

Speakers' Letter

Special Meeting of the AMA House of Delegates Online June 7, 2020

Ladies and Gentlemen:

First and foremost, thank you for the care that you are providing for your patients during this challenging time, and we are especially grateful for the support you have provided us as we prepare to undertake a virtual meeting of our House of Delegates.

A virtual meeting is a new experience for all of us, but below we have tried to provide the information you will need to participate fully.

Bruce A Scott, MD, Speaker
Lisa Bohman Egbert, MD, Vice Speaker

SPECIAL MEETING

The June 2020 Special Meeting AMA House of Delegates (HOD) will convene on Sunday afternoon, June 7, at 2 p.m. Central Daylight Time (UTC-5) using an online platform. Participants should join the meeting via any device with audio/video capability, including smartphones, tablets, and computers. Further details are below. Recognizing the time demands that many of you face, your Speakers have reduced many of the usual speeches and ceremonial components of the meeting. This, along with the focused agenda specified by our AMA Board of Trustees, should allow the House to complete our formal business in about 2 hours. Please note, planning is underway for a “COVID-19 Town Hall” presentation immediately following the close of the HOD (details for this will be forthcoming). We hope most of you will be able to stay connected for this important event.

REGISTRATION

Delegates and alternate delegates should check the list of delegates and alternate delegates in the handbook to ensure they have been certified to represent their society at the upcoming Special Meeting. AMA bylaws require that individuals be confirmed as delegates or alternate delegates *before each meeting* of the House of Delegates, and several societies have yet to confirm their delegates.

Only certified delegates will be issued voting credentials for the Special Meeting. These credentials will include a numeric delegate code and password, which will be REQUIRED in order to vote, whether for the election of officers or voting on items of business. Your delegate code and password will be sent to certified delegates both by regular mail and by email, so it is important that we have your current, preferred email address. If your delegate code is compromised, contact us at hod@ama-assn.org, and you will be provided with a new code. Delegates who learn before the special meeting that they will be unable to participate must notify us at hod@ama-assn.org as well as their sponsoring organization of their situation so that an alternate delegate can be credentialed as a delegate in their place. After the elections are completed, your Speaker will give verbal instructions should a delegate wish to allow his/her alternate to vote on the business of the House. Note that only the delegate or their alternate may vote and only the final vote entered will be counted. Accordingly, we encourage delegates to ensure that they have some method to communicate with their alternate delegate during the Special Meeting.

BUSINESS OF THE SPECIAL MEETING

As outlined in the Call to the Special Meeting (emailed Saturday, April 25), business is limited to essential items, and those items are included in the handbook. After extensive consideration, our BOT reached the decision to limit items of business to include only reports that our bylaws specify be presented to the House or that will facilitate the management of our AMA's policy compendium. Our bylaws (§2.12.2) on Special Meetings of the House of Delegates specify that no business other than that for which a special meeting is called shall be considered. Therefore, no resolutions or other business will be considered.

AMA MEETING WEBSITE

Information on the Special Meeting is now posted at ama-assn.org/hod-special-meeting on the AMA website. You will find the latest information and links to other relevant pages, including the elections and the business to be considered. Many elements of the meeting are still in flux, and the latest information will always be online, including the link to the meeting platform itself. If you previously bookmarked the Annual Meeting page (ama-assn.org/annual-meeting) you should be redirected to the Special Meeting page from there.

HANDBOOK DISTRIBUTION

The handbook will be posted at ama-assn.org/sm20-hod-business on May 12, 2020. There will be no addendum. Business items are collated under a combined Reference Committee F and Amendments to Constitution & Bylaws tab. Additional meeting-related documents are also included in the handbook, including the roster of delegates and alternate delegates (updated as of date of print).

Hardcopy handbooks will be mailed to delegates and alternate delegates who have previously received paper copies by May 15. Primary distribution of the handbook is through the meeting website.

REFERENCE COMMITTEE HEARING VIA ONLINE MEMBER FORUM

The robust discussion and debate seen at every House of Delegates meeting is not possible at this time with a strictly virtual format (but see "Planning for the Future" below). Consequently, we have developed an online forum that will function as the reference committee hearing.

The site will be online at ama-assn.org/forums/house-delegates on May 12, 2020 or can be accessed through the meeting website. Aside from entering your comments as text, it should be treated as any other reference committee hearing. Delegates and alternate delegates must provide their name, delegation, on behalf of whom they are testifying (as an individual or their delegation), and any conflict of interest that may exist. Comments should be directed to the "chair" although reference to previous comments is certainly possible and appropriate. Ad hominem comments and other inappropriate comments will be deleted.

