

Upload them bylaws



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At our most recent Branch Officers Training, a question was asked concerning the time it takes to get bylaws approved. This branch officer was under the impression that it could take several months to almost a year to receive a decision. She might have been told this by someone who experienced an extended wait time, but this would be an exception rather than the rule.

As the chair of the Committee of Laws, I have worked with my fellow committee members to make sure that we get branches and state associations a response as soon as possible. I wrote in my July

article about providing a response within 30 to 45 days from the date of receipt, and I was using that as a conservative estimate. The turnaround can be shorter or longer depending on the extent of the changes and the schedule of the committee members.

We know that branches and state associations can put a lot of time and effort into creating or amending bylaws, so we want to get them back to you so you can officially implement your *proposed* changes. Remember, even if it is something agreed to by your members, it's just "proposed" until approved by the Committee of Laws. Article 11, Section 3 of the *NALC Constitution* states in part, "*by-laws and subsequent alterations or amendments made thereto shall not take effect until so approved.*" (Emphasis added.) The only exception to this would be changes made to the bylaws "fixing the time and place of meetings, and the amount of initiation fees, dues and reinstatement fees." Those would become effective at the time determined by the branch or state association.

When you follow the process outlined in Article 15 of the *NALC Constitution*, a branch can have bylaw changes approved by their members within 30 days. Consider, for example, a branch introduces bylaw changes at its September meeting, votes and approves them at the October meeting (30 days), then *immediately* submits them to the Committee of Laws; in this case, the branch can have them back by or before the December meeting. I used that example because I know it was a reality for the branches or state associations that submitted changes this past October. Some might have actually had them returned by the November meeting.

The key to the quickest return possible is the Members Only portal of the NALC website. As I have written previously, you can track the status of your bylaws through the portal as well. Another way to access the portal is by going to the assistant-secretary treasurer page under the "Union Administration" tab on the NALC website for direct links and forms to complete for bylaw submission.

It should be noted that only presidents, secretaries and treasurers have access to the bylaw menu in the portal. At some point we will have it where the president can provide access to any member or officer as designated.

For those who have access, once inside the Members Only portal, you will see the "By-Laws" button and when you click on it, it will take you to the "Maintain Bylaws" section of the database. From there you can amend or create bylaws directly by typing them in by article and section. And that's important because a change to each section should be entered just like you would on the hard-copy version. Be careful not to "submit" each article and section as a separate bylaw submission. There is a tutorial in the "Maintain Bylaw" section to help you every step of the way.

If you already have it typed up as a PDF from the fillable form provided on my webpage, you also can directly upload it through the portal. Simply drag and drop and I will receive your changes instantly once it is submitted. The program will confirm the successful submission by responding "file uploaded complete."

You also are able to view any submission that we have currently in the database for your branch or state association. We are working on digitalizing and uploading in the database any hard-copy file that we have at Headquarters that is not already available for your viewing. If you are using the portal, make sure that you include a copy of your current bylaws as well. This can help if we have any questions concerning the context of what is submitted.

Complete all of the information requested, including your contact information. A *direct* phone number and/or an email address for the contact person will suffice.

Disclaimer: For purists like me who love mail and the Postal Service, this in no way implies a preference for digital over our beloved mail service. This just provides a quicker response time. Mailed bylaw changes are still very much welcome!

In closing, I wish all a very merry Christmas, a happy Hanukkah, joyous Kwanzaa and a prosperous new year, from my family to yours.