

# Blue Ribbon Committee Report

to

**UMECRA Board of Directors**

**Final Report**

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## ***Dr Beecher's Letter***

Forty years ago, UMECRA was founded as an organization of distance riding events. The rides at this time were the only tangible events that could bring substance to an organization.

The purpose of this group of rides was first to provide rules consistently from event to event. Up to that time each ride was its own little empire. The second thing was to maintain records. Third - to develop an annual award system. Thus was born Upper Midwest Endurance and Competitive Rides Association (UMECRA). The system worked well and of course the annual meeting and awards presentation was started. The rest, as they say, is history.

Currently, we are at a crossroads in maintaining viability in this sport. The numbers at some rides have fallen drastically. Many rides are subsidized by the manager and/or their volunteers. The rides have changed their format to having many events in a weekend. They attempt to get by with often times not the best trails, not the best camping, not the best management, etc. All-in-all, this organization, although it's not dying, it is struggling.

Strength in numbers may be of some help if we change our formats and recognize person membership. We, hypothetically, go from this organization of fifty rides to fifty rides and 300 members. If we do this we should require all the auxiliary organizations' members to join UMECRA en masse.

The details of this could be worked out. Now I know this is a pause-and-gulp moment. Many of the auxiliary groups (AHDRA, APDRA, etc) are very viable organizations. Many are closely associated with breed organizations. Most of them represent the duplication of what UMECRA does.

I think this could all be done with one organization. I would suggest that a regional system be developed for UMECRA; i.e. Minnesota and Iowa-one region; Michigan and Wisconsin-second region; Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio-third region. The breed awards could still come from the parent groups through UMECRA. At this time we know of several groups that are duplicating efforts in record keeping, etc. They all require a membership fee and they all require someone to do the work. I know these represent a lot of personal input and effort.

This could all be done by a parent organization. In today's world of spreadsheets, computers, etc. one entry per rider could take care of all the record keeping. One membership fee could cover what now requires several memberships. To me, the advantages certainly outweigh the disadvantages. Financially, it would be cheaper for the riders and should result in a stronger UMECRA. A system of regional awards could be formatted.

This would require some time, dedication, intelligence, forgiveness, cooperation, and diplomacy. It will be a push-me pull-me at first. Think positive, and the negatives will disappear. If a positive vote should occur, I suggest the board should establish a blue ribbon committee to address the details or possibly several committees; i.e. one for records, one for finances, one for awards. Obviously, this epistle could go on ad nauseum. Enough said for starters.

Happy trails.  
R.A. Beecher, DVM

## ***Agenda February 16, 2012***

### **“Blue Ribbon Committee”**

**Roll call**

**Changes to agenda/approval of agenda**

**Elect chairperson**

**Elect secretary**

**Clarification of issues**

**Voting**

**Regional/breed organizations**

**Establish committees**

**Survey of ride managers**

**Survey of members**

**Survey of regional organizations**

**Survey of breed organizations**

**Other committees ?**

**Next steps/Next meeting**

To facilitate fairness and efficiency, meeting protocol will loosely follow *Robert's Rules in Plain English* by Doris P. Zimmerman (1997, (because that's what I have available for reference).

Basically, that means

- for action to be taken there should be a motion, a second, followed by discussion, and a vote
- a majority vote passes a motion
- there must be a 2/3<sup>rd</sup> vote for someone to “call the question,” stop discussion and force a vote
- to assure that all agenda items are addressed, I reserve the right to limit the length of time for discussion (e.g., only five more minutes to discuss this topic, or only three more comments on this topic). If there is objection to limiting debate, it will need to be agreed upon by a 2/3rds majority.

## ***Blue Ribbon Committee Meeting Minutes February 16, 2012***

Conference Call  
February 16, 2012  
7:00 PM, CST

Attendance: Barb Kurki, Barry Saylor, Bruce Birr, Cathy Cook, Elinore Tonsor, Gene Dake, Holly Kemmis, Joslyn Seefeldt, Julie Jackson-Biegert, Lori Windows, Lynn Riechert, Marty Power, Peggy Pasillas, Robin Schadt, R. A. Beecher.

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM, CST.
2. Barry Saylor moved, Dr. Beecher seconded the nomination of Marty Power as Chair of this committee. There being no other nominations, Marty accepted the position as chair of the committee.
3. Dr. Beecher moved, Gene Dake seconded Elinore Tonsor as Secretary of the Blue Ribbon Committee. There being no other nominations, Elinore accepted the position as secretary of the committee.
4. Marty explained the issues at hand:
  - a. Voting rights within UMECRA.
  - b. The position of regional and breed organizations within UMECRA.

Discussion ensued regarding these issues, and the possibility of related issues becoming a significant part of this committee's discussions and suggested actions.

5. Marty suggested that sub-committees be formed to collect input from regional/breed organizations, ride managers, and riders. (Please note that it was agreed that for the purpose of clarity, the term "members" would be replaced with "riders" and "ride managers.")
  - a. Peggy Passilas agreed to work as the survey coordinator, and suggested that "Survey Monkey" would be used. Peggy agreed to have those without e-mail have access to a hard copy of the survey by contacting her and she would mail one out to them.
  - b. The sub-committees are as follow:
    - i. Ride Managers – Elinore Tonsor, Barry Saylor, Wayne Gastfield, Barb Kurti, Diane Schmidt.
    - ii. Riders – Holly Kemmis, Julie Jackson-Biegert, Robin Schadt, Cathy Cook.
    - iii. Regional Organizations – Gene Dake, Lynn Reichert, Joslyn Seefeldt, Bruce Birr, Tony Troyer.
    - iv. Breed Organizations – Dawn Haas, Lori Windows, R.A. Beecher

Marty will contact those unable to attend this phone conference to see which sub committee they would prefer to assist.

Significant discussion ensued regarding who was to be surveyed and what questions the survey would include. Some of the questions put forth were:

“Do we need to change the voting structure of UMECRA?”

“Should we investigate the regional organizations becoming subsidiaries of UMECRA?”

“Should we investigate the breed organizations becoming subsidiaries of UMECRA?”

The question that was agreed upon is as follows: Would you be interested in seeing UMECRA become a ride managers and riders organization?

Holly moved, Peggy seconded that the survey be completed in a multiple step process with the first stage centering on voting. Motion Carried.

Julie moved, Bruce seconded that the survey be sent to all UMECRA members as well as members of regional/breed organizations including non-UMECRA members. Motion carried.

Peggy Pasillas explained the process of the survey, and it was agreed among the committee membership that demographic would be included in the survey.

