

SCOUTS-L

TROOP ELECTIONS

Date: Fri, 8 Dec 1995 10:00:52 -0500
From: Steve Black <steve_black@POBOX.TBE.COM>
Subject: Voting and Elections Poll

In my previous request for information concerning the above subject, I received a total of 40 replies (THANKS! - that was a cheer, sorry I yelled ;))

I have tallied the votes and the results are in!!!

1) Frequency of Elections: The overwhelming response was 6 Months (26 out of 40)

Annual came in with 13 of 40 and one troop holds election 3 times/year.

2) When elections are held: Start of School Year won with 19 of 40, with Sept and March being the most popular months. The balance of votes were split between October (most), Summer Camp, and other Special times (e.g. Re-Charter time annual Winter camping Trip).

3) Special Rank Requirements for SPL: Almost all (37 of 40) had a rank require-

ment and in 24 of those First Class was required for SPL. Other considerations were size of Troop - smaller troop usually had lower "recommended" requirements and larger troops had higher rank requirements. Special mention

was made for SM approval and a commitment to attend Jr. Leader Training.

4) Type of Election: Almost all (36 of 40) had anonymous elections. The elections differed in many ways however. Some elected the SPL, who then selected his ASPL (with SM approval) and then they held elections for PL's.

This way if a scout ran for SPL and didn't make it, he would still be eligible for PL. Others elected an ASPL because the ASPL automatically became the SPL after serving as ASPL. Most PL's were elected within their own Patrol. Also, in most cases (where a description was given), the Scribe, Historian, and other "leadership positions" were appointed by the SPL (you know what goes here ;)) (with SM approval). In other words, he selected his

"cabinet". Some troops elect SPL, ASPL, PL and APL but most just elect the SPL and PL and they select their assistant.

5) Who Tallies the Votes: Adult Leaders won with 25 of 40. Other results indicated that the SPL oversaw the results. The answer that struck me as the most likely was the incumbent Scribe. But I guess this would only work if he wasn't running for a position. In most cases the need to be

totally unbiased was mentioned. In addition, some Troops SAVE the ballots in case there are any questions (or arguments!!!). This was a great idea!!!

Usually an adult was responsible in some fashion to "watch" the results.

Some other suggestions that were sent in:

Some Troops allow re-election to positions. These are usually the smaller troops. The larger ones apparently do not. Some troops limit this to a one-time re-election but one troop noted that a boy is rarely elected three times in a row.

Publicize the elections!!! Make sure everyone knows when and where they are.

Allow the scouts to make a speech before the election.

Junior Leader Training is required for all leadership positions.

And finally, have a written election system in place. One responder said that the SM in their Troop frequently changes the requirements for certain positions apparently to "force" the scouts to elect the scout that the SM wants to be in that position. He related that the boys know what's going on and resent it. Having written election procedures also gives the scouts something to follow and look forward to (especially if they aren't happy with a PL or SPL that they have elected).

I hope the above will give many of the newbie Scouters (like me) some ideas and direction.

Thanks to everyone that responded. I will approach the scouts in my troop with the results just as they are printed here and let them make the choice of how they want to hold elections in their Troop!!!

**YIS,
Steve Black - ASM
Troop 321 - Washington Township, NJ
E-mail: steve.black@pobox.tbe.com**

**Date: Tue, 20 May 1997 14:07:43 -0400
From: Ron Raab-Long <raablong@VOICENET.COM>
Subject: Re: Troop Elections - The Mechanics**

**At 10:29 AM 5/20/97 -0700, you wrote:
>I have some questions regarding Troop Elections for the Senior Patrol**

>Leader and Patrol Leaders.
SNIP...

John,

We have set the following procedures in our troop.

Elections are held every 6 months (3 months for new scout patrol)

No term limits.

For SPL

- * We have set Star rank as minimum, with no minimum age.
- * Boys are nominated and seconded by the troop at large.
- * Each nominee is given the opportunity to address the troop.
- * Election is by secret ballot, counted by adults.

For ASPL

- * Star rank or above.
- * Appointed by newly elected SPL, with advice and consent of the SM.

