



**NRHA**

3000 NW 10<sup>th</sup> St.

Oklahoma City, OK 73107-5302

405-946-7400 phone

405-946-8410 fax

September 10, 2007

Dear NRHA Members:

Many members of the NRHA will remember 2007 as a year filled with challenges for our organization. Without a doubt, the members of the NRHA elected board (the Executive Board) have experienced those challenges right along with the members. By definition, the elected board is the NRHA governing body responsible for the daily operation of the association, decision-making necessary for the continuity of the association and those issues requiring immediate attention. What that means is that beyond just being aware of and becoming activated by an issue, the elected board has the daily responsibility to contend with and ultimately resolve issues and points of contention that face NRHA. In carrying out this duty, the elected board must live by five basic tenets.

1. We must be inclusive of and balance the needs of all members and all points of view.
2. We must respond to problems "up front" (we cannot wait for others to act and then respond).
3. We must be aware of and follow the rules, policies and procedures of NRHA (which includes the confidentiality of our deliberations).
4. We must be accountable to the members for what we say and do.
5. We must ensure that NRHA meets its objectives as defined in the bylaws.

It is not possible (given the constraints listed above) for the elected board to be less than deliberate about what we do. In fact, to be otherwise would be outside of the bounds of our job description. As a result, when difficult and complex issues are in the process of deliberation or have not reached their rule-driven and/or policy conclusion, the elected board is not at liberty to speak publicly in detail about those issues. This restriction includes any reaction to rumor, innuendo or outright misstatement of fact by those not privy to the complete discussion or set of facts. We face many of the same situations as any other not-for-profit organization.

**NATIONAL REINING HORSE ASSOCIATION**

As has always been true, any member of NRHA is free to express themselves and their opinion about any subject; informed or not. In 2007, we have seen the full impact of those opinions expressed via e-mails, instant messaging, chat rooms and alternative reining websites. The information shared by such methods is done so in an extremely rapid fashion which can be useful. Unfortunately, rapid sharing of information without balance, responsibility and accountability can be, and often has been a detriment to our association in 2007. The elected board has seen numerous comments about our actions, (and about ourselves personally), broadcast on the internet. Often those comments are not true and are also uninformed. In some cases these comments have been made by people who have never been to a meeting and have never directly communicated with, or even met the person they are being publicly and personally critical of. In addition, it has been rare, in 2007, for those critical voices to offer substantive alternatives for solving the issues they demean. It is basically a case of representation without taxation and it has impaired the due process of our governing bodies and through them our members. Often, in 2007, those with the loudest voices and most narrow point of view have been heard the most.

As with all of the current points of contention, the increasing difficulty in managing and governing NRHA was apparent to the elected board early on in 2007. Rather than inflame the members and cast random blame about how we had become so contentious an organization, the elected board chartered the most complete self-evaluation that NRHA had ever undergone. This process was initially launched by the executive board in March and April of 2007 and ultimately became the NRHA Organizational Review. After hundreds of hours of NRHA member volunteer time and the complete cooperation of the NRHA staff, the review was completed in July of 2007 and presented to the full board in August. This review basically revealed a financially solvent organization, full of committed volunteers and staff, functioning with inadequate, outdated technology. The review prescribed a set of very specific remedies, including the halting of all rule changes and programs that overly burdened the office and/or the governance structure of NRHA. In addition, the review called for massive re-organization and redefining of the way NRHA is governed and managed. While the results of the review can be seen as critical of the system that we currently have, it must also be seen as evidence that the body that launched the process (the elected board) is willing to undergo constructive criticism for the good of the organization.

The future of NRHA is the largest concern of the members of the elected board. In the current, highly-charged political climate we are hearing many constructive comments, but we are also hearing accusations about elected members of NRHA that are known to be slanted, unfair, unfounded or, in some cases, simply not true. What we see is a destructive process that can only be a negative for our organization, regardless of the outcome of the election. The character assassination of some of NRHA's most committed and long serving volunteers and staff cannot possibly create a useful post-election climate. The members of the elected board are calling on all members to see the issues of 2007 for what they are: the culmination of a long-term need to update our organization and governance. We also call on all members of NRHA to see the problems of 2007 **for what they are NOT**: the failure of individual volunteer members of NRHA to do all they could to make NRHA better in the future. We can never be better as an organization if we continue to tear our organization apart. We can only advance in the best possible way if we join together for a better tomorrow in NRHA.

Sincerely,

The NRHA Elected Board of Directors

NATIONAL REINING HORSE ASSOCIATION