

Constitution and Bylaws Program Action Plan 2018-2019

The Constitution and Bylaws program informs and educates members of the American Legion Auxiliary at all levels on the importance and power of properly written, reviewed and updated documents, policies, and procedures. Our Constitution and Bylaws are the basis for governance of our department, divisions, districts, and units. Preparing and adhering to updated Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules ensures a more successful organizational process and provides the structures to follow at all levels of our organization.

The following is provided as a guide to help facilitate reviews of your current Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules.

Guide for Units

A. Constitution and Bylaws

1. Our Constitution and Bylaws are the foundation of our organization.
2. They should contain the most essential provisions relating to the organization, its name, purpose, membership, officers, meetings, governing board, committees, parliamentary authority, and amendments to prescribe structural changes.
3. They are the law of the organization. They should be reviewed, but not changed every year; and they have direct bearing on the rights of members.
4. They should have a standard form and content.
5. They should define the primary characteristics of the organization.
6. They should prescribe how the organization is structured and functions.
7. They should include all rules that are so important that they cannot be changed without prior notice.

B. Standing Rules

1. Standing Rules relate to the details of administration for the organization.
2. A Standing Rule may be amended or rescinded by a two-thirds vote; or if notice has been given, by a majority vote.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 state statute, the constitution, the bylaws, or any special rules of order adopted by the organization.

When we review your Unit Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules, we look to 1) ensure that your C&B is not in conflict with the Department and National governing documents; and 2) make sure that all members are being treated equally.

It is also important that the Executive Committee is not given too much power. We are a "membership" driven organization made up of volunteers. It is the responsibility of the Executive Committee to ensure that the Unit carries out its mission and complies with the requirements of its tax-exempt status. The Executive Committee should come up with ideas, gather information, make recommendations, and report to its membership for voting and decision-making. Only in an emergency can the members of the Executive Committee make decisions without approval of the membership. Otherwise, why would a member bother to attend meetings if the members of the Executive Committee made all the decisions? It's important that we make sure that ALL members are allowed a "voice."

Please follow the procedures below when submitting your updated Unit Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules for approval:

1. An updated version of the suggested sample Unit Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules may be found on the Department website at alatexas.org under Forms. Lots of notes were inserted to help you create and update your Constitution & Bylaws.
2. We recommend that "every" unit review their Unit Constitution & Bylaws after the national convention each year, which usually takes place the end of August or the first week of September. Ideally, you should schedule a specific month – October through March – to review your C&B. Reviewing them does not mean that it is necessary to "update" them, but it is important that you review them to see if any changes need to be made. Soon, we should "rarely" need to update our Constitution and our Bylaws, whereas our Standing Rules can easily be changed at any time.
3. A Unit's Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules must be approved by a member of the Department Constitution and Bylaws Committee. **DO NOT** send your C&B directly to Department. We will send it to the Unit and to Department after it has been approved.
4. The signatures of the Unit President or Secretary and Unit C&B Chairman must appear after the Bylaws and the Standing Rules. A member of the Department Constitution & Bylaws Committee, after approving the C&B, will sign and date them.
5. If possible, please email your Unit C&B to the C&B Committee person in your Division in Microsoft Word format rather than sending it via snail mail. That way, suggested changes may be highlighted in your attachment and sent back to you via email which will speed up the process. We plan to handle everything electronically, if possible, and are hopeful that "someone" in every Unit – or a family member or friend – will have an email address that can be used to update your C&B.
6. If this is not possible, you may snail mail "one" copy of your Constitution & Bylaws to us. This will, however, take more time for us to process and approve.
7. Your Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules will "not" go into effect until after they have been approved and sent back to you. We encourage you to make copies for every Unit member and send a copy to your District President.

Constitution and Bylaws Reporting

Year-End Reports

Year-End reports in narrative format are due to the Constitution and Bylaws Chairman no later than May 1, 2019. Please copy the C&B person in your Division.

As part of your Narrative Report, please include answers to the following questions:

- Have you done an annual review of your Unit Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules?
- When were your Unit Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules last revised?
- How was your Unit inspired to review your governing documents?
- Has your Unit sponsored any Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules activities? If so, what were those activities?

Department Award

Each Unit that submits and receives their approved Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules back will receive a Certificate of Success.

See the contact information below for your 2018-2019 Constitution and Bylaws Committee:

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