



## **EMPAC ENDORSEMENT PROCEDURES MANUAL**

**Effective August 2017**

## **ENDORSEMENT**

### **Endorsement - A Powerful Tool**

EMPAC and its ability to endorse political candidates is SEANC's most powerful tool. Endorsement gives SEANC the ability to reward its supporters in the General Assembly who work for the objectives of the Association. Endorsement is a time-intensive process requiring total commitment from EMPAC members. The process includes targeting legislative races, setting up and conducting candidate interviews, choosing candidates to endorse and providing necessary campaign support efforts to ensure election of chosen candidates.

### **Endorsement Activity Guidelines**

Endorsement activities must be kept out of the state workplace and conducted outside of work hours according to state election laws. In addition, many agencies and fellow employees frown upon partisan politics entering the work-site. It is prudent to err on the side of caution. When in doubt, keep EMPAC separate, and do not jeopardize the opportunity to increase the influence of state employees in the General Assembly.

- All activities conducted for the sole purpose of endorsement must be paid for with EMPAC funds.
- EMPAC activities must be conducted after work hours or using vacation time.
- Endorsement organizational meetings and interview sessions shall be held in locations away from state property, such as members' homes, libraries, churches, or restaurants.
- SEANC District newsletters may carry information about the endorsement process in general and report on actual endorsements, when the newsletters are distributed only to members.
- Do not use state agency telephones, computers, copy machines, fax machines, state letterhead, envelopes, inter-office mail, or any state-owned equipment to prepare or send information related to endorsement.
- Do not distribute endorsement materials through inter-office mail systems. Either directly mail via USPS endorsement materials to members' home addresses or mark clearly "HAND DELIVERY REQUIRED" and pass out to individuals during lunch breaks. Do not use state mailboxes.
- Do not post endorsement-related posters, announcements or materials in state agencies, including restrooms or staff lounge areas.
- Once candidates are endorsed, the State EMPAC may both publish and mail special bulletins to members, or purchase political announcements to be printed in The Reporter.

### **7 Steps in the Endorsement Process**

There are many steps involved with developing and implementing the endorsement process. Listed below are seven clearly defined steps that must take place before endorsement faces its true test - Election Day. The EMPAC endorsement process corresponds with the two-year election cycle for legislators.

#### 1. Convention Initiates EMPAC Process

- Delegates elect State EMPAC Chair.
- Delegates approve Policy Platform and prioritize issues.

#### 2. State EMPAC Organizes

- Chair appoints Secretary, Treasurer and other needed subcommittee members.
- Receives and reviews incumbent performance assessments from SEANC's Government Relations Department.

- Develops timely election strategies.

### 3. Area EMPACs Organize

- Elect Area EMPAC officers.
- Develop an endorsement strategy.
- Establish subcommittees.
- Identify candidates to be interviewed.
- Identify Area's endorsement support capabilities.

### 4. EMPAC Training Implemented

- Statewide training conference convenes.
- Area EMPAC's share training materials and other information with all members involved in endorsement activities.

### 5. Interview Process

- Area EMPAC establishes Interview Teams and selects moderator(s).
- Area EMPAC trains Interview Teams.
- Area EMPAC arranges locations and logistics for interviews.
- SEANC Government Relations staff will forward sample invitations, letters, etc. to Area EMPAC chairs.
  - Area EMPAC members will mail interview invitations and pertinent information to candidates, handle follow-up calls and confirm interview times.
- The Area EMPAC is encouraged to inform the SEANC Government Relations Department of candidate interview schedules and other pertinent information.
- Interview Teams interview candidates and vote by secret ballot.
- Team moderators send all interview information (ballots, tally sheets, tapes, etc.) to the Area EMPAC Chairs.

### 6. Legislative Reports and legislative Issues Questionnaires

- The Governmental Relations Department prepare written legislative reports on the association's dealings with incumbent legislators during the General Assembly session.
- A legislative issues questionnaire may be mailed to all candidates who file for the General Assembly if directed by the State EMPAC Committee.
- The Political Strategist forwards legislative reports and legislative issues questionnaires, if applicable, to the appropriate Area EMPAC Chair for their review prior to making endorsement decisions.