The forum will remain open until the afternoon of June 3, after which the reference committee will prepare a report for presentation to the House. That report will be posted on the meeting website, probably on June 4, and the consent calendar will be the subject of discussion during our House of Delegates Special Meeting June 7.

Extractions from the reference committee's consent calendar and comments can be submitted using the chat function on our virtual meeting platform. Limited debate will be possible using that same chat function, and some telephonic communication may be possible as well. Your Speakers will do our best to manage fair and impartial debate.

OPERATION OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING

On the day of the Special Meeting, the meeting website will be open two hours before the meeting is to start. Individuals should be logged onto the meeting site at least 30 minutes prior to the start to assure that all are able to connect and so that problems may be addressed. Delegates should login with their delegate code and password, not as a guest. Alternate delegates, Federation staff and others should access the same website as guests. Access to the meeting is the same for both methods of entry with the exception of the ability to vote.

During the meeting, one or both of your Speakers will be on camera to preside just as with any other meeting. The screen on your device will include text on the left and video on the right, which is why a tablet or pc is preferred over a smartphone. The platform accommodates smartphone access but will require switching between these views. Votes may be cast on computer, tablet or smartphone. A chat function will allow participants to communicate with the Speakers. A help line will be available should users encounter trouble such as lost credentials.

ELECTIONS AND NOMINATIONS

The [2020 Election Manual](#) lists candidates for officer positions as well as council candidates who were nominated by the Board of Trustees. A link to candidates' conflict of interest disclosures also appears in the election manual. The election manual is freely accessible, but conflict of interest information is available only to members, who must login to obtain access.

The following races are scheduled:

- President-elect – vote for one, currently one candidate
- Speaker – vote for one, currently one candidate
- Vice Speaker – vote for one, currently one candidate
- At-large trustee – vote for four contingent on Dr. Harmon's election as president-elect, currently eight candidates
- Council on Constitution and Bylaws – vote for one, currently one candidate
- Council on Medical Education – vote for one, currently one candidate
- Council on Medical Education, resident – vote for one, currently one candidate
- Council on Medical Service – vote for two, currently five candidates
- Council on Medical Service, resident – vote for one, currently one candidate
- Council on Science and Public Health – vote for two, currently two candidates

The Speaker will handle each election sequentially and will accept nominations "from the floor" as allowed by AMA bylaws. Individuals wishing to make such a nomination should do so using the chat function and must identify themselves as part of the message. Consider this example: "I am Bruce Scott, delegate from Kentucky, speaking for my delegation I nominate Lisa Egbert for the office of vice speaker." A nominating speech is not allowed, except for the offices of president-elect, speaker and vice speaker (per the bylaws). Eight trustee candidates will give their two-minute self-nominating speeches via recording, which your Speakers will arrange (candidates have been so informed). Should any additional candidates for the BOT emerge, they would give their two-minute self-nominating speech by audio only as no option for video would be available at that point. Races for remaining offices will be handled according to our rules, which do not include speeches.

In the event of a runoff or new vacancy, circumstance will dictate the procedures that will ensue. Your Speakers have planned for various scenarios, and our voting platform can be programmed quickly, which should allow a smooth process.

Pre-recorded Interviews of Candidates in Contested Elections

One aspect of the guidelines for our AMA's elections calls for delegates to become acquainted with the candidates and to make independent judgments about each candidate. To facilitate this for the Special Meeting, your Speakers are setting up "virtual interviews" for the trustee and Council on Medical Service candidates, as those elections are contested. The candidates will be asked to present themselves with a short "stump" speech and to answer a few questions, all recorded in a single take. These "interviews" will then be posted for delegates to review as part of their decision-making process. Candidates have all been apprised of this plan. Members of the House will be notified as soon as the "virtual interviews" are available on the meeting website, which should be by month's end. These interviews supplement the election manual.

Voting in Elections During the Special Meeting

Only duly credentialed delegates are permitted to cast a ballot, which is why delegates must login using their delegate code and password. They will be able to vote during the Special Meeting using the meeting platform, with results available in real time.

In the event of the election of a current council member with an unexpired term to the BOT, any remaining candidates from the original ballot for that council will automatically be nominated for subsequent elections to fill any newly created vacancy, and in addition nominations will be taken "from the floor." House policy requires that all nominees complete a conflict of interest (COI) form prior to election, so individuals who anticipate the possibility of being nominated from the floor are urged to contact Roger Brown (roger.brown@ama-assn.org, or phone 312.464.4344) to make arrangements to complete a COI disclosure. For this Special Meeting the election rules require that COIs be completed no later than 48 hours before the meeting commences. Inquiries and submitted COIs will be maintained in confidence. Disclosures will be posted online if and only if the individual is nominated from the floor at the Special Meeting.

