

**NATIONAL BLACK LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION
54TH NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STANDING RULES OF THE CONVENTION**

Pursuant to the most current version of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* and Article III, Section F, Subsection 2 of the Constitution of the National Black Law Students Association (NBLSA), the following standing rules are hereby established for the National General Assembly's orderly operation.

Article III, Section F, Subsection 2: "The General Assembly . . . may adopt special rules of order that shall regulate the internal operations of the body. Such special rules shall be specifically germane to the transaction of Assembly business."

Section I. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

Policy Framework of the National General Assembly

- Rule 1. The Standing Rules of the 54th National Black Law Students Association (NBLSA) General Assembly Plenary Sessions are hereby established under Article III, Section F of the NBLSA Constitution, as a set of uniform special rules with the purpose of regulating the internal operations (e.g., procedures and conduct of Assembly business) of the body during plenary sessions. In accordance with the most current version of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, upon introduction by the presiding officer, these rules shall be amendable by properly made motions to amend, then passed by majority vote of the assembled delegates.
- Rule 2. No Standing Rule shall be in conflict with the NBLSA Constitution, Bylaws, or the most current version of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.
- Rule 3. The Standing Rules shall be subject to a passage by majority vote of the Assembly prior to the introduction or entertaining of any substantive business and shall, thereafter, be enforced by the presiding officer as the definitive rules of the plenary sessions.
- Rule 4. Once the Standing Rules have been adopted, they cannot be modified at the same plenary session except by a reconsideration.
- Rule 5. At any future plenary session, the standing rules may be suspended, modified, or rescinded by a proper motion followed by a majority vote.
- Rule 6. A motion to suspend any Standing Rule, or any other rule governing the proceedings of the Assembly, shall be made with particularity, indicating the specific rule(s) requiring suspension. Unless otherwise herein provided, a motion to suspend Assembly rules or any other rule relating to parliamentary procedure shall require a two-thirds vote.

Rule 7. The parliamentary authority of the National General Assembly shall be the most current version of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. The Assembly shall also be bound to enforce any and all applicable provisions of the NBLSA Constitution, the NBLSA Bylaws, resolutions of the NBLSA General Assembly, and the policies of the NBLSA Executive Board.

Composition of the General Assembly

Rule 8. The General Assembly shall be composed of delegates or authorized proxies from each active NBLSA Law School Chapter. The assigned delegate(s) and proxies is a financially active member of NBLSA. The Director of Membership shall be responsible for certifying the presence of and voting strength of chapter delegates or their authorized proxies.

Rule 9. Each chapter shall be entitled to have two (2) speaking delegates and one (1) alternate delegate present in the Assembly chamber. In the case of a tie vote, the presiding officer shall exercise a tie breaking vote.

Rule 10. The authorized officers of the General Assembly shall be the National Chair, as its primary presiding officer, the National Vice Chair, the National Secretary, and the National Parliamentarian. The chair of the National Elections Committee shall be authorized to conduct the electoral process and the National Director of Membership shall be authorized to help maintain and recognize quorum, and ascertain and resolve discrepancies in chapter voting strength, as stipulated by these rules.

Rule 11. In the case of the apparent or foreseeable unavailability of both the National Chair and the National Vice-Chair to preside over the General Assembly, the Assembly shall nominate and appoint, by majority vote, a "Chair Pro Tempore" who shall preside in the absence of both the National Chair and National Vice-Chair.

Rule 12. The proceedings of the General Assembly shall be closed to the general public with the exception of the following authorized attendees:

- a. Chapter delegates, Chapter proxies, and alternate delegates;
- b. Members of the NBLSA National Executive Board;
- c. Past NBLSA National Chairs;
- d. Members of the Board of Directors of BLSA Canada;
- e. Registered National Convention attendees;
- f. Any other person authorized by the National Chair, or their authorized designee.

Use of Chapter Proxies

Rule 13. An active chapter unable to attend the meeting of the General Assembly shall have the right to assign, by proxy, its voting power on policy, procedural, and electoral matters to an attending chapter, provided the following requirements are met of the chapters receiving and assigning the proxy:

- a. The chapters must be active chapters member of NBLSA, located within the same Region;
- b. The chapter receiving the proxy must, itself, have voting delegates registered for the National Convention and in attendance at the plenary session of the General Assembly;
- c. The chapter assigning the voting power by proxy must complete any necessary written forms and submit such forms in a manner prescribed by NBLSA policy; and,
- d. The chapter receiving and exercising the voting power by proxy shall follow all voting instructions provided by the assigning chapter. In the absence of instructions, the receiving chapter must vote in a manner reasonably construed to be in the best interest of the assigning chapter.

Rule 14. An attending chapter may only hold a proxy for two (2) other non-attending schools. In the event of a sudden delegate change (i.e. the delegate(s) is/are unable to attend the plenary session), all proxy forms must be received by the Director of Membership twenty-four (24) hours prior to the beginning of plenary sessions.

