

GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE 2023 ELECTIONS

ISLAMIC SOCIETY of GREATER HOUSTON (ISGH)

The document provides guidelines and procedures for conducting a fair and unbiased annual election for selected members of the Board of Directors (Shura), selected Associate Directors, and all Area Representatives of the Islamic Society of Greater Houston (ISGH) based on the applicable provisions of the ISGH Constitution & Bylaws. The Election Commission shall conduct the elections in the manner stipulated in these guidelines.

Note:

All due care has been exercised in preparing these Election Guidelines as well as the Nomination Forms and related documents that are being released by EC 2023 for use of ISGH Membership. ISGH EC 2023 reserves all rights to correct, amend, or change the contents as needed without any prior notice in order to rectify any error or mistake in preparations of these documents.

In all cases of discrepancy or error the ISGH Constitution & Bylaws shall prevail.

A. IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES FOR 2023 ISGH ELECTIONS:

- 1. June 30, 2023**
Record Date. Members of ISGH who have filed their membership applications or renewed their membership before the end of June and have paid their dues and approved by the Shura will be considered as the eligible voting members.
- 2. 3rd Sunday of July:
(July 16, 2023)**
The Board of Directors of ISGH shall select and appoint Chairman and at least four other members of the Election Commission, with an effort to have at least one EC member from each Zone.
- 3. 2nd Sunday of August:
(August 13, 2023)**
A tentative list of eligible voting members is posted on the bulletin boards in the Islamic Centers (ICs) by the respective Directors and in the Main Center by the General Secretary.
- 4. 1st Sunday of September:
(September 3, 2023)**
The General Secretary of the ISGH provides the final list of the eligible voting members (approved by the ISGH Board of Directors) to the Chairman of the Election Commission.
- 5. 4th Sunday of September:
(September 24, 2023)**
The General Secretary shall provide a written approved copy of BOARD approved referendum issues (*if any*) or changes to Constitution & Bylaws to the Election Commission.

6. 1st Sunday of October:
(October 1, 2023)
- The Election Commission shall announce election procedures and make the nomination forms available to all eligible voters for downloading on the ISGH website by this date.
[**Note:** Finalization of the Zip Code Groups is a tedious process which gets further complicated due to the fact that some of ISGH’s esteem members do not furnish all the required information. Missing address and/or zip codes compromise the actual membership counts for various ICs and thus affect the correct number of Area Reps allotted to each IC. It is possible that due to certain delays in corrections and finalizations of membership data, announcement of the zip groups and numbers of reps *may get delayed*. If there is more than a couple of days delay in the zip grouping announcement, deadline for the nominations for Area Reps **ONLY** may be extended by EC. All other election schedules will remain same. Please continue to visit the Elections 2023 webpage on the ISGH website for latest updates]
7. 3rd Sunday of October:
(October 15, 2023)
- The last date for receiving the nominations for contested positions by noon (Article VII, Sec. 3A). Properly filled out Nomination Forms may be submitted via email to EC2023ISGH@gmail.com or a paper copy may be dropped in special locked box at the ISGH Main Office. PLEASE **DO NOT** submit duplicates of same nomination by same nominator. This may cause issues with proper processing of the Nominations and thus may result in delays.
8. 1st Sunday of November:
(November 5, 2023)
- Election Commission announces preliminary list of eligible nominees. EC2023 and ISGH announce procedures and process for members to opt-in for online voting.
9. 2nd Sunday of November:
(November 12, 2023)
- The last date for the withdrawal of a nomination, by 12:00 noon. Election Commission must receive signed withdrawal request on paper, or via email on or before this date/time.
10. 3rd Sunday of November:
(November 19, 2023)
- The Election Commission makes the announcement of the final candidates list by 5:00PM and also publishes them on ISGH website. Candidate resumes and optional video recording shall be posted the following day (November 20, 2023)
11. (Nov. 23-Dec 2, 2023):
- These days shall be used to arrange **Mandatory** Candidate Introduction Sessions by the EC at selected ICs and/or at the ISGH Main Center, or via remote meetings options. Format, rules, and schedules will be worked out by EC.
12. 1st Sunday of December:
(December 3, 2023)
- Early balloting at designated Islamic Centers. Timings and Islamic Centers where Early Balloting is to be held will be announced later. Please continue to visit ISGH Website for such updates. Further, please note that, for the third year in a row, there is an option for members to opt in to vote on-line on the Early Balloting Day **ONLY**. ISGH has been informing all the members about this option and how to sign up for it. Please continue to visit the Elections 2023 webpage on ISGH website for additional information and guidance for this option as well as all other elections related updates and changes.

