**GCB Advocacy Committee**

**Advocacy Training**

**October 20, 2018**

**Presenters List**

Deborah Lovell, Advocacy

Deborah Lovell has served for over 30 years in a variety of rehabilitation settings.  She is currently the Family Outreach Coordinator at the Charlie Norwood Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Augusta, Georgia where she works with blind veterans from Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina.  Prior to moving to Augusta she worked as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor for the Georgia Department of Labor in the Atlanta area for many years. She began her career as a senior case manager with the Hall County Department of Family and Children Services in Gainesville, Georgia.

Ms. Lovell earned a M.A., in Blind Rehabilitation from Western Michigan University and a M.Ed. in Rehabilitation Counseling from Auburn University.

Ms. Lovell holds certifications as a Vision Rehabilitation Therapist, (CVRT) and as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, (CRC). She is also recognized as a Certified Mentor in the Veterans Health Administration as well as a certified PAIRS instructor for the VA Marriage Enrichment program.

Some of her professional and community affiliations include:  Georgia Association for the Education of the Blind and Visually Impaired, (GA-AER), Georgia Rehabilitation Association, and (GRA). She is a member of the Georgia State Rehabilitation Council, (SRC).  Ms. Lovell is a member of the Georgia Council of the Blind and serves as president of the Augusta chapter.

Jerrie Toney, Technology

I was born at Fort Bragg in North Carolina and in my youth moved from military base to military base with my family. I earned an Associate Degree as a Programming Specialist, from Gwinnett Technical College.  My hobbies are reading, volunteering, digging in the dirt, and crocheting. I am a grandmother of 7 and a great-grandmother of 2.

If anyone ever told me that I couldn’t do something, I was determined to do it!

Alice Ritchhart, Legislative

My name is Alice Ritchhart and I live in Brunswick, Georgia. I am originally from Indiana where I worked as a Social Worker for a Retirement center, and then as a case worker for Department of Family and Children Services. After moving to Georgia I worked as an Independent living coordinator for. I at the age of46 I returned to school and received my Master’s and was a Certified Visual Rehabilitation Therapist. I enjoy traveling, swimming, and spending time with friends. I am very involved in advocacy work. I am currently working my 5th dog, but my first from GEB. I received Cal a black lab 2 years ago from the special needs program. He is a true blessing, and without him I would not be able to continue doing the things I enjoy i.e. Traveling, and being an advocate. I became an advocate because both my parents were blind, and very involved in the NFB. My father also worked on many political campaigns, and always took me with him when he worked on several politicians campaigns.

Marj Schneider, Leadership

Growing up in Minneapolis, Minnesota, I had partial vision and attended public schools. In the '60s and '70s it was all about maximizing usable vision, so I was never taught braille, even though I was less and less able to read large print. In high school I started making friends with other blind people. They were older than I was and I began learning a different way to view my disability.

When I had the opportunity at age 15 to learn braille outside of the school system, I took advantage of it and learned it in three months.

That was the first time I remember advocating for myself, and it was because of what I was learning from my new blind friends. From them I realized that college could be an option for me, but that I would have to be proactive with professors to find out in advance what textbooks I would need recorded and for them to make the accommodations I'd need to participate in classes. This was before the days of offices for disabled students, so there was no hand-holding; there was nobody but me to hire my own readers and arrange for accommodations to take tests.

Learning to navigate the challenges posed by attending a school as big as the University of Minnesota was the best way for me to become a self-advocate, while I was also learning about advocating on bigger questions as a member of a variety of organizations on and off campus.

I've learned a great deal in the years since, in my life in Minnesota and then in Georgia, from people who were strong, talented advocates, but it was from people I got to know in the blind community as a teenager that I had my first valuable lessons.

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# Acronyms

CAP – Client Assistance Program

AAA or Triple A.- Area Agency on Aging

AAPD - American Association of People with Disabilities

ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act

HIPAA - Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act HPRP

OCR – Office for Civil Rights

SILC - Statewide Independent Living Council

PA - Personal Assistant PAR - Personnel Activity Report PAS - Personal Assistant (or Attendant) Services

P & A - Protection and Advocacy

PWD - People with Disabilities

VR or VRS – Vocational Rehabilitation Services

VRT – Vision Rehabilitation Therapist

O&M – Orientation and Mobility Specialist

VT – Low Vision Therapist

AT/S – Assistive Technology/Assistive Technology Specialist

CHILD RELATED

IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP – Individualized Education Program

FAPE - Free Appropriate Public Education

FERPA - Family Educational Rights

OSERS - Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

PTI – Parent Training and Information Center

TVI – Teacher of the Visually Impaired

# Definition of Self Advocacy and Systems Advocacy

* Self-advocacy accurse anytime individuals speak or act on their own behalf to improve their quality of life.
* Speaking up and speaking out for your rights.
* Self-advocacy often leads to systems advocacy.

# Systems advocacy is an effort to change policies, rules or laws which determine how services are provided.

* Organized training for their members or speak to other groups about self-advocacy.
* Be a powerful voice to organizations about changes they want to see in their communities.
* Be a way for people to come together to have fun and may friends.
* Systems advocacy brings people together to share ideas and support.

# Technology

Technology is very much a part of today’s society.  Such as how people interact with each other and perform other various tasks.  For someone who is visually impaired or blind it is a wonderful tool to assist them with being independent.

First you must create a criteria for selecting the appropriate technology for you.

Second you need to determine which adaptive media will be most comfortable and efficient for you to use to access information that is presented to you.

You need to ask yourself the following questions:

What are my needs?

Make a list of the duties you perform now and a list of the duties you should be performing.

Are you doing them as independently as you like?

Think of what you really need to do rather than what activities you want to do.

Do you need to be mobile?

Which tasks depend solely on technology?

Example: Paying bills, reading mail, researching information, taking notes and much more.

The technology that you choose should first and foremost meet your needs.

What are my wants?

Example of wants: Reading a book, participating in online chats, text messaging using a cell phone and keeping in touch with people via a social network.

What are my expectations?

If your needs and wants are many your expectations will be high.

This means you will need to acquire a number of technological tools to make it all happen.

Avoid overloading yourself with unneeded technology just because you are visually impaired.

What can I afford?

If your technology journey will change frequently over the next three to five years, you may want to budget a large amount of money to purchase high-end solutions that grow with you.

If your funds are limited and your technology is more fixed and stable, you may want to plan on

replacing your lower-cost solutions.

Such as computers and cellular phones more frequently.

What ever you decide it is important to determine how you will pay for your technology.

You can purchase it yourself.

There may be low-interest loan programs for technology purchases by persons who are visually impaired.

VR may be a resource if you are wanting to go back to work.

Lions Clubs and churches may also be another untapped resource.

Examples of Some Technology:

Cell Phones: iPhone and Android

Computers: PC and Mac

Screen Magnification: Magic and ZoomText

Screen Readers: JAWS and NVDA

# Tips on Working with your Legislators

Step 1: Building a relationship

It’s important to get to know who your legislators/ politicians before an issue arises for which you need their assistance.

* Find out who represents you or is running for office to represent you
* \* Send them a personalized birthday card or Christmas card
* Invite them out for coffee to get to know them
* is \*  If it is election time pick a candidate who you  relate to as far as what you believe in and volunteer to work on their campaign ie. (sign in your yard,make calls, on their behalf, help get people registered to vote)

Step 2: What to do when an issue arises for which you need their support.

* Identify the problem/ issue and what your “ask is”
* Present them with a one page fact sheet with main points about the issue, and the solution
* \* At the top of the page have your contact information typed or attach a business card
* \* If meeting with them in person keep your talk short and sweet as you may only have 5 to 15 minutes of their time
* \* If they ask a question you don’t know the answer to tell them you will get back with them with the answer don’t just give false information
* \* If possible meet with them while they are back home to discuss the issue
* \* Some times the best source is to make friends with someone on their office staff
* \* \* Thank them for their time and support

Step 3: Follow up

* Once you get back home follow up with a phone call especially if you know a vote is taking place
* \* Send a thank you note
* \* If they don’t vote or resolve the current issue you were asking help with do not get ugly with them. Again thank them because you will need their assistance in future in which they may do as you need.
* \* Don’t burn bridges

These tips work for all levels of the legislative process from local commissioners to state officials to your federal officials.

