BACKGROUND

Prior to spring 2020, all voting for elections and bylaw changes was done in person at the business meeting held in conjunction with the Annual Conference. In 2020, in-person voting was not an option due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In May 2020, ALGA held its first election for board members using remote voting. Because the bylaws were silent on this procedure, the Constitution and Bylaws Procedures Committee (CPBC) determined remote voting was permissible per Montana Code.

In March 2021, ALGA held a second remote vote in compliance with the regulations provided by Montana code. Members approved changes to ALGA’s bylaws to explicitly allow remote voting.

This manual describes the process and controls used by ALGA to conduct remote voting.

Oversight

The ALGA President is responsible for oversight of the voting process.

Eligibility

As per the bylaws, full members are permitted to cast a vote. The easiest way to ensure only eligible members vote is to only send a ballot to eligible members.

Mailing List Extraction and Preparation

To extract only eligible members from the ALGA member database, Member Services will query for:

- Member (individual)
- Not expired

The extracted list will be reviewed and validated by a second person in Member Services to ensure accuracy of the query and export.
The following fields will be exported from the database into a spreadsheet format:

- First name
- Last name
- Email address

Once in a spreadsheet, the following checks must be done on the exported data:

- Duplicate check for email address. There may be records that share an email address. Only one ballot should go to an email address. If there are duplicate email addresses, the ballot should go to the email address that matches the first and last name when possible. The remaining duplicate records will not receive a ballot. Reasonable efforts to have members update their records with the correct email addresses should be taken.

- Duplicate check against the combination of first and last name. There may be duplicate records in the database where a single individual may have multiple email addresses. This is a manual check process and duplicate identification is based on the judgement of the individual checking.

When possible, the database should be updated to address duplicate records or email addresses.

**Assigning Unique PINs**

To ensure that the individual vote responses are anonymized to the extent possible, each voter will be assigned a unique PIN to submit their vote.

Member Services has a list of approximately 6000 unique 6 digit PINs. These PINs can be shuffled and reused for multiple voting events.

To assign a PIN, the list of generic PINs should be randomly shuffled. Then a set of PINs can be copied and pasted into a column in the mailing list.
Once the PIN is assigned to a member on the mailing list, segregation of duties is required so that no individual has access to the member email, the PIN, and the vote response.

Creating the Ballot

Ballots are created and issued using the SurveyMonkey software. As of 2021, it is no longer necessary to provide a voting option by paper.

During the voting period, no one other than Member Services should have access to ALGA’s SurveyMonkey account.

The President and Secretary with the assistance of Member Services and the Communications Liaison will craft the language to go on the ballot and ensure its functionality.

Once the ballot has been created, the generic link to access the survey should be noted. This link will be provided to voters in an email notification.

Although the ballot is hosted through SurveyMonkey, SurveyMonkey is not used to send the ballot to voters. This ensures that the voter email and the PIN are not associated with one another and anonymity can be preserved.

Establishing the Voting Period

There are a number of considerations to establish the voting period including:

- Season. It may be prudent to have a longer voting period and more reminders during the summer or over holiday periods when people are likely to be on vacation.

- Complexity. If the vote is for complex changes to bylaws, a longer voting period may be helpful for members.
As a result of the analysis of voting patterns from the March 2021 bylaw vote, the suggested voting period is 8 calendar days from Wednesday to Thursday with one reminder to non-respondents on Monday.

Creating the Email Notification

Eligible voters are provided with the link to the ballot and their unique PIN through email notification.

The President and Secretary with the assistance of Member Services and the Communications Liaison will craft the language in the email notification.

The following content must be included:

- Greeting by First & Last Name (merge field)
- Explanation of what the vote is about
- The PIN formatted to be bold, large and stand out in the email. (merge field)
- A link to the electronic ballot
- A link to any FAQ’s, profiles, etc (additional info)
- The voting period dates
- When the results will be announced
- Who to contact for more information

Formatting of the email should ensure readability and include appropriate branding and graphics as needed to appear professional.

