

Proposed Bylaw Amendment: Diverse Composition of the National Executive Committee

Summary:

The National Executive Committee (NEC) is ultimately responsible for managing the NLG. This amendment would continue the practice of having an NEC drawn from all aspects of the national organization while decreasing the size of the NEC from an unwieldy 35 to a more functional group of 23. All committees who have one year representatives would extend that term to two years to ensure institutional memory. It would build an NEC able to work together as a functional group and at the same time build a leadership that is both more accountable and more democratic.

Contact:

This proposal is being offered by the subcommittee of the NEC tasked with presenting a proposal to create a more functional NEC. The contact members are Judith Mirkinson, Legal Worker VP, Sarah Coffey, Mid-East Regional VP, Matthew Rinaldi, former NEC member and member steering committee Military Law Task Force and Kathleen Gilbert, Executive Director, Military Law Task Force. The proposal will be presented at the convention by Judith Mirkinson, mirk2@comcast.net.

Rationale:

There is general consensus that the current NEC is too large. Meetings can be chaotic and unfocused. Many positions are duplicated. The current structure puts 5 different Vice-Presidents on the NEC, with 2 Executive VPs and 3 National VPs. Some regions and committees have 2 or 3 members of the NEC as co-representatives.

This proposal would eliminate duplication while retaining broad representation on the NEC from regions and working national committees. It would require each position to have a designated alternate member, to ensure continuity and broader leadership development. It would create a smaller, more nimble NEC that would allow NEC members to develop functional skills and more sustained interpersonal relationships.

Proposed Diverse Composition of the NEC:

The NEC is the ultimate representative body of the National Lawyers Guild. The NLG is more than an alternative bar association. It is a national network of progressive lawyers, law students, legal workers and jailhouse lawyers dedicated to the proposition that personal rights transcend property rights. It is organized into geographic regions, which build local activism and membership, as well as national working committees, which focus on specific areas of the law, such as immigration defense.

It is a political body that needs to be guided by a political leadership. As such, its governance should not be divided from its political mission - the two are intricately connected and the former flowing from the latter.

To be truly representative and transparent, the NEC needs to include members from both geographic regions and the national working committees. To function at peak efficiency, the NEC needs representatives from all aspects of the national organization, allowing each section of the NLG to inform and enhance national coordination of our work.

Proposed Bylaw Amendment:

Pursuant to Section 11 of the Constitution of the National Lawyers Guild, this Bylaw would amend the following two sections of the Constitution to read as follows:

Article 5.1

Composition of the National Executive Committee (NEC) – The organization shall be governed by a board of directors known as the National Executive Committee, composed of the following: a President, (with a President Elect every third year) a Vice-President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, a National Law Student representative, a National Legal Worker representative, a Jailhouse Lawyer representative, a Regional representative from each region, the National Office Executive Director, a National Office staff representative, a representative from The United People of Color Caucus and one representative from up to eight NLG projects and national committees. Each member shall have one vote.

All NEC members shall have specific areas of work for which they are responsible.

Committees /Projects on the NEC shall be selected from those that submit applications. All NEC committees/projects shall then be selected as one part of the existing post-convention voting.

If needed, each position may have a co-representative who shall help with the work and attend meetings of the NEC as a voting member when the designated member is unable to attend. This position can be alternated one year/one year, but only one person shall attend NEC meetings in any given year. Any NLG member may attend NEC meetings but only designated NEC members can vote.

Article 5.3

Terms of Office on the NEC – The term of office for the President shall be three years. The term of office for all other members of the NEC (including the vice-president) shall be two years.

Impacted Party Statement:

This proposal has been shared with the NEC and discussed at NEC meetings. It has been circulated as widely as possible, including being circulated to projects and working committees, the National Office, local chapters and all impacted parties. This effort generated suggestions, some of which have been incorporated into the final proposal. With some disagreement from particular individuals, no chapter, working committee or impacted group has expressed any opposition and there has been active support expressed by impacted committees and individuals.

Implementing Entities:

The national organization, including the NEC and the National Office, shall ensure the implementation of these amendments in 2018.