Ohio" before nomination cut-off date. Mention in the memo "Nomination Fee and Candidate Name"

It is important to note that Nomination shall be automatically rejected if the following are missing personal email address, phone#, photograph on profile, nominee statement, and nomination fee of \$250, and the signatures of proposer, seconder, and nominee. Email, mailing address and Phone numbers of proposers and seconders is a must.

Nomination Form shall include a signed declaration by the candidate that the information submitted is accurate.

The CAEC shall verify each candidate's background through a vetting process to accept or deny.

The CAEC will share the list of nominations received for positions with nominees only.

- I. Voting-eligible Members may send in confidence any serious concern about any candidate to the CAEC (such member's identity shall be kept confidential). When a complaint includes significant and sensitive information which may require proof, more details may be obtained by further investigation by the CAEC to make any decision. If the concern is related to a candidate's misconduct or credibility, character, behavior, honesty or ethics, the CAEC in consultation with Advisory and BOT may investigate such complaints. Frivolous complaints about nominees are discouraged.
- II. Nominee may be disqualified for any act of omission or unsubstantiated statements or any fraudulent information included in the nomination form; any





relevant information obtained through research by CAEC before or after the elections may disqualify the candidate from the role.

## **8. Withdrawal of the Nomination**

Withdrawal of nomination can happen in two ways.

- a. Any person whose nomination is accepted can withdraw before the deadline for withdrawal.
- b. Once nominations are verified and list of accepted nominees will be shared with all active nominees with a withdrawal deadline date. Any nominee can withdraw from the election before the withdrawal date.

CAEC shall be neutral and shall not attempt to convince any candidate to withdraw. Withdrawal can be done by email from the nominee's email address used in the Nomination Form. A Nominee can also withdraw after the deadline but before printing of ballots in the case of a formal election.

## **9. Ballot Preparation, Voting and Counting Process**

Before the ballots are prepared, the nominees may be given an opportunity to verify how their names will be listed on the ballot. Each person can request a slight variation in his/her name. However, the CAEC may or may not accept that request. The CAEC decision is final.

Election officers will share the final list of candidates in the race of election with their respective profiles with general body. If the election is unanimous, names will be shared with general body after certification.

Election can be either in-person or electronic. The candidate names and personal statements are listed alphabetically by last name on the ballot and attached information. Every active life member who became a member by June 30<sup>th</sup> of current year will receive a ballot. A life member is one with the current residential mailing address that is validated, member and spouse are supposed to provide their email ids to receive the electronic ballot during the election time. Husband and wife of a family membership are considered as two members who are eligible to vote.



If the election is in-person, general body will receive communication from election officers on location and timings for voting. Other than candidates no one is allowed to stay in the voting premises after they cast their vote. Election officers will work with President for designating volunteers to check the ID and give the ballot for casting the vote. Election officers will give the required training to volunteers before the start of election. Campaigning is prohibited strictly in the election premises. If any violation of the election rules shall force charges of disqualification of individual from APCO.

Counting may take place either right after the completion of election or on a different date. Candidates can bring one supporter inside the counting area. Once the counting completes every candidate is required to sign before leaving the counting area to acknowledge the result.

If the election is electronic Ballots are e-mailed to member and spouse only to the official e-mail address as per APCO records. Updating e-mail id by July month of the year is critical to receive the election ballot.

All general body members are instructed to vote for the Executive Director, and trustee positions. The CAEC adopts its own security measures to ensure fair election process.

## **10. Electronic Ballots and Voting**

CAEC shall work with Membership chair to initiate a project to obtain and maintain valid email Ids for all eligible voters. Evaluate and select a company that provides the following:

- a) Branded Voting Website - The voting website should be able to brand with APCO logo, is easy to use, works with all modern browsers, and looks professional.
- b) Authentication Methods - You provide passwords to voting system with your list of eligible voters, system generates passwords (and optionally emails out direct voting links), authenticates voters against an external website login, CAEC generates a single sign-on (SSO) link on your secure website.
- c) Flexible Ballot Questions – System should support attaching photos & descriptions to each candidate, allow for a single winner or multiple winners, control the minimum and maximum number of candidates voters are allowed to select, control whether voters are allowed to abstain from voting.



