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**Election Supervisor's Announcement of Approved Process for Obtaining
Accreditation Petition Signatures by Electronic Means**

The Rules provide that any candidate for International office may seek pre-convention certification as an “accredited candidate” by obtaining the signatures of 2.5% of the members in good standing in relevant membership pools on accreditation petitions approved by the Election Supervisor. *See* Rules, Art. X, §1. Such certification permits the candidate access to union membership lists and to have his/her campaign literature published in IBT publications in accordance with the Rules.

As detailed further in this announcement, the Office of the Election Supervisor (OES) has developed a secure electronic system for accreditation petitioning to augment but not replace the established method of collecting signature support on paper petitions. OES will accept for review and verification under Article X of the Rules petition signatures submitted on paper petition forms approved by the Election Supervisor as well as electronic “signatures” submitted through the electronic petitioning system the OES has developed.

The Election Supervisor has concluded that limits on social interactions as a consequence of the public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic strongly favor providing candidates with an additional method to obtain petition support for accreditation and foster engagement of the membership in the electoral process. Paper petitioning typically occurs in a setting that involves sharing writing instruments, petitions, and clipboards without an opportunity for disinfection between users, and people interact and speak at close range. The Election Supervisor reasons that public health precautions to address the pandemic, whether government-mandated or recommended, may limit the opportunities for face-to-face interaction between candidates and supporters in the setting where petitioning on paper occurs, or may simply discourage risk-averse members from engaging in such interactions.¹ The electronic petitioning system is intended to facilitate member engagement in the petitioning process while substantially reducing the risk of virus spread that may be present in the paper petitioning process.

¹ *See, e.g.,* V. McGrane, “Ed Markey falling short of signatures ahead of May deadline; Harder to gather in-person support in coronavirus era,” *Boston Globe* (April 8, 2020)

The OES electronic petitioning system is the product of collaboration between the Election Supervisor, OES staff, and OES's information technology vendor, 501Works LLC. The vendor is independent of the IBT and has never done IT work for the IBT or any of its affiliates.

The system imports and relies for membership verification on data maintained within the IBT's various membership databases.² The imported data is under the secure control of OES: no IBT official, employee, consultant or vendor has or will have access to the information that members input as a result of accessing the system and signing an accreditation petition electronically.

The system requires membership verification to materially eliminate the possibility that a person other than the named member has electronically signed the member's name to an accreditation petition. Paper petitions require that each signer for a particular candidate or slate enter his/her name, local union, and, at the member's option, the member's full mailing address or the last four digits of his/her Social Security Number or Social Insurance Number. OES uses that information to verify the members eligibility to sign an accreditation petition. These requirements are repeated on the electronic system.

Unlike paper petitions that are circulated by a member in good standing who must certify that the petition signers are members in good standing who signed the petition in the circulator's presence, the electronic petition is signed using an electronic device without a requirement of certification by a circulator. To address the absence of the circulator's certification, the electronic petition includes anti-forgery checks that are not part of the paper petitioning process. This is primarily done through validating the electronic signature via a second electronic source – mobile phone or email. For example, the electronic system requires the member to enter his/her mobile phone number or email address; when the member has completed the electronic signature process, the system automatically generates an SMS text message or an email to the electronic address the member has provided that asks the member to verify that he/she has just electronically signed an accreditation petition. An affirmative response to the email or text message validates the signature for submission to OES review. In addition to this anti-forgery check, the system incorporates other security techniques to help ensure the validity of signatures collected via the electronic petitioning system. The combination of these measures serves the same purpose as the circulator's certification required on paper petitions.

² OES obtains data from the IBT's TITAN system, and additional databases maintained by certain IBT Local Unions, the BLET, the BMWED, the GCC, and the TCRC.

A signature submitted using the electronic system will count towards accreditation only if the membership information is validated against the database, *and* the member completes the validation process by responding to the electronic message seeking verification that he/she has just signed the electronic petition. That is similar to the paper petition process where accreditation is awarded based on a candidate attaining at least the required number of *valid* signatures. A member signing electronically will receive an acknowledgement when the validation process is completed.

Just as paper petitioning requires candidates and their supporters to reach potential petition signers without assistance from the union, any employer, or OES, candidates and their supporters seeking to have members use the electronic petitioning system bear the obligation to reach and solicit them to do so without assistance from the union, any employer, or OES. The system will be accessed through URLs unique to each candidate or slate that are supplied by the OES, but the methods and means of publicizing the existence and internet address of the electronic petitioning system is each candidate's or slate's responsibility.

Because of the anti-forgery and membership database-interface features built into the OES electronic system, no candidate may submit for accreditation purposes any "signatures" obtained on any electronic system other than the OES-sanctioned system announced here.

Candidates and their supporters are reminded that signing accreditation petitions, whether on paper petitions or using the electronic system announced here, may not permissibly be done on employer- or union-paid time or in employer work areas. Any member with evidence that campaign activity violating the Rules has occurred on work time or in work areas may file a protest.

As stated, the Election Supervisor has established the electronic means of participating in the accreditation process as a supplement to the existing paper process. In doing so, he has exercised his authority to interpret the Rules under Article I to construe the term "signature" as used in Article X as including both the traditional act of signing one's name by hand and a signature submitted using the OES electronic system. Further, the Election Supervisor has concluded that application of the electronic system's anti-forgery protections detailed above are substantially equivalent to the role performed by the circulator of paper petitions.

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Further announcement will be made when the electronic petitioning system is made available for use.

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