

WHAT ARE BYLAWS?

Bylaws are the basic rules by which an organization governs itself. The bylaws are always superior to and supersede the standing rules and parliamentary authority. For a ruling on any question, look first in the bylaws, then the standing rules (if they exist), and finally *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.

WHY ARE BYLAWS IMPORTANT?

The structure and specific rules of a PTA are contained in its bylaws. Rules provide for a smooth running organization. Bylaws are a guide for the PTA, but should not unnecessarily restrict its operation. If something is not working, the PTA should consider amending the bylaws.

GENERAL BYLAW INFORMATION

- Each local PTA/PTSA unit and council must review its bylaws every two years.
- A current (not more than two years old) copy of the PTA's bylaws must be on file with the district/region director or designated representative of the state board of directors. If approved bylaws do not exist, the current *Illinois PTA Bylaws for Local PTA/PTSA Units or Councils* shall be in effect.
- All articles and sections preceded by double stars (**) are in conformity with the Regulations of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All articles and sections preceded by the number symbol (#) are required by the Illinois PTA. Both double starred (**) and number symbol (#) articles and sections are required to be in local PTA/PTSA unit and council bylaws. They

must appear word for word exactly as they appear in the *Illinois PTA Bylaws for Local PTA/PTSA Units or Councils*. These articles and sections do not have to be voted upon by the PTA membership. They were adopted by the Illinois PTA convention delegate body.

BYLAW COMMITTEE GUIDELINES

The committee should:

- Familiarize itself with the PTA's bylaws and insure that the local PTA/PTSA unit or council abides by its adopted bylaws. Chairing the committee could be the responsibility of a vice president.
- Help all members become familiar with their bylaws. Various articles or sections could be explained at a meeting or in a newsletter article.
- Review the bylaws early in the PTA year and determine what changes are needed, using the current *Illinois PTA Bylaws for Local PTA/PTSA Units or Councils*.
- Use the *Illinois PTA Bylaws for Local PTA/PTSA Units or Councils*, and complete all blanks. Suggested wording is given in parenthesis. If the wording offers a choice, select what fits the PTA's procedure. Do not include the underline or parenthesis in the final copy of the bylaws. Statements in parenthesis and underlined, following bylaw sections, are suggestions for the PTA to consider. The statement itself should not appear in the bylaws.
- Use the proper form when stating a number in the bylaws, which is to state the number as a word, then as a numeral in parenthesis. For

example, if three days notice is required to call a meeting, it would be stated "three (3) days notice".

The committee chairman should:

- Prepare the proposed amendments; present them to the executive board for their approval to present them for adoption; and must send the amendments to the district/region director or designated representative of the state board of directors, for that person's review, prior to presentation to the membership.
- Give notice of proposed amendments to the membership at the previous meeting or in writing thirty (30) days before the general meeting at which the amendments will be voted upon. For councils only, proposed amendments should be presented by member units to their own membership for consideration and approval, prior to being adopted at a general council meeting.
- Present the proposed amendments to the membership at a general meeting, for their adoption. The adoption of bylaw amendments requires a two-thirds vote.
- Send two copies of all adopted amendments to the district/region director or designated representative of the state board of directors for final approval. Upon approval, the district/region director or designated representative of the state board of directors will sign, date, and return one copy, which becomes the official copy. A copy should be given to each board member and all members who request a copy. Council bylaws should be given to each member local PTA/PTSA unit.

STANDING RULES

Standing Rules relate to the details of administration of the PTA, rather than to parliamentary procedure. Standing Rules can be considered as the PTA's procedures. They are usually adopted as a need for them arises. Adoption requires a majority vote without previous notice having been given.

A PTA can have Standing Rules just for the executive board, and would be adopted by that body. They can have Standing Rules for the entire PTA, which would be adopted by the membership at a regular meeting.

Standing Rules generally include details, which do not appropriately belong in the bylaws. Some examples are:

- the amount of dues;
- duties of officers and chairmen not stated in the bylaws;
- duties of the executive board;
- procedures for reimbursement of expenses, honoring PTA volunteers, responding to serious illness or death of a PTA member, student, or staff member.

EXPLANATION OF TERMINOLOGY USED IN BYLAWS

Noncommercial – the name PTA or the names of its officers shall not be used in conjunction with the commercial activities of other organizations, including, but not limited to, the promotion of their goods and services.

Nonsectarian – membership in the PTA is open to everyone regardless of race, color, creed, or national origin, and should not support one religion over another.

TERMINOLOGY (continued)

Nonpartisan – the PTA may propose, support, or oppose legislation needed to achieve the Objects. But, may not support or oppose political parties of candidates.

Constituent organizations – all organizations in membership with the Illinois PTA, including councils and local PTA/PTSA units.

Special committee – a committee selected to perform a specified function. At the completion of the task, it automatically ceases to exist.

Standing committee – a permanent committee that performs a continuing function and remains in existence for the life of the PTA that establishes it.

Executive board – a group composed of the officers and chairmen of standing committees of the PTA, and often includes the principal of the school. Other persons may be included as stated in the bylaws.

Executive committee – a smaller group subordinate to the executive board and usually limited to the elected officers.

Ex-officio – by virtue of or because of office. When provided in the bylaws, certain officers are automatic members of certain committees. The president is often an ex-officio member of some committees. This allows him/her to attend committees when desired; offer motions; speak to motions; and vote. An ex-officio member is not counted when determining a quorum.

For all questions pertaining the bylaws, contact the district/region director, the designated representative of the state board of directors, or the Illinois PTA Bylaws Chairman.

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What are they and why are they important?

General Bylaw Information.

Bylaw Committee Guidelines

Responsibilities of the committee and its chairman

Explanation of Standing Rules

Explanation of some terminology used in bylaws.