Members of the this committee, as well as the membership of the sub-committees will be listed in the newsletter, with members urged to express their opinions to these committee members as well as being urged to take the survey.

Discussion continued centered on the regional organizations and their role in this action.

Marty declared the meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM, CST.

Respectfully submitted,

Elinore Tonsor  
Blue Ribbon Committee Secretary

An Addendum to the Minutes Reads:

The committee voted 13 yes to 5 no to conduct a 5 question survey of UMECRA members and regional organization members who are not currently members of UMECRA.

## **Agenda February 23, 2012**

### **Agenda BRC 2/23/12**

This special BRC meeting was called solely to allow for a vote on which version to use of the Member Survey.

An email from Peggy to committee members stated:

All - as requested - 2 versions of the survey. The first version is questions 1-3, the 2nd version is questions 1-5. I believe the introduction can remain the same.

Introduction: At the UMECRA Banquet in January, a blue ribbon committee was formed to look into some possible changes to the organization. In order to understand what UMECRA member and members of related organizations opinions are, there will be several short surveys taken to gather your thoughts on the various subjects. The first issue we would like to get your opinion on is regarding voting rights.

The By-Laws state in Article II Section 7 Delegates. Each manager of a endurance/competitive trail ride shall submit the names of its official voting delegates or its authorized alternate voting delegate(s) to be recorded by the corporate secretary prior to any meeting of members.... Only voting delegates may vote on business presented at a meeting. Article VII Section 4. Voting Procedures at Meetings of the Corporation, b "Each Ride membership shall be entitled to appoint a single voting delegate for each ride-day of their ride/event." In addition, there are four Rider Representatives who have voting privileges.

Please respond to the following short survey regarding UMECRA member voting practices. Your responses will remain anonymous.

1. 1. Indicate what organizations you are currently a member in (select all that apply):

UMECRA

DRAW

GLDRA

MNDRA

MDDA

AHA

AHDRA

AERC

2. 2. Are you a ride manager for a UMECRA sanctioned ride?

Yes

No

3. 3. Do you believe UMECRA should amend its bylaws to allow all members to be voting members, rather than the current format where only ride managers and rider reps have voting rights?

Yes

No

4. 4. If you are currently a member of UMECRA, but not a Ride Manager, would you increase your participation in UMECRA if you had voting privileges?

Yes

No

5. 5. If you are not currently a member of UMECRA, would you be more likely to join if you had voting privileges?

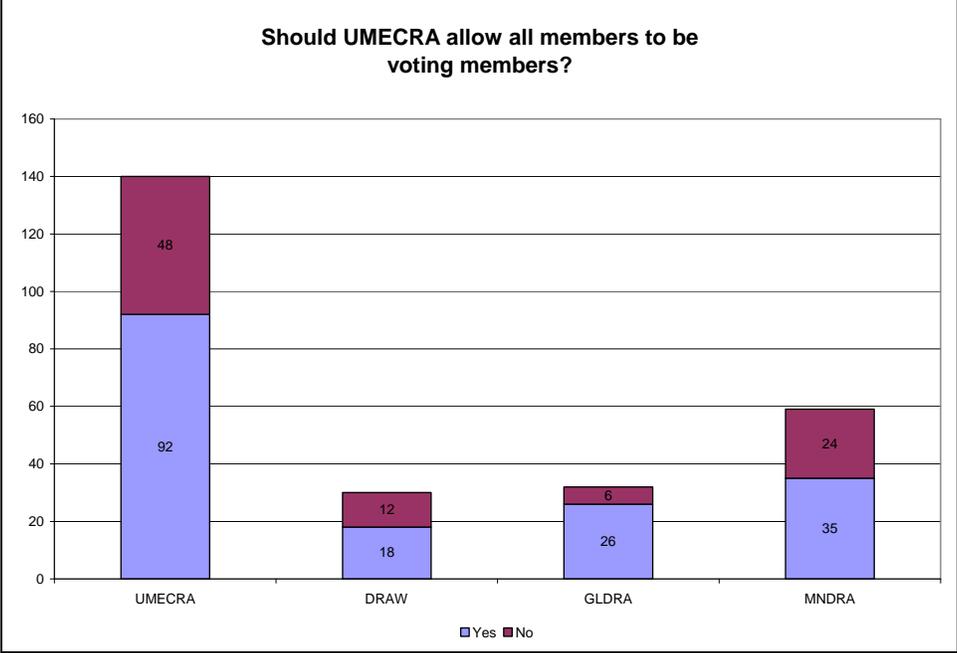
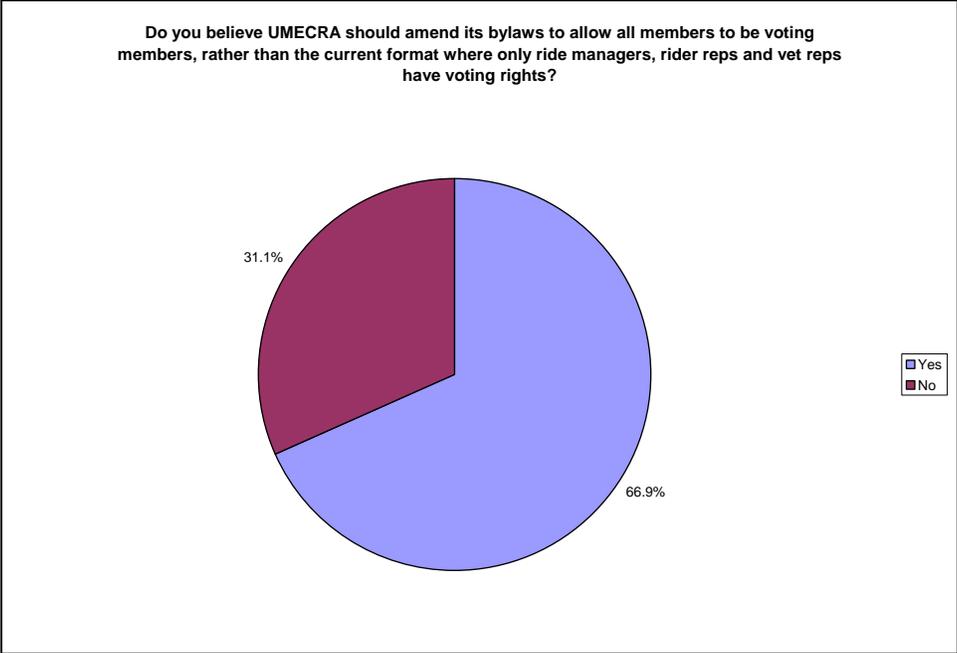
Yes

No

Members Present: Barb Kurti, Barry Saylor, Bruce Birr, Cathy Cook, Dianne Schmidt, Elinore Tonsor, Julie Jackson-Biegert, Marty Power, Peggy Pasillas, Wayne Gastfield.

