

To: Chairman, TANA Board of Directors (BOD)

From: Chairman, TANA BOD Subcommittee to investigate the issue of discrepancies in the number of voter totals.

Subject: Report of the Subcommittee

Date: October 19, 2021

AUTHORIZATION AND CHARGE: On April 25, 2021, the TANA Board of Directors appointed a Subcommittee, with Dr. Hanumaiah Bandla as Chairperson and Dr. V. Chowdary Jampala and Murali Vennam as members, to investigate the issue of the discrepancies in the voter totals while preparing the list for mailing the ballots and report back to the board within two weeks with findings and recommendations for appropriate actions.

The Subcommittee found that two weeks was not enough time to complete the task and has received subsequent extensions from the Board with the final report to be submitted before October 20, 2021.

PROCESS: The Subcommittee met several times, reviewed the correspondence among the Chairman of Nominations and Elections Committee (NEC), the Elections Trust, the Executive Vice President and the Joint Secretary of TANA, with regards to the TANA voters' mailing list to be used for the TANA organizational elections of 2021.

The Subcommittee also met with the following via Teleconference:

Sri Kanakam Babu Inampudi, Chairman, TANA Nominations and Elections Committee (2019 - 2021)

Sri Harish Koya, Chairman, TANA Board of Directors (2019-2021)

Sri Ashok Babu Kolla, Joint Secretary of TANA (2019-2021)

FACTS: The Subcommittee ascertained the following facts

1. The established practice of TANA is that a list of eligible voters list approved by the Executive Committee (EC) is submitted by the EVP to the NEC by a deadline established in the TANA bylaws. TANA Members are provided an opportunity to submit updated addresses until a deadline determined by the BOD. The initial voters list is then updated with addresses and appropriate allocation to various regions and this list is provided by the EVP to the NEC. The NEC forwards this list to the Elections Trust which conducts the election. The Election Trust submits

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this list to National Change of Address (NCOA) processing to ensure that the addresses are current and uses the updated addresses for mailing the ballots.

2. On January 28, 2021, the EVP submitted an EC approved eligible voters list to the NEC. Subsequently, the BOD authorized a process for members to update their addresses. This list also included a person whose membership has been revoked and included members residing outside North America.
3. On April 5, 2021, the Executive Vice-President (EVP) submitted an updated voters list (List 1) to the Chairman, NEC, to be used for mailing of the ballots to members for the TANA 2021 organizational elections. This list had errors in allocation of members to appropriate regions as the updates to the addresses did not update the regions. This list also included a person whose membership has been revoked and included members residing outside North America. The NEC removed the ineligible voters and sent the corrected list to the Elections Trust on April 6, 2021.
4. The Joint Secretary sent a request to the NEC on 4/6/21 for possible updates of addresses for 3 Life members. The Chairman of the Board asked the Chairman of the NEC to see if it was possible to make these corrections. These corrections were not accepted by the NEC.
5. The voters list supplied by the EVP on April 5 did not include any of the requests for spousal additions made by members through the web site or emails to the secretary and joint secretary.
6. The voters list supplied by the EVP on April 5 did not include some of the address updates received before the prescribed deadline. Specifically, the voters list supplied by the EVP on April 5 did not include changes made to the addresses in the Membership Database before the initial eligible voters list was submitted to the NEC by EVP on 1/28/21. It is also not clear that 100% of the approved address update requests were correctly entered into the voters list submitted on 4/5/21, because of the lack of time for verification.
7. The Joint Secretary and the Secretary did not follow through on the BOD recommendation, and the established practice, to inform the members whether the address changes they requested were approved or not, and to give an opportunity for the member to validate the address change request.
8. On April 7, 2021, the Elections Trust sent back a list, with three different files, to NEC after applying NCOA corrections to the list and finding that the region allocations are incorrect.
9. On April 8, 2021, the Chairman of the NEC contacted the Chairman of the BOD for help in correcting the issue of the region allocation. The Chairman of the BOD suggested using the help of Joint Secretary in updating the list with correct regions.
10. On April 8, 2021, the Joint Secretary sent a list, with three files, back to the NEC; this list included some updates to the addresses as well as addition of some spousal members that were not in the April 5 list. This list was forwarded by NEC to the Elections Trust.
11. Subsequently, on April 8, 2021, the Joint Secretary requested corrections of mismatches between the address and spouse information in Life Member and Foundation Donor members for two Foundation Donor members, and for correction of information for one Life member. The NEC accepted the corrections for the mismatches of the two Foundation Donor Members but did not accept the correction for the Life Member.

