

Houston Knanaya Catholic Society (HKCS)

Election Policies and Procedures – (2005 Revised)

Purpose:

To establish written guidelines to ensure consistency and fairness in conducting elections for Houston Knanaya Catholic Society (HKCS).

Scope:

These procedures shall govern all aspects of elections for those Society offices for which a ballot is mandated by the Society's constitution, and for any other purpose (such as referenda) for which a ballot is required. Aspects covered include scheduling, announcements, requirements for nomination of candidates, ballot preparation, qualification for voting, tallying of ballots, and certification and announcement of results. These procedures must conform to the Society's constitution; in case of conflict between these procedures and Constitution, the Constitution governs.

Notes:

1. The dates specified in this document are of the current year.
2. Definition of number of days. – Counting days including the day specified.
3. Deadlines - Deadline hold as 8.00 PM if hand delivered or post mark of the day specified if mailed.

Section A - Pre-election:

1. The Secretary will forward the updated and duly attested current Voters list to the Chairperson of Liaison board on 1st of September. This list shall be displayed in public at the community center.
2. Secretary shall send a letter attached with the current voters list by mail to every family by 10th of September.
3. The Liaison board will make a draft voter's list based on the above mentioned Voters list. Eligibility for membership is dictated by Society constitution and membership policy and procedure. Draft voter's list will be available with the Chairperson of the liaison board for verification on 10th of September. Any dispute regarding the voter's list must be brought to the attention of the Chairperson of the liaison board as soon as possible but no later as 30th of September. The liaison board's decision on the dispute will be final.
4. Persons who are not current member of the Society by 30th of September are not eligible to vote for any Society election conducted till 31st of December of that year.
5. Draft voters list shall be available with the chairperson of the liaison board by 1st of October. This voter's list shall be displayed in public at the community center on the same day and a copy will be available to any current member upon request.
6. Final voters list will be displayed at the community center notice board on October 15-Th and will be available to the candidates upon request. There will be no addition to the final voters list.
7. Election related questions, final voters list, policies and procedures regarding elections should be directed to Liaison board only
8. In the event of election be held on occasions other than annual general body meeting (this item is applicable only for this situation), The Secretary shall forward the updated and duly attested current membership list to the Chairperson of liaison board 30 days before the election. This list shall be displayed in public at the community center on the same day. Any dispute regarding the voter's list must be brought to the attention of the Chairperson of the liaison board as soon as possible but no later than 15 days before the election day. People who are not current members of the Society 15 days before the election shall not be eligible to vote for that election. Liaison board shall have the final voter's list ready 14 days before the election and this list shall be displayed in public at the community center. This list shall not be edited before the election.

Section B -: Notification:

1. The Society Executive will notify all members in writing at least 20 days in advance for a general body meeting announcing that election will be conducted at that time. The time and date for Meet the Candidates program and Early Voting shall be announced in this letter
2. Liaison Board will prepare the election message (Election time, Early voting specifics, Nomination forms criteria, Eligibility criteria for candidates, Voters criteria, No of positions etc) and forward it to Society executives before Sep 10 of that calendar year for community notification and it should be included in the above letter

Section C - Nomination:

1. Nomination procedure described in the Society constitution will be followed. Any nomination withdrawals should be done in writing seven days before the election.
2. Nominations should be submitted to the Liaison Board in prescribed nomination form available from the liaison board.
3. Candidates who are filing nominations for election should pay \$ 100.00 along with specified nomination form. The amount will be fully refundable if the candidate withdraws before the deadline. Also the deposit will be returned to the candidates if there is no contest for the specified post. Any overage or underage of expenses will be absorbed by the Society.
4. Nominations forms will be given only to candidates upon request or to authorized individuals designated by the candidates
5. Every member, who wishes to become office bearer, should be a member of the building body of the Society.
6. If there is no approved nomination, the Chairperson of the liaison board will give a synopsis of the position to be filled and then seek nominations for the position from the General Body. The name can be either self-nominated by an eligible candidate, or nominated by an eligible voter. Another eligible voter should second this nomination.
7. If there are more candidates than the number of position(s) open, after consulting with the Executive Board, Liaison Board can decide to conduct the election at that time, or can accept the nominations and announce a date for election. Election must be held within 45 days.

Section D - Polling Procedure:

1. Meet the candidate program shall be conducted before the Election Day. All candidates have the option to declare their panel of office bearers at this time. Before the event, the Chairperson of the liaison board will explain the election procedure. Each candidate will be given an opportunity to speak for a specified time limit. The order of speech will be determined in alphabetic order based on the candidate's family name on the voter's list. In case of personal attack or in similar circumstances, the Chairperson of liaison board may allow a candidate a brief amount of time for rebuttal.
2. On the Election Day, the Chairperson of the liaison board will explain the election procedure. The ballot box will be opened and shown to all voters to verify that it is empty. After this, the box will be closed and sealed by tape in front of the voters.
3. Each candidate can delegate one agent as an observer to ensure elections are conducted in a fair manner. The ballots will contain the name of position or title, initials of at least two members of the liaison board and the polling date. If possible, the ballot may have the names of candidates preprinted with the option to select one of them.
4. Voters will enter the polling area one at a time in an orderly fashion. One ballot will be given per voter. When voters are given ballots, their names will be checked off from the voter's list to prevent reappearance. The front of the ballot must be initialed by two of the Liaison Board members.
5. Voters needing assistance to cast the vote may request the help of another eligible voter who must also cast vote at the same time.
6. Any unused ballots must be destroyed after all members present have voted.

Section E - The Counting Procedure:

1. In the presence of the candidates and agents, the Liaison Board will open the ballot box and start counting. The count of votes for each candidate will be verified and tallied on paper in the presence of the candidates and agents. Candidates and agents are responsible for verifying the accuracy of the count. Unclear votes will be counted as invalid.
2. The sum of votes for each candidate and invalid votes will be recorded on the tally sheet. The candidates, agents, and members of the liaison board must sign the tally sheet, there by accepting the results.
3. All ballots will be returned to the original box. The box will be sealed with tapes. Candidates, agents and members of the liaison board will sign over the tape overlapping to the background material of the box. It is recommended to sign on more than one side of the box.
4. The sealed and signed box will be kept in the possession of the Chairperson of the liaison board for one year.

Section F - Declaration of Election Result Procedure:

1. The number of votes for each candidate and invalid votes will be announced. The candidate with the most votes will be declared the winner.
2. In case there is a tie, winner will be decided by lotto.

Section G - Grievance Procedure:

1. An eligible voter must notify any complaints about the election results in writing to the Chairperson of the liaison board within seven days after the election with supporting evidence.
2. The Liaison Board must investigate and reply to any election related complaint within 30 days of the receipt of the same.

Section H – Early Voting:

1. Early voting will be available on the same day of election. Time and place will be announced along with the general body meeting notification.
2. The early vote ballot box will be safely kept at one of the Society office rooms. The room will be sealed and all keys will be under the possession of Liaison Chairperson until the regular voting starts. Counting will be done after all polling is completed.

Section H – Expenses:

All election related expenses up to \$ 750.00 by Liaison board will be reimbursed by Society executives upon receipt. Any additional expenses must be pre approved by the Society executives.

History:

Original Policy: Passed on 07/13/2003; Proposed: Cyriac Velimattom; Seconded: Zenith Ellankil; Recorded: Jomon Kannala . Secretary, HKCS

Revised Policy: Passed on 11/12/2005; Proposed: Jose Vanchipurackal; Seconded: Jimmy Kunnassery; Recorded: Ajith Antony Kulathil Karote, Chairperson, Liaison Board