# Sample Letter Requesting Appointment

Alice Ritchhart

125 Willow Pond Way  
Brunswick, GA. 31525  
February 12, 2013  
  
Dear Ms. Sweeney:  
My name is Alice Ritchhart, and I am from Georgia and with the American Council of the Blind. I along with Marsha Farrow are writing to request a meeting with Senator Isakson or his aid who deals with disabilities issues on Tuesday, February 26, 2013. The issues we wish to discuss are Medicare and low vision devices, and the   
Anne Sullivan Macy Act which is about the education of our blind and visually impaired students. Please contact me at alice.ritchhart@comcast.net or by phone at (912) 996-4213 to set up a time to meet with the Senator or his aid.  
Thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely;

Alice Ritchhart

# Sample letter to Legislator with Call to Action

Alice Ritchhart

125 Willow Pond Way

Brunswick, GA. 31525

June 23, 2018

To: [Gus\_Youmans@isakson.senate.gov](mailto:Gus_Youmans@isakson.senate.gov),

Dear Mr. Youmans:  
  
My name is Alice Ritchhart, and I live in Brunswick, Georgia. I am the president of the Georgia Council of the Blind which is an affiliate of the American Council of the Blind. It is my understanding that Anthony Stephens Director of Advocacy & Governmental Affairs has reached out to Senator Isakson's office about co-sponsoring the Medicare Demonstration bill that Senator Nelson is looking to introduce. The Georgia Council of the Blind would like for Senator Isakson to sign on to this very important piece of legislation as it would have a positive impact on many of our members as well as other Georgians who have developed vision loss due to aging. According to Population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau (2016) indicate that there are approximately 2,268,400 individuals age 55 and above in Georgia, 145,789 of whom are visually impaired.   
The overall prevalence rate of visual impairment is higher for individuals age 65 and older residing in Georgia compared with the overall rate in the United States.   
Rate of visual impairment for Georgians age 65 and above across all races regardless of ethnicity is 7.6%, compared with 6.6% for individuals nationwide. For a decade now, Medicare has refused to cover the cost of low-vision aids, due to an eye-glasses exclusion that prohibits the purchase of any durable medical goods with a lens.  While the regulatory exclusion was seen as cost saving by not covering eye-glasses, it has had negative impact on those who through the use of special low-vision aids could significantly increase their independence in the home.  ACB believes that simple adaptive low-vision aids can have a significant impact on an individual’s ability to remain independent in the home. It would allow our older population to due task such as reading their own medications, reading and paying their own bills, and many other daily task which in many cases would allow them to remain in their own homes, and not in institutions  which can be more costly in the long run. Therefore the Georgia Council of the Blind would greatly appreciate the Senator's support and willingness to be a co-sponsor on to this important piece of legislation.  
  
If you have any questions about the Georgia Council of the Blind supporting the American Council of the Blind on this issue feel free to contact me at alice.ritchhart@comcast.net or phone at (912) 996-4213. Also please continue to reach out to Anthony Stephens   
Director of Advocacy & Governmental Affairs American Council of the Blind 1703 N. Beauregard Street, Suite 420 Alexandria, VA 22311  
 (T) 202.467.5081 for all the information on this legislation. Again thank you for your time and consideration on this issue which is important to a large part of our membership and the many Georgians who are visually impaired.  
Sincerely;  
Alice Ritchhart, President  
Georgia Council of the Blind

# Sample letter when signing on with other groups with regard to a problem

We, the undersigned organizations representing Americans who are blind and visually impaired, write in support of your offices’ efforts to assure equal access to vital health information through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).  It is our belief that H.R. \*\*\*\* will provide necessary data and insight into a problem that has gone on for too long.

For years, advocacy groups have been calling upon CMS to provide written materials in accessible format for individuals who are blind and visually impaired.  Persistent failure to meet such reasonable accommodations results in a lack of critical information affecting patients’ medical treatment, coverage of services, financial responsibilities, and knowledge of private programs and activities that can improve an individual’s health outcome.  To deny adequate reasonable accommodations not only puts at risk an individual’s physical, emotional, and economic well-being, but it also places undue strain on CMS through operating in a manner that is not the most efficient and transparent portal of patient care required to be accessible to all under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.  It is our further belief that H.R. \*\*\*\* will also make significant steps toward understanding the severity of the problem through gaining access to critical data on the current prevalence of significant vision loss among individuals covered under CMS and where shortfalls in accessibility exist.

As organizations committed to furthering opportunity and equal access for individuals who are blind and visually impaired, we commend Congress on taking steps toward assuring greater access to vital healthcare information in a manner that is accessible to all.

Sincerely,

# How a Bill is made – Georgia’s Process

# Understanding the Georgia legislative process

Take some time to review the info below

**OVERVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE PROCESS**

The process of government by which bills are considered and laws enacted is commonly referred to as the Legislative Process. The Georgia State Legislature is made up of two houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives. There are 56 Senators and180 house Members representing the people of the State of Georgia. The Legislature has a legislative calendar containing important dates of activities during its two-year session.

**Idea**

All legislation begins as an idea or concept. Ideas and concepts can come from a variety of sources. The process begins when a Senator or house Member decides to author a bill.

**The Author**

A Legislator sends the idea for the bill to the Legislative Counsel where it is drafted into the actual bill. The draft of the bill is returned to the Legislator for introduction. If the author is a Senator, the bill is introduced in the Senate. If the author is a house Member, the bill is introduced in the house.

**First Reading/Introduction**

A bill is introduced or read the first time when the bill number, the name of the author, and the descriptive title of the bill is read on the floor of the house. The bill is then assigned to an appropriate standing committee.

**Committee Hearings**

Bills are assigned to standing committees according to subject area of the bill. For example, a Senate bill dealing with health care facilities would first be assigned to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee for policy review. Bills that require the expenditure of funds must also be heard in the fiscal committees: Senate Appropriations or Assembly Appropriations. Each house has a number of policy committees and a fiscal committee. Each committee is made up of a specified number of Senators or house Members.

During the committee hearing the author presents the bill to the committee and testimony can be heard in support of or opposition to the bill. The committee then votes by passing the bill, passing the bill as amended, or defeating the bill. Bills can be amended several times. Letters of support or opposition are important and should be mailed to the author and committee members before the bill is scheduled to be heard in committee. It takes a majority vote of the full committee membership for a bill to be passed by the committee.

Each house maintains a schedule of legislative committee hearings. Prior to a bill's hearing, a bill analysis is prepared that explains current law, what the bill is intended to do, and some background information. Typically the analysis also lists organizations that support or oppose the bill. The bill then goes to the Rules Committee which then decides if the bill will go back to the floor for a final vote.

**Second Reading**

Bills passed by the Rules committee are read a second time on the floor in the house of origin Bill analyses are also prepared prior to second reading. When a bill is read the second time it is explained by the author, discussed by the Members and voted on by a roll call vote.

**Repeat Process in other House**

Once the bill has been approved by the house of origin it proceeds to the other house where the procedure is repeated.

**Resolution of Differences**

If a bill is amended in the second house, it must go back to the house of origin for concurrence, which is agreement on the amendments. If agreement cannot be reached, the bill is referred to a two house conference committee to resolve differences. Three members of the committee are from the Senate and three are from the Assembly. If a compromise is reached, the bill is returned to both houses for a vote.

**Governor**

If both houses approve a bill, it then goes to the Governor. The Governor has three choices. The Governor can sign the bill into law, allow it to become law without his or her signature, or veto it. A governor's veto can be overridden by a two thirds vote in both houses. Most bills go into effect on the first day of July of the following year unless an effective date is stated in the law.

# BEST PRACTICES TRAINING FOR ADVOCACY

By: Gary R. Goyke, WI Government Relations Consultant

Politics and Lobbying: Tools for Change

You are experts in many fields but not in politics. If you participate, you have tremendous power because most people choose to be part of the silent majority. We are all members of special interest groups. If you do not tell lawmakers about your special interest, who will? Probably someone who does not share your interests or goals.

How Ideas Become Laws

Learn the basic structure of your state legislature. (In Wisconsin, there are 33 Senators and 99 Assembly Representatives; each Senate District has three Assembly Districts.

Legislators get ideas for new bills from constituents, lobbyists and interest groups. They take these ideas to their legislative drafters, and a bill draft is written. The primary author seeks co-authors and co-sponsors. The bill is introduced. The bill is given its first reading in the house where it is introduced - either the Assembly or Senate. The bill is assigned to the appropriate standing committee. The committee may choose to hold a public hearing. The committee may meet in executive session to recommend passage, amend the bill or let it stay in committee indefinitely. If tax money is being spent, the bill will be sent to the Joint Finance (appropriation) Committee, for a vote by that committee. If the bill makes it this far, it is scheduled for action by the entire Assembly or Senate. It then gets its second reading and is debated on the floor. It may be amended and amendments voted on. After the amending stage, the bill is given its third reading. If it is passed, the bill will be sent to the other house, and the process begins again.

Often a bill will be introduced in each house at the same time, to speed up the process. Once a bill passes both houses any differences must be reconciled and approved by both houses. The governor gets the bill and may sign it or veto it. If vetoed, it requires both houses to override the veto with a two-thirds majority to become law. Every step of this process is controlled by Assembly and Senate leadership and by committee chairs. The majority party controls these positions. In most states, the legislative session is two years long. A bill must get through this entire process in one session. If it is not passed into law, it must be reintroduced the next session, and the entire process starts over.

