

## Section and Branch Elections

With regional elections in full swing, ASCE has received a number of questions from Section and Branch officers looking to ensure a fair process for contested elections. One of the most important aspects of a fair election is selecting appropriate guidelines for campaign activities.

While ASCE does not specifically regulate the election process of its sections and branches, the Society's Rules of Policy and Procedure provide some important objectives that apply to local, as well as national, campaigns. Section 7.1 states that the objective of ASCE elections is to "provide a fair and impartial framework by which each candidate receives equal opportunity for promotion of the candidate's qualifications... to the voting membership."

The Rules emphasize the importance of bearing in mind the "character and dignity" of the association and its profession, which includes respect for the members and the need to strike a proper balance between informing the voters and limiting candidate spending as well as unwanted intrusions on the voting members.

Bearing these objectives in mind, ASCE believes some simple, common-sense procedures will help ensure a successful election:

1. Any opportunity for one candidate to address the voting members should be equally afforded to the others. If one candidate is invited to speak about his/her candidacy at a meeting, all other candidates for that office must be invited to speak as well.
2. Allowing candidates to distribute flyers or send mailings individually may give an unfair advantage to a candidate with greater resources than his/her opponent. Offering all candidates the option to include a personal vision statement in an existing section or branch publication, or compiling such statements into a single file to be e-mailed to members, is fair to all candidates and less intrusive on the voters.
3. Communications from candidates should focus on their individual qualifications, experiences, and objectives. Negative remarks concerning other candidates should be strictly prohibited.

For a more comprehensive example of election guidelines, the ASCE rules for Society-level elections may be found in Article 7 of the ASCE Rules of Policy & Procedure:  
[http://www.asce.org/pdf/rules\\_policyProcedure.pdf](http://www.asce.org/pdf/rules_policyProcedure.pdf).

For questions on an election-related issue, or to discuss any other matter concerning your ASCE Section, Branch, or group, please e-mail: [thoke@asce.org](mailto:thoke@asce.org).