Rule 15. The National Chair shall be empowered to permit further proxy forms after the beginning of plenary business.

Section II. THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Quorum and Voting

Rule 1. The General Assembly, in order to transact business, must recognize the existence of a quorum, which shall be defined as one-fifth (1/5) of the Association's active chapter membership. All chapters present must have registered for the National Convention.

Rule 2. The presiding officer shall be responsible for establishing the presence of a sufficient quorum, ensuring that enough eligible chapters are in attendance at the plenary session for the transaction of Assembly business.

Rule 3. Any delegate may call for quorum if it is suspected that a quorum does not exist, at which point the presiding officer shall confirm the presence of a quorum prior to resuming Assembly business. The National Secretary and National Director of Membership shall keep a record of the registered chapters in attendance at

each plenary meeting of the National General Assembly.

Rule 4. An act of the General Assembly, where not otherwise provided, shall be deemed passed upon gaining a majority of available votes in the affirmative. Vote calculations, per chapter delegation, shall be ascribed as provided by Article III, Section B, Subsection 2 of the NBLSA Constitution. This rule shall be subject to the following exceptions:

- a. Votes on legislation and procedural motions, i.e., motions on parliamentary motions or non-substantive questions, as provided by *Robert's Rules of Order*, shall utilize the vote threshold noted in the guidelines and each chapter shall receive one vote.
- b. Amendments to the NBLSA Constitution and/or Bylaws shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the National General Assembly.
- c. Suspensions of the Standing Rules shall require a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the National General Assembly.
- d. Abstentions shall not be allowed on procedural motions.

Rule 5. Votes by the chapter delegations may be taken by acclamation, showing of voting placard, formal roll call, or any other recommended method proscribed by the presiding officer. A vote by unanimous consent may be requested by the maker of a particular motion and entertained by the presiding officer, where applicable.

Rule 6. In the event that the presiding officer cannot reasonably ascertain the outcome of a vote by acclamation or by show of voting placards, the presiding officer shall commence a formal roll call vote on the measure, which shall ask of their vote in the affirmative/negative/abstention and the number of available votes being used.

Speaking Rights and Decorum

Rule 7. The National General Assembly, other than proscribed by these rules, shall have power to control the speaking rights, time, or frequency of any attendee to the plenary meetings. The presiding officer, in the interest of efficiency and the prudent conduct of plenary business, is empowered to recommend motions for limitations/extensions of speaking rights, time, or frequency.

Rule 8. Rights to speak in debate, make point/motions, and vote are categorically and irrevocably granted to duly registered Chapter delegates and authorized proxies who are present and accounted for in the chamber.

Rule 9. The authorized attendees under Section I, Rule 8 are granted authority to seek recognition and speak in debate(s) on questions pending before the Assembly and raise points of information. This authority may be curtailed or revoked by a motion duly passed by the General Assembly.

Rule 10. Delegates and authorized attendees seeking to speak on a question pending before the Assembly must first be recognized and assigned the floor by the presiding officer before speaking unless an intervening point obviates such recognition. Upon recognition, the speaker shall state their name and law school or in the case of alumni, their prior authorized position.

Rule 11. When seeking the floor, the presiding officer shall be addressed as “Mister/Madam National Chair.” The presiding officer shall then acknowledge the speaker and grant them the floor. The speaker shall begin each speaking opportunity with their name and the name of the school whose chapter they represent.

Rule 12. At no time shall any delegate or authorized attendee reference any member or other person by name. Delegates and authorized attendees are to refer to other speakers or plenary attendees in the third-person or by their official title where applicable, e.g., “the delegate from Howard Law,” “the previous speaker,” or “the National Chair.”

Rule 13. At no time shall a member be allowed to use slanderous, unprofessional, or otherwise offensive language towards delegates and/or authorized attendees of the National General Assembly, the presiding officer, or authorized members of the public during speaking in plenary sessions. The presiding officer shall have sufficient authority to enforce this rule and call delegates/authorized speakers to order, as may be found in *Robert’s Rules of Order*.

Rule 14. If in the opinion of the presiding officer or a delegate, an attendee of a plenary session is disruptive to the proper conduct of the business before the General Assembly and, upon reasonable admonition by the presiding officer, the offending attendee fails to refrain from such actions or maintain proper decorum, the presiding officer may excuse the delegate or attendee from the plenary session. The order from the Chair shall revoke the rights of the attendee to attend the remainder of the plenary session in which the order was made. A motion may be made to overturn the decision of the Chair.

Section III. DEBATE & MISCELLANEOUS

Rules for Debate

Rule 1. For each legislative/policymaking item, e.g., resolutions, amendments to NBLSA governing documents, or main motions, there shall be a presentation by the sponsor or author of the item, a period of questions, and a period of debate. The General Assembly may place restrictions or dispense with these items at its discretion, by passing motions to suspend the rules. For reports, officer presentations, or non-transactional announcements or addresses, the presiding officer may open the floor for questions following the presentation.