Local and federal legislative bodies follow similar patterns of decision-making. We can help with any questions or assist with any endeavors. Our goal is to make each person an effective and successful advocate.

Do's and Don'ts When Dealing with your Legislators

Do Know Your Legislators. Read their biographies. Identify people you both know. Get to know their staffs. Know what their special issues and positions are.

Get to know your own legislator for the area where you live, and legislators representing the communities where you own businesses or provide services. Get to know legislators who are leaders in fighting for your special interests. Make your legislators your friends. The cardinal rule in politics is loyalty. If you are perceived as a loyal friend, your actions and words will impact on legislators.

Do Involve Your Legislators in Your Business. Invite them to your office or property. Invite them to events like open houses. Make sure they understand your business and your concerns.

Do Involve Your Legislators in Your Community. Remember, politicians like crowds. Invite them to church, social, and civic events.

Invite them to high visibility events where they may meet people. Definitely invite them to your Association meetings. Definitely invite them to speak at your state association meetings.

Do Contact Your Legislator When You Have Concerns. Meet them in their district or at the Capitol. The very best way - contact them by phone. The second best way - write them a personal letter. The third best way - send them an e-mail. The fourth best way - send them a form letter.

Do contribute to your candidate's campaign; your family and friends can help.

Work in the campaign. Give an endorsement in paper or literature. Use Yard Signs. Organize Events (Fundraisers.

Do Represent Your Group to Legislators.

Understand the official positions of your group. Be constructive, practical, and reasonable - know what you want from the legislator.

Educate the legislator; you are the expert. Do not assume knowledge.

If you differ from the group on a point, make that clear.

Bring your legislators' concerns and positions back to the group, the leadership and your lobbyist.

Be friendly - keep in contact even when you don't want anything.

Be reasonable - there are different opinions and approaches. Be realistic - compromise and accommodation gets things done. Fight issues not people. Be discreet.

Do Remember No Legislator Will Agree All of the Time. Understand why a legislator may take a certain position on an issue. Understand a legislator's former positions and votes on the issues. Thank them when they support you. Do not burn your bridges when they disagree.

Do Remember Legislators are Human Too. No legislator can understand every bill, law, or regulation. You must explain your concerns and views, and assume a limited understanding of the issue by the legislator. Contact them at the right time for the issue. Offer to provide any information they may need.

Do Remember Legislators are Busy. Make appointments to see legislators in their districts or at the Capitol. Learn to state your positions in as simple and brief way. Do not overstay your welcome. Make your presentation fit the time the legislator has to spend with you. Talk to and work with their staff. If you do not do this, someone else - who may not share your views or have the same interests - will make the contacts.

Do Remember Legislators Represent Different Points of View. Understand their concerns, prejudices and backgrounds.

Understand their areas of expertise and influence in the legislature. Understand their political support. Respect them and their office even if you have no respect for their position.

Do Remember You Represent Your Group and Your Issue. The issue is important, not political parties. Make the issue as non-partisan as possible. Build support from both parties. Support the legislators that support your special interests.

Do Prepare for Legislative Hearings. Prepare written testimony for the committee members. Be brief and to the point and address the issues directly. Do limit your testimony to your expertise and knowledge. Be prepared for questions. Testimony about your personal experiences and how a bill will affect you and others is very influential. Consider organizing your group's testimony in order to be brief and not bore the committee. Do bring other association members to the hearing, even if they do not testify. Numbers count.

Don't Let Your Behavior Defeat Your Issue. Do Not Ever Address Legislators with Mr. or Ms. (Senator or Representative is appropriate; no first names unless you have become close enough to do so.

Do not express your partisan views with legislators present. Do not threaten a legislator with political reprisals. It won't work. Do not imply or demand that political contributions will buy a vote. Its illegal, stupid and will backfire.

Do not call names, make accusations, or denigrate legislators.

Do not pile on lengthy data that needs interpretation or fake an answer. Instead, offer to contact legislators again with more information. Credibility is everything. You must be the expert for legislators.

Do not count on your lobbyist or organization to get the job done for you. Legislators like constituents.

Do not embarrass legislators in a public forum. It is bad taste and will make you an enemy. You will need legislators' support on other issues.

Do not support or oppose a candidate without knowing all the candidates.

Do not insist a legislator support or oppose a proposal. Request is the word.

Do not misstate the group's position on an issue. Credibility is absolutely necessary for political influence.

Do not mix your other concerns with the group's interests. Save them for an additional contact.

Do not contact a legislator at odd hours or inappropriate locations. Do not alienate legislators' staff or friends. They have influence.

Do not cry Wolf - exaggeration destroys your credibility.

Keep in contact with a legislator - it will help when you have an issue.

Say Thank You in a letter after a contact or a vote. This will be long remembered but it is most often forgotten.

You and The Political Process: Strategies and Tactics You and Your Neighbors Can Use For Political Victory

Form Coalitions - join with other groups that have the same goals.

Achieve consensus: negotiate with possible opposition groups in advance of introducing legislation.

Make it easy for legislators to support you by presenting a united front.

Achieve credibility and become the source of expertise on your issues for the legislators. They will consult you first.

Present information clearly, efficiently and truthfully. Legislators deal with thousands of issues. One-page summaries from credible sources are ideal.

Know who in your association can be relied on to make contacts when needed. Recognize that constituents who can vote are more influential with legislators than others.

Contacts should be reported to the lobbyist or association leadership for follow up.

Be prepared to compromise & adapt. You may not get everything you want in one bill. There can be wisdom in the process. Sometimes a proposal becomes better with more input and involvement from other groups.

Keep an open mind. Know What Is Important. What part of the proposal can you give up? What part can be changed without changing the purpose of the proposal? What is a "deal breaker" - absolutely essential?

Victory comes in different ways. A proposal that fails may get groups together and compromises can be negotiated. Legislators sometimes encourage this outcome.

By being politically active, your association prevents negative proposals from being made or getting very far in the process.

The Role of The Association's Lobbyist

Educate, inform and motivate the membership.

Watch for legislative proposals that would affect the association members.

Advise the association how to handle various issues and how the legislative process works.

Alert the association when action is needed by the membership.

Use his own contacts to promote the goals of the Association.

Organize political events and encourage membership participation in the process.

Attend and testify at hearings.

Work with and promote good relations with the administrative departments.

Be sure that all lobbying rules and ethical standards are being complied with as well as filing all required reports.

Political Action Committees - Pool money to support legislators who are supportive of the association. Sometimes legislators do not take money from PACs. There are also legal limits and candidates can only take so much money from the PACs.

Political Conduits: Another legal tool for associations and groups to make legal contributions to support legislators and candidates who support the Association's goals. Each contributor approves of the contribution made to a candidate or legislator in his or her name.

Role and Duties of Legislators' Staff

Legislative Assistant, Issue specialist, assists legislator in preparing, reviewing and acting on legislation.

Case Worker responds to non-legislative constituent concerns, including any specific problems constituents may have with state government agencies.

Secretary Runs the office, answer phones, sort mail, enter data.

Scheduler is keeper of the legislator's calendar, and allocates a legislator's time between legislative responsibilities, staff requirements and constituent requests.

Press Secretary/Communications Director builds and maintains effective lines of communication between the legislator, his constituency, and the general public. The press secretary must know the benefits, demands and special requirements of both print and electronic media and how to most effectively promote the legislator's view or position on specific issues.

Committee Staff work on issues handled by committee. They are experts on the subject matter of the committee. The staff is the representative of the legislator when he/she is unable to be present at hearings, meetings etc. Staff cannot engage in campaign activities on state time. It is productive to talk to staff. They give you more time and may spend more time on your issue.

After the Legislature Votes

A lobbying effort does not just include the legislative process. Laws are often passed directing a state department to promulgate rules to accomplish the purposes of the law. These administrative rules have the force of law. State departments also recommend rules changes for approval by the legislature. There is an opportunity to serve on advisory and other committees to help make these rules. It is far easier to help make the rules than it is to defeat them or try to change them later.

Legislative Accomplishments

Success is not only measured by what you get passed, but also by what you prevent from passing. It is far easier to stop or change something when you are in on it in the beginning. You have achieved success in your political efforts when legislators and state departments ask you, your association or your lobbyist's input before making decisions. Legislative success requires a long history of credibility.

# Board Member's Manual for State and Special Interest Affiliates

**Compiled, written, and edited by: Ardis Bazyn**Member of ACB Membership Committee June, 2000

**Acknowledgements**

Thank you to all of the A.C.B. members who gave valuable input -- Ardis Bazyn

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**INTRODUCTION**

This manual was written to assist state and special interest affiliate board members. This document is meant to assist the affiliate board members with procedures that would be beneficial for the organization. It should help make transition from being a member of the organization to having a position as a board member. All affiliates operate in different ways but these guidelines should pertain to all. Obviously, not all board members have the same capabilities and these are not meant to discourage any current board members. However, this manual is meant to provide some guidelines that should benefit the affiliate.

