

Notes from Constitution and Bylaws committee meeting on 1/5/20

Eva Kosinski, chair acting as recording secretary.

The meeting was held on Zoom from 7-9, on Sunday Jan. 5, though we waited a bit to start to wait for newcomers (7:15). Attendees were:

Committee members:

Caryn Ann Harlos
Eva Kosinski
Mike Seebeck
BetteRose Ryan
Jeff Crowe
Joshua Lallement
Kevin Gulbranson
Michele Poague
Reyd Dotson

Leon Lipka was on national guard duty and could not attend
Sarah Bousman was out of town

visitors:

Wayne Harlos
Victoria Reynolds
Eric Muldur
Mike Spalding (briefly)

NOTE: The meeting was recorded, although due to just getting used to Zoom, Eva did not push the "record" button early enough. One part of the meeting that didn't get recorded was the discussion of whether or not a new chair needed to be voted on. (it was decided yes, and a vote was taken, with a unanimous vote for Ms Kosinski to chair). The other thing was a late notification that the El Paso affiliate board had rescinded Mr. Seebeck's nomination to the committee. The chair chose to let him continue with the meeting, because of the late notice, and the committee will wait to see the outcome of his appeal of that decision.

Some background was in order, since there were several new committee members, so Ms. Harlos was asked (along with Mr. Seebeck) to lay out some of the reasoning behind the 3 elements the committee is being asked to consider

- Merging the Constitution with the Bylaws (retaining the name Bylaws) with Standing rules as an addendum to the Bylaws but only the Bylaws go to the state.
- Standing rules for the 2020 convention:
- Standing rules for the 2021 convention:

Early questions triggered overall discussion:

Why?

- Roberts Rules of Order, which is considered “standard best practice” has recommended it.
- It has been brought up numerous times as a proposal but never got a full vote.
- Changes in one usually trigger changes in the other, since in some areas, Constitution and Bylaws intersect, making twice as much work at convention.
- Standing rules already set in place could be waived in convention but as a “time saver” would not need to be renegotiated before each convention.
- That’s how it’s done at National.

What would change?

- Thresholds for votes when changes are proposed.
- Currently Bylaws only require a majority to pass a proposal, and the Constitution requires a 2/3 vote. If the merge proposal passed, both would require 2/3.
- Items will no longer appear both in the Constitution and Bylaws – simplifying things.
- Standing rules would be an addendum to the Bylaws, and while they can always be waived in convention, would remain once put in place. Because new changes only take place AFTER convention, we need to look at 2020 standing rules first. They would still be proposed and voted on for the 2020 convention, as, until the convention ends, the old system remains in place, and folks can adjust the rules before convention begins. 2021 rules would have to be voted on at convention to take effect.

Concerns:

- If something urgent came up, especially for bylaws that would previously only have taken a majority vote, and we needed to get something done, needing a 2/3 vote would be an obstacle.
- When the last convention voted to have Bylaws only come up every other year, it’s possible they overlooked the proviso that was included in the vote which stated:

Proviso: This proposal would not apply to the need to clear the backlog of unheard Constitution and Bylaws proposals from the 2019 Convention and earlier, nor exclude proposals to codify the Convention Standing Rules into the Bylaws, or a proposal to combine the Constitution and Bylaws--both of which are needed items that were not achievable due to time constraints--which would be the only proposals allowed at the 2020 Convention.

- Convention planners and candidates have concerns that spending time on bylaws will overshadow a hope they had that the convention can focus in 2020 on the issues, training, fund-raising or other areas involved with the upcoming election.

Action:

The documents are going to be made available in share-able form (pdfs were already made available to the committee – thanks Mike Seebeck-- so they could take a peek before we started discussions). Committee members will be looking at all of them, but we will shift focus for the next meeting because time-wise the first matter to come up will be standing rules for the upcoming April convention.

Next Meeting:

Ms. Harlos set up a doodle poll to figure out who's available when for the next meeting so we can ensure the required quorum of 7. The chair will announce next meeting with the agenda as soon as information on schedules is confirmed.