The final vote (both by email and call-in) was 13 yes and 5 no to conduct the five question survey.

# Partial<sup>1</sup> Results from March 2012 UMECRA Member Survey



<sup>1</sup> Full results published in the UMECRA April 2012 Newsletter.  
Blue Ribbon Committee Report: 4 Dec 2012

## ***Agenda April 17, 2012***

**Agenda  
BRC  
April 17, 2012  
7:00 CDT**

Call to order

Roll call

Approval of agenda

Approval of minutes

Old Business

Discuss survey results

New Business

Update of Board meeting

Next steps:

    Survey of ride managers

    Survey of regional organizations

    Survey of breed organizations

    Other surveys?

Concerns of committee protocol

## **Blue Ribbon Committee Meeting Minutes April 17, 2012**

BRC Meeting Minutes  
Conference call on 4/17/12  
7:00 pm CST

Attendance: Barb Gardner, Barb Kurti, Dianne Schmidt, Elinore Tonsor, Gene Dake, Holly Kemmis, Julie Jackson-Biegert, Marty Power, Peggy Pasillas, Tony Troyer, Wayne Gastfield

The meeting was called to order by Marty Power at 7:00 pm.

We agreed to proceed with additional surveys and that each sub-committee would be responsible for gathering information about the advantages and disadvantages of restructuring UMECRA for riders, ride managers, regional organization and breed organizations.

Peggy Pasillas volunteered to send out your surveys using Survey Monkey. Subcommittees are to get the questions they want asked and a list of the people they want to survey.

We gave ourselves a month to get this done and agreed we want all information back by May 25<sup>th</sup> so we can schedule our next BRC meeting for the last week in May.

BRC Sub Committees (\*designates committee chair)

- Riders

Holly Kemmis, holly.kemmis@kohler.com  
\*Julie Jackson-Biegert, jujacks@fuse.net  
Robin Schadt, robinschadt@ad.com  
Cathy Cook, cookdc@avci.net

- Ride Managers

\*Elinore Tonsor, helinorelonsor@earthlink.net  
Barry Saylor, bsaylor1947@gmail.com  
Wayne Gastfield, no email address  
Barb Kurti, silverheartsfarm@yahoo.com  
Dianne Schmidt, schmidtdianne@yahoo.com

- Regional Organizations

Gene Dake, dedake@dishmail.net  
Lynn Reichert, lynnreichert@msn.com  
Joslyn Seefeldt, joslynsfiberfarm@aol.com  
Bruce Birr, bbirr@centurytel.net  
Barb Gardner, barb@doublebarallc.com  
\*Tony Troyer, il4aerc@aol.com

- Breed Organizations (No chair person designated)

Dawn Haas, jjehaas@centurytel.net  
Lori Windows, kickbuttshaman@cs.com  
R.A. Beecher, docbeech@netins.net

The following people agreed to serve as a liaison with the Breed and Regional Organizations:

- AHDRA – Lori Windows
- ApDRA – Dawn Haas
- DRAW – Jos Seefeldt
- GLDRA – Gene Dake
- MDDA – Tony Troyer
- MnDRA – Lynn Reichert

Respectfully submitted  
Marty Power

## ***Agenda August 21, 2012***

BRC Agenda  
8/21/12  
8:00 CST

Call to order

Roll call

Approval of the agenda

Approval of the minutes (4/17/12)

Old Business

    Sub committee reports

New Business

    How to move forward

## **Blue Ribbon Committee Meeting Minutes August 21, 2012**

Blue Ribbon Committee  
Minutes  
August, 21, 2012

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 pm CST by Marty Power.

The role call was taken and the following members were present: Bruce Birr, Julie Jackson-Biegert, Lori Windows, Tony Troyer, Marty Power.

The agenda was approved with no additions.

The minutes from the last meeting (4/17/12) were not submitted for approval. It was determined that the email Marty Power sent to the BRC committee following the April 17<sup>th</sup> meeting on 4/19/12 would be used in lieu of formal minutes. These were approved as read.

Old Business:

Lori reported that AHDRA, because it is a breed organization drawing membership from across the country, would not be appropriate to be subsumed under UMECRA. It was assumed this would also be true for ApDRA. We discussed the advantages/disadvantages of regional organization merging with UMECRA. Bruce said that he thinks that members of GLDRA feel that the number of rides in their area, quality of awards, etc., was enough for their members to not have to join another organization. It was decided that (given the information the committee has at present) the regional organizations do not see merging with UMECRA as in their best interest.

New Business:

We discussed strategies for moving forward.

Marty will ask Peggy to send out a notice to the email list and have Julie put on Facebook the questions/issues we want members to discuss/provide input. We will focus discussion on #1 in the September newsletter and #2 in the October newsletter.

1. What are the advantages and disadvantage of changing UMECRA from a ride manager organization (where only ride managers, rider reps, and vet reps have voting rights) to a one member/one vote organization?
2. How can UMECRA and the regional organizations (GLDRA, MNDRA, DRAW) better work together to support each other and improve distance riding in the Midwest?

Marty will (with help from Tony and Theresa) write a brief piece for the September newsletter about the procedure that needs to be followed to bring the one member/one vote up for a vote at the 2013 annual meeting.

Bruce offered to look at the current Bylaws to determine how much work would need to be done if the one member/one vote passes at the 2013 annual meeting. Is it possible/practical to have a draft of the new bylaws ready to be voted on at that time?

Tony Troyer motioned and Lori Windows seconded that the meeting be adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marty Power

## ***Newsletter Write-ups***

### **February/March & April A Blue Ribbon Committee...**

The “Blue Ribbon Committee” (BRC) has been busy, but we need your help. Over the next few months we will be sending out a series of short surveys. Please take the time to respond.

- What is your vision for UMECRA?
- We want to hear your ideas about how to move UMECRA forward.

The following sub-committees were established:

- Riders – Holly Kemmis, Julie Jackson-Biegert, Robin Schadt, Cathy Cook
- Ride Managers – Elinore Tonsor, Barry Saylor, Wayne Gastfield, Barb Kurti, Dianne Schmidt
- Regional Organizations – Gene Dake, Lynn Reichert, Joslyn Seefeldt, Bruce Birr, Barb Gardner
- Breed Organizations – Dawn Haas, Lori Windows, R.A. Beecher

The following people agreed to serve as a liaison with the Breed and Regional Organizations:

- AHDRA – Lori Windows
- ApDRA – Dawn Haas
- DRAW – Jos Seefeldt
- GLDRA – Gene Dake
- MDDA – Tony Troyer
- MnDRA – Lynn Reichert

Send your comments and concerns to any or all of the above people.