This manual contains the normal officers' duties. It gives procedures to follow when conducting meetings. There is a section briefly describing the most important "Roberts' Rules of Order". Information about appointing committees and outlining duties for these committees. Financial records are discussed since board members do vote on these reports. Maintaining the membership and mailing lists are covered thoroughly since each affiliate has different people in charge of these lists. Public relations and brochures are discussed since all board members may be involved in working on these projects.

**PROCEDURES DURING BOARD MEETINGS**

NOTE: These guidelines can be followed for regular meetings, conference calls, and pre-convention or post-convention board meetings. (See section on "ABBREVIATED "ROBERTS' RULES of Order"")

1. The president should make sure the secretary has a tape recorder ready to tape all board meetings. Notes can be taken in whatever form is preferred by the secretary: Braille, computer, or handwriting. If the secretary is using both the tapes and the notes, it will make certain that all wordings can be verified for the motions and other actions taken by consensus.

2. The secretary should list the official time any meeting starts, the date, and the place of the meeting.

3. After the president calls the meeting to order, the secretary should be asked to call the roll. The secretary must be prepared to call the names of all the board members and record who is or is not present. This is important when votes are taken. Also, the president must know if a quorum is present before starting the meeting. A quorum must be present for any major action to be taken.

4. The president should next ask if anyone has anything to add to the agenda that had been prepared prior to the meeting. The president should have these sent out in advance of the meeting and have them available at the meeting itself. (Some constitutions prescribe the amount of advance notice necessary for agenda items and some do not) If this meeting is a conference call, the president should let the board know what the agenda is at least ten days before the call. The president should read the agenda on the call or have the secretary read the agenda. If additions are requested, the president should suggest a time on the agenda to add these items. The president should then ask for a motion to approve the agenda. After the motion is made, seconded, and passed, the president presents the next topic on the agenda (usually the minutes of the prior meeting).

5. The president should ask the secretary to read the previous meeting's minutes. For many affiliates, the reading is waived and the president may just ask for additions or corrections. This waiver is accomplished by a motion only if all board members have had the opportunity to read the minutes. Sometimes it is waived even when all have not read the minutes if they are considered to be too old to be of substance.

6. The president should ask for a motion to approve the minutes if no one has already made the motion. When someone moves the approval, the president asks for a second. After the second, the president asks for approval from the board. After asking for an aye or a nay, the president determines the fate of the motion. If a motion seems to be a tie vote, a roll call vote must be taken. (This is the procedure for all motions made.) If a roll call is asked for by the president or a board member, the secretary reads the role and asks each board member for their vote. When all have been recorded, the totals are presented. In the case of a tie vote, the president may break the tie.

7. During the rest of the meeting, the secretary must be prepared to record any motions (in a chronological order) that are made, to call the roll for a roll call vote, and to record any actions that are taken by consensus. When motions are made, the name of the person making the motion is usually noted. Any policy decisions made by consensus must be recorded.

Minutes should be as brief as possible. When discussion occurs, it is not necessary for the secretary to explain the details. A comment stating that a "discussion followed" is sufficient. Events and dates decided upon would be considered actions by consensus.

8. All motions voted on must be understood by everyone. The president or secretary should ask for them to be repeated if necessary. The records need to be clear and accurate for future reference.

9. The president should instruct the secretary to record only the main essentials of the treasurer's report. Also, the president should request the treasurer to give a copy of the report to the secretary for the permanent record. These may be needed in the future if questions develop. For example, if the treasurer's next report is disputed. Amounts may be checked against previous closing balances.

10. At the end of the meeting, the time the meeting was adjourned should be recorded.

11. An important guest should be noted if this would be useful in the future.

**BETWEEN MEETINGS**

1. Following each board meeting, the president should ask the secretary to read the notes carefully to see if they are clear. The tape recordings can be helpful if there are any questions. If questions arise soon, it is easier to get a consensus among board members present at the meeting about any discrepancy.

2. The president may ask for a copy of the minutes in order to take care of any necessary business. Most presidents make notes for themselves but some do not.

3. A copy of the minutes may be printed in the organization newsletter. Since most of these are in alternative format, it may be easier for a small affiliate to get information out this way. Some affiliates prefer this way of handing out minutes because there is less chance of members getting incorrect information about what transpired at board meetings. This is also a way for all members to know what is happening in the affiliate since they may not have the opportunity to attend many board meetings. This may not be possible for larger affiliates who cover more business, but a summary could be provided to the newsletter.

4. The president must instruct the secretary to send out notices about the upcoming board meetings. Some presidents write this letter themselves.

5. The president should remind the secretary about a month before the next meeting, copies of the minutes should be sent to all board members in alternative formats (i.e. Braille or tape and large print).

6. The president needs to communicate with officers, board members, and committee chairs in between meetings to make sure the on-going activities are proceeding as they should. The president should request reports on committees as necessary and should require that important information be sent to the newsletter for publication.

7. The president should also keep in contact with chapter presidents. If the president has e-mail, a message can be sent periodically to each local president to keep a connection between the affiliate and local members. If the president does not have e- mail, contact can be made by phone or letter. The president can delegate this communication link to the vice president(s) or other board members.

8. The president needs to write a message for the affiliate newsletter each time it goes to print. Regular deadlines are established by most newsletter editors. This is another connection between local members and the affiliate.

9. Periodically, at least once a year, a fund-raising letter should be written to members and friends. This can be a communication mechanism as well as a fund-raising letter that lets the mailing list know of current activities as well as requesting funds.

10. The president should request the secretary to send information in a timely manner to local presidents regarding special days celebrated or recognized. Examples include "Braille Literacy Week" and "White Cane Safety Day". Local chapters should be encouraged to have special activities for these special days. The state affiliate presidents should also try to have the governor in the state sign a proclamation for these two special times. Contact the governor's office in plenty of time in order to get important publicity this activity can generate.

11. The president should recommend seminars for leadership or membership development from time to time.

12. The president will encounter difficult people occasionally and receive many complaints. A president should listen carefully to all complaints and suggestions and use tact and good judgement when handling them. Often, the person bringing the concern to the president will simply want a sympathetic response. If further follow-up is necessary, a president may consult with the vice president(s) or other officers or board members for further input.

**APPOINTING COMMITTEES**

1. The president needs to appoint all committee chairpersons. Sometimes presidents appoint the whole committee and sometimes presidents ask the chair to appoint the rest of the committee with the approval of the president. Usually, the chair has some input as to who the members of the committee should be.

2. Standing committees are the committees that regularly function. These are sometimes listed in the constitution and bylaws of the organization. Some examples are: Membership, Fund- raising, Credentials, Budget, Constitution and Bylaws, Resolutions, Publications, etc. It is important for the president to know what committees are required. Some standing committees are required by motion of the board of directors or by the convention.

3. Ad hoc committees are appointed by the president after a request has been expressed by the board of directors, a motion at a convention, or a resolution passed by the convention.

4. Standing committees are on-going committees while most ad hoc committees have a limited term. Sometimes the term is specified in the original board motion, convention motion, or resolution. Other times the committee simply continues until the specific tasks identified are finished.

5. The president needs to instruct the chairs of committees on the duties of the committee and what is expected of the members of each committee.

6. The following suggestions to the chairs would be appropriate.

The chair should tell all committee members to give feedback and not expect the chair to have all the ideas. Each committee should write a list of specific goals and objectives for the year. A list of proposed strategies to use to attain the goals written should be decided. If any funding is necessary to complete committee tasks, the chair should present these requests to the President or the Budget Committee. Each committee member should be assigned a specific task or responsibility for some aspect of the committee work. Their should be a specific time frame given for each task so that the progress of activities can be checked. The chair should be prepared to ask if any problem or concern developed which caused a particular task not to be achieved and if they need a different assignment for some reason. Committee members should be encouraged to come to the chair so the chair need not ask over and over again. The chair must prepare any necessary reports for the president or the board. The chair must check with members of the committee to make sure the committee goals are completed on time.

7. The president is an ex-official member of all committees and may be as involved in them as is suitable for that committee. The president can assign this duty to a vice president or board member as appropriate.

**PLANNING CONVENTIONS**

1. The president needs to appoint committees to plan the annual or biannual convention. The president also needs to either visit prospective future hotels or ask a committee to do this.

2. After the president or a committee has located a few hotels with decent rates and amenities, the board of directors needs to decide which one is most feasible. If the president does not have time to research several hotels, a committee should be recommended. Members get dissatisfied if choices are not available. Also, rates are usually higher if there is no obvious competition. After a board decision is made, a contract should be signed as soon as possible with the chosen hotel. Most hotels give a time-line for that particular rate.