12. On April 9, 2021, the Election Trust sent another list back to NEC claiming inaccuracies in the list it received earlier that day; this was forwarded by the NEC to the Joint Secretary for further corrections.
13. On April 11, 2021, the Joint Secretary sent a list to the NEC. That list was forwarded by NEC to the Elections Trust.
14. On April 18, 2021, Elections Trust sent a 'final mailing list' to NEC, which was based on the April 11 list of Joint Secretary. The NEC, at that time tallied the number of voters and found that this list had more voters than the April 5 Voters List. The Chairman of the NEC informed the Chairman of BOD, who called the Joint Secretary for an explanation. The Joint Secretary informed that the list sent by him on April 11 may have had some discrepancies from April 5 list. In an email to the Chairman of NEC on April 19, the Joint Secretary identified the changes as deletion of one spouse member and addition of 44 spouse members and provided the names of deletion and additions.
15. On April 21, 2021, the NEC decided not to use any of the lists supplied by the Joint Secretary, and use only the list supplied by the EVP on April 5 with the deletion of the revoked member and addresses outside North America.
16. The lists provided by, and changes made by, the Joint Secretary did not impact the actual voters list used by the NEC and Elections Trust in the 2021 organizational elections.
17. The lists sent by the Joint Secretary on April 8 and April 11 included several address changes in addition to the spousal additions and deletions identified on April 19.

CONCLUSIONS: The Subcommittee, based on its review of evidence, concludes the following.

1. The process of maintaining and updating the voters list is beset with many systemic issues including
 - a. The failure to concurrently update the TANA Membership Database identifying the approved and revoked members
 - b. Failure to update the Membership Database in a timely manner
 - c. The violation of the deadlines for preparing the voters list which narrowed the window for address updates
 - d. Lack of clarity regarding processes and deadlines for adding spousal members
 - e. Lack of clarity regarding processes and deadlines for correcting errors
 - f. Rushing the process for updating addresses by the members and verification before the elections.
 - g. Computer systems not being robust enough to deal with a surge of address update requests
 - h. Secretary and Joint Secretary not having enough time to update and verify the Database and voters list
 - i. Not having robust procedures and policies for updating the addresses and informing members

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- j. Failure to follow the existing procedures for maintaining the documentation and responding to the members.
 - k. Not having appropriate oversight of the address updating process
 - l. Lack of communication between the BOD and the Joint Secretary on changes to processes for verification and updating the addresses.
 - m. Lack of clarity regarding the authority of the NEC in making changes to the approved and officially submitted voters list.
2. As the Secretary and the Joint Secretary, who have the responsibility for maintaining the TANA Membership Database and make address changes, are often candidates for other offices during the elections, there is widespread concern about their ability to make changes to the lists to benefit themselves or the candidates they support.
 3. The NEC and the BOD Chairman, in hindsight, exhibited poor judgement in entrusting the corrections of the officially submitted voters list to a candidate in the election, which even under the best of circumstances would cast suspicions on the integrity of the process.
 4. The Joint Secretary submitted that he continued to update the excel spreadsheet of the voters list with changes identified after April 5, with the intention of updating the Membership Database with all the changes. The Subcommittee concludes that this was a reasonable action on his part.
 5. The Joint Secretary submitted that he took external help from individuals who are not associated with TANA to compare and verify the accuracy of records to update the database. The Subcommittee concludes that he has exceeded his authority in doing this and exposed the organization to risks of violation of privacy and database tampering.
 6. There appears to be a misunderstanding or lack of clear communication between the NEC and Joint Secretary regarding what was expected of the Joint Secretary on April 8 and April 11.
 7. The Joint Secretary submitted the changes made by him and submitted to the NEC were part of the database updates he was making and that he thought he was supposed to send all the changes to the NEC. The Subcommittee finds this to be a reasonable explanation for his actions.
 8. The address changes made by the Joint Secretary after April 5 were less than 100 in number, and were spread across all regions. There was adequate supporting documentation for some of these address changes. However, there were some changes for which the supporting documentation does not meet the expected standards. The Joint Secretary did not follow established procedures as he made some address changes supposedly based on verbal communications without adequate documentation, and he has not preserved some of the documentation that he says was provided to him.
 9. The deletion of a spouse member made by the Joint Secretary is an appropriate change to the database as one person was listed twice in the database, once as a spouse and once as a primary member. However, this deletion to the database should have been made only after being approved by the TANA Membership Verification Committee (MVC). The Subcommittee, however, notes that there is a general lack of understanding with regards to this issue.

