Constitution & Bylaws Vote (during the Coronavirus Pandemic)

By Philip Hu

At our April executive board meeting, AFT 6157 executive board members discussed and took action on two matters that require membership voting: AFT recommended bylaws and constitution changes, and our union's officers election. Both of these matters have been affected by our current shelter-at-home conditions due to the coronavirus pandemic.

First, the executive board voted to move forward with electronic voting for our bylaws and constitution changes. This action follows the guidance and recommendations provided to us by CFT and AFT National. On issues that only affect the local union, such as contract ratification, dues changes, and—in this case—changes to bylaws and constitution, use of electronic voting is less restricted because, unlike officer and delegate elections, these matters do not fall under the jurisdiction of federal law.

Second, regarding our officers election, the executive board made the difficult decision to postpone the election until the week of PDD in August. The postponement of the election will extend the terms of office for current executive board members until the August election results are certified. As many of you may know, President Paul Fong is retiring this year. His official retirement date is August 31, so he will be able to serve until the election takes place, and, likely, until the new board is seated.

No decision was made regarding whether the August election will be by traditional paper ballot or by electronic voting. We are reviewing the electronic voting options available alongside applicable laws and CFT/AFT policies while keeping a close watch on the current pandemic that prevents us from holding our vote by paper ballot. We also must elect delegates to CFT/AFT conventions in the upcoming academic year. If we choose to elect both officers and delegates together in the same election, we cannot use electronic voting as that is prohibited by federal law. Due to matters of compliance with federal law, compliance with CFT and AFT bylaws, and following the guidance for best practices provided by CFT and AFT, we need to be much more cautious in our approach to electronic voting where officers and delegates are concerned.

We are conducting longer-term research into electronic voting vendors/platforms to determine whether or not they meet the standards required by federal law as well as CFT/AFT bylaws and constitution. If/when we find a vendor that complies with all of these, we will revisit the matter of electronic voting for officers/delegates.