3. Typical convention committees include: program committee, resolutions committee, constitution and by-laws committee, awards committee (if your affiliate has awards), scholarship committee (if one), decorating committee (if there is a luncheon or banquet), and people to handle registration, microphones and taping of programs, and other services.

4. The president needs to keep in touch with the convention hotel as time passes to make sure no problems have arisen. Also, meal functions will need to be planned in time to let members know prices early enough.

5. Once committees have been appointed, the president needs to check on their progress from time to time.

6. Pre-registration forms make it easier to plan ahead for convention space and meal functions. Your affiliate might offer a discount to members who register in advance of the convention. Pre-registration also makes it easier for the people handling the registration table.

**DUTIES DURING SPECIAL INTEREST CONVENTIONS**

1. Special interest affiliates have different practices concerning who opens the convention. In many, the president presides and introduces different program presenters. In others, the program chair will open the session. If banquets or luncheons are part of the activities, an M.C. often leads this part. In most cases, however, the president does welcome the membership and guests present at the sessions.

2. In a few special interest affiliates, the roll call of states is recorded at the annual convention. The president should remind the secretary to register the delegate, alternate delegate, and the delegate for the nominating committee. The president will appoint the chair to the Nominating Committee. In affiliates that do not have a yearly company audit, the president needs to appoint an auditing committee to check the records.

3. For these same affiliates the president should make sure the secretary will be present at the nominating committee just long enough to make sure that the correct people are present. After this, the Nominating Committee chair will take over.

4. The Resolutions Committee chair will present all resolutions presented to them. The Constitution and By-laws Committee chair will present any possible changes to those documents.

5. The president should make sure the secretary takes convention minutes which usually consist only of motions made on the floor and resolutions brought forward.

6. A copy of the convention program will usually suffice for the other parts of the convention.

7. For the affiliates that do have state chapters, a roll call vote may be taken at any time during the convention.

8. During the business meeting, the president may have the previous year's minutes read. This is different for all affiliates. It depends if the membership wants this information. This may also be waived by a motion from the members.

9. During the pre-board meeting or business meeting, an A.C.B. delegate and a delegate to the nominating committee for A.C.B. needs to be assigned. Since the decision needs to be made before the first session of A.C.B., the board of directors of the affiliate may need to make the recommendation rather than the membership at large. Of course, when voting at the A.CB convention occurs, any member can help the delegate make decisions on how the affiliate should vote unless a decision was previously discussed during the business meeting.

**DUTIES DURING STATE CONVENTIONS**

1. The president usually presides at all program sessions for the convention. If a banquet or luncheon is planned, sometimes an M.C will introduce guests.

2. The president must appoint an auditing committee unless the affiliate has a yearly audit by a company. The president must also appoint a chair for the nominating committee. Some presidents also choose the members of the nominating committee and other affiliates vote on the other members of the committee after the president has assigned this responsibility. In affiliates where there are chapters, the nominating committee may consist of a member from each chapter. The president should read the current Constitution and By-laws to understand the procedure followed in that state.

3. The membership must vote on the delegate to the A.C.B. convention. Usually, the president is the one voted to go but if that person is unable to attend, another choice may be made by the membership. Usually, the alternate delegate is chosen by the delegate but sometimes the affiliate chooses this person also.

4. When elections are to take place, the president will ask the chair of that committee to read the nominations voted on in that committee. After the names are presented, the president will preside. If the president is up for re-election, he will step aside for that position vote and the vice president will take over for that vote. When the president reads the position and the name from the nominating committee, the membership will be asked for any nominations they wish to present. He will say, (Are there any nominations from the floor?" After each request for nominations, this question will be repeated until the request has been made three times without any response. At this time, someone must make a motion to close nominations and a vote can take place. This motion must have a second and a vote taken. If there are no nominations from the floor, someone may make a motion to move that nominations cease and the person be accepted by acclamation. This motion must be seconded and a vote taken.

5. The president must be sure the secretary or designee is prepared to record any motions made at the convention.

6. The resolutions chair presents resolutions. All resolutions must be recorded (usually by the secretary) for use later.

7. The Constitution and By-laws chair presents the possible changes in the Constitution and By-laws.

8. The president should ask if the secretary is prepared to read the previous year's minutes if required to do so during the business session. Some affiliates do not do this at all. Others make a motion to waive it.

9. A copy of the program should be kept which will serve as minutes of the rest of the convention.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

1. Letterhead stationery should be used for all correspondence. This shows more credibility especially when writing fund-raising letters. 2. Correspondence is handled differently in each affiliate. It is important to determine who handles what correspondence as soon as an officer takes over a new position. 3. If your affiliate has a corresponding secretary the correspondence is usually handled by that person. 4. Some affiliates have the secretary do most of the correspondence unless the president chooses to take care of it. This may be determined by the amount of time each person has available or it may depend on what writing skills each person has. 5. Even though the secretary usually handles sending resolutions to the proper parties noted on the resolution, the president should ask the secretary when this will be finished. If no specifics are written on the resolution the president should direct the secretary what to do in each case. 6. Many affiliates designate chairs of different committees to do their own correspondence. The president should make sure the correspondence is handled in a timely manner. due to the broad range of limitations or capabilities correspondence assignments may change depending on the chairs of committees.

**BUDGETING PROCESS**

1. A few affiliates have the president present the budget for approval. However, most affiliates have the treasurer draw up the budget while others have a finance or budget committee. In most cases, however, the treasurer has to gather the data from the year before.

2. It is easiest to get the figures of expenses and contributions or earnings from the previous year and delete old expenses and add in new expenses in order to prepare the most precise budget.

3. It is beneficial to get input from committee chairs for the possible expenses for the next year if there will be any.

4. Most affiliates do not have any special rules about spending over the budget limit. Most have the board initially approve the budget. The affiliate constitution and bylaws should be consulted to make sure that no special instructions have been provided.

5. A budget guides the treasurer in paying bills. If the budget for expenses is close to the limit the treasurer should consult the president about the proper procedure.

6. Sometimes the board of directors may need to be consulted when a large expenditure is presented that was not on the original budget.

**FINANCIAL REPORTS**

1. The treasurers report consists of the beginning balance, a list of expenses (in categories), and a list of income in categories such as donations and fund-raising activities.

2. This is generally a summary but the treasurer must be prepared to answer questions about any particular amount.

3. A report is usually given at each regular board meeting and convention and the business meeting for special interest affiliates.

4. Each treasurer should send out a copy of the report before the next board meeting in an alternative format (i.e. Braille, computer disk, or tape and large print).

5. The treasurer may prefer to send a copy of the report to the newsletter editor for publication to be in an alternative format and for members to read. This is easier for many smaller affiliates.

**FUND-RAISING RECORDS**

1. When the president appoints the fund-raising committee, usually the treasurer is asked to serve on it. The treasurer is responsible for keeping track of all funds.

2. If using a professional fund-raiser, a separate account must be kept since expenses must come out before the money can be considered the affiliates' to use.

3. Some fund-raising income can be kept in the checking account but should be clearly designated when deposited so later it can be determined if a particular fund-raiser is worth attempting again.

4. As noted under the mailing list, donors from fund-raising letters should be designated. These donors may be willing to donate in the future.

5. Fund-raising often needs to be encouraged by the president and the treasurer since these officers know how much money is needed.

**MEMBERSHIP LIST**

1. Membership lists should be kept accurate and as up to date as possible.

2. Each entry should contain the members name address and phone number.

3. Each entry should also list the choice of format for both the Affiliates Newsletter and the Braille Forum.

4. Each entry should tell the mailing status such as blind or sighted. Some affiliates may prefer to designate blind visually impaired or sighted.

The U.S. Post Office regulations E040.4.0 through E040.4.2 pertain to mail sent without postage. These require that mail sent without postage meet certain requirements. First, the person sent the mail must be unable to read regular print (blind or physically handicapped). Paper, Braille, records, tapes, or other material for the production of reading matter is allowed. The size of the type must be 14 point or larger to be eligible. The envelopes must be left unsealed and must contain the words "Free Matter for the Blind or Handicapped" on the upper right corner of the addressed side.

5. It would be helpful for membership retention to designate whether a member is a new member or a renewal. With this designation it would be easier to check if prior members have renewed. This would allow affiliates to call members to find out why they have not renewed. It would also help if reminder letters are sent to members not responding with dues after a certain date. It also will help insure that new members are added to the lists going to the national office for both membership dues and the Braille Forum.

6. The A.C.B. office sends out a membership list each year to check against the current list and affiliates will have to add any new members to that A.C.B. list. The deadline for A.C.B. is March 15. Each affiliate has it's own membership deadline.

7. The treasurer must be sure to provide the information to all who handle the membership lists after receiving each member's dues. This needs to be done throughout the year as any dues are received.

