

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Student Government

Spring Election Rules

Preamble

These elections will conform to the *Student Government Constitution*, its *Bylaws*, and all University policies.

Article I

Eligibility

1. Any Minnesota State University, Mankato student may seek elected office, provided Article I of the *Spring Election Rules* is satisfied.
2. No person may run for more than one Senate seat and/or executive office (President or Vice President) concurrently.
3. All candidates for President and Vice President, as well as at least one (1) candidate from each party (if not led by a Presidential/Vice Presidential nominee), are required to attend an election rules meeting conducted by the Elections Commission at the beginning of the campaign period, to read over these rules and to ask any questions.
 - a. Candidates unable to attend an election rules meeting must schedule a time to meet with an Elections Commission member to discuss the elections rules, prior to the Spring Election day, if otherwise required.
 - b. Candidates for President and Vice President will be responsible for ensuring that candidates on their ticket are aware of these rules.
 - c. All candidates must also agree to be bound by the rules of the election, whether or not they personally attend a rules reading.

Article II

Filing

1. All candidates must file a *Candidacy Application* in order to be active during the campaign period (outlined in Article IV of these rules) and to appear on the Spring Election ballot. *Candidacy Applications* shall be available on the Student Government Engage portal.
 - a. Candidates for executive office (President or Vice President) must file together and no later than Three (3) weeks prior to the Spring Election day.
 - b. Candidates for all other elected positions must file no later than one (1) week prior to the Spring Election day.
2. When candidates file, they will receive a copy of the *Spring Election Rules* and notice of their requirement to be bound by the rules.
 - a. Parties must have at least one (1) member attend a rules reading prior to campaigning
3. The Elections Commission shall compile a voter guide consisting of candidates who choose to submit a personal profile summarizing their qualifications and stances on various issues. The guide shall be available at the Student Government online voting booth, on the Student Government website, and through the Student Government Engage portal.
4. The Elections Commission will hold a minimum of two (2) election rules meetings prior to the Spring Election day. Additionally, The Elections Commission will hold

rule readings upon request of candidates, subject to scheduling and approval by the Elections Commission.

5. If a member appointed to the Elections Commission should decide to run, they must withdraw from the Commission no later than the day candidacy applications are made publicly available. Any member of the Elections Commission remaining past this time shall be ineligible to run in the election.
6. Any write-in candidate that is elected to office must file a *Candidacy Application* within 48 hours of being notified of their election by the Elections Commission. The Elections Commission will send an email the day following the Spring Election day to the email address on file with the Registrar's Office. If the Elections Commission is unable to contact the write-in candidate within five (5) business days the runner up will take office, pursuant to the process of this section of these rules.

Article III

Elections Publicity

1. The Elections Commission shall distribute posters advertising upcoming elections and candidacy filing procedures.
2. The Elections Commission shall work with the Office of Student Affairs to distribute an all-student email advertising upcoming elections and candidacy filing procedures.

Article IV

Campaigning

1. Campaigning may begin on the date specified by the Elections Commission in the Election Timeline, but may begin no earlier than the Monday following spring break on the year of the Spring Election day, provided the requirements within Articles I & II have been met.
2. In order to begin campaigning, a candidate must have filed their candidacy application.
3. All candidates for President and Vice President, and all independent candidates must agree to be bound to the rules of the election before they may begin campaigning.
 - a. A candidate or party is able to request a rules reading, subject to scheduling and approval by the Elections Commission.
 - b. Parties must have fulfilled requirements of Article I prior to campaigning
4. Campaigning shall be defined as:
 - a. The public distribution or posting of any material or information promoting a candidate/party or group for office.
 - b. Speaking before an organized group, except as allowed in Section 4 of this Article, or in a public place or forum with the purpose of promoting a candidate/party or group for office.
 - c. Any program or activity requesting the vote of a constituent for a specified candidate/party or group.
 - d. Any attempts to discredit an opponent.
 - e. Publishing any physical or digital materials expressing an opinion about or encouragement to vote one or way or another on any fee proposal, Constitutional amendment, or any other item to be decided by a referendum vote. This would not include materials that are simply factual in nature, describing the item to be voted on.