For PL

- * Boys are nominated by members of their patrol
- * Election by secret ballot, counted by adults.
- * APL's are appointed by PL's

Patrol Scribes & Quartermasters

- * Elected within the patrol by secret ballot

Troop Quartermaster, Librarian & Historian

- * Elected by troop by secret ballot.

Troop Guide

- * Appointed by Scoutmaster.
- * Must be 1st Class or above.

Den Chiefs

- * Approved by Scoutmaster and Cubmaster
- * Must be 1st Class or above

Junior Asst. Scoutmaster

- * Appointed by Scoutmaster
- * Must be 16 and have served in other leadership positions

Does it work? Sometimes. Elections will always be somewhat of a popularity

contest. We try to instill in the boys that they are electing their leaders, not their friends. We ask them to think about who knows how to get

a job done; who goes on every campout, and who do they think will do the best job.

The most important item is training. These changes are coming to your troop due to attending basic training -- you learned what you needed to do your job. Your boys need the same thing. Don't give them a job and responsibilities without teaching them what is expected of them. Use the Junior Leader Training Kit, its cheap and effective.

YIS,
Ron Raab-Long
Two Bays District,
DelMarVa Council
Dover, Delaware

Date: Tue, 20 May 1997 13:24:25 -0500
From: "settummanque, or blackeagle (Mike Walton)"
<blkeagle@DYNASTY.NET>
Subject: Re: Troop Elections - The Mechanics

John Durbetaki asked about how Troop elections are conducted:

The reason why there's not a clear "procedure" in the Scoutmasters' Handbook, John, as you will read here on this list, is because there's about upteen (upteen is my word I'm using this week for "a lot of" *grinning*) different ways that a unit may hold those elections. What works best is what works with *your* unit.

We've always used a nomination, candidate speech, questions, and then secret ballot-type format for all of the elections in all of the units that I've served as "primary leader" for. This parallels what they do in school and church for youth leadership, and (somehow) closely parallels what they will see or experience in adulthood. It's not the best way, and I grant it that it's not the way that smaller units HAVE to do things...but with a medium to large unit, that's the way I've done it.

Another way, which was told to me is the "traditional way" that senior leadership was elected back in the "good old days", was that each Patrol holds an election on their own for Patrol Leader and Assistant. Then, the Patrol Leaders would among themselves, elect a Senior Patrol Leader, and that Patrol's Assistant would become Patrol Leader and would have to appoint an Assistant. The Senior Patrol Leader would then appoint his "staff": the Assistant Senior Patrol Leader, Scribe, Librarian, Den Chiefs, and other

officers. I don't like it, but it may work with your unit.

>How are qualifications set?

That's up to your Patrol Leaders' Council, John.....they set the qualifications (of course, with your consent and approval.). Such qualifications may include a period of time in the Troop (waiverable if the person transferred to your Troop from another) or in Scouting (or both), the attainment of a certain rank, or the attainment of a set of skills or all or none of the above. The "qualification" could just be "whomever can best lead the Troop, represent us to the adults in our Troop and community, and can be an example to us in and out of Scouting".

>Is there any filtering process (for example does PLC approve candidates >or is anyone who meets the requirements eligible)?

It should be anyone that meets the requirements/qualifications that's been set up in advance by your PLC....you don't want to "filter" too many Scouts or you'll end up "appointing leaders" again!

>How are campaigns conducted (probably effects SPL more than PL)?

In the typical "political campaign style" (hopefully without any graft, corruption, or other un-Scoutlike conduct!! *wide grin*). In my units, there's very little "campaigning" done because the nomination, speech and election's all done on the same night....but let's get real here....if we know that an election for Grand Poobar is coming up, and we want to run for it, we're going to do what we can to talk to as many people beforehand, convince them that "I really want to be Grand Poobah, and I think that I can provide the leadership we need"....before the nomination and election night. Our Scouts are just like us, and they've got this thing figured out as well.

>How long are campaigns?

Like I stated, they can last from the time you announce that the unit's going to have elections until election evening, or a very short run during the evening.

>How is voting done (secret ballot, show of hands)?

I don't like "show of hands" because if we're talking about demonstrating citizenship to our Scouts, the "right to vote and to dissent" should be private, just like it is with us adults. I only like "show of hands" in a last-minute, "we need a decision and we need it NOW!" kinda format, where I can't wait for someone to tear up paper, hand out pens and tabulate votes and names.