8. It may be easier to change information and retrieve information if you use a computer. Many affiliates use computers for their lists. A variety of programs are currently used. They include: Word Perfect Lotus D Base Excel, Access, Microsoft Works, or Microsoft Word. If you are using a print or Braille list, it will be easier if it is in alphabetical order.

**MAILING LIST**

1. Some affiliates combine their mailing list and membership list and just designate which names are members. This may depend on which method the affiliate uses for it's records computer print or Braille.

2. Mailing lists need to contain the name address and phone number of each person on the list. Phone numbers are helpful if a copy of a send-out comes back without a postal stamp marking the status. Also sometimes those stamps are not correct. Some mailings have come back marked deceased and the person was found to be very much alive later.

3. Mailing lists should be checked periodically to make sure that lists are up to date.

4. Mailing lists need to contain postal information to indicate whether those can be sent free matter or not. It is the affiliate's choice whether it just lists sighted or blind or whether it has visually impaired as a third listing (explanations of the Free Matter qualifications are listed under the Membership Lists).

5. If this mailing list is used for fund-raising it may be helpful to note when the person has made a donation. Sometimes this is an indicator of interest in making donations in the future.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS**

1. The President needs to encourage the right amount of public awareness and publicity. This can be accomplished by appointing a public relations committee. Publicity helps to promote your group to a wider audience.

2. Most newspapers have columns of weekly or monthly events,

3. Radio stations will often allow spot service announcements that give meeting times, places, dates, and other information. Some stations have a weekly or monthly calendar of events.

4. Some cable networks also have a scrolling screen covering coming events. (your affiliate could also use this opportunity to tell them that visually impaired persons need to rely on others to get this information and that it would be beneficial to have these calendars spoken aloud.)

5. Radio reading services and telephone reading services should be contacted to see if announcements of events are allowed.

6. Chapter or state newsletters should give dates, times, and places of regular chapter meetings.

7. Phone trees are useful in calling members and other interested persons. Electronic phone tree programs are available that allow lists of phone numbers to be called with specific information are helpful for busy presidents who wish to pass on important or timely information.

8. Special events sponsored by chapters or state or special interest affiliates are a good way to encourage new persons to come. Your group will want to get publicity.

9. Publicity for special events needs to be planned ahead of time. Most media companies need two weeks to a month advance notice of an event.

10. Radio news releases or interviews are a way to get the event publicized.

11. TV interviews or news items generated by calling them about your special event work especially in smaller communities.

12. Newspaper news releases and news coverage of special events are also possible if you plan for them.

13. Articles about special coming events should also be included in affiliate and chapter newsletters.

14. Notifying schools or other interested persons about special contests, awards, or scholarships is a good way to promote these special activities.

15. Inviting college students to participate in your affiliate and chapter meetings after they apply for a scholarship is a good way to show interest in younger persons. Of course, inviting them before they apply is even better but sometimes members are not aware of some blind students until they do apply for a scholarship.

16. Contests for younger children can create awareness in the community about your group. These can range from coloring and writing contests for classes in public schools or contests specifically for blind students.

**BROCHURES**

1. Each affiliate should have its own brochure. The A.C.B. national office has .A.C.B brochures but local ones are important for fund-raising publicity in your local community.

2. If the affiliate does not currently have a brochure, consider writing one. Even chapters sometimes use simple flyers so they have information to hand out when they have bake sales and other fund-raising projects.

3. Brochures can be simple with just the most basic information about your group. Some brochures are more elaborate with pictures and more color..

4. Brochures need to include the purpose of your group including its major projects.

5. Brochures should include information about annual conventions and your main office information if any.

6. Contact information needs to be given: address, phone numbers, e-mail addresses.

7. A blank space for local chapters to put a local contact person's business card or address label would be beneficial.

8. Brochures should have a catchy color or phrase to attract people to read them.

9. Include a membership form if space is available or a membership contact person.

**SOME MAJOR COMMITTEE GUIDELINES**

**Long Range Planning Committee**

1. Examine on-going efforts of the organization and make recommendations to the appropriate committee.

2. Make long range goals appropriate for the time.

3. Examine current practices of each committee and offer suggestions and/or solutions.

4. Collaborate with other organizations on legislation or other joint efforts that may benefit members.

**Membership committee**

1. Establish goals to promote membership growth.

2. Initiate outreach efforts for membership drives.

3. Keep membership lists accurate and up to date to make sure all members receive the newsletter".

4. Send out membership renewal letter or coordinate with the affiliate office so a letter can be sent out.

5. Review the membership application to make sure it requests all the necessary information.

**Convention Committee**

1. Develop the itinerary for the affiliate convention and send it to the national office by due date if the affiliate is a special interest affiliate.

2. Make sure a program chair is appointed for the convention and offer ideas if possible. Make sure the program schedule is turned in to the national office on time if the affiliate is a special interest affiliate.

3. Work out prices and other details necessary to make the convention run smoothly.

4. Decide what needs to be printed in the convention program and if the affiliate is a special interest affiliate, send this to the national office.

5. The President should decide when the board meetings need to take place during the convention so the times can be included in the program.

**Legislative Committee**

1. Establish a state affiliate or special interest affiliate phone tree for the organization to help activate members when critical legislation needs to responses.

2. Contact appropriate legislators when legislation affecting blind persons is recognized.

3. Motivate members that advocacy is necessary for the growth and maintenance of blindness related programs.

4. Inform legislators this organization is prepared to fight for any action taken that limits blindness related programs or activities.

5. Collaborate with other organizations in order to further or maintain these programs. 6. Contact affiliate members as needed to call or write legislators or other government officials when necessary.

**Budget and Finance Committee**

1. Establish a yearly budget and make changes as necessary.

2. Inform the board of the current budget and how current expenses and income compare with the budget.

3. Alert the board to major changes in the budget during the year.

4. Coordinate with the Fund-raising Committee so they know of needed funding.

5. Assist the treasurer with any questions that occur about on-going expenses.

**Publications Committee**

1. Make sure the publication is using basic guidelines established.

2. Make changes in format and individual columns as necessary.

3. Make sure the newsletter is sent to all members in a timely manner.

4. Make sure the mailing list is kept up to date. The editor or affiliate office needs to have labels kept accurate.

5. Make sure the newsletter contains relevant and up to date items.

6. The editor should try to get printing costs as low as possible and consult with the publications committee about changes in the printing source. Costs should be checked from time to time to compare prices for quality of the product.

7. Check the printing and tape quality to make sure it is satisfactory.

8. Remember that the newsletter is the primary way to pass the message that your affiliate is a viable organization that advocates for members and wants the best programs possible.

9. Make sure that nothing inappropriate or offensive to members is published. This does not mean that differing opinions about programs or services can not be offered but that these do not offend anyone's gender, religion, ethnic background, disability, or sexual orientation as stated in equal opportunity laws.

10. Explore new ideas or columns that may be of interest to members as a whole.

**General Publication Guidelines**

1. The logo should be portrayed on the cover along with the name of the publication and the name of the editor.

2. The number of pages printed will be based on the information available and the funds allocated at that time.

3. No comments by the editor should be made in any article. Editorial comments should be limited to an editor's column.

4. Surrounding facts can be inserted immediately before the article but no editorial remarks should be placed here. They should be written in the editor's column.

5. No comments, based on age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, from other publications should be printed if they would bee offensive to any member. The editor should consult the publications committee about any article which might be offensive to members.

6. The purpose statement of the affiliate should be given followed by the affiliate office phone numbers and address.

2. A table of contents should be near the beginning of the newsletter.

3. An editor's column should be included followed by letters to the editor.

4. It is important to have a president's message.

5. Convention reports including programs and the schedule of affiliate meetings and other activities should be included.

6. Legislation updates are also important.

7. Affiliate committee reports should be included if the information would be of interest to the members.

8. Articles submitted should be included if they would be of interest to members.

9. Member focus (articles about individual members) should be included as space permits.

10. Information about other conferences of interest to members should be included if space permits.

11. Special interest stories, jokes, etc. (appropriate for audience) should be inserted when space permits.

12. A fund-raising letter should be written occasionally.

13. The newsletter should also include a list of board members and committee chairs.

14. A membership application should always be included.

**Grant Committee**

1. The committee needs to look for any appropriate grants available.

2. Make a list of possible areas that grants could cover.

3. The committee should check magazines, newsletters, and other publications for possible grant offerings.

4. Look on the internet for possible grant listings.

5. The committee should apply for any grants that could fit in with any of our programs.

6. The committee should contact any corporations or foundations to find out what grants they might have available for non-profit organizations.

7. The committee should check with libraries to find grant listings, donors, or other sources for grants.

**Historian**

1. The historian should save pictures and writings about all affiliate events.

2. Keep scrapbook for all items saved.

3. The historian should keep documentation of all events in chronological order.

4. Update history book as appropriate.

5. The historian should keep account of where all historical documents are being held.

6. The historian should display historical documents at special functions for members to see.

7. The historian should send articles to the newsletter from time to time about historical events.

8. The historian should find someone to take pictures at significant events to help gather memories.

**Resolutions Committee**

1. The chair should send an article to the newsletter requesting resolutions before the convention in the first two issues of the year.