5. Encouraging voting in general, without specifying a particular candidate/party or group, is NOT campaigning.
6. Campaign recruitment
 - a. Recruitment shall be defined as seeking candidates and/or staff for a party or group.
 - b. Recruitment must be done in a private manner.
 - c. There is no limit to the number of people that can take part in recruitment.
7. Campaign material
 - a. Campaign material shall be defined as physical or digital images, statements, and messages by a candidate or endorsing individual or group for the purposes of campaigning as defined above.
 - b. Examples of campaign material include, but are not limited to: literature, posters, advertisements, banners, flyers, printed material, websites, emails, text messages, and social media sites.
 - c. All campaign materials distributed by or on behalf of candidates for office must be approved and logged by the Elections Commission.
 - d. All materials must include a disclaimer visible to the naked eye, with the words “sponsored by” “Sponsored by (Name of Candidate and/or Party) and not endorsed by or directly affiliated with Minnesota State University, Mankato or the Student Government.” The university e-mail address of the candidate and/or party head must be included.
 - i. Requests for exceptions to this rule may be made on a case-by-case basis and will be determined by a majority vote of the Elections Commission.
 - e. Any materials created on behalf of a candidate who is a member of a party or group must indicate that candidate’s affiliation with that party or group.
 - f. Poster guidelines:
 - i. All posters must contain a disclaimer as noted in Section 6d and 6e above.
 - ii. Standard posters shall not exceed 11”X17”
 - iii. Large posters may be allowed in specifically designated areas, as defined by CSU Operations.
 - iv. Two (2) posters for the same candidate or party or group may not be closer than 36”.
 - v. No candidate/party or anyone representing a campaign/party shall remove, deface, or post over any other candidate/party or group’s materials.
 - vi. All posters must include the URL for the online election (mnsu.edu/voting) as well as the Spring election date.
 - vii. All printed materials distributed on campus must comply with University Graphics Standards, which can be found at mnsu.edu/standards.
 - viii. All posters must be stamped by the Elections Commission or appropriate designee as determined by the Elections Commission chairperson.
 - ix. Within 48 hours of verification of the Spring Election day results, all candidates must remove all posters.
 - g. Use of Generative A.I is allowed; however, candidates are required to disclose the use of Generative A.I. on all campaign materials (physical or digital) with this disclaimer that is visible to the naked eye:

“This campaign material was created in part with the assistance of generative AI.”

- h. Student newspaper advertisements must follow the same guidelines as posters.
- i. A candidate/party or group that creates a webpage and/or social media account to campaign must provide the URL to the Elections Commission.
 - i. Promotion of the website/social media account will not be allowed until the campaign period begins.
 - ii. The page/website/group must be approved and meet guidelines as noted above.
 - iii. Posts to websites, blogs, and/or social media sites do not need individual approval.
- 8. If any candidate or campaign is going to use the name of any entity (including, but not limited to, individuals, organizations, departments, or businesses), said campaign or candidate must have written authorization from said entity to do so.
 - a. This written authorization is to be submitted in the form of the *Affidavit of Endorsement* provided by the Elections Commission.
 - b. The *Affidavit of Endorsement* can be filed electronically on the Student Government page on the campus engagement platform.
- 9. Announcements to Recognized Student Organizations must include a verbal disclaimer that the candidate is not endorsed by the Student Government or the Student Senate, nor represents the University.
- 10. The Elections Commission will facilitate official debates and/or a forum between all Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates.
 - a. The forum shall begin at 12:00pm on the Wednesday before the Spring Election.
- 11. No campaigning zones
 - a. In the Student Government office.
 - b. In the conduct of Student Senate business, including Student Government committees, commissions, or boards.
 - c. In the Memorial Library.
 - d. Within thirty (30) feet of any polling station during the Spring Election.
 - e. Within the Student Activities Office.
 - f. Any office that has requested to be a no campaign zone.
- 12. Campaigning within the Residence Halls, Centennial Student Union, and academic buildings must follow those respective building guidelines and any university or local public health-related guidelines.

Article V

Voting

- 1. All currently enrolled students shall be eligible to vote online between 8:00am and 6:00pm on the Spring Election day(s). For 2026, the election dates shall be Monday, April 13 and Tuesday, April 14. Polls will be open continuously from 8:00 a.m. Monday, April 13 until 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, April 14.
- 2. If permissible by current university guidelines, the Elections Commission will be responsible for staffing a polling station at the Centennial Student Union from 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. on the Spring Election day(s). As able, the Elections Commission will also staff polling stations at, but not limited to, University Dining Center, and the Taylor Center.
 - a. No person involved with a campaign shall staff a polling station.
 - b. Candidates/parties or groups and endorsing groups or individuals will be able to table, but must be at least thirty (30) feet from any polling station.

- c. No candidate/party or group or endorsing entity will be allowed to host a polling station.

