

Constitution & By-Laws

2024-2025

“Securing Our Foundation by Building a Stronger Future” is President Charlotte’s theme this year. Our governing documents are the BLUEPRINTS we are going to use to accomplish our goals. If we do not look out for our Veterans, who will?

The Constitution & Bylaws program informs and educates members of the American Legion Auxiliary on the importance and power of having properly written and regularly reviewed and updated governing documents at all levels of the organization.

Your governing documents include your articles of incorporation (if incorporated), constitution, bylaws, standing rules, and policies. These fundamental rules of the organization state how the membership agrees to govern itself, how it will choose its leaders, hold its meetings, and policies of the administration of the organization.

The importance of having governing documents in place to allow operations to continue in an emergency has become absolutely vital. Keeping your governing documents up to date and making them available to all members are key to a healthy organization that functions as a team to support our veterans, military, and their families.

Operation 300 is our President’s project this year. In this Program Engagement Plan, there will be different ways that we can secure our organization by reviewing our governing documents to make our organization secure. Together, we will make a difference in the lives of our veterans and their families!

We are here to assist you in any way so do not be afraid to reach out. Together, we are strong!

For God and Country

2024-*Jane*-2025

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Constitution & By-Laws Program Engagement Plan 2024-2025

Governing Documents – What are they and why do we need them?

A. **Constitution:** The dictionary defines the Constitution as a system of fundamental principles according to which a nation, state, corporation, or the like is governed. In the American Legion Auxiliary, it should constitute the Articles of Incorporation. It should also contain the core purpose and structure of your department or unit. This is the *FOUNDATION* of your Unit.

1. **Name:** States the name of your Unit.
2. **Nature:** Defines the purpose of your Unit.
3. **Eligibility:** Who can join your organization (Unit)?
4. **Officers:** Who are the leaders of your Unit?
5. **Changes:** Defines how to amend your Constitution

Your Constitution rarely changes; however, you should review them often to be knowledgeable in order to teach new members.

B. **Bylaws:** Bylaws are defined as the governing regulations of a corporation. In your Unit, this should include how you govern yourself and any fundamental rules voted on by the organization. Bylaws should be amended every five to 10 years as needed and supported by Standing Rules. This is the *FRAMEWORK* of your Unit.

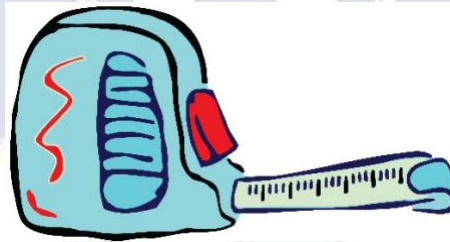
1. **Duties of Officers:** This defines the expectations of the office listed.
2. **Elections:** Defines the rules of your Unit's elections.
3. **Committees:** States what committees the Unit has. What is their purpose?
4. **Discipline:** How the Unit handles any discipline that may arise.
5. **Changes:** Defines how to amend your Bylaws.
6. **Meetings:** Regular, special, and quorum needed.

C. **Standing Rules:** Standing Rules are specific to your Unit. In the Auxiliary, your Standing Rules should be more specific than the Bylaws, administrative, and “process focused.” They should provide details about provisions in the Bylaws. They can be amended as frequently as needed to keep the organization up to date. This is the *DESIGN* of your Unit.

1. **Meetings:** Date and time of monthly meeting.
2. **Dues:** How much are your Unit's dues? Senior AND Juniors.
3. **Discretionary Items:**

- a. Does the Chaplain have funds to send cards, flowers etc. without waiting for the next Unit meeting.
- b. Does the President have funds for emergency purposes? Emergency purpose is defined as something that comes up before the next Unit meeting. i.e. \$50.00/month for food at a celebration of life or purchasing the last two Christmas gifts off the Angel Tree etc.
4. Signers of checks.
5. Key holders. Who has keys to the Auxiliary cabinets etc.? Who is responsible?
6. Cash control. How is money to be handled and turned in after a fundraiser is complete? To whom is it turned into? Etc.
7. Audits. When are the Unit's finances audited? When are they audited?

Important Measurements to Your Governing Documents



1. Give a copy to every member. All members, not just the leadership, are entitled to access to the governing documents, so it's a good idea to make these easily available to your membership.
2. Make sure your governing documents are not in direct conflict with National's and Department's Constitution and Bylaws.
3. **Spring Cleaning:**
 - a. Review for words like "she". If the section refers to the duties of a specific office — for example, the unit president — consider changing "she" to "the president." Instead of saying "she shall preside over unit meetings," change the text to "the unit president shall preside over all unit meetings."
 - b. Consider a Code of Conduct and procedures regarding the discipline of a member.
 - c. Shouda, coulda, woulda - it all amounts to nothing. "Should" has no place in your governing documents. Remember: Your governing documents state the fundamentals of your unit. These rules and procedures should be as clear as possible, and the word "should" leaves far too much room for interpretation. Consider swapping "should" for "may" or "must/shall."
4. Have a copy of your governing documents on hand for every meeting. Important decisions are made at your Unit's meetings and this way the proper procedure is being used.

Year-End Reporting

Make C&B fun this year for all members! Using President Charlotte's theme this year, have fun learning about your governing documents, reviewing those documents, and mentoring Unit members about your documents!! Take pictures of Unit members having fun with the Unit's C&B this year as you are ***"Securing Our Foundation by Building a Stronger Future"***.

Constitution & Bylaws Year-End Reporting will be a narrative outlining the following:

1. Have you done an annual review of your Constitution & Bylaws?
2. How did you have fun this year with your Constitution & Bylaws? If so, what were those activities? How did you inspire your members to learn more about your governing documents? Please be specific.

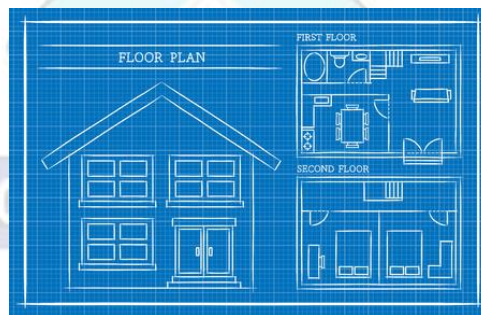
DEADLINES are real!!

April 1st, 2025 - Unit Year-End Report is due to District C&B Chairman.

April 15th, 2025 – District Year-End Report is due to Department C&B Chairman.

I look forward to see how you engaged your members with your Unit's governing documents!

Department Chairman's Award



Awarded to one (1) Unit in each Membership grouping who demonstrated how they incorporated President Charlotte's theme while reviewing, learning, and teaching members about the Unit's governing documents. Include Pictures as attachments.