- 13. 2nd Sunday of December:
(December 10, 2023) Election Day balloting in the ISGH Main Center. The times for balloting will be announced by EC in near future. Announcements of the election results shall be as soon as the counting of the ballots is completed.
- 14. 3rd Sunday of December:
(December 17, 2023) If needed, hold Run-Off Election at Main Center for Executive Body positions and at designated Islamic Centers for other positions. [Note: *Alternative voting methods maybe used as mentioned above*]
- 15. 2nd Sunday of Jan 2024:
(January 7, 2024) Oath-taking Ceremony at Main Center (after Zuhr salat) AFTER **Mandatory** Newly Elected Officials Orientation Session.

B. POSITIONS UP FOR ELECTION

The 2023 Election Commission (“EC”) shall seek nominations for the following positions:

- 1. Vice President
- 2. Treasurer
- 3. Director, Northwest Zone
- 4. Director, Southeast Zone
- 5. Director, South Zone
- 6. Associate Director, North Zone – Bilal IC
- 7. Associate Director, North Zone – Champions IC
- 8. Associate Director, North Zone – Cypress IC
- 9. Associate Director, North Zone – Woodlands IC
- 10. Associate Director, Southwest Zone – Hamza IC
- 11. Associate Director, Southwest Zone – Maryam IC
- 12. Associate Director, Southwest Zone – River Oaks IC
- 13. Associate Director, Southwest Zone – Synott IC
- 14. Associate Director, Northwest Zone – Spring Branch IC (Special Election)
- 15. Area Representatives for all Islamic Centers of all Zones; For ICs that otherwise have more than 10 Area Reps, one each of a YOUTH and SISTER Area Reps also need to be elected.

Please refer to the note about Zip Code Groups in the IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES section. Total numbers of Area Reps for each IC are based on a formula that takes into account total number of eligible voting members residing within each zip code in an IC. Information about number of Area Reps for each IC and Zip Code Groups will be announced separately.

C. GENERAL INFORMATION AND RULES FOR 2023 ELECTIONS

Following rules are paraphrased excerpts from the ISGH Constitution & Bylaws and from the Policy & Procedures Manual and are hereby provided as guidelines to facilitate the election process. In all cases of errors and/or conflicts, the actual ISGH Constitution & Bylaws shall prevail.

It is further recommended and strongly suggested that all ISGH eligible voting members should routinely visit the Elections 2023 webpage on the ISGH website. **This shall be the ONLY venue for EC2023 official announcements.**

I. RULES APPLICABLE TO ELIGIBLE VOTING MEMBERS:

1. Only eligible voting members shall be allowed to cast a vote.
2. An eligible voting member is a person whose name appears on the Shura-APPROVED 2023 ISGH Membership List as provided to the Election Commission. **It is the responsibility of each individual to check and confirm voting eligibility.** EC cannot arbitrarily add names or change zonal and/or IC affiliations. EC is making sure that all individuals have means to checkup and verify their membership status directly and that procedures are in place to rectify omissions and/or mistakes made by ISGH in processing any Membership application or documents. Such information will be provided on the Elections 2023 webpage of ISGH website, and it is recommended that all members visit that webpage quite often. That shall be the **ONLY** source for ISGH EC2023 announcements.
3. This year, for 2023 ISGH Elections, for the third year in a row, an option to vote on- line is being made available. This option is available to ALL members. However, one must opt-in to use this option. A link for opting into this option will be made available through the membership status checkup portal.