And, a BIG THANK YOU to the BRC for your outstanding work thus far!

Marty Power

### **September**

The Blue Ribbon Committee...

is finishing up it's work, but need your help before making a recommendation to the UMECRA Board of Directors.

Please send your thoughts and comments to the newsletter editor, Peggy Pasillas at [UMECRAnews@gmail.com](mailto:UMECRAnews@gmail.com) by 10/1/12 to be included in the October newsletter so we can have an open discussion of the membership about these important decisions facing UMECRA.

We will have space in October newsletters to comment on the following questions.

What are the advantages and disadvantage of changing UMECRA from a ride manager organization (where only ride managers, rider reps, and vet reps have voting rights) to a one member/one vote organization?

How can UMECRA and the regional organizations (GLDRA, MNDRA, DRAW) better work together to support each other and improve distance riding in the Midwest?

We will also be discussing these questions on FaceBook, so join the conversation there as well.

Based on all of the information we have gathered from the survey and other member input, the next step will be for the BRC to make a recommendation

to the UMECRA Board of Directors at the November Board meeting. The Board will then decide what (if anything) to present to the membership for a vote at the annual meeting.

Thanks for your attention and contribution to the conversation

## ***Incomplete List of the Membership/Voting Structure***

**The following is an incomplete list of the membership/voting structure of various distance riding associations.**

### **SEDRA**

#### **ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP**

Membership shall be open to all and shall be of the following types: Single Membership \$30.00

– Is open to individuals eighteen (18) years of age or over. **This is a voting membership.**

Junior Individual Membership - \$10.00 Open to individuals under eighteen (18) years of age as of July 1st and to remain as junior members for the fiscal year. This is a voting membership, with **voting being limited to those junior members fourteen (14) years of age** as of July 1st.... Each **family membership shall be entitled to a maximum of two (2) votes.**

### **OAATS**

#### **ARTICLE VI MEMBERSHIPS, VOTING RIGHTS AND DUES**

Section 3 Only Adult Full Members of OAATS (as defined in Article VI, Section 2a) will be allowed to vote in any election or on any issue.

Section 2 Types of membership:

OAATS shall have four (6) types of memberships. The BOD shall determine the classifications and privileges, other than voting rights, of those memberships.

(a) Individual Affiliate **voting membership**: a person who is a current AHA member through OAATS. May **vote**, hold office, and/or be a delegate through this club. (b) Individual Associate **Non-Voting membership**: a person who is not a current affiliate AHA member through this club. (c) Youth Affiliate is a **Non-Voting membership**

### **DRAW**

#### **ARTICLE III MEMBERSHIP**

Section 5: You must be a member in good standing to hold an office, be nominated for office, or **vote** at a D.R.A.W. meeting.

### **NATRC**

#### **ARTICLE X MEMBERSHIP**

Section 1. Any person interested in the purposes and objectives of this organization may be eligible for membership, and upon proper application and payment of the required dues may be accepted in membership.

Section 4. **No member shall be entitled to vote unless he is a paid-up member in good standing** at the time when such voting takes place.

### **UMECRA**

#### **Article VII MEMBERSHIP**

Section 4. VOTING PROCEDURES AT MEETINGS OF THE CORPORATION. Delegates shall be chosen by each ride as follows:

**a.** The members of the Board of Directors, Officers, Veterinary Representative and Rider

Representatives of the corporation shall serve and be accredited as voting delegates of the corporation. However, Advisory Positions on the Board may not serve as voting delegates unless otherwise qualified herein.

**b.** Each Ride membership shall be entitled to appoint a single voting delegate for each ride-day of their ride/event. For example, for a ride held over a Friday, Saturday and Sunday, that event shall be entitled to three (3) voting delegates, regardless of whether they have multiple divisions or events on a particular ride day. However, the ride must have at least one sanctioned event or division on a day for it to qualify as a ride day for purposes of assigning voting delegates. Additionally, the Board shall reserve the right to confirm appointment of voting delegate(s) to the spirit of this Section, in order to avoid splitting of days at the same ride location time and place in an effort to increase appointment of voting delegates.

**c.** Although one person may serve in a combination of the above positions, s/he may exercise only one vote as a delegate. Said delegates shall elect the officers and directors of the corporation and shall, by majority vote of the delegates present at any such meeting, approve rule changes proposed by the Board of Directors or decide whether to permanently adopt interim rules previously made by the Board of Directors, together with such other powers as may be authorized under these By-Laws.

## **Note from Connie Caudill on AERC Voting**

From: Connie Caudill [conniecaudill@yahoo.com]  
Sent: Saturday, September 29, 2012 11:42 AM  
To: Marty & Chris Power  
Subject: Re: question about voting in AERC

Hi Marty,

I can answer only by what I have experienced.

The members vote for the directors whom then represent them.

The members can attend the Board meetings but unless they are recognized by the chairman, they can't join in the discussion and don't vote in the board meetings. We have in the past sent out things for the membership to vote on but I think it only had to do with bylaw changes.

The committee chairs are appointed by the president and approved by the Board. The committee chairs bring most of the ideas to the Board for a vote.

I am not sure if there are any other things the members vote on. I think if a member can get enough signatures (like 5%), they can bring something up for a vote from the entire membership.

The Board votes most everything but should discuss with the members as much as possible before making a decision on things.

For a rule change, AERC has a policy that we will run the change in 2 Endurance News before making a final decision about changing it.

For policies we don't even publish them in the Endurance News but we do have a Policies and Procedures manual.

Personally I don't think a club like UMECRA would want to use AERC as an example. I know in our little endurance organization it is a lot different. The Daniel Boone Distance riders do not have a Bod or committees. We have officers that are voted in by the members. We meet once a year and that is where the club makes all our decisions. If someone doesn't like one of our rules, they have to wait until our annual meeting to try and get it changed. All members feel a part of the club and know their voice is heard if they attend the meeting. If they don't attend they can send word on how they feel. Our club is really small, only about 60 members so it is easy to work with.

I would think a club the size of UMECRA would want something in between.

Good luck,

Connie

From: Marty & Chris Power <power@speednet.com>  
To: conniecaudill@yahoo.com  
Sent: Saturday, September 29, 2012 7:42 AM  
Subject: question about voting in AERC

Connie,

I am chairperson of a UMECRA committee looking at changing our bylaws to allow the membership voting privileges rather than the current rule where ride managers and four rider representatives make the decisions for the organization. I'm looking at the membership/voting structure for other organization and copied below from the AERC Bylaws.

