

Voting Instructions for Election of Delegate(s)

[To be read aloud at Convention.]

Who is eligible to be elected: Any Bahá'í in good standing, 21 years of age or older, and living in the electoral unit is eligible to serve as a delegate. *[Members of the Continental Board of Counselors are exempt.]*

If you are uncertain whether a person resides in your unit, please refer to the posted membership list. If voting through the Online Balloting System, search for those eligible by typing a few letters of their name, starting with their last name.

*[It may be helpful here to read the **duties of delegates** found on the reverse of this page.]*

Ballot Instructions:

- **Paper ballots:** The following procedure is recommended: **Enclose each paper ballot within two envelopes—an inner one and an outer one—to be accepted by the tellers.** Use either those provided in the election call mailing or those provided at Convention.
 - **Print** legibly in ink on the ballot the name of the person for whom you want to vote (If your unit has more than one delegate, you must enter a different name on each line).
 - **Insert** the completed ballot into the small envelope marked “Delegate Election Ballot” or a blank envelope provided at Convention, and seal it. There should be no identifying markings on the outside of this envelope, as this will invalidate your vote.
 - **Insert** the unmarked envelope into the second envelope, seal it, and fill out your name, address, and Bahá'í ID number.
 - When individuals in your unit have the same name, please include descriptive information that will aid the tellers in identifying which person you are voting for. This may include city/community of residence, physical descriptors, maiden name, and/or current Bahá'í service.
 - Please remain silent until all ballots have been cast. Tellers will then collect the ballots.
- **Online Balloting System (OBS):** If you would like to use the Online Balloting System to cast your ballot electronically, you may access OBS during the voting period through this QR code, through OBSBahai.org, or through Bahai.us after signing in with your Bahá'í Online Services Account. Any ballot cast online overrides a paper ballot.



Guidance: *[to be read aloud followed by prayers]*

“If we but turn our gaze to the high qualifications of the members of Bahá'í Assemblies, as enumerated in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablets, we are filled with feelings of unworthiness and dismay, and would feel truly disheartened but for the comforting thought that if we rise to play nobly our part every deficiency in our lives will be more than compensated by the all-conquering spirit of His grace and power. Hence it is incumbent upon the chosen delegates to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespective of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognized ability and mature experience.”

From the writings of Shoghi Effendi, June 3, 1925

“Due regard must be paid to their actual capacity and present attainments, and only those who are best qualified for membership, be they men or women, and irrespective of social standing, should be elected to the extremely responsible position.”

From the writings of Shoghi Effendi, December 27, 1923

Duties of Delegates

It would be impossible at this stage to ignore the indispensability or to overestimate the unique significance of the institution of the National Spiritual Assembly – the pivot round which revolve the activities of the believers throughout the American continent. Supreme is their position, grave their responsibilities, manifold and arduous their duties. How great the privilege, how delicate the task of the assembled delegates whose function it is to elect such national representatives as would by their record of service ennoble and enrich the annals of the Cause!

Letter written by Shoghi Effendi, dated June 3, 1925

Foremost is the election of your National Assembly, when you will choose individuals who can meet the pressing requirements of the progress of the Cause at the present stage of its development. Our letter dated 25 March 2007 was intended to strengthen the Bahá'í electoral process, and we urge you to give renewed consideration to its salient points. In the features and outcomes of this electoral process that distinguish it from contemporary practices we find not limitations, but dawning points of profound implication. The delegates, as well as the generality of the believers, uphold the purity of Bahá'í elections, scrupulously avoiding electioneering or discussion of who should or should not be a member, even when specific names are not mentioned; for not only does the Guardian prohibit reference to particular personalities, but he also states that "we should refrain from influencing the opinions of others." Collectively, the friends strive to purge themselves of every trace of worldly tendencies—pursuit of personal ambitions, promotion of individuals, contest, and partisanship—which can corrupt and distort an election's spiritual character. Delegates are obliged to become "intelligent, well-informed and responsible" electors so as to "be able to make a wise choice at the election time". They enjoy the unfettered right to choose from among all those eligible, whether it be to retain members or to select new ones. The community wholeheartedly embraces the result of the election, confident that the delegates have cast their ballots for those for whom prayer and reflection have inspired them to vote....

Shoghi Effendi stated that the National Convention should "fulfil the functions of an enlightened, consultative and co-operative body that will enrich the experience, enhance the prestige, support the authority, and assist the deliberations of the National Spiritual Assembly." Although delegates are to offer their views in a full, frank, and unhampered manner, he advised that time not be spent on problems of secondary importance and that disruptive forces, "which are but the outcome of human passion and selfishness," should be resisted. Instead, the Guardian expected those assembled to "approach their task with absolute detachment" and "concentrate their attention on the most important and pressing issues" in order to obtain a "deeper and broader vision of the Cause through an increase in the spirit of unity and of whole hearted co-operation." "The unfettered freedom of the individual should be tempered with mutual consultation and sacrifice," he explained, "and the spirit of initiative and enterprise should be reinforced by a deeper realization of the supreme necessity for concerted action and a fuller devotion to the common weal."

Your consultations with the National Assembly at the Convention take place within the context of the larger set of relationships that bind the Plan's three protagonists and must increasingly reflect the features of this distinctive conversation. Each year the Rídván message sets the stage for the discussions at Convention by conveying a sense of the current progress of the Bahá'í world and the work that lies ahead. Your contribution, though free and frank, is not characterized by insistence on personal opinion. While there may be a wide range of important topics, attention to the progress of the Five Year Plan and the requirements of its remaining years cannot be neglected. You bring to the Convention insights gleaned from the conversation unfolding within your region. In this way, you enrich the perspective of the National Assembly and become informed of its hopes, challenges, and aims. You enhance your own understanding of the affairs of the Cause from a national perspective and rededicate yourself to the community's common enterprise.

Message of the Universal House of Justice to delegates gathered at National Conventions, May 16, 2013