Testing

A test process should occur approximately 1 week prior to sending the live ballot.

The test should use the first name, last name, and a fake PIN using letters rather than numbers for everyone with an @algaonline.org email address. This file can be manually created and include any additional testers as needed.

Testers should check that:
The email looks professional, contains all required information, and is easy to read and understand.

All links to FAQ's or additional information function properly.

The link to the ballot functions properly.

The ballot functions properly and is easy to understand and use.

After testing, Member Services must clear all test responses from SurveyMonkey.

### Sending the Ballot

On the first day of the voting period, the email merge and send should be completed using the live mailing list and tested email contents.

⚠️ **The person sending the ballot will have access to the mailing list with PIN and should not have access to SurveyMonkey or detailed voting results.**

### Sending a Reminder

There are two options to send a reminder.

1. A generic email to all eligible voters
2. A targeted email reminder to only those who have not voted (preferred)

To send a generic email to all eligible voters, the Communications Liaison/President/Secretary/Member Services should modify the subject line and introduction of the original email content to indicate this is a reminder. Then the same procedure using the full mailing list should be repeated so everyone on the list receives the reminder email.

⚠️ **If the reminder is sent to all eligible voters, there is a high likelihood that duplicate PIN votes will be received and will need to be resolved. This is not the preferred option.**

To send a targeted email reminder to only those who have not voted:
1. An individual without access to the mailing list downloads a file with responses from SurveyMonkey.
2. This individual removes all information from the downloaded file except for the submitted PIN.
3. The list of submitted PINs is provided to the person managing the mailing list.
4. This person matches submitted PINs to the eligible PINs on the mailing list and removes those voters who have already voted.
5. This person then uses the revised mailing list to send a revised reminder email.

⚠️ If a targeted reminder is sent, segregation of duties must be maintained to ensure that no individual has access to the member information, PIN, and vote responses.

**Closing the Vote**

After the voting period has closed:

1. The person with SurveyMonkey access:
   a. Closes the SurveyMonkey ballot so that it will not accept any more responses.
   b. Downloads the file with responses from SurveyMonkey.
   c. Removes all information from the downloaded file except for the submitted PIN and the date/time the vote was submitted.
   d. Provides the list of submitted PINs with the date/time field to the person managing the mailing list.
2. The person with mailing list access:
   a. Matches submitted PINs to the eligible PINs on the mailing list and identifies any submitted PINs that do not match an eligible PIN from the mailing list.
   b. Checks for any duplicate submitted PINs. If more than 1 vote is submitted using the same eligible PIN, the vote that was submitted first will be counted and subsequent vote(s) will be ineligible.
c. Provides the list of submitted, ineligible PINs with the submitted date/time to the person who has access to the submitted votes.

3. The person with SurveyMonkey access:
   a. Removes the votes that were submitted by ineligible PINs and date/times of submissions in the case of duplicate PINs
   b. Tabulates the votes and summarizes the results.
   c. Communicates the results to the sitting President and Communications Liaison.

4. The sitting President communicates the results to the successful and unsuccessful candidates if applicable.

5. The sitting President communicates the results to the Board.

6. The Communication Liaison communicates the results to the general membership.

7. The person with SurveyMonkey access deletes the ballot.

8. The person with mailing list access deletes the mailing list with PINs.

9. The results of the vote and process are summarized by Member Services and provided to the sitting President and Secretary and includes:
   a. Total possible votes (mailing list count)
   b. Total received votes
   c. Total ineligible votes with reasons for ineligibility (no match or duplicate)
   d. Vote results
   e. Process improvement suggestions
   f. A description of any issues encountered and resolutions

10. The summarized results should be reviewed by the Board at the next scheduled board meeting and be retained as a record as part of the board minutes.

The following may be retained by

MemberServices/President/Secretary/SPO/Communications Liaison for the purposes of process improvement:
   a. A copy of the ballot and emails in a non-live format
   b. A schedule of emails and reminders sent
   c. The detailed vote responses download from SurveyMonkey with PINs removed