

BYLAWS *and Policies*

The Bylaws and Policies column explores and discusses issues relevant to NSNA® governance.



By Liz Patail,
Director and Chair,
Bylaws and Policies
Committee

Empower Your Chapter!

Have you checked your chapter bylaws lately? Just as our bodies require regular healthcare exams, your organization's bylaws need periodic assessment. Such checks help maintain the health and viability of the chapter, because the bylaws serve as the foundation for the organization's structure and the basis for future action. Further, if conflict arises, clear bylaws make things easier for everyone and will guide Board members in their decision-making process.

How to check your bylaws in 5 quick steps

1. Areas of Conformity

There are four areas of conformity: purpose & function, membership, dues and representation. A simple check can be done by comparing these areas of your bylaws to NSNA's® bylaws located on the NSNA® website. Are they all there?

2. Officers and Directors

Are these still the positions on your board or have you added, deleted or changed a position? Are their duties accurate and clearly defined? Is there a section clearly outlining who is eligible to run for office (for an example, see Article V Section 3 of NSNA's® bylaws)?

3. Nominating and Elections Committee

Is there an impartial body designated to administer elections? Make sure that this duty isn't simply tacked onto an officer's job description, which can easily lead to a conflict of interest.

4. Defined Terms

Are all terms used in the bylaws clearly defined? This is an important yet simple way to prevent misinterpretations of your bylaws.

5. General

Check to make sure the formatting is correct and that words are spelled correctly.

September is a great month for performing your annual bylaws check and ensuring that your chapter has a solid foundation to support it in the upcoming school year. If you find areas that need updating, be sure to follow the proper procedure for amending them. Robert's Rules of Orders states that members must be previously notified and that the amendment must pass with a specified majority. These specifics (e.g., notification time frame and majority needed) should be outlined explicitly in the bylaws. Not there?! Then it's a good thing you did your annual check... add it! (See Article XIII for guidance.)

For more information, browse the Bylaws section at www.nсна.org. "Top Ten Bylaws Mistakes" provides some fun and educational activities you can do during your fall meetings to increase bylaws awareness and strengthen your chapter. Remember that by performing your bylaws check or using the activities on the website at meetings you will make your chapter eligible for the Bylaws and Policies Award, which will be handed out at the national convention! ∞