### 7. Endorsement Recommendations and Decisions

- Area EMPAC counts ballots, reviews results of counted ballots, and affirms or denies the results. The Area EMPAC also receives, investigates and rules on challenges (requiring a simple majority of the members present) at the Area level.
- Upon completion of the Area endorsement activities, the Area EMPAC Chair forwards the endorsement results to the State EMPAC Chair. The Area endorsement results must be signed by the Area EMPAC members who voted on the endorsement(s). Area endorsement decisions must be kept confidential until they are finalized by the State EMPAC Committee.
- State EMPAC reviews the endorsement results for compliance with EMPAC procedures and prepares a report of the endorsed candidates for announcement in a proper public forum.

### 8. Announce Endorsements after General Assembly Adjourns

- State EMPAC Chair notifies candidates in writing of the endorsement decision. Only candidates who were interviewed, who could not interview but expressed an interest in endorsement, or who were endorsed without an interview shall receive a letter of notification.
- Endorsements are publicly announced through the media.
- Districts may host endorsed candidates at Convention and at local Area meetings.
- State, Area and District levels of EMPAC provide campaign support to endorsed candidates.

### **Options for Endorsement**

Area EMPACs should look closely at all legislative races assigned to their Area and consider endorsement interviews in as many races as possible. In addition, the Area EMPAC may choose to make endorsements in primary races. In both cases, the process outlined below must be followed.

The State EMPAC Committee may choose to make endorsements in select statewide races. Once a statewide race has been identified for consideration for EMPAC endorsement, all candidates for the selected office(s) should be interviewed by the State EMPAC Committee or a subcommittee of said body. In addition, candidates may be asked to complete written questionnaires developed by State EMPAC in conjunction with SEANC staff. Once interviews with all candidates are completed, the State EMPAC will meet to make endorsements of a candidate in the race(s).

### **Candidate Assignments**

1. The Government Relations staff will analyze the legislative districts, based on current maps that change as new Census data is compiled, and provide the State EMPAC with recommendations on which EMPAC Area best fits the makeup of each legislative district. This process will determine which EMPAC Area has the most SEANC members in a legislative district and which other Areas also are represented by the office holder(s) in that legislative district. The Area with the most SEANC members in the legislative district will be named as the Primary Area for that legislative endorsement process. All other EMPAC Areas affected by a particular legislative district will be deemed Secondary Areas for the endorsement process. If an Area EMPAC feels that it is not best suited to consider endorsement for a particular candidate, then this information will be shared with the State EMPAC.

2. The Primary Area, if agreeing to participate in the endorsement process, will be assigned legislative districts for endorsement decisions and will be encouraged to seek input from all Secondary Areas.

3. Any unresolved issues pertaining to the candidate assignment process will be addressed by the State EMPAC.

### **Endorsement Criteria**

EMPAC uses the following criteria when possible to determine which candidates to endorse in the General Assembly races:

1. Favorable voting behavior on specific legislation.
2. Introduction or sponsorship of SEANC legislation.
3. Letter writing in support of state employee issues or legislation.
4. Seeking SEANC input on issues or legislation.
5. Positive speeches or comments related to state employee issues or legislation in a committee or on the General Assembly floor.
6. Active lobbying of their colleagues in either chamber in support of SEANC issues or legislation or efforts to defeat legislation adversely affecting state employees.
7. Personal commitment to support SEANC issues that appear in legislation.

## **Interview Guidelines**

Interviews of candidates are extremely important to the success of EMPAC's endorsement effort. Making the decision on who should be endorsed by EMPAC is a serious and difficult task and one that should not be taken lightly. It is important to understand that the purpose of an interview is to seek a candidate's position or opinion on an issue of importance to SEANC and state employees. Interview moderators and team members will be provided appropriate training, either personally or on-line, on the proper techniques of parliamentary procedure and interviewing. Interviews may be completed by speaking to each candidate individually or in a forum format.

## **Interview Question Development**

The State EMPAC will develop all materials to be sent to the eligible candidates. Those materials will be used to develop questions for the Interview Teams. Interview Teams must use the standard questionnaire but may ask the candidate follow-up questions as it relates to the information presented.

## **Interviews:**

Only EMPAC contributors may serve on an interview team.

SEANC members, other state employees and retired state employees may attend as observers, and their comments may be solicited and recorded at the conclusion of the interview. However, observers will not be allowed to participate in the interview or in the vote. No other candidates, campaign staff of other candidates or current legislators will be allowed to observe the interview process.

A team member's absence from an interview for any given legislative seat will adversely affect his or her ability to fairly evaluate all candidates for that legislative seat. Therefore, only team members who attend all the interviews for a legislative seat will be allowed to vote.

## **Interview Teams**

Interview Team membership is structured by the Area EMPAC. All affected Districts shall be given proportionate representation if they so desire. The Districts select the individual members. When possible, Interview Team members should be registered voters for the subject race.

