

## Required language for bylaw changes



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**A**s chairperson of the Committee of Laws, it is my privilege to review submissions from branches for proposed changes to their bylaws. When reviewing hundreds of submissions each year, recurring issues with branch bylaws become obvious.

This month, I want to address required language that is routinely missing from branch bylaws when submitted to the Committee of Laws for review. Below are a few examples of some language that must be contained in branch bylaws:

- **Meetings**—Article 3, Section 1 of the *Constitution for the Government of Subordinate and Federal Branches (CGSFB)* states that regular meetings of the branch shall be held “at such time and place as may be designated in the Branch bylaws.” Presidential rulings have consistently held that this language clearly requires that both the date and the time of the meetings be fixed in the bylaws (i.e., the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m.). It is impermissible for branches to leave the date or time of the meeting uncertain.
- **Officers**—Article 4, Section 1 of the *CGSFB* states: “The officers of the Branch shall be a President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Sergeant-at-Arms, a Health Benefits Representative, and a Board of Trustees composed of either three or five members.” The branch may also establish officer positions in addition to those required by the *CGSFB*. The *NALC Constitution* also allows the branch to combine certain offices and to determine whether the board of trustees is to consist of three or five members. The bylaws should specify which offices, if any, are combined, as well as the number of trustees (either three or five).
- **Term of office**—Article 4, Section 2 of the *CGSFB* states: “All officers shall be elected for a term of one (1), two (2), or three (3) years, at the option of the Branch, or until their successors are duly elected and installed.” The bylaws must stipulate which term of office the branch selected.
- **Elections**—Article 5, Section 4 of the *CGSFB* states: “Election of officers shall take place at a time prescribed by the Branch bylaws.” The *NALC Constitution* requires that the branch bylaws specify the exact date of the election. If the election is by mail, the date on which ballots are due should be set forth. It would be sufficient to indicate that the election will be held at a branch meeting. In ad-

dition, the bylaws should state when nominations will take place. (Article 5, Section 5 (b) of the *CGSFB* requires that nominations be held at a regular or special meeting of the branch not less than four weeks before the date of the election, but not less than 10 days after the notice of nomination and election has been sent out.)

- **Delegate elections**—Article 5, Section 4 of the *NALC Constitution* states: “Election of delegates and alternate delegates to the National and State Association Convention shall be made no later than December of the year preceding the convention year.” Again, the date, place and manner of nomination and election should be listed in the branch bylaws.
- **Stewards**—Article 4, Section 5 of the *CGSFB* states: “Branches having members in two or more stations may make provisions in their bylaws for station delegates, representatives or shop stewards to be appointed or elected, within the respective stations as the Branch may be determined....” The branch bylaws should specify how the branch has decided to choose its stewards: election by the general membership, election by station or by appointment. (The term station delegates in Article 4, Section 5 of the *CGSFB* refers to stewards, not convention delegates.)
- **Dues**—Article 7, Section 1 of the *CGSFB* provides: “Initiation fees and dues shall be fixed in the bylaws and payable in advance, provided that regular members with 50 years membership shall be exempt from the payment of dues, fines and assessments.” Branch bylaws must specify the amount of branch dues. If the branch dues are the same as the minimum dues required by Article 7, Section 2 of the *NALC Constitution* (not the *CGSFB*), it would be sufficient to so state. However, the branch dues must be listed in the bylaws.

These are just a few examples of language that must be included in all branch bylaws. The Committee of Laws recommends that branches refer to the *CGSFB* when considering revising their bylaws. The *CGSFB* begins on page 66 of the *NALC Constitution*. The *NALC Constitution* can be found at [nalc.org](http://nalc.org) under the “Union Administration” tab. Copies of the *NALC Constitution* also may be purchased from the NALC Supply Department.

**For more information regarding branch elections, please refer to the *NALC Regulations Governing Branch Election Procedures*. A copy of the regulations also can be found on the NALC website by going to the “Union Administration” tab, then clicking “In This Section”; it also can be found on the secretary-treasurer’s page, under a link for “Election Information.” The guide also can be requested from the NALC Supply Department.**