



# American Legion Auxiliary Department of California Constitution and Bylaws

August 2020 Bulletin

Hello Founding Mothers and Framers,

How exciting to be continuing the celebration of our 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday. It is good to work with each of you for another year.

Are you aware that September 17<sup>th</sup> is Constitution Day? It memorializes the date the Constitution was signed in 1787. It was previously known as "Citizenship Day" and became an official federal holiday called "Constitution Day" in 2004. On this day, students learn about the constitution and the rights it ensures. Maybe your unit can sponsor some type of activity for September 17<sup>th</sup> with a teacher or your unit. I understand it would probably be a virtual type of activity, but I think you can do it! With the November 3<sup>rd</sup> election around the corner, timing could not be more perfect. I would like to hear from you to let me know what you were able to come up with.

In both the District and Unit Bylaws you will find the following:

## "ARTICLE VIII – PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

SECTION 1. This Unit shall be governed by *Robert's Rules of Order NEWLY REVISED* on all points not covered by these Bylaws."

Which edition are you using? *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition*, is coming out in September. It is a good idea for Units and districts to update their copy of Robert's Rule of Order Newly Revised to the 12<sup>th</sup> Edition this year.

I received the following information from the Western Division Constitution and Bylaws Chairman that I think you will find helpful:

### **Important Information from our National Chairperson, Trish Ward.**

**Or is it Chairman, Chairperson, Chairmember or just Chair?**

The national organization has received many inquiries regarding usage of the word "Chairman." Is it appropriate if the chairman is a woman? Since we have both men and women in the American Legion Auxiliary, is "Chairperson" a better choice in our governing documents? Here is the official scoop regarding usage of the word "Chairman."

In meetings, your presiding officer should be addressed by title such as "Madam Chairman" or "Mr. President." Robert's Rules provides that an officer's title should be used as defined in the bylaws, or the rules of order. In Robert's Rules, "Chairman" is considered gender neutral as "Director" or "Governor." (Not many female members of a board of directors or a board of governors what to be called a "Directrix")

or a “Governess,” the traditional feminine forms of “Director” and “Governor.”) But courtesy demands that a person’s preference as to the usage of their title be honored. Accordingly, “Madam Chair” or “Madam Chairperson” is not incorrect, if it’s the pleasure of a woman holding the position of presiding officer.

### So the answer to the issue is ...

At present, the official position of the American Legion Auxiliary national organization is we will remain using gender-neutral terms including “Chairman” when referring to people (men and women) who are serving in that position. To change this reference in our ALA governing documents would require a resolution presented to the delegates for consideration and voting at National Convention.

### But wait...there’s MORE! What about when the Vice-President is Presiding?

A vice-president is addressed as Mr./Madam President when actually presiding. If the president is only temporarily out of the chair and is still present at the meeting, Mr./Madam Vice President is appropriate. Any other person temporarily occupying the chair is properly addressed as Mr./Madam Chairman.



When addressing the presiding officer, avoid the second person, as in “Madam Chairman, are you sure that ...?” Instead, use “Madam Chairman, is the chair certain of ...?”

### Speaking through the chair



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When addressing another member, you never go wrong by speaking through the chair. Refrain from using the member’s name if you can avoid it. Respect is conveyed by depersonalizing comments made in debate. For example, “Mr. Chairman, does the member who just spoke have information on the cost of his proposal?” works much better than, “Dang it Millie, have you thought about how much your idea is gonna cost us?” Formality has its benefits! Roberts Rules for Dummies, C. Alan Jennings (Copyright 2005)

If it is time for your district or unit to do the ten-year rewrite of your Bylaws, you will be receiving a letter from me in the next couple of weeks. I will be happy to help you, so please do not hesitate to ask questions.

When emailing me, please be sure to type in “C & B” (or something similar) in the subject line to be sure to draw my attention to it. My inbox gets so many daily junk emails that I need something to draw my attention to your important email as I sort through them.

I wish you a wonderful year as Constitution and Bylaws Chairman. Please stay safe and stay healthy!

Yours in Service,

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