6.06. A “Voting Member” shall be each Active Regular Adult Member and each Adult Lifetime Member, unless otherwise restricted by provisions of these Bylaws or Rules. A Voting Member is entitled to one vote on each matter submitted to a vote of the Members. Youth Members, Affiliate Members, all Special Memberships other than Adult Lifetime and any Inactive Members shall not be entitled to vote on Conference matters.

6.07. A quorum at any meeting of Members shall consist of 20% of the Voting Members of the Conference.

6.08. The Members present at a duly called or held meeting at which a quorum is present may continue to transact business until adjournment notwithstanding the withdrawal of enough Members to leave less than a quorum, if such action taken, other than adjournment, is approved by at least a majority of Members required to constitute a quorum.

I'm interested in how decisions are made by AERC; which decisions (if any) are made by the Board and which are voted on by the membership at large.

Thanks for your help.

Marty Power  
AERC # M33 298

## **Comments from FaceBook**

(unedited)

In response to the question:

**What are the advantages and disadvantage of changing UMECRA from a ride manager organization (where only ride managers, rider reps, and vet reps have voting rights) to a one member/one vote organization?**

[Janet Hedding Sarver](#) I think it would give riders a vested interest in the organization and inject some energy into the discussions. That might help riders connect better with the annual meeting too.

[Roberta Harms](#) I agree that change comes to all groups. I am not against members having a vote at the meetings, however at the big meeting members who are NOT ride managers vote as proxy managers. There are some rides that go without a voice, so let managers know you will be there. So being a manager only voting group is only a concept now anyways! IMO

[Linda L. Fassett Rudolphi](#) That is a good point [Roberta Harms](#) - a proxy voter usually is just filling in a vote and not necessarily thinking about the subject as an individual.

[Tony Troyer](#) I would look at this as a way to get down to the real ponit of the pro and cons of how UMECRA is doing business in times that have changed. Change can be good and it can be really bad. The BRC is just wanting to explore outside the box to see if there is something we can do in all area's of UMECRA.

[Joslyn Seefeldt](#) There are several sides to this issue (ain't that always the way!). As a rider, I can see where it would be great to have more of a voice in how UMECRA operates. As a ride manager, not sure I would be in favor of having riders make decisions that could potentially affect how I manage my ride. Not trying to open a can of worms but, until you've been in the trenches as a ride manager, I don't think most riders realize all the stuff that goes on behind the scenes while managing a ride. Don't get me wrong - I am not trying to put ride managers and riders on opposite side of the fence - rather, I am a bit worried that riders could inadvertently pass some rule/regulation that could turn off ride managers from continuing to manage. And, I think we can all agree that is something no one wants to see happen.

[Joan Stokdyk](#) I could see having some items being open to all members and see other items being decided on just by the ride managers and rider rep. The hard part might be deciding what should be open to all and what should not be open to all.

[Laura Husser](#) in my tenure i have performed EVERY job required to put on a rde at least once except DVM( i can't get an honorary degree) and manager(i'm averse to self toture). i do not know what motivates these precious few to accept the task, but if loosing the vote causes even one manager to cash in his/er dance card, i am opposed. how do the managers feel about this?

[Tony Troyer](#) My thought was just to have all members the right to vote for the Elected Officers at convention only! This way if you want to have a "say" in UMECRA you can vote for all the officers that "you" think will do the job well and it would take the voting of RM's that puts on numerous rides / stacking the deck since you should be voting how the RM wants you to vote as if it was the RM personally casting the vote. [Roberta Harms](#) does this spell it out well enough?

[Tony Troyer](#) This way the Rider reps would get voted on at convention also... We have had years that only 25 to 30 votes get mailed back into the BoD for Reps, why not give those that care enough about coming to convention the right to elect them in?

[Christina Hyke](#) Okay, I realize I haven't been to many rides lately... but maybe that makes me a little less biased? My big thought reading this is "if it ain't broke don't fix it" Why the change? What brought this to the forefront? UMECRA seems to be pretty smoothly operating... so keep it the way it is.

[Jennifer Allen](#) The main concern is that riders are not getting a say in the bureaucracy of the organization, I think. But as a being an assist RM, I have seen a lot of things - and experienced more than I would have thought - that a Rider never does. Hence the "unwillingness" of RM's to support this kind of move. There is a lot of work that goes into managing a ride - before, during and after. Sometimes you end the weekend wondering how you ever do it, and WHY you ever do it!

How do you enact such a change if the managers already have the voting power? Dissolve the organization for five weeks so you can create a whole new system? Because it might take that - and longer - to draft, revise, and vote in a new system.

Don't forget the rider reps! Yes, they are elected at convention by a majority of ride managers from the state, but when was the last time you told your rider rep about a problem or concern you had? It's what they're there for! Consider telling a ride manager (when there isn't anything going on, or at another ride since there is not much down-time during the manager's ride) about your concern. Ask them if they would present something to the board, etc. Use your managers like delegates. Sure - they may still vote however they want, but at least they will have your idea in the back of their head, and maybe it will give them a new view point.

[Christina Hyke](#) The gravity of consequences that could go wrong in a distance group if governed by votes has to be considered. Seriously had not thought of this before, as I thought most organizations operate on member voting, but in the case of distance riding. Not in the short term, but in the long term, if you had a flood of newbies into the sport, hypothetically they could vote to change the whole face of the organization, and the rides... and with that the heart of the sport and the protections that all of you more seasoned riders already know need to stay in place. Maybe a poor example, though what if people started wanting to race for prize money? We all know what dire consequences this could have for the sport. I imagine that some motivated individual could generate a new org that had that goal, but if the idea of only RM's managing the org has worked thus far, I would say to keep it as such. Again, personal issues have kept me from competing the way I would like to, though I still love distance riding, and UMECRA, and would like like to see it stay strong & hearts;

[Linda L. Fassett Rudolphi](#) Just to be the devil's advocate - what insures riders that RM won't do all the above concerns? Don't we as riders trust the RM have the best intentions for the organization - why wouldn't the same be true regarding RM trusting the members of UMECRA to have the best intentions for the organization?

[Christina Hyke](#) Linda, I think because a RM is someone who is typically somewhat of a veteran of the sport, and knows better. And is in the company of veterans of the sport, who know better. It is more likely that the sport could boom with an influx of new people, who don't know better and put themselves above the future of the sport & wellbeing of the horses. It occurs to me that such a strenuous sport, where a horse will typically be working hard for longer hours than any other horse sport I can think of, could call for a more stringent and unique voting structure.