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10. There were a total addition of 48 persons as spouses to existing members in the list submitted by the Joint Secretary to the NEC on 4/11/21 that were not present in the list submitted by the EVP on 4/5/21
11. Of the addition of spousal members, 24 of them were based on requests from members thru the web site or with emails. 23 of these 24 appear to be appropriate requests. However, the documentation support for some of these additions does not meet the expected standards. The Joint Secretary did not follow established procedures as he made some of these additions based on verbal communications without adequate documentation, and he has not preserved some of the documentation that he says was provided to him.
12. The spousal members could be added to the Membership Database only after being approved by the membership verification committee. These spouse members, even after the approval by MVC, would not have been eligible to cast votes in the organizational elections as they would not have met the deadline for eligibility. The Subcommittee, however, notes that there is a general lack of understanding with regards to this issue.
13. There were at least 24 additions of spouses that did not have an adequate explanation or any documentation support. The Joint Secretary submitted that 15 of these additions were due to system errors. The Subcommittee, however, does not see a pattern supportive of a system error, and concludes that there was external human intervention.
14. The unexplained spousal additions were small in number and were spread across multiple regions.
15. The pattern of address changes and unexplained spousal additions do not seem to be directed towards a particular region.
16. The voters list submitted by the EVP to the NEC is supposed to be a confidential document limited to only a small number of TANA Officers, who are entrusted to protect it. The Subcommittee regrettably notes that there is an egregious breach of confidentiality with regards to the voters list.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Subcommittee recognizes that it is the right and responsibility of the BOD to take appropriate actions considering the facts and conclusions presented. The Subcommittee makes the following recommendations to the BOD to ensure that the underlying systemic issues are corrected.

- 1) The processes and procedures for making up the final TANA voters list should include appropriate checks and balances to ensure reliability and transparency to ensure the trust and confidence of members and candidates in elections.
- 2) The systemic issues identified with regards to the computer system, Membership Database and voters list should be addressed immediately. This needs to be a priority for the BOD.
- 3) Additions and deletions to the Membership Database can only be done after being verified by MVC. Only those members approved before the voter eligibility deadline can be eligible to vote.

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- 4) The MVC and TANA Executive Committee (EC) have the responsibility to ensure that the voters list is accurate. The MVC, the EVP and the EC should meet the deadlines required by the bylaws and exercise due diligence in approving the voters list. The BOD should adhere to the bylaws with regards to the deadlines and exceptions should be granted only after careful examination of the reasons and consideration of the impact on election processes.
- 5) Ideally, the address updates to the membership be done continuously and by the members themselves online in a secure and verifiable way and acknowledged appropriately. The procedures, including deadlines, for updating the addresses and other member information should be communicated clearly to the members.
- 6) The final deadline for inclusion of updated addresses in the voters list should leave at least 60 days for verification and updating the database and voters list to be submitted to the NEC.
- 7) As the Joint Secretary is not a member of the BOD, the BOD should ensure that all decisions of the BOD regarding the Address Verification process are communicated to the Joint Secretary in writing via email or sharing of the relevant minutes.
- 8) The BOD guidelines for Elections should specifically address the process for the NCOA processing and final allocation of members to regions. Ideally, the NCOA processing and region allocation be completed before the final list is given to the NEC by EVP.
- 9) The MVC should be given the responsibility to review the final mailing list before it is submitted to the NEC and be given at least 7 days of time to accomplish this. There should be no changes to this list except for NCOA address corrections and removal of ineligible voters, if identified late, with the approval of BOD.
- 10) The BOD should start the preparations for elections in October of the even-numbered year to ensure appropriate time for development of guidelines and procedures so that the elections can be conducted smoothly and a credible voters list is available in time for elections.
- 11) It needs to be clarified that request for addition of spouses would need to be verified by the MVC and approved by the EC, and that only those spouses that applied for addition before the voter eligibility deadline would be eligible for voting. This needs to be part of the member education regarding eligibility for voting.
- 12) The BOD should strive to maintain the confidentiality of membership and voters lists. The BOD should develop a policy to address this issue that is very important and vital to the membership.
- 13) To improve member confidence in the election process, the BOD should consider entrusting the process of Membership Database and address corrections to a trustworthy agency that does not have an interest in influencing the outcome of the organizational elections.

Hanumaiah Bandla, Chairman

V. Chowdary Jampala, Member

Murali Vennam, Member

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