Each Interview Team shall have a maximum of seven members, including the moderator. For an endorsement vote to be valid, a minimum of three Interview Team members must have attended ALL interviews for the subject race -- less than three will nullify the endorsement vote for that race. Alternate or substitute Interview Team members may be used only when they meet all criteria set forth for the Interview Team. Alternates or substitutes may meet the criteria by attending all interviews for the subject race.

Members of the Interview Team are required to sign the EMPAC Non-Partisan Pledge

Interview Team duties include the following:

1. The Interview Team moderator shall keep attendance records of all team members and observers present at all interviews to ensure endorsement process oversight and compliance.
2. Following an interview, the Interview Team moderator solicits comments from observers before they are dismissed.

3. After completion of all interviews for a race, Interview Team members will review and discuss findings of all interviews and mark ballots.
4. Interview Team members shall vote by secret ballot and shall document reasons for all endorsement decisions to ensure accountability. Endorsement ballots shall not be counted by the interview team.
5. Moderator shall submit all interview materials (ballots, tally sheets, recordings, etc.) to the Area EMPAC Chair.

### **Preparing For the Interview**

The following information is needed about each candidate:

1. Detailed analysis for all incumbents from SEANC's Government Relations Staff and EMPAC Chair.
2. Position statements on issues of concern to SEANC.
3. Legislative goals or planned initiatives if elected.
4. Candidate's qualifications: previous public service, education, relevant experience, demonstrated ability to communicate effectively, etc.

### **Scheduling the Interview**

The Area EMPAC will ensure that candidate interviews are properly scheduled. It should be explained that the interviews will help determine the endorsement recommendation for a particular legislative seat.

Interviews will be scheduled at a time and location convenient for the candidates but also convenient for the interviewers. All interviews for a given race should be scheduled as close together as possible, preferably on the same date. An appropriate location, away from state agency facilities, should be reserved well in advance of the date of the interviews. The interview location should include a waiting area and a separate interview area. Interview materials will be distributed to the Interview Team moderator for distribution to the Interview Team members.

### **Interview Team Briefing**

The Interview Team will receive a set of standard questions to be asked of all candidates. The Interview Team should meet prior to each interview to develop questions in addition to the standard questions. The purpose of interviewing candidates is to solicit their views on SEANC issues. Keep the questions simple. Address one issue at a time. Avoid multiple-part questions, and limit the questions depending on the complexity of the issue and length of the candidate's answers. The Interview Team should assign specific questions to team members. During the interview, the Interview Team should stick to the script.

### **The Day of the Interview - Mechanics**

- The Interview Team arrives at the interview site in advance of the first interview.
- The recorder is set up and tested, and the chairs are arranged for interviewers, candidates and observers.
- Observers are seated and instructed on appropriate behavior.
- Candidates arrive and are greeted by a designated person. If they are early, they should be taken to a waiting area away from the ongoing interview. At the appropriate time, the candidate is escorted to the interview room.
- The Interview Team is introduced, and the moderator explains the format.
- Endorsement criteria and the process for notification of an endorsement decision are explained.

- Designated persons ask the prepared questions.
- After the final response, the candidate is excused.
- Comments are solicited from observers and recorded. Moderator excuses observers from the room prior to the vote.
- The Interview Team reviews the gathered information and using the standardized ballot, votes either to "Endorse", "Not Endorse" or "Take No Action" for each candidate
- The Interview Team moderator seals the ballots and sends all interview materials (ballots, tally sheets, recordings, etc.) to the Area EMPAC Chair.

### **The Interview Itself**

Informality works well in the interview process. Sessions should be as informal and conversational as possible. Avoid putting the candidate on the defensive.

1. Be polite. Greet the candidate with a handshake, a smile and be friendly. Don't give a monologue.
2. Candidates should be given 2 to 3 minutes for an opening statement
3. Throughout the session don't show preference by words, body language or facial expressions.
4. Uniformity in the manner the questions are phrased and asked of each candidate is essential. It will allow you to fairly assess responses using the same reference point.
5. If the candidate stays on one question too long, the moderator is responsible for closing discussion on that question and moving on to the next question.
6. Listen to the first concrete comment(s) by the candidate. Those will usually be his or her basic opinion.
7. After a question is answered, the moderator may state, "My understanding is that you support the SEANC position on..." Look for a "yes" or "no" response.
8. Be good listeners. Interview Team members are encouraged to take notes.
9. Interviewers should refrain from expressing personal views or issues. Because the purpose of the screening process is to learn about the candidates, the candidates should be doing most of the talking.
10. At the end of the session, the candidate should be allowed 2 to 3 minutes for a closing statement.
11. Tell the candidate what happens next in the process, and thank him or her for their interest in SEANC.
12. Excuse the candidate(s) and have a designated person escort him or her away from the interview area.

