



Tom Bellamore

## Every Vote Counts

Several years ago, the California Avocado Commission (CAC) established a threshold for the commercial production of California avocados. Growers having an average annual production of less than 10,000 pounds in the three preceding marketing years are deemed “exempt” from paying the current year’s assessment. The change was meant to reduce the cost burden on the non-commercial grower, but it has election implications, too. Non-commercial growers do not receive a ballot in the Commission’s annual general election.

The size of the Commission’s board of directors changed as well, from 29 members down to 19 presently. The five growing districts currently in place are represented by two members

and one alternate member from each district, for a total of 15 grower commissioners. The balance of seats is held by two handler members, one handler alternate and one public member. Each year, five grower members, and one handler member, are elected to the board. Every two years alternate grower and handler members are elected to the available seats. Accordingly, CAC election ballots will vary slightly from year to year.

When a candidate puts forth their name for election to the Commission in a year when both a member seat and alternate member seat are open, it is no longer required that they declare which seat they are interested in filling. The preference of some candidates is to first serve as an alternate member, usually

to get better acquainted with the operation of the Commission before stepping up to the board table. To date, when the votes are counted in a year when two seats are open, the two candidates with the most votes have been offered seats on the Commission board. The candidate with the highest number of votes has been offered their choice of the member or alternate member seats, and the candidate with the second highest number of votes has been offered the remaining seat. In the event of a tie, lots are drawn to determine which candidate receives first choice.

Of the roughly 3,400 growers of California avocados, more than half may be exempt from payment of an assessment in any given year, leaving the voter base hovering around 1,700 grow-

VOTE (NO MORE THAN 3)			DISTRICT 3 CANDIDATES	BOARD SEAT PREFERENCE
1 <sup>ST</sup> CHOICE	2 <sup>ND</sup> CHOICE	3 <sup>RD</sup> CHOICE	ONE MEMBER AND ONE ALTERNATE SEAT ARE AVAILABLE	MEMBER, ALTERNATE, OR NO PREFERENCE
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	John Smith	Alternate Seat Preferred
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Jane Clark	Member Seat Preferred
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Write-in (Optional) <i>must include write-in name / phone number / email address</i>	

ers in a typical election year. Even more reason, then, to make sure that nothing deters interested growers and handlers from stepping forward as candidates and that the voting process for the electorate is simple and straightforward. Every vote must count.

With these objectives in mind, the Commission recently set about making some adjustments to the documents used to conduct the annual elections and the process itself. If you wish to become a candidate you will still have to complete an Affidavit of Eligibility, a Disclosure of Affiliations, a Nomination Petition and (optionally) a Candidate Statement, but these forms are being redesigned for ease of use. Things will

***“Of the roughly 3,400 growers of California avocados, more than half may be exempt from payment of an assessment in any given year, leaving the voter base hovering around 1,700 growers in a typical election year.”***

look a little different on the ballot, too, when it comes time to cast your vote.

The Commission’s Governance Committee reviewed various fair voting methods for multi-seat elections and recommended board adoption of ranked choice voting as a means of achieving proportional, more representative results. The ranked choice method allows voters to rank their choices in order (first, second, third) to show not only a preference for a single, top choice but a second or third choice as well. This method avoids splitting votes among similar candidates and ensures that more votes count toward the election of each voter’s choice. With ranked choice voting, the way the winner is chosen and how remaining seats are filled is a bit complicated and doesn’t warrant mention here, but the California De-

partment of Food and Agriculture—the agency charged with receiving and tallying the ballots—has assured the Commission that it is up to the task.

The annual CAC board election will be held in October 2019 for one producer member seat and one producer alternate seat in each of the five districts. In addition, one handler member seat and one handler alternate member seat also are open. All seats are for two-year terms. An election announcement and self-nomination packet will be sent to all commercial producers and handlers by July 15, 2019, and ballots will mail by September 23, 2019.

The board typically meets five times per year in Irvine, CA, and al-

though travel can sometimes be tough, the meetings are focused and productive. If you are interested in running for a seat on the board, please review the self-nomination packet carefully, because a few things will have changed. If you’re content with just casting your vote, pay attention, please, to the new ballot format so that your choices can be properly registered. Remember, a mistake can result in a disqualified vote.

The new board will be seated at the meeting at the Commission office on November 21, 2019. The Commission board always welcomes new talent and embraces diversity among its members, so don’t hesitate to step forward if you would like to join your fellow growers and handlers in guiding the industry and promoting the California avocado brand. 🥑



## Board of Directors

### District 1

Member/Jessica Hunter-**Secretary**  
Member/ Ryan Rochefort  
Alternate/Michael Perricone

### District 2

Member/Charley Wolk  
Member/Ohannes Karaoghlanian-**Vice Chair**  
Alternate/Bob Schaar

### District 3

Member/John Lamb-**Chairman**  
Member/Robert Grether-**Treasurer**  
Alternate/John Lloyd-Butler

### District 4

Member/Ed McFadden  
Member/Jason Cole  
Alternate/Bryce Bannatyne Jr.

### District 5

Member/Salvador Dominguez  
Member/Tyler Cobb  
Alternate/Randy Douglas

### Handlers

Member/Gary Caloroso  
Member/Peter Shore  
Alternate/Neil Witt

**Public Member**  
Daniella Malfitano

To contact a CAC representative, please visit:  
[CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/Commission/your-representatives](http://CaliforniaAvocadoGrowers.com/Commission/your-representatives)