

Bylaws and frequently asked questions



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As 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 is yes. However, if as in most branches, the stewards are elected only by those in the immediate work area, then the answer is 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. Your shop stewards may sit on the executive board only if they are elected by the entire membership. 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.

“I urge each branch to maintain copies of the current bylaws and keep them in a location generally known by officers and branch items.”

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

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.

Branches may have additional officers, but they must also be listed in their branch 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, this will assist you when reviewing branch bylaws. Additionally, a few branches have requested copies of their current bylaws. Please note that the Committee 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 the current bylaws and keep them in a location generally known by officers and branch members.

On another note: normally, during this time of year, preparations would be in full swing by the NALC branches and members for the upcoming Letter Carriers’ Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive, traditionally held on the second Saturday in May. Unfortunately, NALC is unable to hold the food drive this May due to safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, each of us can still contribute to the battle against food insecurity by donating through the Stamp Out Hunger Donor Drive. For more information, go to nalc.org/food.