### **Guidelines for Single Candidate Interviews**

Interviews with individual candidates should be scheduled for approximately one hour. This will allow time for approximately six to eight follow-up questions depending on the complexity of the issues discussed.

Allow at least 15 minutes between each interview.

All candidates should have the same opportunity to respond to questions. If a candidate interview finishes early, the interview should end. Time should not be filled with questions not contained in the script.

It should be explained to the candidates when arranging for the interview that the interviews will be audio or video recorded. Recordings will be made to ensure that accurate records of candidates' responses and group discussions are available for possible review during the endorsement decision process.

Interviewers should refrain from expressing personal views or issues. Because the purpose of the screening process is to learn about the candidates, the candidates should be doing most of the talking.

Interview Team members shall vote immediately following the general discussion of the final interview in a given race. This will assure that the interviewers' impressions of the candidates are fresh. Observers should be excused before the voting begins

### **Guidelines for Multiple Candidate Interviews (Candidate Forums)**

Should the need arise, due to conflicts in scheduling and availability for individual candidates, it is possible for more than one candidate in a specific race or candidates in multiple races within an EMPAC Area to be interviewed at the same time. The most commonly used format for such multiple interviews is the Candidate Forum.

Interviewing multiple candidates in a forum setting requires additional planning and preparation. The Area EMPAC will need to secure a facility or location that is not state agency affiliated and is large enough to accommodate multiple candidates and the maximum size EMPAC interview team of seven.

The allotted time will need to be increased to ensure that all candidates in the forum would have the same opportunity to respond to questions. Depending on the number of candidates attending, this may be up to 2 hours.

As with individual candidate interviews a team member's absence from a Candidate Forum for given legislative seats will adversely affect his or her ability to fairly evaluate all candidates for those legislative seats. Therefore, only team members who attend all the interviews in a Candidate Forum for a legislative seat will be allowed to vote.

Should an interview team member need to leave the Candidate Forum before the interview is completed the interview moderator will need to decide which, if any, specific candidate race that team member may vote in -- provided that the team member had interviewed all candidates in that specific race and not just a candidate from one party.

Interview Team members shall vote immediately following the general discussion of the forum. This will assure that the interviewers' impressions of the candidates are fresh. Observers should be excused before the voting begins

### **Making a Decision**

After all interviews in the Area are completed, the Area EMPAC will meet in Executive Session to tally the votes and affirm or deny the results. The Area EMPAC Chair shall immediately forward the results to the State EMPAC Chair. The list of the Area EMPAC endorsements must be signed by the members of the Area EMPAC who voted on the endorsements. All interview materials (ballots, tally sheets, tapes, etc.) shall be sent to the SEANC Political Strategist to be confidentially secured, and shall be destroyed 2 years following the General Election.

A quorum of Area members must be present at the Area endorsement meeting. If a quorum does not exist, the Area may only make recommendations and the State committee may make endorsements for those Areas.

To recommend endorsement for a candidate, a simple majority vote is required.

An Area EMPAC, at its discretion, may choose to take no action in a particular race. (Examples: no incumbent; lack of interest from candidate(s) to be interviewed; general knowledge that candidate is not interested in State employee issues. NOTE: the examples given are NOT all inclusive.)

- The State EMPAC should be made aware of any decision not to endorse and any pertinent information.



- The SEANC Government Relations Department should also be informed of these instances because this information is essential to respond to inquiries from candidates.

If the Area EMPAC decides to take no action in legislative races in their Area, the State EMPAC may consider endorsements in those races where no action was taken. It will require a 2/3 vote of the State EMPAC to move forward with endorsement in the affected areas where no action was taken by the Area EMPAC.

The Area EMPAC also shall receive, investigate and rule on challenges. The State EMPAC reviews the Area endorsement results for compliance with the procedures and prepares a report of the endorsed candidates for announcement in a proper public forum. When necessary, due to a challenge or noncompliance, all interview materials secured by the SEANC Political Strategist will be issued to the State EMPAC Chair for review by the State EMPAC.

