INTRO TO YDA: ORGANIZATIONAL OUTLINE AND GUIDEBOOK

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and

In Conjunction With:

The Officers of the Young Democrats of America

Updated to reflect changes made to the YDA Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Rules at the 2019 YDA National Convention

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Acknowledgments

This guidebook was created by Quentin Wathum-Ocama (MN), the 1st Vice President of the Young Democrats of America, with valuable feedback provided by Rebecca Pinn (MA), the Secretary of the Young Democrats of America, Genevieve Mina (AK), the President of the Alaska Young Democrats, Jen House (OH), the President of the Ohio Young Democrats and Chair of the Young Democrats of America Association of Chartered Unit Presidents, and the other National Officers of the Young Democrats of America.

Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to concisely explain the overall structure of the Young Democrats of America in a manner that is far more accessible and digestible for our members and the general public. This document may not be able to explain every facet or aspect of the structure and processes of the Young Democrats of America and we encourage readers to refer to the Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Rules (which are the organization’s governing documents) for answers that require greater specificity. You can find a link to the Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Rules of the Young Democrats of America on our website (www.yda.org) in the footer of the page.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................................................... 1
Purpose of this Document ...................................................................................................................................... 1
Table of Contents .................................................................................................................................................... 1
Introduction and Organizational Background ...................................................................................................... 3
National Committee ................................................................................................................................................. 3
  Membership ........................................................................................................................................................... 4
  Meeting Notice and Requirements ........................................................................................................................ 4
  Proxies ................................................................................................................................................................... 5
  Standing Committees ............................................................................................................................................ 5
  Meetings ................................................................................................................................................................ 5
  Conference Calls ................................................................................................................................................... 5
  Votes By Mail or Internet ................................................................................................................................... 6
National Convention ................................................................................................................................................ 7
  Delegates ............................................................................................................................................................... 7
  Convention Committees ..................................................................................................................................... 8
  General Session ................................................................................................................................................... 8
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Board of Directors</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Officers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Caucuses</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constituency and Issue Caucuses</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auxiliary Organizations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council of Region Directors</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Chartered Unit Presidents</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select Committees</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing Committees</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial Council</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impeachment</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amendments</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submissions for National Committee Meetings</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submissions for Convention</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charter</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bylaws</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing Rules</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolutions Submissions</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic Methods</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting by Videoconference, Teleconference,</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Online Conference</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction and Organizational Background

The Young Democrats of America (YDA) is the largest youth-led, partisan political organization in the nation. The Young Democrats of America mobilizes young people under the age of 36 to participate in the electoral process to elect Democrats, influence the ideals of the Democratic Party, advocate for progressive issues, and train the next generation of progressive leaders. The Young Democrats of America has been the official youth arm of the Democratic Party since its founding in 1932.

The YDA has over 150,000 members nation-wide in chapters in 46 states and U.S. territories – including high-school and college students, young workers, young professionals, and young families – Our membership reflects the broad diversity of our nation and the Democratic Party.

Since 2002, the YDA has operated independently of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) as a nonfederal 527 political organization, while maintaining voting representation on the DNC through the YDA President, and two elected Democratic National Committee-people. The President of YDA also serves on the DNC Executive Committee.
National Committee

National Committee is the governing body of the YDA between National Convention; the Committee has broad authority except for powers reserved to the National Convention (e.g. electing officers other than the National Committee Representatives and approving the Platform).