[Christina Hyke](#) Yes, Tony, I know full well you all put on more rides/miles in a year than I have in my whole life, and therefore the more experienced ones should run the org.

[Tony Troyer](#) [Christina Hyke](#)...That was not to bash you ...I really mean it when I said, we need to hear from everyone. This is OUR UMECRA, all of us regardless of 50,000 miles or 500 miles need to have a say in where UMECRA could or should go from here.

[Diane Witkop Schermerhorn](#) I havent been a member long and i dont have a lot of miles. I didnt know umecra was a rm org when i joined and am still surprised at the rm voting rights only concept. I am pretty neutral about it as i dont know why it was set up this way. Maybe some more experienced members can explain the reasoning behind it. I do not know who the rider reps are, i did vote based on their bios, but i do not know them and would be hesitant to bring issues to a person i do not at all know. I am in favor of adding a lot more reps, maybe double the number. I would maube stand a chance of knowing and using one.

[Carmen Evans Steuck](#) I know that riders don't have voting rights. As I recall from the UMECRA conventions I've been to, riders are allowed/encouraged to attend the meetings and JOIN IN THE DISCUSSIONS before the votes are cast. We (riders) may not have an actual vote, but we aren't shut out of the discussions. If you have a concern and aren't comfortable discussing it "in public" or not able to attend the meeting, call/e-mail/talk to your rider reps or any ride manager to discuss your opinion/issue to get the idea into someone's head who DOES have a vote. I'm not for or against allowing rider votes at this point, but I think the majority of riders don't use the resources that are already available to them to get their voice heard.

[Nicole Mauser-Storer](#) I've been thinking since I read this thread and I have a crazy idea. Feel free to shoot holes as I'm sure there are plenty. What if UMECRA gives voting rights to those members who substantially contribute to a ride as well as the ride managers? In my mind that accomplishes a couple of things. Those people who want to vote would have to step up and volunteer to secretary, mark trail, run P/R checks or something and thus get some much needed help at some of the rides. It also rewards those people who take the time to help by giving them a say in the operations and helps reduce some of the concerns that people who may not fully understand what it takes to run a ride may inadvertently vote for a change that is hard to implement. I know many of the people I see volunteering are folks who have been involved for a

long time, but don't manage their own ride for one reason or another. I would guess that the ride manager would send a list of volunteers to the Board and those people would be given something at registration that identified them as a "voter". Might be a good intermediary step before giving full voting rights to every member and a test to see how it goes?

[Karen Tellef](#) If anyone likes Nicole's idea, I'd also include people who lead Novice rides as a worthy volunteer and potentially a way of getting more people to consider doing that.

[Nicole Mauser-Storer](#) I left off the vets as well. I don't see any reason why our dedicated vets shouldn't have a vote.

[Roxi Welling](#) I might be missing something but with UMECRA being a ride manager organization with the possibility of placing before the board the decision to change to a one member one vote organization won't it be difficult to get this passed if the majority of the members want this since it will be voted on by the people that will lose their voting power? Hope that reads like what I'm trying to say. Meaning the ride managers are who will pass this change. If this is true then why would it be conceivable?

[Julie Jackson-Biegert](#) There are a lot of good comments here - I think the idea of taking baby steps and adding more rider reps may be a good way to move forward. Part of the reason for this proposal is to get more involvement from the riders. Although I like the idea of including volunteers, I think that still leaves a big hole - I think we need their perspective in a bigger way. Touching on [Nicole Mauser-Storer](#)'s suggestion, maybe we have "support staff" rep voting rights? Just a thought.

## **Comment from Newsletter and E-mails**

(unedited)

Hi Jos,

For reasons too numerous to type out, I am opposed to riders having a vote. How about anyone who EVER managed a ride having a vote (and is still a member in good standing). That might increase the voting number by a few but they would still know the trials and tribulations of putting on a ride.

Katie

Katherine Bachhuber

[kbach@nconnect.net](mailto:kbach@nconnect.net)

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I have been a UMECRA member for numerous years although living in Ohio. I think in addition to the organizations mentioned, you need to work with surrounding organizations to more fully let our riders have choices closer to home and to step toward a national organization. If this doesn't happen CTR riding could fall away. We need to operate closer to AERC which is a growing organization. One Ohio ride that use to be CTR and endurance has switched to endurance only. This year they sent out 98 riders. A far cry from the 5 CTR riders that went out at a later in the season ride at the same location. The Ohio Indiana organization is OAATS that I would suggest. I don't know what is west of UMECRA.

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As a new member to the organization, I don't feel that I have a right to vote on anything. I think that once you allow everyone to have a say in things, the focus of the organization will change from "what is best for the group" to a "what is best for me" type of attitude. I do not think this should be changed.

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I have been a member of UMECRA, AHDRA, and GLDRA for many years. Making UMECRA an organization that affords members a voice would go a long way toward improving relations between the groups. When trying to determine the cause of member dissatisfaction and the difficulty of recruiting new UMECRA members, think Boston Tea Party. When I talk to potential members and current members at rides, I always hear the same complaint: riders have no voice in UMECRA.

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The pros for changing to a one member/one vote sytem are: increased membership and member retention. I can't think of a single reason to continue with the current system. This question reminds me of every issue of Endurance News where members are encouraged to submit ideas for increasing AERC membership. Each time, I send in the suggestion that AERC should begin to view LD rides as "real" rides. There is no downside to doing that and a dozen reasons to change the current method of tracking and recognizing LD riders and horses in AERC. But, nothing every changes - the board is stuck in a rut. Don't let that happen to UMECRA.

Another point of contention is the seemingly arbitrary method of approving new ride dates and locations. There has been a lot of animosity over ride locations being moved and changed. I'm not sure what the solution to the problem is, but perhaps a committee approach with a member from each state would be more objective.

Last - I have enjoyed being a UMECRA member and hope to continue on. Thanks to all of you who are taking time to examine these issues.

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As a new member, I see the advantage of each member having a vote would increase the participation of what happens within the organization, would result in a higher interest as decisions are made by each of us. I was surprised that a select few of the members made decisions for all of us. I understand this was established under a different set of rules however times do change and in order to grow, keep interest of paying members- decisions should be made by a majority vote from each member.

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Every UMECRA rider/member should have a vote as to what happens in UMECRA, rules regulations changes.

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It's difficult enough to get decisions made with the ride managers making the decisions. I don't believe it will help the organization make the hard decisions if all riders vote. I would recommend staying with the current organizational structure.

