

alternate, if available, will become a member. In case of a vacancy in the office of vice chairperson of a four to five member county committee, the first alternate, if available, for the LAA of the vice chairperson will become a member and the county committee will conduct an organizational meeting to select a vice chairperson; and in case of a vacancy in the office of the first alternate, a respective second alternate, if available, will become the first alternate. When unanimously recommended by the members of the county committee, as constituted under this paragraph, and approved by the State committee, the offices of chairperson and vice chairperson of the county committee may be filled by any county committee member without regard to the order of succession specified in this paragraph.

(b) In the event that a vacancy, other than one caused by temporary absence, occurs in the membership of the county committee and no alternate is available to fill the vacancy, a special election may be held to fill such vacancies as exist in the membership.

(c) In the event that a vacancy, other than one caused by temporary absence, occurs in the membership of the county committee and no alternate is available to fill the vacancy, the State committee may designate a person to serve out the balance of the term of the vacant position on the county committee.

#### § 7.15 Challenges and appeals.

(a) Challenges and appeals by nominees regarding voter eligibility or the results of a county committee election must be handled in accordance with the Uniform Guidelines.

(b) Any nominee has the right to challenge an election in writing, in person, or both within 15 calendar days after the results of the election are posted.

(c) Challenges to the election must be made to the county committee, which will provide a decision on the challenge to the appellant within 7 calendar days of the receipt of the challenge.

(d) The county committee's decision may be appealed to the State Committee within 15 calendar days of re-

ceipt of the notice of the decision if the appellant desires.

(e) In the event that an election is nullified as a result of a challenge or appeal, or an error in the election process, a special election must be conducted by the county office and closely monitored by the FSA State office.

#### § 7.16 Report of election.

(a) The county committee must file an election report with the Secretary through the Deputy Administrator's office not later than 20 days after the date an election is held.

(b) The election report must include:

(1) The number of eligible voters in the local administrative area;

(2) The number of ballots cast in the election by eligible voters;

(3) The percentage of eligible voters that cast ballots;

(4) The number of ballots disqualified in the election;

(5) The percentage of ballots disqualified;

(6) The number of nominees for each seat up for election;

(7) The race, ethnicity, and gender of each nominee, as provided by the voluntary self identification of each nominee; and

(8) The final election results, including the number of ballots received by each nominee.

#### § 7.17 Remedial measures.

(a) FSA will consider additional efforts to achieve the objective that county committees are fairly representative of farmers and ranchers within areas covered by the committees. Such efforts may include, but are not limited to, compliance reviews of selected counties, further centralization of the election process, and the appointment of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to particular committees in accordance with a notice published in the FEDERAL REGISTER issued by the Secretary authorizing such appointments.

(b) The Secretary may ensure inclusion of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers by appointment of 1 additional voting member to a county committee when a significant population of socially disadvantaged farmers and