Membership

The National Committee fluctuates in the size of its membership but typically is compromised from 150 to 175 individuals. Individuals who hold multiple voting positions are only entitled to one vote on the National Committee. The National Committee is comprised of the following individuals:

- YDA National Officers
- Region Directors
- Chairs of Constituency and Issues Caucus
- Chairs of YDA Select and Standing Committees
- State and Territorial Presidents of Chartered Units
- 2 National Committee Representatives (not of the same gender identity) from each Chartered State and Territory

Meeting Notice and Requirements

The National Committee meets during National Conferences that are held at least twice per year. National Committee Meetings must alternate between the East and West sides of the Mississippi River. National Committee Meetings must be announced by the YDA with at least 90-day notice to the YDA National Committee and the general public. Being a member of the National Committee does not prevent individuals from registering and participating in other events and activities at Meetings such as attending workshops & trainings, hearing speeches from elected prominent Democrats, and participating in social events/outings.
National Committee (Continued)

Proxies

Members of the National Committee who cannot attend a meeting are able to send proxies to other Young Democrats to vote in their stead. Individuals who do not hold a voting position vote on the National Committee may only carry two proxies at one time (allowing two votes total). Individuals who already hold a voting position vote on the National Committee also may only carry two proxies at one time (allowing three votes total). Proxy Forms may be submitted electronically to the YDA Secretary and Credentials Committee Chair. If Proxies are submitted in person or by mail they require to be notarized. Proxy Forms can be submitted electronically or in person an hour before any scheduled first meeting of the Standing Committee on Credentials. Proxy submissions by mail should be sent at least 5 days before any meeting in order to ensure its timely arrival.

Standing Committees

The National Committee has a Standing Committee on Resolutions, Rules, Campaigns, Legislation and Credentials. Each state or territory can send one delegate to these committees to be their voting representative; state or territorial leadership can designate who that representative is. All work of the Standing Committee is forwarded in the form of a “Report” to the representatives of the National Committee for approval. A quorum of a Standing Committee consists of representatives from 25% of chartered units.

Meetings

Some of the things that the YDA Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Rules requires or allows the National Committee to do during meeting is as follows:

- Approve proxies of National Committee Members
- Approve various resolutions
- Amend and adopt Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Rules
- Approve Stakeholder Members (before July in even-numbered years)
- Elect Democratic National Committeeman and Committeewoman (before July in even-numbered years)
- Any other relevant business that comes before the body

A quorum of the National Committee consists of representatives from 25% of chartered units.

Conference Calls

The National Committee may also meet via conference call or by some other videoconference software at the discretion of the President. These conference calls usually include important updates from YDA Elected and Appointed Officers and can often feature a guest speaker. National Committee conference calls happen usually on a monthly or semiregular basis (e.g. every 6 weeks).

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1 Proxies from YDA National Officers must be to other members of the National Committee
2 Report from the Credentials Committee
3 Report from the Resolutions Committee
4 Report from the Rules Committee
Votes By Mail or Internet
Sometimes an urgent matter or issue arises that requires the National Committee to take action in a more immediate fashion, usually in the time in between in-person meetings of the National Committee. Any member of the National Committee can create a petition to call for votes by mail or internet. Petitions need to have the signatures\(^5\) of at least 25% of the National Committee for a vote by mail or internet to take place. Once the required number of signatures have been gathered, the petition is then turned into the YDA Secretary. Matters normally handled at meetings of the National Committee to the members of the National Committee through the mail, or by means of electronic voting, provided that the following provisions apply:

1. The petition must be submitted by a current and eligible member of the National Committee.
2. At least one opportunity for open, un-muted and un-censored debate must occur prior to the beginning of the voting period. Notice for debate on a petition shall be announced no less than 7 days to all members of the National Committee.
3. Members shall have at least 11 days to return their ballot, and within 5 days after the close of balloting, the list of members voting, and their votes cast shall be distributed to the National Committee.
4. Any vote shall be void unless ballots are returned by a majority (i.e. 50% plus 1) of the members of the National Committee.
5. Any member whose credentials were revoked at a previous National Committee meeting, or whose voting power was suspended at a previous National Committee meeting may not cast a ballot in a mail or electronic vote, and may not have their signature applied to the petition threshold, until such time as their vote has been restored.
6. Voting must be made available through postal mail or fax to any member upon request to the Secretary.
7. Voting must be done in a manner to ensure that all votes cast bear the signature or electronic signature of the member who cast the vote.
8. Should 20% of the members of the National Committee vote to postpone the matter under consideration until the next conference call meeting of the National Committee, the matter shall be considered tabled until that time.
9. Should 25% of the members of the National Committee vote to postpone the matter under consideration until the next in-person meeting of the National Committee, the matter shall be considered tabled until that time.
10. The election of Officers and the confirmation of Presidential Appointments can not be done through a vote by mail or the internet.