2. The committee must read all resolutions and ideas sent for resolutions.

3. After writing or rewriting any resolutions, the chair should present them to the members if they are not withdrawn.

4. Some affiliates require reading resolutions a second time at a second session for debate and vote.

5. The president and the secretary get a copy of the resolutions so they can be sent to the appropriate person and be recorded.

6. Give a copy of resolutions to the affiliate office so they can be sent out there if preferred.

**Constitution and Bylaw Committee**

1. Have each committee member read a current copy of the Constitution and bylaws.

2. Write an article for the newsletter asking for possible changes in the Constitution or bylaws. This article would have to be placed in the first issue of the year.

3. Write another article in the second issue of the year to have any possible Constitutional changes listed in the newsletter at least thirty days ahead of convention (some affiliates have other time requirements).

4. Have committee meeting before the program session so possible changes can be presented.

5. Read the possible changes again at second session (this may also vary from affiliate to affiliate) for debate and vote.

6. Give a copy of all Constitutional and bylaw changes to both the affiliate office and the secretary for record keeping purposes.

7. Ask the secretary to send a copy to the publications committee for publication in the upcoming newsletter.

**Awards Committee**

1. Give each committee member a list of the awards to be given at the annual convention luncheon or banquet.

2. Publicize in the newsletter and other publications as appropriate for nominations for these awards. Include the date nominations are due, criteria for awards, and where nominations should be sent. Ask for the name and address of any deserving person plus a summary of their achievements and your remarks. Ask for them to be sent to the chair.

3. If not enough nominations are received, ask board members for more nominations.

4. When nominations are received, evaluate the letters and other material to find the appropriate recipient for each award.

5. Check to make sure the recipient has not previously received the award.

6. Have plaques or certificates ordered in time for presentation to the winners at the annual luncheon or banquet.

7. Present the awards at the annual luncheon or banquet.

8. Write an article stating the award winners for the newsletter and the "Braille Forum".

9. Give names of winners and awards to office and secretary for record keeping purposes.

10. Take pictures of award winners if possible for affiliate history.

**FUND-RAISING COMMITTEE**

1. Make necessary arrangements for any fund-raising activities for the affiliate. Coordinate any convention fund- raisers with the convention committee.

2. Develop other fund-raising ideas to help organization raise money. Suggestions may include but not be limited to: barbecues, dinners to celebrate holidays, Tupperware, Stanley, or other company parties that give discounts to non-profits, candy sales, magazine sales, candles and other decorations (Christmas), t-shirts, and casino nights or cruises.

3. Decide when raffles could conveniently take place.

4. An annual (or biannual) fund-raising letter should be written. It is best to have this written by the president but the fund-raising committee may help to develop it. Sometimes, an affiliate uses this to get more members as well.

**Simplified Robert's Rules of Parliamentary Procedure**

Meetings are no more troublesome than the members that attend them. Parliamentary procedure is a system of rules that allow members to know what they can expect from each other in an orderly, fair, and efficient way. The procedures are based on two universally accepted democratic principles which balance the interests of the individual and of the group. Every member has equal rights and obligations. The officers and members must deal with each other in good faith and with fairness. The whole organization is undermined to the extent that any individual or minority is not treated equally. The majority rules. Assured of fairness for all, and recognizing that unanimity is impossible, each member agrees in advance to accept the will of the majority to facilitate decision making. This is, in effect, an unqualified grant of trust and confidence. All the procedures summarized below are an application of these principles. They allow members to express their opinions, act on their needs, and know what is going on.

1. After the president or chair opens the meeting, members wishing to have the floor (ask to speak on any subject or motion) must request to speak. You say, "Mr. or Madame President or Chair, may I have the floor?" The president or chair will respond by allowing you to speak or letting you know when you can speak. The president or chair may list the order of speakers if several have asked to speak at the same time.

2. A motion is the formal proposal of a suggestion for consideration of the group. A motion gives the group something to react to and act on so that there can be a final decision. A motion limits discussion to something definite so that everyone knows what is at stake and what the outcome will be. To make a motion, a member says, "I move that \_\_\_\_." A second is required and indicates that at least two people feel that the proposal merits consideration. If a second is not given, the item is not discussed, simply because it doesn't have enough support to be considered. To second a motion, a member says, "I second that motion."

3. Amendments are suggested changes to a motion before the body. They must be germane (which means they must have something to do with the motion being discussed). There can even be an amendment to an amendment, but that's all. Amendments have to be seconded. Once before the group, discussion is limited to the amendment in question. The group votes on the last amendment proposed and works its way back to the main motion. To amend a motion, a member says, "I move to amend the motion by \_\_\_\_."

4. Motions are prioritized chronologically. Motions are passed in order of precedence. In other words, if a motion is being discussed, you can interrupt that discussion to present a new motion. It must either be an amendment to the motion under discussion or a motion concerning the current motion. If it is regarding another matter or would only b possible if the current motion under discussion passes, you have to wait until the discussion is complete and the motion is voted upon.

5. Withdraw a Motion when you have made a motion and want to withdraw it, which simply means you have changed your mind. You say, "I withdraw my motion," and that's it unless discussion has started on your motion. Then it is the property of the body and can only be withdrawn by a motion to permit withdrawal which requires a second, is neither debatable nor amendable, and requires a majority vote. Of course, if no one objects, a motion may be withdrawn at any time.

6. Division of the Question may be called when you want to consider a motion point by point. You say, "I request the motion be divided as follows \_\_\_\_." If the chairman agrees, debate and voting will be conducted on each point, one at a time. If the request is not granted, you may move to divide the question. The rules applying to main motions govern.

7. Division of the Assembly is called when the results of a vote are unclear or you want a definite count taken instead of a voice vote. You say, "I call for a division of the assembly." You may state if you want a hand count, secret ballot, or roll call vote. If there is a conflict, the chairperson will decide the method of vote.

8. End Debate when you want to end debate and put the question being discussed to an immediate vote. You say, "I move we end debate." The motion requires a second, is not debatable, is not amendable, and requires a 2/3 vote. If there is more than one part of the proposal being discussed, i.e., there are amendments, or other motions to refer to a committee, or to postpone, etc., you should specify whether you are moving for a vote on the item under immediate consideration or on all matters pertaining to that question. If there is no objection, the chairman may end debate on his own or at the suggestion of a member. However, if there is an objection from any member, a motion is required to end debate. In many meetings, the phrase "I would like to call the question" is often used instead of a move to end debate. The difference between calling the question and ending debate is that calling the question is considered a vote of acclimation. In other words, no vote is necessary unless there are objections to ending debate.

9. Limit Debate when you want to limit debate to a certain amount of time or to a certain number of additional speakers. You say, "I move we limit debate to \_\_\_\_ [a specified number of speakers on each side or a specific time]." If there is more than one part to the proposal being considered, you should specify whether you want to limit debate to just one item under discussion or to all discussion on the main question. The motion requires a second, is not debatable, and requires a 2/3 vote. (The same special restrictions for the motion to end debate hold for the motion to limit debate.)

10. Refer to a Committee when you want to have a smaller group go over what is being discussed before further action. You say, "I move we refer this matter to \_\_\_\_." The motion requires a second, is debatable and amendable only as to which committee will handle the matter, and requires a majority vote. Business may be referred to an existing group, such as executive committee, or to an ad hoc committee, which is a committee especially established for a specific purpose and exists until the matter is resolved; or to the committee of the whole (which is a way of saying that the group can consider the matter informally). Usually a matter is referred to the committee of the whole when there is need to discuss a matter before the introduction of a motion. The same effect can be achieved by moving to consider the matter informally or by moving to table the discussion until another time.

11. Appeal when you want to reverse a decision or ruling of the chairman. You say, "I appeal the decision of the chair (stating the action or decision that is objected to)." This appeal requires a second. The chairperson may explain his or her reason for decision without leaving the chair. The appeal is debatable, is not amendable, and requires a majority vote to overrule the chair. The appeal must be made immediately after the decision in question. The chair must recognize all appeals.

12. When you want to end the meeting, you say, "I move we adjourn." The motion requires a second, is not debatable, and must be put to an immediate vote. It requires a majority vote for passage. Adjournment ends the meeting. Any unfinished business is then considered old business at the next meeting.

13. Recess when you want to suspend the meeting, take a break, or just hold off until a specific time before the next regular meeting. "I move we recess until \_\_\_\_." The motion requires a second, is debatable only as to the time of the resumption of the meeting, and requires a majority vote. The only acceptable amendment is on the time of the resumption of the meeting.

