



ORDER OF OMEGA

CHAPTER CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS

The constitution of an organization contains the fundamental principles which govern its operation. The bylaws establish the specific rules by which the group is to function. All but the most informal groups should have their basic structure and methods of operation in writing.

WHY HAVE A CONSTITUTION?

By definition, an organization is a “body of persons organized for some specific purpose, as a club, union or society.” The process of writing a constitution will clarify your purpose, provide building blocks for an effective group and delineate your basic structure. It also gives both members and potential members a better understanding of what the organization is and how it functions. If you remember the value of having a written document, which clearly describes the basic framework of your organization, the drafting of the Constitution will be a much easier and more rewarding experience.

WHAT SHOULD BE COVERED IN A CONSTITUTION?

Below is an outline of the standard information to be included in a constitution. The objective is to draft a document, which covers these topics in a clear and concise manner.

Article I	The name of the organization
Article II	Affiliation with other groups (local, state, national, etc.)
Article III	Purpose, aims, functions of the organization
Article IV	Membership requirements and limitations
Article V	Officers (titles, term of office, how and when elected)
Article VI	Advisor (term of service, how selected)
Article VII	Meetings (frequency, special meetings and who calls them)
Article VIII	Quorum (number of members required to transact business)
Article IX	Referendum and Recall (procedures and handling)
Article X	Amendments (means of proposal, notice required, voting)
Article XI	Ratification (requirements for adopting this constitution)

WHY HAVE BYLAWS?

While the constitution covers the fundamental principle, it does not prescribe specific procedures for operating your organization, Bylaws set forth in detail the procedures for conducting business by a specific chapter.

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE BYLAWS?

- Bylaws must not contradict the constitution. They generally contain specific information on the following topics:
 - Membership (selection requirements, resignations, expulsion, rights and duties)
 - Dues (amount and collection procedures, any special fees and when payable)
 - Duties of Officers (powers, responsibilities, special job descriptions, procedures for filling unexpired terms of office, removal from office)
 - Executive Board (structure, composition, powers)
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- Committees (standing, special, how formed, chairperson, meetings, duties, powers)
 - Order of Business (standard agenda for conducting meetings)
 - Parliamentary Authority (provisions for rules of order, generally *Robert's Rules of Order*)
 - Amendment Procedures (means of proposal, notice required, voting requirements)
 - Other specific policies and procedures unique to your organization necessary for its operation

WHAT DO WE DO WITH THEM?

A constitution and bylaws articulate the purpose of your organization and spell out procedures for orderly functioning. Constitutions usually require a 2/3 vote of the membership for adoption. Bylaws require only a simple majority for passage. Once you have developed these, they should be reviewed often. The needs of your group will change over time and the constitution and bylaws should be kept up to date to reflect the current state of affairs.

Make sure each member has a copy of these. This will help unify and educate your members by informing them about the opportunities that exist for participation and the procedures for being an active, contributing member. A thorough study of the constitution and bylaws should be a part of officer training and transition.

We give credit to the University of Michigan Student Organization Development Center for the development of this information.

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