- d) Voter-Verified Audit Trail - Once the electronic ballot has been cast a printable receipt is provided to assure voters that their votes have been recorded as intended. Should you opt to publish the results, anyone will be able to download a file containing votes and receipt codes. This serves as a Voter-Verified Audit Trail (VVAT) - an independent verification system for voting systems designed to allow voters to verify that their vote was cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud or malfunction, and to provide a means to audit the stored electronic results.
- e) Certified Results - With the security of an independently managed server and service, voters can rest assured that their votes will be counted properly. The system should display a certified by software company seal on your published voting results. The company selected should also provide a Letter of Certification attesting to the validity of our results.

Here are a few examples of firms that provide above features:

<https://www.electionbuddy.com>,  
<https://www.simplyvoting.com>,  
<https://www.bigpulsevoting.com>,  
<https://www.associationvoting.com>,  
<https://www.opavote.com>

## **11. Ballot Recount**

A candidate may request a recount of the ballots within one week of declaration of the results, if the margin of loss is two percent or less of the ballots returned. The request must be in writing and signed by the candidate and addressed to CAEC chair with a copy to the Chairman of the BOT.

## **12. Tie Vote**

In case of a tie vote, ballot recount will automatically be done for the affected candidates. If the tie is confirmed for 2 candidates, the CAEC in consultation with BOT & Advisory may decide the winner based on these selection criteria:

- Previous APCO experience



- Duration of APCO membership
- Service for APCO as donor / volunteer
- Diversity of the candidate exposure and experience in Central Ohio offering service in different organizations.

### **13. Certification of Election Results**

CAEC will provide the TFAS Board of Trustees and Advisory Board with the Certification of Election results after ballots are counted, including any recounts as needed. The results shall be posted on the APCO website after the Certification of Election results.

### **14. Preservation of Election Records**

Items to be stored:

- a) Election Manual
- b) Nominations
- c) Ballot data
- d) Member's list
- e) Certification of Election Process
- f) Storing procedure: The items will be stored in cardboard boxes and closed with tape. Available CAEC members, APCO Trustees, and any observers will sign across the tape.
- g) Responsible officer: APCO Secretary will be responsible for storing the ballot records.
- h) Emails will be stored for future reference.
- i) How long to be stored: 2 calendar years after the election year (example: 2024 election results will be stored until December 2026).
- j) Opening the storage boxes: If there is a need such as by a court order, the boxes in which ballots are stored will be opened by the CAEC and any observers. After a review of the records, the boxes will be resealed and returned to the Secretary for storage.



- k) What to do at the end: At the end of the 2 years storage period, the contents of the boxes will be shredded by the Secretary in the presence of the representatives from the then CAEC.

## **15. Election Disputes**

All election related disputes and questions or concerns which may arise during or after election process which are otherwise not covered in By Laws or Election Manual, will be resolved by the CAEC in consultation with BOT and Advisory board. The recommended resolution will be final.

### **Disclaimer:**

The Constitution and Election Committee of APCO is committed to conducting fair, transparent, and accurate elections. However, we acknowledge that, despite our best efforts, errors or omissions may occur in the election process.

The committee has identified a discrepancy in the primary email information of certain members, we want to make it clear that this discrepancy is unintentional and not within our control. The CAEC is not responsible for any defects or errors in the election process arising from missing primary email information or any other unforeseen circumstances beyond its control.

By participating in the election process, all members acknowledge and agree that the CAEC shall not be held liable for any issues related to elections, and they waive any claims or actions against the committee in this regard.

The committee reserves the right to take corrective measures to address any identified issues to the best of its ability, ensuring the integrity of the election process.

This disclaimer is issued in good faith to inform members of potential issues and to clarify the responsibilities of the CAEC. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation as we work to ensure a fair and inclusive election.

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