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First of all, I want to thank the Blue Ribbon Committee for taking the time and energy to bring topics to the table in an effort to make a great organization even better. I also appreciate the transparent approach of posting to Facebook for members to read and/or voice opinions and thoughts. Our UMECRA members proved to be professional with their comments and concerns. I also want to preface this in saying I think the UMECRA ride managers have been instrumental in making UMECRA the successful organization it is today, my comments in no way are meant to imply otherwise.

I have been a member of UMECRA for a LONG time; a past ride manager, have spoken to 4-H and saddle clubs about UMECRA, have mentored novice riders, etc, etc. I understand the original policy limiting the voting members of UMECRA to the ride managers. At that time, the ride managers were a majority of the riders and members of UMECRA. The early ride managers were not only the pioneers of the sport, but were also instrumental in developing the rules and an organization within a small section of the Midwest. Protecting their endeavors to ensure its' growth was good business in the beginning.

In an effort to transfer that original policy of only ride managers voting into today's scenario, I thought I would offer some numbers:

From 2008 to 2012 UMECRA has averaged 398 members a year.

In 2012 there were 45 rides on the schedule.

Of the 45 rides, only 35 individuals are ride managers – that equals 8.79% of the average yearly membership.

According to the UMECRA Bylaws:

Officers (3), Past president (1), Rider Reps (4), Directors at large (2), Regional Reps (4), Vet Rep (1) and Ride Managers (35 people in 2012) are allowed to vote (a total of 50 individuals).

Proxies are purposely left out of this as they typically vote as per the direction of the ride manager.

Fifty individual's means only 12.5% of the total membership is allowed to vote and/or hold office.

At this time the board, officers, and reps are responsible for setting the agenda at the annual meeting to be voted on by delegates (15 individuals).

Voting can only be conducted on the set agenda at the annual meeting.

Fast forward to 2012, I think it is safe to say many of the riders today are avid students of the sport, travel out of the district to experience other organizations, and thus a much more informed membership overall.

In addition, the geographic area UMECRA now encompasses brings a new dynamic to the fundamentals of the organization.

On the other hand, the ride managers have a legitimate concern that rules could be written that are detrimental to a ride or favor limited individuals if the membership votes.

There has to be solution somewhere in the middle of this situation to bring more ideas and involvement in the future of UMECRA and for the organization to remain current and competitive. I personally think the members of the UMECRA organization are capable of making good decisions and by allowing the entire membership to be involved, everyone becomes vested in the future of the UMECRA organization.

I would like to offer the following as a possible solution:

Ride managers would be added to the list of individuals who can set the agenda for the annual meeting.  
(From 15 to 50 people per the 2012 numbers)

With ride manager input on the agenda it allows managers to review and/or introduce new rules or policies that would be workable for all UMECRA rides.

Open the vote at the annual meeting to all current members who have been a member one year previous to the year of the vote to avoid last minute stacking of votes. For example, a new member in 2011 could not vote until the 2013 annual meeting.

Respectfully,

Linda Rudolphi

## Summary of GLDRA Member Responses

### UMECRA BRC REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE

April 18, 2012

(unedited)

Following are relevant and pertinent excerpts from responses to the inquiry I made to GLDRA membership regarding the above:

- I'm for umecra members having voting rights, but against any mandatory joining rule.
- Seems like they are focusing on the money. Maybe they should focus on what UMECRA can do for the rider.
- ...part of their problem they caused themselves. I am thinking of how a UMECRA ride sneaked in on Karen B's ride and now that ride has no desire to give Karen first dibs.
- I would be quite annoyed if I had to pay a fee to ride a comp ride because I was not a member of UMECRA.
- whatever happens, each state needs to have some kind of equal say in whatever rules are developed.
- Well, all I can say is that the reason I belong to state, regional and national organizations is that I enjoy having a larger pool of competitors, i.e., its more meaningful to me to receive a year end award from AERC than from UMECRA and from UMECRA than GLDRA because it represents a bigger accomplishment. So, I see absolutely no point in dividing UMECRA into regions almost small as the auxiliary organizations (especially with a MI/WI region separated by a Lake Michigan!).
- I don't agree that our rides are generally characterized by lousy trails and poor management
- I don't see what eliminating auxiliary organizations does to fix their problem
- I would hate to see UMECRA start making ride managers collect non-member fees as I don't think such fees incentivize membership - they just discourage new people from trying the sport at all. UMECRA just needs to tighten their belt - they could give more modest awards and offer upgrades for a contribution from the recipient, for example.
- 1)a) I am not aware of any GLDRA rides that benefit our group so this should not be an issue. b) GLDRA is an organization that tracks points and mileage and offers year end awards. I do not believe it would serve any purpose, nor benefit Michigan riders (at all) to dissolve GLDRA and only be part of UMECRA. UMECRA has ignored Michigan riders for a very long time, I cannot see this changing from this proposal. I believe this answers both why and why not for me. 2)a) Dual membership is an option that would probably work. However this just makes it more expensive for the riders who currently do not belong to UMECRA but ride GLDRA rides. This is in effect like taxing the poor, might just do more harm than good.
- Gene, my initial response to this is that it sounds like it will only be beneficial to UMECRA. I certainly do not think it would do anybody any good to charge non-UMECRA members a fee at rides. A lot of people just start out in one group, like GLDRA, when they first start out, like I did. Then after I got my feet wet, and knew a little more what I was doing, I joined UMECRA.
- I disagree with UMECRA'S policy allowing rides in different location on the same weekend.

