Proposed Amendments to the Constitution

THE COMMITTEE ON AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION RECEIVED TWO general proposals for amendments this year from the Executive Council. The first proposal was to amend the constitution to allow for electronic voting. This proposal resulted in a single amendment that addresses references in the constitution to "a mail ballot" or to voting "by mail" for the following purposes: the annual MLA elections for second vice president (art. 6.F–G) and the Executive Council (art. 8.A.3–4), the ratification of actions taken by the Delegate Assembly (arts. 3.D, 9.C.13, 11.C.7, 13.E), and referenda (arts. 4.B and 9.E). Thus, the amendment limits electronic balloting to votes in which the entire membership participates. The amendment consists in a new section to be added to article 4, Administration, immediately after the section establishing *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* as the association's parliamentary authority.

The Executive Council's second proposal to amend the constitution grew out of a recommendation to change the dates of the annual convention from late December to early January. The recommendation was formulated by the Ad Hoc Committee on the Structure of the Annual Convention and endorsed by the 2006 Delegate Assembly. The first time the convention is held in January instead of in December, there will be a year with no convention. Thus, amendments are needed to address the current constitutional requirements for an annual convention, an annual meeting of the Delegate Assembly, and annual sessions of open hearings of the Delegate Assembly and to address the terms of office of the officers, members of the Executive Council, and members of the Delegate Assembly, which are either specified as or understood to be calendar-year terms that begin immediately after a convention when the convention is held on the traditional December dates. The necessary amendments are therefore grouped in two sets. The first set consists in four amendments—to articles 12.A, 12.E, 9.D, and 11.C.4—that provide the leeway needed for changing the dates of the convention while maintaining the long-standing practices that govern the convention and the meetings and hearings of the Delegate Assembly. The second set consists in three amendments—to article 6.B, to the head paragraph of article 8, and to article 10.C—that specify the terms of office for the officers, for Executive Council members, and for Delegate Assembly members in a way that accommodates both current practice and the new January convention dates.

All the proposed amendments were forwarded to the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution this spring. The committee completed its work on the amendments and will forward them to the Delegate Assembly, which will vote on the amendments during the assembly's regular meeting on 29 December 2007. So that members may be fully informed of such matters, the MLA constitution (art. 13.B) requires that all amendments to be brought before the Delegate Assembly be "published in an appropriate publication of the association at least ninety days before the meeting at which they are to be voted on." If approved by the assembly, the amendments will be submitted to the membership of the association in 2008 for ratification by mail ballot.

Both the present and the proposed versions of the articles subject to amendment appear below. The proposed new language is underlined.

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Current constitution	Proposed revisions
IV. Administration	**IV. Administration**
[A.–B.]	[A.–B.]
C. The current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall be the authority for the conduct of all formal business of the association.	C. The current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* shall be the authority for the conduct of all formal business of the association.
	D. Any time this constitution authorizes a vote of the entire membership of the association, that vote may be conducted by electronic means.
[D.–G.]	[E.–H.]
XII. Conventions and Meetings	**XII. Conventions and Meetings**
A. The association shall hold one or more conventions annually. In an emergency, the Executive Council shall have the power to cancel a convention.	A. The association shall hold one or more conventions annually, with the following exceptions. This constitutional provision and any others that are inconsistent or interfere with changing the dates of the annual convention shall be suspended at the discretion of the Executive Council. In an emergency, the Executive Council shall have the power to cancel a convention.
[B.–D.]	[B.–D.]
E. The Delegate Assembly shall hold at least one meeting annually, normally in conjunction with a convention of the association. Meetings of the Delegate Assembly must be announced in an appropriate publication of the association at least three months in advance of each meeting and can be canceled only by a majority of its delegates responding to a mail ballot on the question.	E. The Delegate Assembly shall hold a meeting in conjunction with each convention of the association. Meetings of the Delegate Assembly must be announced in an appropriate publication of the association at least three months in advance of each meeting and can be cancelled only by a majority of its delegates responding to a mail ballot on the question.
IX. Delegate Assembly—Responsibilities	**IX. Delegate Assembly—Responsibilities**
[A.–C.]	[A.–C.]
D. At least once a year, the assembly shall hold a session of open hearings to allow members of the association who are not delegates to present matters of concern to the assembly. No votes shall be taken at this session. These hearings shall terminate before the assembly begins its formal deliberations.	D. At least once a year, except in any year in which the annual meeting has been suspended in accordance with article 12.A, the assembly shall hold a session of open hearings to allow members of the association who are not delegates to present matters of concern to the assembly. No votes shall be taken at this session. These hearings shall terminate before the assembly begins its formal deliberations.
[E.]	[E.]
XI. Committees	**XI. Committees**
[A.–B.]	[A.–B.]
C. *Organizing Committee*	C. *Organizing Committee*
[1.–3.]	[1.–3.]
4. The committee shall hold hearings open to all members of the association on all resolutions it has received or initiated. Hearings shall be held on each day of the convention preceding the day of the assembly meeting. [. . .]	4. The committee shall hold hearings open to all members of the association on all resolutions it has received or initiated. Hearings shall be held on the day of the convention preceding the day of the assembly meeting. [. . .]
[5.–7.]	[5.–7.]
[D.]	[D.]

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Current constitution

VI. Officers—Election

[A.]

B. The president and vice presidents shall serve for one calendar year. The first vice president shall succeed to the office of president, and the second vice president to the office of first vice president. The second vice president shall be elected by the membership of the association as specified below.

[C.–I.]

VIII. Executive Council—Composition and Election. The Executive Council shall be composed of twelve at-large members and two members from the Delegate Assembly. In accordance with the provisions of article 8.A.5, at all times there shall be on the Executive Council representation from the three groups of dues-paying MLA members established by the constitution: regular members, student members, and life members. A council member's category of membership at the time of election shall stand throughout that council member's term of office. All members of the Executive Council must retain membership in the association during their terms of office.

X. Delegate Assembly—Composition and Election

[A.–B.]

C. Each year one-third of the members of the Delegate Assembly shall be elected for three-year terms, except for ex officio members, who shall serve for the duration of their terms in office. Candidates for election must have been listed in the most recent printed directory of members of the association or, if they are graduate students, in the current membership list. [. . .]

[D.–E.]

Proposed revisions

VI. Officers—Election

[A.]

B. The president and vice presidents shall serve for a term of approximately one year, which shall begin at the close of the association's convention following the election of the second vice president. The first vice president shall succeed to the office of president, and the second vice president to the office of first vice president. The second vice president shall be elected by the membership of the association as specified below.

[C.–I.]

VIII. Executive Council—Composition and Election. The Executive Council shall be composed of twelve at-large members and two members from the Delegate Assembly. In accordance with the provisions of article 8.A.5, at all times there shall be on the Executive Council representation from the three groups of dues-paying MLA members established by the constitution: regular members, student members, and life members. Executive Council members' terms shall begin at the close of the association's convention following their election. A council member's category of membership at the time of election shall stand throughout that council member's term of office. All members of the Executive Council must retain membership in the association during their terms of office.

X. Delegate Assembly—Composition and Election

[A.–B.]

C. Each year one-third of the members of the Delegate Assembly shall be elected for three-year terms, except for ex officio members, who shall serve for the duration of their terms in office. Elected delegates' terms shall begin at the close of the association's convention following their election. Candidates for election must have been listed in the most recent printed directory of members of the association or, if they are graduate students, in the current membership list. [. . .]

[D.–E.]

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