

# Frequently asked questions about branch bylaws



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**A**s chairman of the Committee of Laws, I frequently receive calls from members regarding branch bylaws. Below you will find a few of the most common by-law questions.

**Q: Can a steward serve on the executive board of the local branch?**

A: The answer depends on how stewards are elected in your branch. If stewards are elected by the entire branch, the answer would be yes. However, if as in most branches the stewards are elected only by those in the immediate work area, then the answer would be no.

Articles 4 and 5 of the *Constitution for the Government of Subordinate and Federal Branches (CGSFB)*,

in accordance with federal law, require that all executive board members be elected by vote of the entire membership. Only if your shop stewards are elected by the entire membership may they sit on the executive board. Unelected stewards may perform the functions described in Article 4, Section 5 of the *CGSFB*, but may not act in an executive capacity for the branch. However, there is no law prohibiting stewards from participating in an advisory role.

**Q: How many officers must the branch have to be in line with the Constitution?**

A: 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 Benefit Representative, and a Board of Trustees composed of either three or five members.

A branch may have additional officers but they must also be listed in the branch's bylaws. With the exception of the office of president, branches may consolidate offices. However, when this consolidation occurs, their duties must be spelled out in the branch bylaws.

Branches with fewer than 10 active letter carriers are addressed in Article 4, Section 3 of the *CGSFB*, which states:

However, if there are less than ten (10) active members, the office of President may be combined with other offices.

**Q: Can a retiree vote at a branch meeting or run for office?**

A: Yes. This is covered in Article 2, Section 1(a) of the *NALC Constitution*, which defines retirees as regular NALC members. The only limitation on the rights of retirees is that they "shall have no voice or vote in the Branch in any matter

pertaining to the ratification of a national working agreement, local memorandum of understanding, or proposed work stoppage."

**Q: Can a branch president change the time of a regular meeting to accommodate his or her schedule?**

A: No. Article 3, Section 1 of the *CGSFB* states:

The regular meetings of the Branch shall be held not less than once a month, at such time and place as may be designated in the Branch by-laws. Each Branch, with prior approval of its membership, shall have the option of only meeting ten (10) times per year.

This language requires that the time of branch meetings be fixed in the branch bylaws. (It would be permissible, however, for the branch to change the time of meetings in the event of unforeseen circumstances.)

**Hopefully, these Q-and-A's will assist you when reviewing your branch bylaws.** Additionally, a few branches have requested copies of their current bylaws. Please note that the Committee of Laws does not maintain an updated set of the bylaws of each branch, but rather, pursuant to Article 11, Section 3 of the *NALC Constitution*, only a chronological record of each approved bylaw amendment. I urge each branch to maintain copies of its current bylaws and keep them in a location generally known by officers and branch members.

**"We hope the 2019 food drive will bring in a historic amount and that the food bank shelves in every community will be filled to their capacity."**

**Food drive preparation is in full swing**

**On another note, as you read this article branches will be in full swing preparing for our national food drive on May 11.** The food drive is a prime example of the many community services letter carriers provide throughout the year. We hope that 2019 will bring in a historic amount and that the food bank shelves in every community will be filled to their capacity. Many thanks to all the food drive coordinators, letter carriers and others who volunteer and good luck to each branch for a successful drive!