

Constitution & Bylaws and Standing Rules

What is this program and why do we have it?

The Constitution & Bylaws program informs and educates members of the American Legion Auxiliary on the importance and power of properly written, reviewed and updated documents, policies, and procedures at all levels. Constitution & Bylaws are the basis for governance of your department, county, and unit. Preparing and adhering to updated Constitution, Bylaws and Standing Rules will ensure a more successful organizational process, and provide the structures to follow at all levels of our organization.

What can you do?

The following is provided as a guideline to help facilitate reviews of your current Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules. Please remember that department, district, county and unit Constitutions, Bylaws and Standing Rules cannot conflict with national governing documents.

Guidelines for Units and Departments

A. Constitution & Bylaws:

- a. are the foundation of the organization
- b. contain the most essential provisions relating to the organization, its name, purpose, membership, officers, meetings, governing board, committees, parliamentary authority and amendments to prescribed structural changes
- c. are the law of the organization
 - should be reviewed, but not changed, every year
 - have direct bearing on the rights of members
- d. should have a standard form and content
- e. define the primary characteristics of the organization
- f. prescribe how the organization is structured and functions
- g. include all rules that are so important that they cannot be changed without prior notice.

B. Standing Rules:

- a. Relate to the details of administration for the organization.
- b. May be adopted by a majority vote.
 - may be amended or rescinded at any regularly scheduled meeting: with prior notification, by a majority vote, unless the bylaws stipulate otherwise, without prior notification by two-thirds vote.

C. Parliamentary Authority – The most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* shall govern this organization in all cases that are not in conflict with the state statute, the constitution, the bylaws, or special rules of order adopted by the organization.

D. Definitions

- a. Resolution: An elaborate, formally written motion. A resolution may contain a preamble that lists the reasons for adoption. Each reason is listed in a separate paragraph starting with the word "whereas." A resolution must have at least one "resolved" clause that specifies the action or position being proposed.
- b. Amendment: Proposes a change to the Constitution, Bylaws, Special Rules of Order, or Standing Rules. It is also used to modify a motion Under consideration.

Ideas:

For the Member

- Volunteer to create a game of Constitution & Bylaws questions for members to play at unit meetings; make Constitutions & Bylaws fun!
- Volunteer to write a resolution or amendment to be brought before your unit.
- Volunteer to help your department, district and/or unit to update governing documents to conform to the national organization's governing documents.
- Become familiar with the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*

The Unit Level

- Update Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules, as well as policies and procedures, to conform to the national organization's recent update.
- Plan a parliamentary procedure seminar at a unit/district function.

Department

- Update Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules, as well as policies and procedures, to conform with the national organization's governing documents.
- Plan a parliamentary procedure seminar at a department function.

Additional Resources You Can Use:

1. National Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules (also available for download at www.ALAFforVeterans.org)
2. Policies and Procedures Manual
3. Unit Guide Book
4. Parliamentary Procedure
5. Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised

HOW TO WRITE STANDING RULES

Step-by-Step Instructions:

- Start with a specific need that relates to the administration of your department, county, or unit (e.g., awards you present, budget for convention attendees, voting body).
- Write the Standing Rule. See “Guidelines for Writing Standing Rules” on the next page.
- Present it at a department, county, or unit meeting.
- A standing rule can be adopted with majority vote at any regular meeting with notice, unless otherwise stipulated in the bylaws. Without notice, a standing rule requires a 2/3 vote for adoption.
- The Standing Rules document should be kept up-to-date, and each new Standing Rule should record the date it was adopted.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING STANDING RULES

Standing Rules are those rules and regulations, which relate to the details of the administration of an organization for the guidance of an assembly. Standing Rules are usually adopted in the form of a resolution, and require a majority vote to pass with previous notice at any regularly scheduled meeting, and a 2/3 vote in the affirmative to pass without prior notice.

The following points are intended to be a helpful guide for writing or updating Standing Rules. Not every topic or item will apply in every instance, and some things may not be listed.

The (NAME AND NUMBER) of the _____ District, American Legion Auxiliary, hereby adopts the Constitution & Bylaws as prescribed by the American Legion Auxiliary, Department of _____.

The most recent edition of Robert’s Rules of Order, in all questions not governed by articles of the National, (department/county/unit) Constitution & Bylaws, shall govern this (department/county/unit).

1. State time (day and hour) of meeting, place of meeting and information on notification of meeting. Are you meeting all twelve (12) months?
2. Dues – Senior, Junior, Gold Star Mothers, Life Members.
3. Process for selecting Life Members.

4. Election
 - a. When will election be held?
 - b. Secretary and/or Treasurer – elected or appointed?
 - c. A nominating committee – yes or no? Elected per the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.

5. Election of delegates for department convention, conferences, county meetings- when and how selected.

6. Installation of officers – when, where, who is in charge.

7. Equipment – rules for loaning, maintenance, etc.

8. Finances
 - a. Rent
 - b. Utilities
 - c. Working funds for officers, chairmen, poppy purchases, ALA Girls State, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, etc.
 - d. Annual gifts for district president's visit, retiring officers, etc.
 - e. Flowers and/or gifts for illness, death, etc.
 - f. Expenses for delegates to department convention, at a conference, county meetings, etc. (registration fee, mileage, per diem)
 - g. How bills are paid and who signs the checks
 - h. Contest prizes – how much for poppy, essay contests, etc.
 - i. Department and district mandatory funds
 - j. Arrangements for special dinners – funerals, etc.
 - k. Annual donations to special programs or charities

9. The fiscal year of this department/district/unit will be _____.

10. Audit – when and by whom.

11. This paragraph should appear at the end of your Standing Rules: "Standing Rules are adopted by a majority vote and may be amended by two-thirds (2/3) vote at any meeting, or if notice has been given, by a majority vote." Standing Rules are usually adopted from time to time, as they are needed, in the form of resolutions.

12. The date of the meeting at which these Standing Rules were approved MUST be shown. ALSO – The signature of the Constitution & Bylaws chairman and president or secretary MUST appear on the bottom of the list.

Date Approved

President or Secretary

Constitution & Bylaws Chairman