AWHONN Governance and Bylaws Update

Frequently Asked Questions

What are Bylaws and why are they relevant to AWHONN?
Bylaws are an important legal governing document and can be considered the organization’s contract with its members. Bylaws describe how AWHONN is run, set out voting rights and procedures, and contain rules for such things as how to call a meeting and how often meetings must be held. The Bylaws also describe AWHONN’s and its member’s rights and responsibilities.

Why is AWHONN making changes to the Bylaws?
AWHONN’s current Bylaws have not undergone a review in quite some time. Tasked by the 2020 BOD President, a Task Force was charged with reviewing the Bylaws and making suggested recommendations for adoption by AWHONN members.

Who comprised the Bylaws Task Force?
The Task Force comprised 16 members, nine core members who met twice a week for two months in 2020 to review and make recommendations and seven members who reviewed recommendations and provided additional comments and suggestions. The Task Force was made up of current Section and chapter leaders, national committee members and included one past President. Task Force Co-Chair Shakira Henderson was the only current BOD member who participated in the review.

Who is eligible to vote on these Bylaws changes?
All full member registered nurses are voting members of AWHONN. As defined by the Bylaws, all full members with a valid RN license are eligible to vote.

What are the major changes proposed for adoption?
AWHONN’s Bylaws are made up of 15 Articles. After a thorough review, the Bylaws Task Force recommended updating eight out of the 15 Articles. Some of the Articles only have one proposed change while other Articles have multiple proposed changes.

Some of the main areas the TF focused updating include:

- Adding stronger diversity, equity and inclusion and advocacy language to AWHONN’s purpose and functions.
- Clarifying the categories of membership and the rights and responsibilities of members.
- Updating AWHONN election requirements and guidelines as well as removal requirements, filling elected leader vacancies and better defining the role of the nominating committee.
- Adding language to Board of Director responsibilities and powers related to management of the CEO and how to handle requirements for actions taken at in-person BOD meetings if the BOD cannot meet physically as was the case under COVID restrictions.
- Updating to the responsibilities of the Secretary/Treasurer, Section Nominating Committees, and other updates to Section operations.
- Adjusting some amendments where the title needed to be corrected or updated.
**Why are we being asked to vote by Article instead of each individual change?**
The voting ballot will look a little different than some are used to from AWHONN. Instead of voting on each individual wording change, members are asked to vote to approve each of the eight Articles that are being updated.

Many of the proposed changes affect other sub-sections within the Article. For example, under the Purpose & Functions of AWHONN, it would not make sense to add DE&I language to the functions if the language in the Purpose was not approved. This is one example why members are asked to vote on changes to the entire Article instead of subsection by subsection.

**How do I vote on these Bylaws changes?**
AWHONN voting members will receive an electronic ballot from Survey and Ballot Systems, the company AWHONN has contracted to manage this process on March 15, 2021. Voting will be open from March 15-April 16. As defined by the Bylaws, all full members with a valid RN license are eligible to vote. If you do not receive a ballot e-mail by March 16, 2021, please reach out to support@directvote.net. Please also add noreply@directvote.net to your approved sender list on the e-mail account you receive AWHONN messages to.

**Who do I contact if I have additional questions?**
Members are encouraged to send additional questions to president@awhonn.org.