Secret ballot, with the opportunity to vote for "none of the above" or "another Scout that meets "the requirements" whom you feel would be a better leader than the ones listed." To aid this, I take a piece of cardboard or use the chalk or whiteboard and list the names of ALL of the Scouts that are "eligible" according to the PLC's "qualifications", even though they may not be "nominated". Some Scouts are kinda shy about standing up and stating their loyalty to a friend....they think that it's "bragging" (and in some cases, it is). I list the name in last-name alphabetical order as not to influence or favor one Scout over another. I also list all names using the same color marker or chalk, again as to not to "highlight" (even subconsciously) a particular Scout.

Lastly, I don't allow myself nor my Assistants (nor any other adult present) to have an "opinion" or "a suggestion" about "whom we would vote for or what we thought". Our thoughts, suggestions, and opinions aren't needed here....nor should they be included in ANY part of the process. Let the Scouts elect THEIR leadership, not the leadership that WE want in place! I ask those adults that can't understand that concept to leave the room....and yeah, John....I had to bite my own tongue as well when in one case, a boy was nominated that I really had NO INTEREST whatsoever in working with, and rather to leave the room or turn around or give some other indication of my *personal displeasure*, I just stood there and didn't say anything (and man, did I want to say some stuff THAT NIGHT!!!).

>Our elections are mid July (after Summer Camp). I think the candidates >should be known to the Troop before camp so that the boys can see the >candidates in action. Any thoughts?

Not bad. It gives your Scouts -- and the adults involved -- a chance to see all of the Scouts in your unit, AND allows for those "late bloomer" leaders to come out and "show their stuff" in a DIFFERENT environment other than "regular Troop meetings and stuff".

One of the things I ask my PLCs to insist upon in their "qualifications", John, is that each Scout MUST be willing to attend Junior Leader Training as soon after the elections are held and at times during the year that are set aside for such training. Some Scouts have no problem in serving as a leader, but when it comes time to be trained to do that job better, all of a sudden, they have a variety of other things that they "need to do". I give my new leaders two opportunities and after they haven't attended the second opportunity, they are removed from office (effective or not) and a new election held to fill the "unexpired period of office". I've only had to do it once, and then I hated to do it because the kid was a GREAT Scribe. But he knew that it was coming, and left the Troop anyway.

Whatever your PLC and you work out, John....STICK TO YOUR GUNS and don't change the rules or the procedure because you "don't like the direction it's going in". Bad move all the way around....in real life, we have to deal with whomever the majority elects, we learn to work with or around the person (hopefully we learn to work with the person!) and we look forward to his or her leaving that office and a new election with new leadership. That's the way it's done in this country, and as teachers and coaches of citizenship, that's the way it should be done in our units and among our youth, the leaders of this country long after we're gone!

Let us all know how the election turns out, John...there's a LOT of Scouters out there like you wanting to know how YOU did it and what happened!!
GREAT
QUESTIONS!!

Settummanque!

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---- FORWARD in service to youth ----

Date: Tue, 20 May 1997 14:30:28 +0000
From: Mark Ray <info@EAGLEBOOK.COM>
Subject: Re: Troop Elections - The Mechanics

There is no "right" way to do elections, but here are a few thoughts:

- Hold elections at regularly scheduled intervals (every 6 months, perhaps).
- Hold nominations one week and elections the next. Or, as you mentioned, hold nominations before camp and elections after. Good idea!
- Candidates should give a speech outlining their qualifications and Scouting history. At our last election, we opened the floor to questions, which elicited some good responses. It was easy to tell which boys were serious about running and which just wanted the (perceived) glory.
- Someone (the Scoutmaster or current SPL) should outline the job description for each position.
- Definitely vote by secret ballot and don't reveal the actual vote counts. Imagine how embarrassed a boy would be if he got only 1 or 2 votes.
- I don't think it's appropriate for the PLC to screen candidates. I have seen times, however, when the Scoutmaster needed to discourage a nominated Scout from running.

