Chapter chair elections

Chapter chairs: Backbone of our schools

Members will vote to fill chapter leadership positions for the 2019-2020 school year.

By Arlene Inouye
UTLA Secretary

Can you imagine having a UTLA strike without a chapter chair, vice chair, co-chair, or Contract Action Team? Whether you work at one school site or are part of the UTLA special categories, the chapter chair and CAT team structure were critical to the amazing organizing on the picket lines, at the rallies, with parents and community, and keeping the momentum throughout the strike. From simple things like bringing the donuts and leading the chants to motivating members in the torrential rain, the reality that chapter chairs are the backbone of our union was never more visible than during the strike. All of our chapter and special category teams, you should be so proud of what you accomplished.

And while it is not every day that we go on strike, it is every day that we need a strong chapter chair structure in our schools and to represent our special categories. As we move into spring, our organizing actions, contract implementation, and political campaigns, along with ongoing school-site issues, will continue. Having a chapter chair makes a big difference—the difference between members receiving and knowing important information, being able to resolve conflicts with administration, being able to enforce our contract agreement, and having the ability to organize around critical school-site concerns and broader union issues that affect your staff. Last year we had a record number of chapter leaders at more than 800 school sites and more special category chapter chairs, plus hundreds of co-chairs and CAT members. This allowed us to have a communication structure of 10 members to a leader and to have two-way communication.

The election of a UTLA chapter chair, vice chair, and/or co-chair is a critical part of maintaining a strong connection of members in a chapter, to a larger cluster, and to a larger area. Additionally, our new contract adds special category chapter chairs for substitutes, health and human service professionals, and itinerants in categories that have more than 200 members and meet in local districts (see the special categories section of the Election Rules). Last year, we are making an all-out effort to have elected chapter leaders in place before the summer break so that we can continue our strength in our schools and union. Each UTLA chapter should make every effort to complete the election process no later than April 12 so that our Area representatives, cluster leaders, and Area leadership can know which schools to reach out to before the end of the school year. Please see the UTLA chapter chair election rules and duties below.

For the special category chapter chair elections, candidates self-nominate using the form on this page, also due on April 12. Let’s continue the momentum as we build the strong foundation of our chapter structures. Please let me know if you have any questions at ainoyme@utla.net.

UTLA Chapter Chair election rules and duties

The following are the rules for the election of UTLA Chapter Chair, Co-Chair, and Vice Chair. In accordance with the UTLA Constitution, each UTLA chapter shall hold an election of chapter officers, including Chapter Chair, each spring, and shall notify UTLA of the results no later than May 16. If a chapter has a local constitution, which lists term of office as two years, the chapter must still submit the name of the Chapter Chair to UTLA each spring, indicating that the Chapter Chair is serving in the first or second year of the term.

Chapters with more than 80 UTLA members are also entitled to elect a Co-Chair. All Chapters may elect up to two Vice Chairs who serve as assistants to the chair and/or Co-Chair.

Qualifications for office, voting, and challenged ballots

To be eligible to vote for office, a person shall have to have been an active member of UTLA and within the same Chapter for at least two calendar months prior to balloting. To be eligible to vote a person shall have to have been a member of UTLA, within the same Chapter, and spend the majority of his/her work time within that Chapter, for at least two calendar months prior to balloting.

A member who spends an equal amount of time at two schools shall choose one of the schools and will be entitled to one full vote.

Local Chapter Constitutions may increase the qualifications for office after a secret ballot vote of all site members and approval by the Board of Directors. Magnet Schools, which share a site and a principal, and wish to have a separate UTLA chapter, must hold a secret ballot vote to do so before the beginning of the nomination process for the election of the Chapter Chair at the regular site begins.

The secret ballot election shall include all UTLA members of the proposed chapter. Chapters that have been separated through a vote, shall annually notify UTLA, through their Chapter Chair of their desire to remain a separate Chapter. In general, UTLA recognizes chapters based on the policy “one principal, one chapter chair, one chapter”.

Any person who requests a ballot but whose name does not appear on the UTLA provided list, or whose code indicates that that person is not a full dues paying member of UTLA, or whose eligibility is challenged for any other reason, shall vote a Challenged Ballot. Said ballot shall be placed in a sealed envelope with the person’s name and employee number on the outside of the envelope. The election committee shall call the UTLA Membership Department to verify the status of any individual who votes a challenged ballot. Only those ballots cast by members who are verified as eligible to vote shall be counted. No ballot shall be counted until all ballots have been verified.

Election responsibilities of current Chapter Chair

The Chapter Chair shall appoint a three member election committee, the members of which must be UTLA members and must not be candidates for office.

If there is no current Chapter Chair at the site, the election committee shall consist of three volunteers who are UTLA members and not candidates for office. The Chapter Chair shall request of UTLA the most current list of UTLA members at the site. If there is no Chapter Chair, a member of the election committee shall make the request.

The Chapter Chair shall give this list of members to the election committee for their use.

If a site has six or fewer UTLA members, the Chapter Chair shall appoint an election committee of at least one member. In the absence of a Chapter Chair, the entire membership shall meet and decide who shall conduct the election (preferably at least two members).

The Chapter Chair shall give a copy of these rules to the election committee and review all parts of it with them to make certain they understand their responsibilities. That ends the Chapter Chair’s involvement in the process.

Duties of the Election Committee

The election committee shall do the (continued on page 14)