

American Legion Auxiliary, Department of Wisconsin

Midwinter January 15, 2022

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

ELIGIBILITY CLAUSE

At the 2019 National Convention, The American Legion voted to expand eligibility for the American Legion Auxiliary to include spouses of veterans or Legionnaires. This opened a tremendous opportunity for the organization to increase membership size. However, it also points to the realization that the Constitution and Bylaws governing documents at every level need to reflect this significant change to the membership eligibility clause.

The ALA membership eligibility clause also reflects a change to the following war periods: April 6, 1917 to November 11, 1918 and any time after December 7, 1941 to those individuals who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during either eligibility period and died in the line of duty or after honorable discharge.

GENDER

In addition to the significant change to potential membership, there are practical changes that need to be made to the documents that reflect the fact that all pronouns now need to be gender neutral. There are ways to define eligibility without the use of pronouns, such as substituting words like President, Vice President or Member, rather than he/she, him/her, his/hers.

QUORUM

It is extremely important that every unit, county or district organization establish a quorum for the number of members who must attend a general meeting, or the number of members required for an Executive Committee meeting. If a quorum is not defined, then a majority of unit members must be present to conduct business. Majority means more than half of the unit members. This would be disastrous for most organizations, if not all.

When establishing a quorum for meetings, it would be reasonable to have the Presiding Officer, the Secretary, and at least three members at large for a representation of five in total, to conduct the business of the organization. However, Department cannot dictate, so it is suggested that at least three members be in attendance.

Membership numbers are declining and as members grow older, many are not willing or able to take on the tasks or responsibilities of officer positions. Therefore, many units have members serving in several officer positions. While this is not ideal, this is common practice. Department suggests that units have a President and a Secretary as two separate individuals since both are in positions of authority. It is further suggested that the President and the Treasurer be two different individuals, to exercise better control of the finances.

PREAMBLE

There is one small change to the American Legion Auxiliary Preamble that was also mandated by The American Legion - "to preserve the memories and incidents of our associations **in all wars,**" not "during the Great Wars."

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS (continued)

APPROVAL PROCESS

If a unit sends a copy of the proposed revisions to their Constitution and Bylaws to all members prior to a meeting, and their bylaws are silent on this process, then there is no need to read the proposed changes at the meeting unless ordered to by a vote of the members. The President can simply ask for questions or issues to discuss and once these are handled, prepare to adopt the proposed changes.

REVISED GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

Many units and counties are submitting changed documents. However, many are not changing the pronouns to be gender neutral. Documents submitted for review without changing the gender references will be returned to the sender for correction.

Many units have recognized the need to update their governing documents and are complimented for their efforts; however, all units, counties, and districts should be considering an update since the changes The American Legion made are significant and need to be addressed. This change is a great opportunity to add male members, who can contribute significantly to the organization.

Approximately 30 documents have been reviewed since the start of the Auxiliary administrative year, leaving many more units, counties, and districts that would benefit from reviewing and updating their governing documents.

QUESTIONS

Units needing assistance with updating their Constitution & Bylaws, or who simply have questions, may contact Department Chairman Jan Pulvermacher-Ryan by email or phone.

CONTACT:

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