Rule 2. Each presentation of legislative/policymaking item and periods of questioning shall be set to a default length of five (5) minutes. The Assembly may choose to

limit, extend, or otherwise adjust the length of the presentation or questioning by motion, insofar as the ability to adequately present the item under consideration is not unreasonably infringed.

- Rule 3. For all periods of debate attached to a legislative/policymaking item requiring National General Assembly consideration, a default time limit of five (5) minutes shall be allotted to each respective point in the item's consideration. The Assembly may choose to limit, extend, or otherwise adjust the length of either the debate or the questioning sections by motion, insofar as the ability to adequately present the item under consideration is not unreasonably infringed.
- Rule 4. Amendments to pending legislation must be properly moved and submitted to the National Secretary in writing prior to a vote on the amendment.
- Rule 5. For any question pending before the body, each speaker may raise two one-minute speeches for each question before the body; however, the Assembly may extend, further limit, or suspend regulations on the frequency and/or length of points of debate by motion. In recognizing members for debate, the presiding officer shall give preference to persons having not spoken on the question before the Assembly prior to returning to previous speakers.
- Rule 6. All debate, points of information, i.e. inquiries of a non-parliamentary nature, and other points/motions to amend shall be germane to the question or legislative item pending before the body, unless the point or statement raised inherently obviates such a requirement. In addition, General Assembly delegates shall not be empowered to make motions that are found to be dilatory, repetitive, or to otherwise prevent the orderly and prudent conduct of plenary business, in explicit nature or implicit intent. The presiding officer shall have power to rule out of order debate, questions, points, motions and other speech not in compliance with this provision and those rules adopted by the Assembly or provided by Robert's Rules of Order.

Procedures Governing Elections

- Rule 7. Elections shall be governed by the electoral rules of the NBLSA Constitution, NBLSA Bylaws, and by National Election policies passed by the National Board. The presiding officer shall strictly conduct the election, as with all plenary business, in a fair and impartial manner.
- Rule 8. Chapters shall be eligible to receive a ballot for elections so long as they have recorded attendance for one of the two plenary sessions held prior to the final official plenary session held during the National Convention (i.e. a chapter must attend a total of two (2) plenary sessions, one of which is the final plenary session). This rule shall extend to any chapter proxy held by the same chapter.
- Rule 9. For any electoral process providing opportunities for questioning of candidates prior to the transmittal of ballots, all authorized plenary attendees, as found

in Section I, Rule 8 may pose questions, where provided in the rules. In all other events during the electoral process where the floor is open for nominations, debate, or other speech on business, speaking rights shall be limited to chapter delegates/proxies and the officers of the Assembly, i.e., the presiding officer, the National Secretary, the National Parliamentarian, and where applicable, the National Director of Membership and the chair of the National Elections Committee.

Rule 10. Candidate speeches shall be given as follows :

- a. Member at Large 5 (5 minutes)
- b. Member at Large 4 (5 minutes)
- c. Member at Large 3 (5 minutes)
- d. Member at Large 2 (5 minutes)
- e. Member at Large 1 (5 minutes)
- f. Attorney General (7 minutes)
- g. Secretary (7 minutes)
- h. Treasurer (8 minutes)
- i. Vice Chair (10 minutes)
- j. Chair (12 minutes)

The Assembly may choose to limit, extend, or otherwise adjust the length of the candidate speeches by motion, insofar as the candidate's ability to adequately present their speech is not unreasonably infringed.

Rule 11. The question-and-answer period shall be limited to a maximum of five (5) minutes for uncontested positions, and ten (10) minutes for contested positions. All candidate responses are limited to one minute and 30 seconds. Unless uncontested, the Chair candidates will participate in a debate for the ten (10) minute question and answer period. The Assembly may choose to limit, extend, or otherwise adjust the length of questioning by motion, insofar as the candidate's ability to adequately respond to the question(s) is not unreasonably infringed.

Rule 12. During voting and the submission of ballots, the presiding officer shall be empowered to excuse all authorized plenary attendees who are not engaged in the business of conducting the election, until such time as the election has concluded. All business, debate, and conversation shall be ceased until such time as ballots have been submitted.

Chair's Privilege

Rule 13. The Chair's Privilege shall be defined as the general power of the National Chair to grant speaking rights to a person or group, not otherwise able to speak, for a specific purpose. The Privilege may not be used to grant unfettered speaking rights to any person not contemplated by Section I, Rule 8

and 10.

Rule 14. The Privilege shall also describe a period of time during the conduction of elections, not longer than five (5) minutes in length, in which only the current or any former National Chair shall be permitted to pose questions to the candidate(s) for the office of National Chair without intervention from any other delegate or authorized attendee. During this time frame, the National Chair may extend said privilege to any authorized attendee present in the room, except as curtailed by the General Assembly by motion.

Rule 15. These rules shall not remove or supplant other powers of the National Chair as may be granted by the NBLSA Constitution, NBLSA Bylaws, *Robert's Rules of Order*, or other NBLSA policy.