

Representing Your State as a Voting Delegate – Get Involved!

Part two in the series, helping you learn more about your Association's governance processes

BY JODI HOYNOSKI

The delegate system is an important part of Holstein Association USA's governance structure. When "delegates" are mentioned, most people just think about them attending National Convention each summer to participate in the Annual Meeting. There, delegates vote on bylaw amendments, resolutions, and elect officers and directors. However, behind the scenes in Brattleboro, the delegate system is a year round, circular process.

Determining Number of Delegates

Starting January 1 of each year, we begin tracking each state's "active" membership count. Reports are run again each month, until the final report is run on May 1. Active members are defined as Holstein Association USA (national) members that have registered Holstein cattle or had cattle transferred into or out of their ownership in the preceding 12 months. The active membership total for each state, on May 1, determines how many delegate seats they will be allowed at the following year's Annual Meeting. The count on May 1, 2012, will determine how many delegates will be allowed per state at the 2013 National Convention in Indianapolis, Ind.

Each state is automatically allowed one delegate, then one additional delegate for every 150 active members (or major fraction thereof). For example, if a state has less than 75 active members, they get one delegate, 75-224 active members gets the state two delegates, 225-374 active members gets the state three delegates, and so on. In 2012, the state with the most delegates is Wisconsin with 17, followed by Pennsylvania with 15 and New York with 11. Interestingly, the bylaws also designate a "Special" election district which includes Alaska, Hawaii, Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico.

Delegate Nomination Process

While the 2012 National Convention is going on, nominating petitions will be going in the mail to all members for the 2013 delegate election. The goal is to have petitions in members' mailboxes so when they return home from one convention, they are nominating delegates for the next one. Nominating petitions are generally due back to the Holstein USA office in one month.

Of the over 18,000 members that were mailed petitions last year, only 335 nominating petitions were returned from 41 states, nominating 594 members. We encourage listing as many people as you can on the nominating petition. Having an ample list

of nominees helps ensure states have maximum representation at Annual Meeting; it's important to have a list of alternates to take the place of the people that cannot attend the Convention.

You will receive a petition for the state in which you reside, and eligible nominees include Holstein Association USA members

that reside in your state. Only one member can be nominated per membership. For example, in the case of a family that has a Corporate membership, the first person nominated who is covered under that Corporate membership will be accepted. Some people find it helpful to take out their own Individual membership to allow them to be nominated, especially in the case where multiple people who typically do business under one

membership would wish to be nominated as a delegate. Once a person is nominated on a single, valid petition, he or she will be included on the ballot as a nominee. There is no need or benefit to being nominated multiple times.

Current board members and employees are ineligible as delegate nominees. Members are also ineligible when they have served as delegate at three consecutive Annual Meetings. A list of those individuals can be found on the Holstein USA web site during election time.

Delegate Elections

Once a person is nominated, he or she will receive notification of nomination. The nominee will be asked to respond, either accepting or declining the nomination. If the nomination is declined, the person's name will be removed from the ballot, which is the next step in the process. If a nominee does not reply, their name remains on the ballot. When accepting, we hope the nominees have checked their calendars to ensure they would be able to serve as a delegate, if elected.

Typically in August, ballots are mailed to our 18,000 members. Each member can vote for as many people as the number of delegates allowed for their state, so if a state is allowed five delegates, each member from that state may vote for up to five people. Nominees' names are listed in the order in which their nomination was received, with the earliest nominees listed first.

Typically, around 5,000 ballots are returned each year by the October deadline. After the votes are tallied, the Elections Committee, comprised of three Association members, meets to



breaks ties and finalizes all states' elections. Ties are broken by randomly drawing names of the people involved in the tie.

Representing Your State

After all ties are broken and the counts are finalized, a Delegate Election report is produced. Every person on the ballot will receive a follow-up letter, including results of elected delegates throughout the U.S. and complete results for their state. Elected delegates are reminded of their expected duties, including attending one of the Regional Member meetings held between December and March each year, in each of the nine governance regions of the country. Of course, delegates must attend the Annual Meeting at National Holstein Convention.

Inevitably, situations arise, and delegates are sometimes unable to attend the Annual Meeting. Delegates are asked to notify the Holstein USA office to give as much notice as possible. Upon hearing someone is unable to serve, staff works to line-up alternates to take their place. We must work down the list of election results, where they are listed in order of number of votes received. As you can imagine, this is a difficult process with members' busy schedules in the spring and summer. Short notice cancellations make it especially difficult to find replacements. This circumstance is also why having several nominations and names on every state's ballot is important. It has happened in that past that the alternate list has been exhausted without success in finding someone to serve, and states end up being short on delegates. A person's name must have appeared on the ballot in order for them to serve as a delegate.

At the Annual Meeting, delegates register with Holstein USA staff and receive their delegate packets, which contain ballots and other important material to review prior to the Annual meeting. After final adjournment of the Annual Meeting, delegates can collect a reimbursement check from Holstein Association USA to help cover some of their costs in attending the Convention. In 2012, the reimbursement rate is \$400 per delegate.

When we return back to the office from the 2012 National Convention in Springfield, Mo., we will likely be greeted by a stack of nominating petitions. While the ink has just dried on the final 2012 delegate roster, it is time to get working on 2013's delegate election. With these tight turnaround times, if there's one thing we can impress upon you regarding this process, deadlines are important, and so is your participation. We hope this information helps you understand the process better so you can be more involved in the future!

— Jodi Hoynoski is the State Association Liaison and Holstein Foundation Programs Manager