14. An ad hoc committee is a group of people assembled just to work on one specific point. (An emergency anything committee is an example of an ad hoc committee.)

15. Dilatory behavior is behavior that is made in a deliberate attempt to delay the body.

16. Frivolous behavior is behavior that is just plain silly.

17. Quorum is simply the number of members required for a vote. For most board meetings, this requires one more than half of the members to be present for any actions to be taken. However, in conventions, the number varies according to the affiliate's constitution.

# Simplified Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure is a system of rules that allow members to know what they can expect from each other in an orderly, fair, and efficient way. The procedures are based on two universally accepted democratic principles, which balance the interests of the individual and of the group. Every member has equal rights and obligations. The officers and members must deal with each other in good faith and with fairness. The whole organization is undermined to the extent that any individual or minority is not treated equally. The majority rules. Assured of fairness for all, and recognizing that unanimity is impossible, each member agrees in advance to accept the will of the majority in order to facilitate decision making. This is, i effect, an unqualified grant of trust and confidence. All the procedures summarized below are an application of these principles. They allow members to express their opinions, act on their needs, and know what is going on. 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To second a motion, a member says, "I second that motion." Amendments are suggested changes to a motion before the body. They must be germane (which means they must have something to do with the motion being discussed). There can even be an amendment to an amendment, but that's all. Amendments have to be seconded. Once before the group, discussion is limited to the amendment in question. The group votes on the last amendment proposed and works its way back to the main motion. To amend a motion, a member says, "I move to amend the motion by \_\_\_\_." Motions are prioritized chronologically. Motions are passed in order of precedence. In other words, if a motion is being discussed, you can interrupt that discussion to present a new motion. It must either be an amendment to the motion under discussion or a motion concerning the current motion. If it is regarding another matter or would only b possible if the current motion under discussion passes, you have to wait until the discussion is complete and the motion is voted upon. Otherwise, the new motion is "out of order" and the chair will indicate by saying "Out of order". Withdraw a Motion when you have made a motion and want to withdraw it, which simply means you have changed your mind. You say, "I withdraw my motion," and that's it unless discussion has started on your motion. Then it is the property of the body and can only be withdrawn by a motion to permit withdrawal, which requires a second, is neither debatable nor amendable, and requires a majority vote. Of course, if no one objects, a motion may be withdrawn at any time. Division of the Question may be called when you want to consider a motion point by point. You say, "I request the motion be divided as follows \_\_\_\_." If the chairman agrees, debate and voting will be conducted on each point, one at a time. If the request is not granted, you may move to divide the question. The rules applying to main motions govern this action. Division of the Assembly is called when the results of a vote are unclear or you want a definite count taken instead of a voice vote. You say, "I call for a division of the assembly." You may state if you want a hand count, secret ballot, or roll call vote. If there is a conflict, the chairperson will decide the method of vote. It is common for someone to simply ask for a roll call vote. End Debate when you want to end debate and put the question being discussed to an immediate vote. You say, "I move we end debate." The motion requires a second, is not debatable, is not amendable, and requires a 2/3 vote. 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The appeal must be made immediately after the decision in question. The chair must recognize all appeals. When you want to end the meeting, you say, "I move we adjourn." The motion requires a second, is not debatable, and must be put to an immediate vote. It requires a majority vote for passage. Adjournment ends the meeting. Any unfinished business is then considered old business at the next meeting. Recess when you want to suspend the meeting, take a break, or just hold off until a specific time before the next regular meeting. "I move we recess until \_\_\_\_." The motion requires a second, is debatable only as to the time of the resumption of the meeting, and requires a majority vote. The only acceptable amendment is on the time of the resumption of the meeting. Dilatory behavior is behavior that is made in a deliberate attempt to delay the body. Frivolous behavior is behavior that is just plain silly. A quorum is simply the number of members required for a vote. For most board meetings, this requires one more than half of the members to be present for any actions to be taken. However, in conventions, the number varies according to the organization constitution.

# Georgia Council of the blind Resource Guide

American Council of the Blind Inc.

1703 N Beauregard St, Suite 420

Alexandria, VA 22311

202-467-5081 / 800-424-8666

Fax:  703-465-5085

[www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org)

Georgia Council of the Blind

Alice Ritchhardt, President

(912) 996-4213

[www.georgiacounciloftheblind.org](http://www.georgiacounciloftheblind.org)

LEGISLATIVE

Georgia Secretary of State

214 State Capitol

Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Phone: 844.753.7825

sos.ga.gov

Number to text for knowledge of your legislators

520-200-2223

Contact information for federal senators and House of Representatives in Washington D.C.

(202) 224-3121.

[www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov).

GVS Customer Care Service

(844) 367-4872

Good resource to find out any kind of information ie. teachers of the visually impaired, Transition counselors, etc.

GVS - Project Independence

Kay McGill, 770-414-3006, kay.mcgill@ablegeorgia.ga.gov

Georgia Vocational Services

Paul Raymond, 770-500-9160, paul.raymond@gvra.ga.gov

Georgia Industries for the Blind

GIB to apply for GVRS services if blind

(888) 226-3444

GVS Transition Services Directer

Lauri Tuten

(706) 360-9953

lauri.tuten@gvs.ga.gov

Georgia Client Assistance Program (CAP)

123 North McDonough Street

Decatur, GA. 30030

(800) 877-9727

Georgia Libraries for Accessible Statewide Services (GLASS)

1800 Century Place

Atlanta, GA. 30345-4304

(404) 235-7200

[(800) 248-6701](callto:(800)%20248-6701)

[glass@georgialibraries.org](mailto:glass@georgialibraries.org)

[www.georgialibraries.org/glass/](http://www.georgialibraries.org/glass/)

**THE HADLEY INSTITUTE FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

700 Elm Street

Winnetka, IL 60093-2554  
847-446-8111

1-800-323-4238

847-446-9916

[info@hadley.edu](mailto:info@hadley.edu)

[www.hadley.edu](http://www.hadley.edu)

American Foundation for the Blind, AFB Atlanta

100 Peachtree Street, Suite 2145

Atlanta, GA. 30303

(800) 232-546

[www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org)

Mark Armstrong, MA, M.Ed., CVRT

Senior Adult Program Specialist

Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults

P.O. Box 12222

Augusta, GA 30914

(706) 303-8494 (Voice)

(706) 432-8134

[mark.armstrong@hknc.org](mailto:mark.armstrong@hknc.org)

SILC

315 West Ponce de Leon Ave  Suite #660

Decatur, GA 30030

770-270-6860

[www.silcga.org](http://www.silcga.org)

Veteran’s Administration

Veterans and eligible active duty service members can get help for vision loss by first contacting the VIST Coordinator in the VA facility nearest their home. VIST locations can be found on the Blind Rehabilitation Service website at:

[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

Todd Turansky, VHA/CM, Coordinator

Visual Impairment Services Team (291A-VIST)

Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center

1 Freedom Way

Augusta, GA 30904

(706) 733-0188, ext. 1-7573

(800) 836-5561, ext. 7573

(706) 513-3960

[todd.turansky@va.gov](mailto:todd.turansky@va.gov)

Helen Donner, Coordinator

Visual Impairment Services Team

Carl Vinson VA Medical Center

1826 Veterans Blvd

Dublin, GA 31021

(478) 274-5458 or (478) 277-2718

[Helen.Donner@va.gov](mailto:Helen.Donner@va.gov)

Kristen Reinhart, Coordinator

Visual Impairment Services Team

Atlanta VA Healthcare System

1670 Clairmont Rd.

Decatur, GA 30033

404-321-6111

[Reinhart.Kristen@va.gov](mailto:Reinhart.Kristen@va.gov)

Center for the Visually Impaired

739 West Peachtree Street NW

Atlanta, Georgia 30308

404-875-9011

[www.cviga.org](http://www.cviga.org)

Savannah Center for Blind and Low Vision

1141 Cornell Avenue

Savannah, Georgia 31406

912-236-4473

[www.SavannahCBLV.org](http://www.SavannahCBLV.org)

Visually Impaired Foundation of Georgia (VIFGA),

Wendy Mon

(800) 541-7903

Visually Impaired Specialized Training and Advocacy Services (VISTAS)

337 South Milledge Avenue, Suite 114

Athens, Georgia 30605-5662

706-995-2216

[www.vistascenter.com](http://www.vistascenter.com)

Vision Rehabilitation Services of Georgia

3830 South Cobb Drive SE

Smyrna, Georgia 30080

770-432-7280

[www.vrsga.org](http://www.vrsga.org)

Walton Options for Independent Living

948 Walton Way

Augusta, Georgia 30903-0519

Phone# - 706-724-6262

Toll Free - 1-877-821-8400

Website - [www.waltonoptions.org](http://www.waltonoptions.org)

Technology Resources:

Apple Accessibility: 877-204-3930

\*See Hadley for the Blind

Microsoft Accessibility: 800-936-5900