II. RULES APPLICABLE TO THE NOMINEES:

Please refer to the ISGH Constitution & Bylaws for details of all eligibility requirements for the positions up for election in the 2023 ISGH General Elections. Most of these requirements are in the Bylaws Article VII. Some such rules and requirements are shown below as FYI only. However, please note that the items shown below by **no** means represent an all-inclusive list of eligibility requirements or restrictions and exclusions. You should be familiar with such qualifications by reading the ISGH Constitution & Bylaws. Please note that in all cases, irrespective of what is contained in this document, the **actual wording and clauses of ISGH C&B shall prevail.** It is the responsibility of Nominators and Nominees to fully understand and abide by the eligibility and other requirements. Please contact the ISGH EC2023 if there are any questions or need any clarification or help.

1. An eligible voting member shall nominate another eligible voting member for one of the contested positions, on the specific form(s) provided by the Election Commission, after consulting with the nominee and obtaining his/her consent.
2. An individual member can accept nomination for only one elected position. A member who accepts nominations for more than one elected position shall be disqualified from all positions by the Election Commission.

3. A nominee for the position of Vice President shall be a member of the ISGH in good standing for two consecutive years and shall be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States of America.
4. A nominee for the position of Vice President or Treasurer should have served or is serving at least one full two-year term as a member of ISGH Board of Directors (Shura) or as Associate Director of an IC.
5. A nominee for any one of the following positions shall be a member of ISGH in good standing for one year and shall be a citizen or permanent resident of the United States:
 - I. Treasurer
 - II. Zonal Directors
 - III. Associate Directors
6. Additionally, a Zonal Director shall be a resident of that Zone as per the Membership Roster of ISGH. A nominee for Associate Director position and nominator shall be a resident of one of the Zip Codes associated with the respective Islamic Center as per the Membership Roster of ISGH. A nominee for the position of Area Representative and nominator shall be a resident of the Zip Code (or one of the Zip Codes of the Zip Code Group), as per the ISGH Membership Database, for which he/she is contesting.
7. An individual who has served two consecutive terms on the Shura is NOT qualified for election to a third consecutive term for the same position.
8. All nominees, irrespective of any position, MUST sign a statement which contains wording as excerpted below from the ISGH C&B:
 - “- Does not himself seek an elected position
 - Does not put his decisions or other people's decisions over and above the decisions of Allah in the Quran and Sunnah
 - Is obedient to Shariah
 - Does not commit major sins.
 - Has not been convicted of a felony or pled guilty or no contest to charge of committing any state or federal felony offense.
 - Consents to ISGH undertaking background checks.”
9. Any person who has previously served, in the aggregate, five full terms on the BOARD, shall no longer be nominated or be eligible for election to any position on the ISGH Board of Directors. A person who has served more than one year of a two-year term shall be deemed to have served a full term. Calculation of the number of terms a person has served as a member of the BOARD shall be made on a retroactive basis beginning from the inception of ISGH.
10. A nominee for an Associate Director position must not have previously served, in the aggregate, three full terms as Associate Director whether in the same or different Islamic Centers. A person who has served more than one year of a two-year term shall be deemed to have served a full term. The calculation of the number of terms a person has served as Associate Director shall be made on a retroactive basis beginning from the inception of ISGH.
11. A nominee for an Associate Director position must have been involved in ISGH as a Board of Directors, Associate Director, or Area Representative, or in any of the ISGH standing or special committees or as a faculty member in any of the ISGH or affiliated educational entities.

12. A member of the Election Commission cannot be a nominee for any position contested in the upcoming elections.
13. An employee of ISGH or of any of its subsidiaries cannot be a nominee for any position contested in the upcoming elections.
14. There are stringent rules regarding family relationships amongst the nominees and/or elected positions within ISGH. Responsibility to make sure that there is no problem with this requirement totally and absolutely lies with the nominator and/or nominee as EC has no way of knowing all such relationships amongst the ISGH members.

