

Government by the members

Upcoming elections give members the opportunity to participate in NCHA's direction.

by NCHA President Bronc Willoughby

With NCHA director elections underway and the vice president election coming up, it's a good time to review the governance framework the National Cutting Horse Association has developed over the years.

We've all heard members say that "NCHA did this" or "NCHA did that." I think we should always focus on the fact that there is no NCHA apart from our members. Each member has a voice, and our directors, executive committee and staff work together to identify our common goals and the best ways we can move forward to achieve those goals.

At this time NCHA has 222 directors to represent members across North America. Directors are elected directly by the members they represent. These men and women volunteer their time and talents on behalf of the association. Members should feel free to share their ideas for, or concerns about, any aspect of the association with their local director.

In addition, the phone numbers of all executive committee members are published on page 2 of the *Chatter* each month. Along with my fellow executive committee members, we are always eager to hear comments from the membership.

Broad representation

The number of directors in each state is determined by the number of members in that state, with one director for each 75 members. If the remainder of members in a state is at least 38, an additional director is named for that state. States whose membership is too small to be considered a director district are combined with nearby states. States with large membership (over 1,500) are divided into several districts.

Under this system, a director does not represent more than 112 members, giving all members reasonable access to their representatives. A chart showing each state's membership and director numbers is published in the *Chatter* each November and December.

Past presidents of the NCHA become at-large directors who serve for life, and they are not included in the direc-

tor counts in any way.

Directors serve three-year terms during which they are expected to attend meetings, such as the NCHA Convention, at their own expense.

Anyone who has been an NCHA member in good standing for the past three years, who is 21 or older and who has no felony convictions, may run for open director seats in their home state. Consent forms are published in the *Chatter* along with the director district chart, and are due by December 15 each year.

If there are more candidates than there are seats available in a district, ballots are sent to all voting members. All ballots must be signed to be counted.

This year, ballots will be counted on April 14. As in the past, the count will be supervised by an independent accounting firm.

New directors will take their seats at the 2009 NCHA Convention.

In many cases, only a quarter of the eligible voters choose to participate in these important elections. In some cases, fewer than 20 votes determine the winners.

I strongly encourage each and every NCHA member to take part in the association's electoral process.

Vice President

NCHA's vice president serves for one year, followed by a year as president-elect, and then a year as president of the association. To be eligible for the vice presidency, a candidate must be a current or former executive committee member, a past president, or a current director who has served at least six years in that position. They must also meet the other criteria required of a director.

An eight-member nominating committee solicits nom-



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inations from the board of directors, and meets at least 120 days prior to the annual Convention to name a minimum of two and a maximum of six candidates for the vice president's office.

The nominating committee includes four members of the executive committee and four directors from different districts, with no more than two of them from the same region. Again, these rules were established to ensure broad representation. The current members of the nominating committee are Chris Benedict, Randy Chartier, Van Greenwell, Jim Paradis, Maben Thompson, Chubby Turner, Carol Ward and Jon White.

Vice president ballots will be mailed to all members on April 29. They must be returned by US Mail and will be counted on June 9, again under the supervision of an independent accounting firm.

Executive committee

In addition to the president, president-elect and vice president, the executive committee consists of 11 members. Eight of those members represent each of NCHA's eight regions, and three are at-large members. Executive committee members serve three-year terms.

The regional executive committee members are elected by the directors from that region. Regional executive committee elections take place on the first day of the NCHA convention, supervised by an NCHA staff member. The vote may be by a show of hands, or by a secret ballot, if requested.

The at-large positions are staggered so that only one opening occurs each year. During the first session of the board of directors at the convention, nominations for the at-large opening are taken from the floor.

Candidates address the board of directors during its second meeting at the convention. Written ballots are cast by all directors who are present, with the one receiving the highest tally elected to a three-year term.

If a current executive committee member is elected as vice president with time remaining on his or her executive committee term, their replacement will be elected as provided above, either by a regional vote or an at-large vote, as appropriate.

Conclusion

The foundation and rules for NCHA's governance were developed over many years to ensure fair representation and transparency. Every detail is outlined in our *Handbook of Rules and Regulations* which is sent to all members and is available online.

In my experience, the vast majority of the men and women who have served as your elected officials in the National Cutting Horse Association have served selflessly for the benefit of the entire organization, often at great cost to themselves in terms of time and money.

But now it's your turn as an NCHA member to consider the issues of the day and cast your ballot for candidates you feel are best suited for the job ahead.

Thank you.★