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TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Election Process Review Task Force

DATE: January 15, 2010

RE: **Election Process Review Discussion and Guidelines**

RECOMMENDATION: That the Board of Directors review the Task Force Discussion as the Guidelines are included in the Candidate Handbook.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT: Specific guidelines inform the candidates for a level playing field for all SLA Board of Directors candidates. The policy takes into account the current communication platforms as well as new social outlets.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: We reviewed current election materials and candidate materials, as well as applicable information from other associations. Furthermore, we conducted a survey with open-ended questions, inviting candidates from 2007-2010 to participate. We received responses from 25 of 40 possible candidates.

The Association wants to maintain a fair and open election process. We do not want to give one candidate an "undue" advantage, or even the appearance of an advantage, over another candidate, particularly due to the communication mechanisms or technology access one candidate has and another candidate lacks. While it is important to maintain a fair and even playing field for all candidates, the use of technology has quickly become a skill just as important as public speaking or networking—other skills needed to be a successful candidate.

Sources: [Candidate Handbook which is a component of B06-29](#)
[Board discussion in June 2007 OM0108-A01](#)
[Board discussion, February 2008 OM0208CC-B01](#)
Campaign Issues—White Paper, 12 October 2007

Issue: **What are the guidelines regarding social networking tools?**

Discussion: Social networking tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Second Life, YouTube, Ning, and LinkedIn are now quite common for business and personal use. There is a low barrier to entry with these tools as they can be set up with minimal technical skills and at no cost.

Limiting the use of social networking tools is problematic because of their ubiquitous nature. For example, if there were restrictions on a candidate's use of Twitter and the candidate were to give a presentation, the candidate may abide by

the letter and the spirit of the restriction, but anyone in the audience could comment on the presentation on Twitter.

Monitoring a myriad of social networking tools on a 24/7 basis is neither feasible nor desirable. As professionals, we expect community monitoring. For example, members would not tolerate repeated emails to a unit's discussion list in which a candidate spoke negatively of his or her opponent. The candidate who behaves in such a fashion on Twitter would likely be dismissed would almost certainly be unsuccessful in the election. Social networking behavior, whether in person or online, cannot be officially monitored but can be monitored indirectly by the community.

Except for the Statement of Intent set out by the Election Rules, we advise that no additional restrictions be placed on social networking tools for the candidates. In other words, they may discuss their SLA candidacy and credentials on any tool in addition to SLA-sponsored information sources.

We cannot predict the development or utility of these tools. It is to the candidate's advantage to use them judiciously and to advocate that their supporters use the tools according to the letter and spirit of the Statement of Intent.

Guideline: Candidates may use social networking tools in pursuing their election to the Board. The emphasis for the candidate should be on communicating their ideas and opinions rather than on the tools.

Issue: Can Association staff provide assistance to the candidate's to help them with the use of social network tools?

Discussion: SLA has a suite of promotional opportunities that the candidates are highly encouraged to employ as they provide robust exposure for the candidates. Since technology tools are constantly evolving, any additional communication that candidates wish to employ, should be the responsibility of the individual candidate.

As information professionals, it is up to the individual candidates to develop skills with social networking tools if he or she desires to use them. Ultimately, this is no different than the candidate who needs to develop skills with writing an effective essay or with improving public speaking skills.

Guideline: Candidates should take full advantage of all SLA-sponsored promotional opportunities. Any additional communication tools or methods they wish to use will be at their own discretion.

Issue: What is the penalty for disregarding policies?

Discussion: This is to be treated on a case-by-case basis.

Guideline: If the Statement of Intent and Candidate Guidelines are disregarded, the Executive Board will take appropriate action up to and including elimination of the candidate from the ballot.

Issue: Can SLA units use their communication tools (listservs, wikis, blogs, etc.) for endorsements?

Discussion: We do not recommend changing our current practice, which is that candidates may receive endorsements from SLA units. While we don't want a lot of "vote for me"

type messages going out to all members, it has been our practice to allow units (a chapter president, for example, using the chapter's discussion list) to support a unit member's candidacy.

Guideline: Candidates may receive endorsements from SLA entities such as Divisions, Chapters or individuals, but not seek these endorsements. SLA Board of Director members should not actively support a candidate.

Issue: What is the recommended practice for chapter visits?

Discussion: This issue primarily affects candidates for President-Elect. The intent is to maintain fair and equitable access, while strongly encouraging candidates to make themselves available to members.

At chapter visits, typically each candidate is introduced and given 5-7 minutes to present their issues, then the floor is opened up for questions and discussion.

We recommend that units and the candidates identify alternative methods to face-to-face communications such as video-teleconferencing or other technologies that are appropriate. Small chapters can not afford to bring in candidates, though some would be able to provide a virtual meeting with the candidates.

Guideline: Candidates for the same position should inform each other well ahead of time about chapters they plan to visit, and give each other the opportunity to participate. For example, if the goal is for both candidates to appear in person, but one candidate cannot attend the meeting, their presence could still be felt with a statement read at the chapter meeting, via teleconference, etc.

The unit will cover the cost of the candidate's chapter visit and/or technology fees to virtually bring in the candidates.

Issue: Election results

Discussion: The nominations committee would value information related to the results of previous elections to help them determine the electability of a previous candidate. Candidates feel that knowing the election results would help bring closure that is now lacking.

Guideline: The vote counts should be made available to the nominating committee, appropriate staff, and the candidate if he/she wishes. This information must remain confidential between the staff and the candidate.

FINANCIAL IMPACT STATEMENT: N/A

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