### **Challenges**

#### Area Challenges:

1. A challenge shall not be considered based upon unsubstantiated information. A challenge may be issued for the following reasons:
  - a. action by a legislator or candidate in opposition to identified SEANC goals and issues, or
  - b. irregularities in the endorsement process.
2. Only members of the Area EMPAC or Interview Team members who voted for the subject race may initiate a challenge.
3. A simple majority vote of the Area EMPAC members present is required to overturn an endorsement decision.
4. Challenges are heard only in Executive Session of the Area EMPAC. This Executive Session is open only to the Area EMPAC members for the subject race; however, when requested, EMPAC officers, SEANC officers and staff will be allowed to respond to specific questions about candidate qualifications.
5. It is critical in the challenge process that all of the interview materials (notes, ballots, tapes, etc.) be available.

#### State Challenges:

There exists the rare possibility that non-conforming endorsements may be made. Any SEANC member, with verifiable evidence of such impropriety may request a special hearing the by State EMPAC to reconsider said endorsement. To do so, the Member must obtain the sponsorship of at least one Area EMPAC Chair. A contested endorsement may only be set aside by a two-thirds vote of the State EMPAC members present and voting to do so.

## Member Involvement

Endorsement of candidates will be decided at the Area level. Member involvement in the campaign support activities will be critical in determining the success of EMPAC's endorsements.

1. An endorsement from EMPAC may result in a financial contribution for the candidate. By law, all contributions to EMPAC must be voluntary, and no SEANC funds may be used for political contributions.
2. SEANC members may serve as campaign volunteers and perform such vital tasks as telephoning voters to solicit support for an endorsed candidate, posting signs, distributing literature, or talking to co-workers, friends and neighbors about the candidate they support.
3. SEANC members are encouraged to attend the candidate interviews.
4. Endorsing a candidate means soliciting votes for that candidate from all voters, not just fellow state employees.
5. Because an EMPAC endorsement includes volunteer assistance from SEANC members in a candidate's legislative district, it is vital to the success of the endorsement process that the candidate has support from members.
6. SEANC retiree members are valuable volunteer resources for endorsed candidates. All SEANC retirees are encouraged to participate fully in the elections process on behalf of EMPAC endorsed candidates.
7. Members are encouraged to participate in EMPAC training opportunities to understand the process and its importance to them as state employees.

## Campaign Support Activities

Involvement in the endorsement process does not end once an endorsement decision is made. The success of EMPAC's candidate endorsements depends on the active participation of SEANC's members working to ensure that endorsed candidates are victorious on Election Day. There are many activities that SEANC members can perform to help their candidates at the polls. Some of these include:

1. Stay Informed. Know the positions endorsed candidates take on state employee issues so that you can inform friends and co-workers.
2. Phone Banks. Endorsed candidates need to get their messages out to voters through volunteer phone banks. Phone time can be donated and staffed by volunteers.
3. Literature Drops. Volunteers can distribute posters, brochures and/or candidate position papers to various locations to publicize endorsed candidates' positions
4. "Get Out The Vote" Phone Calls. Using a communication system similar to the Phone Bank, volunteers must see to it that supporters of endorsed candidates will remember to cast their ballot on Election Day.
5. Mailings. "Stuffing envelopes" is not just a cliché. Candidates need volunteer assistance to send out large quantities of mail in a short period of time.
6. Poll Greeters/Watchers. An effective time to reach potential supporters of a candidate is right before they enter the polling place. Volunteers can position themselves outside the polls and make that all-important, last -minute request for support.
7. Yard Signs. Visibility and name recognition are keys to a candidate's success. Show support by placing yard signs in front of houses and urging friends and co-workers to do the same.
8. Registration Drives. People can't vote for endorsed candidates unless they are registered. Volunteers can help with voter registration drives that are held well in advance of Election Day.
9. Typing/Office Assistance. Candidates need to keep their expenses to a minimum, and office volunteers are always a great asset to their campaigns.

10. Matching Members with Precincts. People need to be aware of their voting precinct to ensure that they are eligible to vote for endorsed candidates. Volunteers can help people determine who represents them in the General Assembly and for whom they can vote.
11. Letter Writing Campaign. A personal letter to fellow state employees can be a great way to publicize an endorsed candidate's support of state employee issues.

**The use of Robert's Rules of Order (latest Edition) shall govern all meetings of EMPAC at the State, Area and District level.**

Amended July 16, 2011: A publication of the Employees Political Action Committee (EMPAC), a subsidiary of the State Employees Association of North Carolina, Inc.

Amended by State EMPAC: August 5, 2017