Please refer to Bylaws Article VII Section 4(A)(vi) shown below:

“(vi) Prohibited relationships on ISGH Board, Boards of ISGH subsidiaries and Islamic Center Councils:

a) *ISGH Board*: No person who is related by blood or marriage to another current ISGH Board member or nominee (“Board Member”), as spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece or first cousin (“Relative”) shall serve or be elected, appointed or nominated to serve on the ISGH Board at the same time as the Board Member.

b) *Board of ISGH Subsidiary*: No person who is related by blood or marriage to another current Board member or nominee of the Board of an ISGH subsidiary (“Subsidiary Board Member”), as spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece or first cousin (“Relative”) shall serve or be elected, appointed, or nominated to serve on the Board of the ISGH subsidiary at the same time as the Subsidiary Board Member.

c) *ISGH Islamic Center Council*: No person who is related by blood or marriage to another current ISGH Islamic Center Council Area Representative or Associate Director, or Zonal Director if there is only one Islamic Center in the Zone or nominee (“Council Member”), as spouse, parent, child, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece or first cousin (“Relative”) shall serve or be elected, appointed, or nominated to serve on the same Islamic Center Council at the same time as the Council Member.

d) If nominations of two or more related individuals are received for different elected or appointed positions as described in subsections (a), (b) and (c) above, all such nominations will be rejected unless all nominations for all positions, but one, are timely withdrawn. If a prohibited relationship is not disclosed and is discovered later, the Board or Council membership of the related individuals shall be automatically terminated and vacancies thus created shall be filled in accordance with Article VII, Section 7, or in the case of an ISGH subsidiary, in accordance with the Articles of Incorporation and approved bylaws of the subsidiary.”

15. Individuals with state or federal felonious charges are NOT allowed to hold any position within ISGH (Ref: Bylaws Article VII Section 4(A)(v). A copy of the valid Driver’s License of the NOMINEE showing the current address MUST be attached with ALL submitted nominations forms. Such copy should clearly show all the information. EC 2023 shall use this information to run a criminal background check on all candidates so as to satisfy this requirement.
16. A nominee may withdraw his/her acceptance by submitting a written request on or before **(12:00 Noon, Sunday Nov 12, 2023)**. Such a withdrawal will be final. The Election Commission MUST have this Withdrawal by the above deadline at the Main Center in writing or via email with time stamp of before noon.

17. All nominees for a position of the Board of Directors (Majlis-e-Shura) or Associate Director, who accept a nomination, are encouraged to submit a short resume of their qualifications and related experience along with an optional self-5-minute maximum video recording, on or before **November 15, 2023**, to the Election Commission. This resume and video will be posted on the Elections 2023 web page on **November 20, 2023**. No submissions are allowed after the deadline. The Elections 2023 web page will indicate that all content presented was received by the deadline and the content is final.
18. All nominees for the position of the Board of Directors (Majlis-e-Shura) shall make themselves available if Election Commission organizes an introduction session at any of the Islamic Centers where nominees for Associate Directors and/or Area Representatives may also be introduced. Alternatively, such “Meet the Candidate” session may be held via electronic means.
19. **Mandatory orientation of all ISGH elected positions:** Prior to the final list of Nominees being announced by the Elections Commission, there shall be mandatory ISGH Elections Orientation Sessions (minimum two sessions) for all candidates seeking ISGH elected offices so that they can clearly understand and acknowledge the demands of time commitment expected if they are elected to that office. Those candidates who are unwilling to attend one of these orientation sessions shall be declared unqualified by the Election Commission and their names shall not appear on the Final Nominations List or on the election ballot. Such sessions may be held either physically (in person), or remotely via electronic means and can be conducted by the EC or by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee where an EC member can verify attendance.
20. **Mandatory orientation of all Newly Elected Officials:** There shall be an Elected Officials Orientation Session after the ISGH elections but prior to taking the Oath of Office. Officials just elected at the ISGH General Elections shall not be allowed to take their respective Oath of Office unless they attend an Elected Officials Orientation Session. If they do not attend an Elected Officials Orientation Session and do not take their Oath of Office by March 31, their position shall be declared vacant.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION:

1. ISGH discourages all defaming and negative campaigns. Members shall discourage, at source, “defaming and negative” campaigns.
2. All nomination letters shall be addressed to the Election Commission and received on or before **12:00 Noon, Sunday, October 15, 2023, at the ISGH Main Center at 3110 Eastside Street, Houston, Texas 77098.** If you mail the nomination papers, please make sure that you mail it early enough and affix appropriate postage to ensure receipt at ISGH Office before the deadline. The **BEST SUGGESTED** method of submitting nominations and/or withdrawals is to send via email to EC2023ISGH@gmail.com and ask for a confirmation.
[**Note:** The Zip Code Groups have not been finalized as of the date of releasing these Guidelines. If there is more than a couple of days delay in the zip grouping announcement, deadline for the nominations for Area Reps **ONLY** may be extended by one week. All other election schedules will remain same. Such information will be posted on the Elections 2023 webpage]

