

Proposed Bylaw Amendment: Establishment of Standing NEC Committees

Summary: This amendment would create standing committees of the NEC by adding in the following (bold) sections to the Constitution.

Contact: This proposed amendment is being offered by Natasha Lycia Ora Bannan, president@nlg.org.

Rationale

This proposal comes at a time of great change within, and outside of, the Guild and the need to have a governance body that is nimble and responsive to the needs of the organization, which increasingly include developing and implementing a diversified fundraising strategy, on-going assessment and analysis of our finances, review of policies and procedures (including in the past year alone: union and staff issues as they arise, handling complaints and grievances, trademark issues and developing anti-harassment and sexual harassment policies). In addition, we are sorely in need of developing membership recruitment strategies and tools, creating campaigns and supporting National Office staff in recruitment and retention of members. In addition, we need to ensure that our board is meeting its fundraising and fiscal and legal oversight requirements.

All of these core areas of governance are crucial to the survival of the Guild at a minimum, and ultimately to our growth and expansion. They are the core functions of most boards of directors, yet have at times been diminished, disregarded or dismissed in lieu of other priorities established by the NEC. This proposal aims to restore those core functions to develop a NEC that is composed of a body of members who bring critical skills, knowledge, experience and passion to reviving the Guild.

The lack of institutional structure that could facilitate effective governance exacerbates the problem of constant turnover in NEC membership, lack of institutional knowledge and history, lack of adequate skills and knowledge to address specific organizational needs (i.e. finance and labor and employment issues) and overall lack of coordinated work. It is standard practice among most board structures to have standing committees staffed by board members who will dedicate their time and efforts to helping the organization on that particular need. The lack of standing committees has meant little to no dedication among the NEC to the organization's infrastructural and operational needs and thus a disproportionate burden placed among staff to develop, plan, strategize, organize and prioritize institutional needs with an absentee board. It negates the responsibilities of all NEC members to take an active role in governance, removing the inappropriate burden placed on staff and to facilitate the conservation of institutional knowledge and needs, as well as the transition of such knowledge to new NEC members as they circle on. Additionally, many institutional needs, such as finance and governance, remain poorly attended to while others, such as the convention, receive an unnecessary amount of attention by the full NEC body, often stagnating the convention planning process. The result is that attention is not being given to other areas of potential growth for the Guild, such as developing more comprehensive membership and fundraising strategies outside of the convention, and helping build a sustainable Guild that can continue to grow and meet the needs of movement work.

Proposed standing committees of the NEC:

- Governance (to include human resources, grievances and complaints, labor and employment and internal policies and procedures)
- Finance
- Fundraising/Development
- Membership
- Convention planning

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Section 11.1 - “The National Finance Committee (NFC) shall be a standing subcommittee of the National Executive Committee. It shall be chaired by the NLG Treasurer and composed of the NLG President, NLG Executive Director, National Lawyers Guild Foundation (NLGF) President, as standing members, and up to five other members appointed by the NFC standing members and confirmed by the NEC to staggered two year terms of office. The NFC shall review budgets presented by the NLG Treasurer and make recommendations as to whether the budgets as presented or after modification by the NFC should be adopted by the NEC. The NFC in cooperation with the NEC shall be responsible for developing and promoting fund raising efforts to finance the national organization. The NFC shall have such other authority as may be provided elsewhere in the NLG Constitution or Bylaws or by delegation of the NEC in accordance with the provisions of the NLG Constitution and Bylaws.

In addition, there shall be a standing Governance subcommittee, composed of the President and other members as selected; a standing Fundraising subcommittee, composed of both Executive Vice-Presidents and other members as selected; a standing Membership subcommittee of which the Membership Director of the National Office shall serve as an *ex officio* member; and a standing Convention committee.”

Impacted Party Statement - this proposal has been discussed at at least two NEC meetings with the membership of the NEC and has been received overall favorably, with some reservations by particular NEC members. A working group was convened to attempt to further develop this proposal after the first meeting.

Implementing entities - The national organization, including members of the Executive Council and the National Office, will ensure the implementation of these amendments in 2017.