



# Good Government Needs You

By Capt. Paul Rice, ALPA Vice-President-Administration/Secretary



Our union is a democracy. It reflects the collective will of its members, expressed through the election process. Ultimately, we are all responsible for making

that democracy work, and we have only ourselves to credit (or blame) for the outcome of any issue.

With election season for many local councils upon us, I find that some of my fellow members do not have a clear understanding of ALPA's election processes and the rules on communications during elections. Members have questions on their rights, obligations, and restrictions during an election campaign. When talking to members about ALPA work (including our election process), I like to use an expression I've heard our general counsel use: "The first rule is to follow the rules."

As pilots, we are used to rules. We follow company procedures and FAA-approved ops specs. We have the FARs that we must follow. The rules guarantee consistency and safety. We rely upon the rules, so following ALPA's rules should not be difficult.

The numerous ALPA local councils are divided into three groups, with one group holding elections each year. Right now, the Election Group I local council election cycle is getting under way. In the next few months, we will hold approximately 38 local council nomination meetings and the resultant representative and officer elections that make up this cycle. The rules governing this process are in Article III of ALPA's *Constitution and By-Laws*.

The rules and procedures for meetings and communications during these elections are critical to making our democracy work. Members must be notified, and mailings from my office must be properly timed. Each incumbent local council chairman must

communicate with local members and schedule a nominations meeting within the appropriate time frame—generally mid-September to late October. I encourage all eligible members to participate in the process—whether as a candidate or just by casting your ballot.

While some members may think that the nomination process is of little importance, consider this: a tie vote in the election of status representatives is broken by the number of nomina-

**I urge all members to participate fully in your local council election process.**

tion ballots that each candidate receives. Therefore, it is important that as many eligible members as possible participate. You may participate in two ways: mail in your nomination ballot or cast your ballot during a local nomination meeting. You can nominate yourself or another member, but if you do the latter, you must ensure that that nominee's written notice of "willingness to serve" is in the hands of the local council chairman before the nomination meeting concludes. Once the nominees are determined, the names of the top two candidates for each position are placed on a ballot, and a ballot information letter is sent to all eligible local council members.

This is the heart of our democratic process, and your participation in the status election and again in the local council officer election affects every facet of the entire union. While status representatives are members of both the MEC and the Board of Directors, the local council chairman is the one who is empowered, by ALPA policy, with one of the greatest privileges and duties within our Association: the ability to communicate with the members.

Communication within ALPA is one of the most important things we do. ALPA's President may communicate to any or all ALPA members. An MEC chairman may communicate to any and all members of that particular pilot group. A local council chairman may communicate to any and all members of that particular local council. He or she can also decide when and where local council meetings are held and, to a large extent, can set the agenda. While other local council officers have venues for communicating to members, the chairman has nearly unlimited access to the Association's communication system.

With such a capability, again like flying an airliner, comes a set of developed rules. Communication rules for candidates are covered in ALPA's *Administrative Manual*—Section 90, Part 15. Candidates—at their own expense—may use the ALPA communications system to address the local council members via e-mail, the Postal Service, or a combination of both. No ALPA resources or funds may be used for these campaign communications.

I urge all members to review ALPA's *Constitution and By-Laws* or *Administrative Manual* for the details about our union's election process—you may view these at [crewroom.alpa.org](http://crewroom.alpa.org)—and to participate fully in your local council election process. Local council elections and meetings are the means by which you influence the makeup of ALPA's representative bodies and thereby set your union's course. As a member, you have many resources at your disposal; as an elected local council status representative, you govern the union—on your MEC and at the highest level of governance within ALPA, the Board of Directors. Who among you is ready to govern, to lead? For those who answer the call, I look forward to working with you! 🌐