Mark Ray
Troop 317
Louisville, KY

Date: Tue, 20 May 1997 13:31:00 CST
From: Murphy Peter <MurphyP@RND3.INDY.TCE.COM>
Subject: Re: Troop Elections - The Mechanics

John,

Good luck! From personal experience, the transition to a boy run program is long and sometime frustrating but rewarding when the results start to show themselves.

I believe election procedures are purposefully vague so that every troop can implement them the way it works best for them. In my troop, the PLC established the qualifications and election schedule (with a little prompting from me). We also did away with electing EVERY troop position (with a lot of prompting from me). A week before the elections, the boys are asked to nominate boys for SPL. The week of elections, the candidates give a brief speech and blank papers are handed out. Everyone writes one name and returns it. After the results are announced, the patrols conduct their own elections anyway they want. We have no set qualifications for Patrol Leader. Meanwhile, the new SPL and I discuss the options for the rest of the troop positions and announce them the following week after meeting with our first choices.

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Del-Mi District, Crossroads of America Council

Date: Tue, 20 May 1997 14:51:19 EDT
From: "Bob Caron, Management Information Systems"
<caron@UMBSKY.CC.UMB.EDU>
Subject: Re: Troop Elections - The Mechanics

Well, I might as well chime in on this one too.

We hold troop elections at Summer Camp (also tends to encourage attendance!)

We elect SPL, ASPL(2), and PLs. Scouts are asked to express an interest in running for office to the adult leaders during the week. They have a discussion with the SM and SAs about the office and become a candidate for one or more with the scout and the SM agreeing they could and would do the job.

For the balloting process, we begin with SPL. The scouts file through a "ballot booth" where an adult leader asks who the scout wants to vote for. Whoever wins SPL is then removed from running for other offices, if applicable.

Then the scouts file through again and vote for two ASPLs from the candidate

positions.

A further question for the list is how different troops deal with ties. Last year we had a tie for SPL, and this year we had a couple of ties for PLs. For the SPL, the adults sat down and decided, since we couldn't come up with a better way (the troop was never told that there was a tie). For the PLs, I have made the SPL find ways to resolve the problem (I did loan him a quarter for one of the choices). What methods have other used to solve this problem?

Jon

--

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Date: Tue, 20 May 1997 17:42:35 -0400
From: "Bruce E. Cobern" <bec@PIPELINE.COM>
Subject: Re: Troop Elections - The Mechanics

> From: Jonathan Dixon <dixonj@ROCOCO.COLORADO.EDU>

> Date: Tuesday, May 20, 1997 4:58 PM

> A further question for the list is how different troops deal with ties.
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> was a tie). For the PLs, I have made the SPL find ways to resolve the
> problem (I did loan him a quarter for one of the choices). What methods
> have other used to solve this problem?

I'm not sure what our procedures do for a tie in the vote for SPL, and I don't think I can remember it happening. We had a tie for PL a few years ago and so we added something to our guidebook about it. I believe that we give preference to the incumbent in the case of a tie. I'm not sure what we do (I'd have to look) if neither is the incumbent, but it might be that we would give preference to someone from within the patrol over someone from outside the patrol. (We allow those First Class or over to run in any and all patrols. It makes it interesting if someone gets elected in more than one patrol, and it has happened.) We also might give the preference to the current APL.

--

Bruce E. Cobern
mailto:bec@pipeline.com

Date: Tue, 20 May 1997 17:09:30 -0500
From: "settummanque, or blackeagle (Mike Walton)"
<blkeagle@DYNASTY.NET>
Subject: Re: Troop Elections - The Mechanics

In a tie, we hold another election. This also gives those "straddling the fencepost" and "electing their friends" another chance to "vote their feelings not their friendship". Most cases, the winner ends up being the person everyone "thought" would win; in a couple of cases, though, I and everyone else was surprised as the Scout that thought that he would win re-election didn't win.

His father was my boss's boss; two days after the election was announced, I ran into his father during a trip in the motor pool. He brought the subject up and stated that his son "felt bad about losing the election". Then, he quickly added, "but he needs to learn how to lose." At that point, I knew that no matter what I did in his military unit, that what I did as his son's Scoutmaster had NO BEARING whatsoever on my performance evaluation. I was relieved and pleased.

And I still have a great deal of respect for Steven Basso's father.

Settummanque!

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