

# Get Out the Vote: Elections Provide Members the Opportunity to Set AHIMA's Future Course

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*by Jill Callahan Dennis, JD, RHIA*

How involved are you in setting the future direction of AHIMA? There are many ways for members to get involved, but one of the most potent and direct ways is in your choice of leaders.

## AHIMA Elections

Each year members have an opportunity to vote for the association's president-elect, three directors, and various members of our Council on Certification and the Commission on Accreditation for Health Informatics and Information Management Education. Those who fill these positions in January will have considerable influence in charting AHIMA's future course—a course that will affect your professional future. Have you taken the time to vote? The polls are open until July 21.

At the state level, members have the opportunity to choose their component state association's board leadership and the delegates who will serve in AHIMA's House of Delegates. Delegates play a key role in approving standards for certification and accreditation and in revising our bylaws. They also engage in issue forums and developmental discussions that eventually lead to AHIMA programs and services, which can affect the very structure of the association. On July 1, many new delegates took office. You can support them by sharing your views on issues and providing input on the decisions those delegates will face.

## Get Informed

We've made some big strides in the past few years to enhance your ability to meet and converse with the national candidates and to understand their views on the issues most important to you. For a two-week period in June, candidates were available online in the Candidate Community of Practice to answer questions, comment on issues, and chat with you about their leadership agenda. Unlike many years ago, where all you might know of any particular candidate was what you read in an abbreviated position statement, members now have real-time access to ask their own questions and be better informed for the vote.

Those who have taken advantage of the opportunity find it well worth their time and influential in determining their choice of candidates. Wouldn't it be beneficial for all states to follow suit and provide more opportunities for state-level candidates to interact with members?

## Get out the Vote

Although member participation in our elections has been slowly growing, the numbers are still not what they should be. This is true for elections within individual component state associations and especially true in our national elections. When we've asked members what determines whether or not they vote, one of the most common responses is "it depends on whether I know someone on the ballot." But the fact is that the more the association grows, the less likely it is that each member will personally know a candidate.

So what can you do to have a greater voice in the association's future? First, take advantage of the opportunities to talk with those running for office in your state. Join the Candidate Community of Practice each year to meet and pose questions to the national candidates. After the elections, stay in touch with your delegates and officers and help them understand your point of view. And finally, don't leave the voting decisions up to someone else. Cast your vote and help determine our future.

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