CEJA Nomination

President-elect Susan Rudd Bailey, MD, will nominate a new member for the Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs during the Special Meeting. The nominee's conflict of interest disclosure will be posted on the AMA website in the week preceding the meeting and the election for that position will be held following the nomination.

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF CANDIDACY FOR 2021 ELECTIONS

Individuals who intend to seek election at the 2021 Annual Meeting should submit an electronic announcement to Roger Brown (roger.brown@ama-assn.org) by Friday, June 5. Our intention is to show those announcements in the virtual meeting before we adjourn. Submissions will be maintained in confidence until shown and will be posted online on the candidate [page](#) after the Special Meeting.

INAUGURATION OF SUSAN R. BAILEY, MD

President-elect Susan Rudd Bailey, MD, will be inaugurated during a brief swearing in ceremony during the Special Meeting, after which she will also deliver her address to the House. We expect to be able to provide live video of Dr. Bailey as she takes the oath.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 2019 INTERIM MEETING

The draft of the [Proceedings](#) of the House of Delegates for the 2019 Interim Meeting (I-19) has been posted on the AMA website. Approval of the previous meeting's minutes is a routine action item. PolicyFinder has been updated to reflect actions from I-19 as captured in the Proceedings.

REFERENCE COMMITTEE F VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

Your Speakers will shortly be appointing three new members to Reference Committee F. The committee deals with AMA's governance and financial matters, including such things as the annual plan, budget and business products, and is responsible for ensuring that the HOD has adequate information regarding the fiscal circumstances of the Association. While the typical reference committee exists only for a single meeting, members of Reference Committee F serve two-year terms and meet with the Board of Trustees between HOD meetings, meaning their commitment is more substantial; in fact, the chair serves a third year in that capacity.

Like other reference committees, we rely on volunteers to serve on Reference Committee F, but the special role of the committee along with the matters that come before it and the longer term of service warrant a special appeal for those volunteers. We are inviting interested members of the House to let us know of their interest in serving on the committee by completing an application form and sending it to hod@ama-assn.org. The form is available at ama-assn.org/speakers-page in both Word and PDF versions. Even if you have previously volunteered to serve on Reference Committee F, we ask that you confirm that interest so that our roster is current.

We need to know of your willingness to serve on the committee by June 21, and appointments will be made by mid-July. Depending on then-current conditions, the full committee is scheduled to meet with the Board of Trustees August 29–30 in Chicago.

Volunteers to serve on other reference committees are also needed for Interim 20. This is a separate application (see below).

2020 INTERIM MEETING PLANNING

The 2020 Interim Meeting is planned for the Manchester Grand Hyatt in San Diego, California, Nov. 14-17. Your Speakers will be working with the Resolution Committee to include those resolutions that but for its suspension would have otherwise been considered at our Annual Meeting.

Depending on circumstances it may be necessary to form more than the six reference committees usually assembled at the Interim Meeting. Delegates and alternate delegates who are willing to serve on a reference committee in November are asked to contact the Office of House of Delegates Affairs by emailing hod@ama-assn.org to let us know about your preferences for a reference committee assignment; appointees must complete a volunteer form, available [online](#). Note that there is a separate form for Reference Committee F.

For now we are planning the normal six reference committees for the Interim Meeting:

- Reference Committee on Amendments to Constitution and Bylaws: Ethics, bylaws
- Reference Committee B: Legislative advocacy
- Reference Committee C: Medical education advocacy
- Reference Committee F: AMA governance and finance
- Reference Committee J: Advocacy related to medical service, medical practice, insurance and related topics
- Reference Committee K: Advocacy related to science and public health and possibly medical education

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Like everyone else, we were caught unaware by the pandemic, and the decision to suspend the Annual Meeting by the Board of Trustees was not made lightly. Subsequent to that decision, your Board has begun exploring how a fuller, more robust meeting of the House of Delegates could be conducted via a virtual platform should this become necessary. Among the elements to consider are reference committee hearings and reports, secure voting by delegates, the temporary seating of alternate delegates for their delegates, and the element with perhaps the greatest complexity, robust debate in the House itself. Your Speakers believe the House is the core of our AMA governance and, therefore, must continue to function.

We look forward to convening with you June 7 and once again thank you for your patience and indulgence as we move forward in this uncharted territory.