- There's been many times that I thought about dropping my UMECRA membership. I am still angry with UMECRA with how they handled my daughter riding as a junior under UMECRA's published rules as the age guidelines UMECRA established were different than AERC's. Under AERC, your miles and placings count no matter where you ride.
- I know alot of rides are struggling, but look at the economy and the price of fuel. Consolidating GLDRA, AHDRA, etc. won't change that.
- I'd rather see GLDRA explore other avenues as opposed to consolidating with UMECRA.
- ...my inital reaction is that it's a ploy to keep UMECRA afloat.
- I hate to say it but UMECRA members other than MI umecra members are snobs! Now maybe this will change but I met UMECRA members in the 70s and I haven 't seen much change and this is the 2010s! That does not mean that there aren't some nice folks, there are and maybe since some of the snobier ones are getting older and aren't around as much, there will be nicer folks.
- I have no desire to join UMECRA.
- I am a lifetime member of GLDRA, if this consolidation goes forward, how will this affect lifetime members?
- Gene, if members are going to be allowed a vote, I would not vote in favor of consolidation.
- As far as dwindling membership and ride attendance, I'd look for ways to make distance riding more inclusive to different segments of the horse owning population.
- don't like UMECRA rules, specifically the no water rule.
- We could sanction our own CTR rides and use the rules as they exist or make whatever changes to them we deem fit. UMECRA does not allow sponging at vet checks for CTR rides and penalizes for boots - both significant ways to TAKE CARE OF OUR HORSES. We would be able to make our own rules regarding sponging and boots, for example!
- Most of us only ride in Michigan. I'm not sure about handing over complete control of our rides & schedule to an organization that has tried to screw over such a prevalent ride as Pine Martin. Makes we wonder if White River or Shore to Shore might be the next target. What about dissolving umecra and letting AERC handle regional awards as they do now?
- my preference right now would be that we leave things as they are.
- I believe UMECRA has knowingly and willingly put themselves in the unfavorable financial position they are in and for a LOT of reasons; not the least of which pertains to holding fast to remaining a "ride managers' organization". Their concern never has been (nor do they intend it to be) one to make their membership happy.
- just because one CHOOSES to be a member of more than one organization, does not necessarily mean it is more expensive to do so. Ultimately, the key here is CHOICE, and there is nothing to say eliminating one or more of those choices would cost less.
- their argument to reduce duplication of records, etc. is terribly weak and the amount of work involved is infinitesimal - and I mean absolutely NO disrespect to our fine people maintaining all our records! - compared to what we would be sacrificing by allowing UMECRA to control our membership, rides, awards, etc.
- my opinion is that GLDRA is a financially healthy and "happy" organization, which is surviving quite well on its own and under the control of its own membership and with its own awards. There is absolutely and categorically NO benefit to GLDRA and/or its

members being "assimilated" into UMECRA, whereby GLDRA members have even less control of their membership fees.

- There is also nothing to prevent GLDRA from being a sanctioning body for its own competitive rides; and we simply do not NEED UMECRA - it's just another CHOICE for people.
- they've made their own mess and I don't think it would benefit Michigan riders to help bail out any of the other associations in our region. I feel for them, but maybe they need to look to GLDRA as an example and take a long hard look at the way they've been doing things. We all get together and have rational discussions and TALK to each other, the UMECRA meetings I have been to are totally disorganized and wander off and on Roberts Rules of Order.

## Response from AHDRA

AHDRA is a national organization. We have many members across the nation, and we would LOOSE membership if we required members also join an organization (UMECRA) that did not sanction rides in their area. As it is, AHDRA is benefiting UMECRA. Case in point. We had a gal from South Dakota show up at AHDRA I last weekend. She joined AHDRA and planned her vacation around attending three AHDRA rides in order to try to win our Triple Crown Award. She has no reason to join UMECRA. AHDRA is officially against any rule that would make UMECRA membership mandatory for AHDRA members.

## ***Thematic Analysis***

from FaceBook, Newsletter & E-mails, Sub-committee Reports

### **Thematic analysis of pros:**

- Improve relations between organizations
- Change “seemingly arbitrary” method of determining ride schedule
- Increase membership and member retention
- Increase interest and participation
- Increase the percentage of people making decisions for the organization
- Increase the pool of people available to hold office
- Give riders a vested interest in the organization
- Each state should have equal say in establishing rules

### **Thematic analysis of cons:**

- Voting will be based on individual self-interest rather than on what’s best for the organization
- Opening up voting to members will make decision-making harder
- Riders do not understand the intricacies of managing a ride and could make decisions detrimental to ride managers resulting in fewer rides
- UMECRA is working fine, no need for change
- Newbies in the sport making poor decisions
- UMECRA **should not** change a non-member fee or have a mandatory joining rule
- A non-member fee would discourage new people from trying the sport

### **Thematic analysis of recommendations/suggestions (in no particular order):**

- Add ride managers to the list of individuals who can set the agenda for the annual meeting.
- Open the vote at the annual meeting to all current members who have been a member one year previous to the year of the vote.
- Open vote to anyone in good standing who has ever managed a ride.
- Have some decisions made by everyone and other decisions made by just ride managers.
- Have everyone at the convention vote for the elected offices including rider reps.
- Add a lot more rider representatives.
- Add more regional directors and directors-at-large.
- Allow voting rights for members who volunteer/contribute to a ride and all veterinarians.
- Do not allow more than one or two rides on a weekend.
- Charge non UMECRA members a non member fee of \$5.00 to encourage them to join UMECRA (as AERC does).
- Allow “Other Positions” appointed by the Board (Newsletter Editor, Points-Keeper, Sanctioning Coordinator, & Webmaster) to be voting members on the Board of Directors.
- Work closer with nearby organizations such as OAATS.
- **Feedback from Breed organizations indicated that due to their National focus, it would not be in their best interest to be subsumed under UMECRA.**
- **Feedback from Regional organization indicated they their membership did not see merging with UMECRA as in their best interest.**

## ***Riders' Sub-Committee Proposal***

Based on rider feedback we believe increasing the involvement of riders will be beneficial to the UMECRA organization by

- 1) Bringing a different and important perspective to discussions
- 2) Increasing rider knowledge of how UMECRA works and how important membership is
- 3) Increasing the overall involvement of members
- 4) Expanding the base from which to draw UMECRA volunteers and leaders

In support of this, the Rider's Sub-Committee from the Blue Ribbon Committee unanimously proposes the following amendment to our by-laws (Article VII - Membership). We ask that this be brought to a vote at the November BoD Meeting.

Respectfully,

Julie Jackson-Biegert  
Cathy Cook  
Holly Kemmis  
Robin Schadt

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### Article VII

#### Section 3. a) Rider Delegates

Up to 10 Rider Delegates per state may be voted in to represent riders for general voting purposes at the annual convention. All UMECRA members would be allowed to vote on the selection of these Delegates. Each state will be allowed at least one Delegate but the total number of Delegates per state is not to exceed more than 10% of the state membership. No state will have more than 10 Delegates.

Rider Delegates must have been members for a minimum of one year and must have **completed** a minimum of four UMECRA rides in the previous season, to be comprised of any combination of CTR of 25 miles or more, Limited Distance or Endurance Rides.

Members who meet this criteria and wish to become Rider Delegates may nominate themselves or be nominated by [November 30](#) - a short biography should be submitted to the newsletter editor will be printed in the newsletter prior to the January Annual meeting.

Voting will be done by mail- in ballot and results will be announced at the Annual Meeting. Delegates will hold a two year term provided they continue to meet Delegate Eligibility Criteria.