3. Early balloting shall be held on **December 3, 2023**, at selected Islamic Centers. The timings and locations will be announced by EC2023 in the coming days. Also, on the day of Early Balloting, those ISGH eligible voting members who opted to vote on-line will be exercising their right to vote via online voting. Please continue to visit the ISGH website and the Elections 2023 webpage for additional information, procedures, and instructions for all election related matters.
4. The 2023 ISGH General Elections shall be held on **Sunday, December 10, 2023**, at the Main Center. Timings will be announced by EC2023 in the coming days.
5. Eligible voting members **MUST** cast their OWN ballot, whether in person or via on-line voting option. Proxy shall **NOT** be accepted.
6. All members eligible to vote, when voting in person, **MUST** present photo *identification*. Acceptable IDs are driver's license, passport, state issued ID, student ID showing age. The identification presented must verify the identity of the voting member to the satisfaction of EC.
7. Children of eligible voting members whose names already appear on the voting list **MUST** present an *identification* showing their date of birth, (minimum age: 15 years. Identification must show DOB of **June 30, 2007** OR earlier). Any person who has attained the age of 21 years on or before June 30, 2023 (DOB earlier than **June 30, 2001**) is not eligible to vote as a dependent child of a member; in order to vote or run for election, they should have their own separate ISGH membership.
8. Dependent, resident (*not visiting*) parents of an eligible member whose names already appear on the voting list must present *proper identification* as specified above.
9. Only those persons whose names are on the list of eligible voting members will be allowed to vote. However, the EC wants to make sure that no ISGH member is denied the right to participate in this election because of an error in the preparation of the voting list. Dealing with missing names is extremely difficult on actual election day(s) and is absolutely discouraged. Under most circumstances it will NOT BE ALLOWED or WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE to do so at the time of balloting.

Thus, everyone is strongly encouraged to check up the Membership Status well in advance of the actual balloting

If for whatever reason any potential voter has not been able to resolve the status problems, then he/she SHOULD NOT go to vote during Early Balloting. Please note that on the Early Balloting Day (i.e. 03 December 2023) ABSOLUTELY NO changes to the membership data will be made and thus no one whose name DOES NOT appear on the membership list will be able to and/or allowed to vote.

On the General Election Day, at the ISGH Main Center, provisions will be made to accommodate those potential voters who have been dealing with membership status issues. Very specific information and proof will be required to make any adjustment to the eligible voters list. Please look for more detailed procedures to be announced by EC2023 to deal with such issues.

10. The BOARD must approve any changes or modifications to these guidelines.

IV. ELECTION PROCEDURE:

1. Election shall be conducted by secret ballots.
2. Candidates or their representatives shall *not* be allowed in the ballot casting room or anywhere else where EC declares the area to be under the EC control.
3. Any balloting material, documentation, and data will be safeguarded using all appropriate measures (like signed and sealed, etc) and shall be left in the custody of Chairman Election Commission. No partial results or trends shall be announced or communicated to anyone.
4. Results will be announced as soon as possible once the voting is completed.
5. All decisions of the Election Commission shall be made by majority vote of the members of the election commission present at the time of the decision. In all matters pertaining to the counting of the ballots and the announcement of the results, the decision of the Election Commission shall be final. All election announcements shall be made by the Chairman Election Commission.
6. In case the numerical difference in ballots cast for two candidates is less than one-half percent of the total ballot cast in that specific race, one of the candidates in that race or one of their representatives may request a higher scrutiny of results. If the ballots difference in ballots cast for two candidates is between one-half percent and One percent, then the Election Commission by a majority vote of the EC may voluntarily conduct a higher scrutiny of results. Under no circumstances will there be a detailed review if the difference in ballots cast for two candidates is over one percent, unless the Election Commission votes by a 2/3rd majority to conduct a review.
7. The Election Commission may unanimously recommend to the BOARD to cancel the outcome of the election in whole or in part if it determines that the election was not fair due to the circumstances brought to its attention that were beyond its control.

Revision History:

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