Article VI

Finances

1. All candidates shall report all contributions and all expenditures related to the campaign for validation and documentation by a member of the Elections Commission prior to being used to campaign.
2. Financial support for campaigns is the responsibility of individual candidates or parties; neither the Election Commission nor Student Government will provide funding of campaigns.
3. Campaign Spending Limits
 - a. The spending limit for candidates for President or Vice President shall be \$300 each.
 - b. The spending limit for candidates for any other office shall be \$200 each.
 - c. The spending limit for any party or group shall be determined by adding the individual spending limits of party members together, capped at \$2000, whichever is lesser
 - i. Any material that indicates a party or group counts against the party or group's spending limit.
4. In kind gifts, goods, or services provided by outside groups or individuals shall count against campaign spending limits at fair market value.
 - a. Such gifts, goods, and services must be declared by the campaign and filed with contributions and expenditures. Monetary donations must also be declared and filed.
 - b. Coupons, certificates, etc., distributed on campus, but redeemable at a local business at a later time, by non-candidates, shall not be considered "contributions" for the purpose of campaign finance.
5. Student Government Subsidy
 - a. Student Government will provide up to a \$10 per-candidate subsidy, capped at a \$50 maximum for a party, to be used for printing of campaign posters or handouts from University Printing Services.
 - b. In order to receive the subsidy, the electronic file for the handout or poster(s) must be received and approved by the Election Commission no later than the President/Vice President filing deadline for full parties or independent President/Vice President candidates running without a full party. For independent candidates for Senator or Board positions, the deadline for submitting poster/handout designs is the same as their filing deadline.
 - c. In order to receive the subsidy, the candidacy application must have already been filed, and the candidate or required party candidate must have already attended the required rules meeting.
 - d. This subsidy shall not count towards a candidate or party's spending limit.
6. Financial Reports must contain electronic or physical receipts. If a material or service is donated or acquired significantly below the market cost, the candidate shall make a reasonable estimate as to the value of the material or service. That estimate shall be approved by the Elections Commission and shall be recorded against the expenditures on the financial report.

Article VII

Violations

1. The Elections Commission reserves the right, through the swearing in of elected candidates, to sanction any candidate/party or group for violation of the Spring Election Rules, the Student Government Constitution, its Bylaws, and/or University policy due to a campaign violation.
 - a. The Elections Commission is the sole body authorized to adjudicate alleged violations (with exception to University policy).
2. It is the responsibility of the candidate to educate any and all campaign staff or endorsing entities as to the rules set forth by the Spring Election Rules. Candidates will be held responsible for any actions of those assisting with the campaign.
3. Prior to reporting an alleged/perceived violation, and, in particular, any minor violation, candidates should attempt to resolve the concern among themselves, first.
4. Penalties for violations will depend on whether a violation is determined to have occurred.
 - a. If no violation is found to have occurred, the claim is set aside and no further action will be taken.
 - b. If a violation is found to have occurred, the severity of the claim must be determined prior to sanctions being applied.
 - i. Violations should be labeled as either Minor or Major.
 - ii. The severity of the claim will be determined by a majority vote of the Elections Commission on a case-by-case basis.
 - c. Minor violations should be considered as small offenses not substantially affecting the outcome of the election.
 - i. The consequence of a first minor violation should be a written reprimand to the candidate and documentation placed in the election file.
 - ii. At the Election Commission's discretion, subsequent minor violations may result in a reduction in the campaign spending limit.
 - iii. At the Election Commission's discretion, excessive minor violations may be considered a major violation and result in the removal of the candidate's eligibility for election.
 - d. Major violations should be considered as major offenses substantially affecting the outcome of the election.
 - i. A major violation may result in the removal of eligibility for election.
 - e. A decision to declare a candidate ineligible for election due to violation rules is subject to a unanimous vote by the Commission. Other sanctions may be determined by a simple majority vote of the Commission.

Article VIII

Election Returns

1. To be considered an elected candidate any person must have received at least five votes.
2. In the event of a tie between two or more candidates who have received at least five votes for any single elected seat a runoff election will take place.
 - a. An additional election will take place one week following the Spring Election.
 - b. Voting times will be the same as for the Spring Election.
 - c. Spring Election rules will remain the same with the exception of:
 - i. The candidate's campaigning materials may remain up until 48 hours after the runoff election.
 - ii. \$100 shall be added to the individual candidate's spending limits.

3. In the event an elected candidate chooses, within 48 hours of the election's conclusion, to refuse office:
 - a. A runner up, defined as the candidate receiving the next highest number of votes, shall be offered the seat, provided they received at least five votes.
 - b. If the runner up refuses the next runner up will be offered the seat. This pattern will continue until there are no viable runners up, at which point the seat will be declared vacant.
4. The Elections Commission shall review the election results once the election ends. During this time, current voting members of the Elections Commission will be the only people allowed within the Student Government Office suite, with the exception of two (2) Election Witnesses. These Election Witnesses will be selected from the non-student body of the campus community to serve as impartial witnesses to ensure the Elections Commission determines the election results fairly and unbiasedly.

Article IX

Amendments

1. This document may be amended solely by initiative of the Elections Commission. Amendments to this document must be made prior to presentation to the Student Senate of the year in which the changes are to take effect.