

Make your branch bylaws flawless



Judy
Willoughby

As chairperson of the Committee of Laws, it is my job 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 share with you common language the committee sees that is missing from branch bylaws. 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 and time of the meeting uncertain.

Officers—The committee from time to time receives bylaws that fail to list the officers of the branch. Although the list of branch offices set forth in Article 4 of the *CGSFB* would govern in the absence of specific provision in the bylaws, it would be preferable to list those offices directly in the bylaws because it is important that the members know what the branch offices are. In addition, the *Constitution* allows the branch to combine certain offices and states that the board of trustees is to consist of three or five members. The bylaws should specify what offices, if any, are combined and 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 should 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 *Constitution* requires the branch bylaws to specify the exact dates of the elections. 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 addition, the bylaws should state when nominations will take place. (Article 5, Section (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 *CGSFB* 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 for 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* is referring 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. Branches looking for assistance when considering to revise their bylaws, the Committee recommends the branches refer to the *CGSFB* as a guide. The *CGSFB* begins on page 66 of the *NALC Constitution*. The *NALC Constitution* can be found at nalc.org under “NALC Constitution.” 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 can also be found on the NALC website by going to “Union Administration” then to “In this section,” and under “Secretary-Treasurer,” you will find a link for “Election information.” The guide can also be requested from the NALC Supply Department.

Happy Father’s Day—The third Sunday of June, we celebrate and honor fathers and their paternal bond and commitment to their children. Happy Father’s Day to all the fathers and grandfathers. May you all enjoy your day!