\(^5\) Can include electronic signatures or personal information captured via a online form
National Convention

The National Convention is highest authority within YDA. The National Convention is held biennially in July or August in odd numbered years. National Conventions must be announced by the YDA with at least 60-day notice to the YDA National Committee and the general public.

The National Convention is the highest attended YDA event as every state is allotted delegate spots based on a formula that factors in the size of their state, their involvement in YDA, and various other variables.

The National Convention is planned by a Convention Procedures Committee and the convention itself is ran by the Convention Management Committee who work closely with the Convention Chair, Secretary, Parliamentarian, Sergeant-at-Arms, and the various leaders of the Convention Committees. All these various positions are appointed by the President who are confirmed by the National Committee.

Delegates

Delegates are individuals chosen to represent their state or territory at the YDA National Convention. Each state or territory is responsible for creating a process for delegate selection. Being a delegate means you participate in Convention business like General Session, Committees, and Voting but also allows an individual to attend workshops & trainings, hear speeches from elected prominent Democrats, and participate in social events/outings.

Since 2019, each delegate can receive at least 3 votes at minimum and a maximum of 7 votes for YDA National Officer elections based on their state or territory’s distance to the convention site. The largest possible size of a state or territorial delegation is currently 37 (this is also dependent on a variety of factors); the vast majority states or territories would not need to bring this many people to cast all their allocated votes. Each state or territory chapter has the ability to submit a list of approved delegates to YDA but if those delegates do not show up then anyone who registers may be awarded delegate status. Delegate status does not prevent individuals from registering and participating in other events and activities at the National Convention.
Convention Committees

The National Convention has a Standing Committee on Platform, Rules, and Credentials. Each state or territory can send one delegate to these committees to be their voting representative; state or territorial leadership can designate who that representative is. All work of the Standing Committees is forwarded in the form of a “Report” to the delegates of the National Convention for approval.

Brief descriptions of the Standing Committees at Convention can be found below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credentials Committee</th>
<th>Platform Committee</th>
<th>Rules Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Reviews all the chartering applications and make recommendations to the Convention for which ones should be approved</td>
<td>• Review platform changes and make recommendations to the Convention for which ones should be approved</td>
<td>• Review rules changes and make recommendations to the Convention for which ones should be approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create, receive and review resolutions and make recommendations to the committee for which ones should be submitted</td>
<td>• Reviews the charters of YDA Constituency &amp; Issues Caucuses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General Session

The YDA Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Rules requires that the National Convention do the following during its general session:

- Have candidates’ speeches/debate and elect YDA National Officers (except for the National Committee Representatives)
- Approve two-year charters of States and Territories
- Amend and adopt a two-year national platform
- Approve various resolutions
- Amend and adopt the Standing Rules for National Convention
- Amend and adopt the YDA Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Rules
- Reauthorize or approve the charters of YDA Constituency & Issues Caucuses

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6 Report from the credentials Committee
7 Part of the report from the Platform Committee
8 Part of the report from the Platform Committee
9 Part of the report from the Rules Committee
10 Part of the report from the Rules Committee
11 Additionally, the Officers of YDA Constituency & Issues Caucuses are elected outside of general session.
Board of Directors

The Board of Directors has a limited role within YDA with the main duty primarily being the approval of major organizational contracts (e.g. for meetings/conventions or major vendors). The Board of Directors shall meet not less than once every 3 months and all meetings must be announced to the National Committee with 14-day notice.

The Board of Directors is also responsible for selecting, supervising, and managing the employment of any and all paid staff members. The Board of Directors also reviews staff performance, awards raises and bonuses, and adopts human resources and staff management policies.

Membership

The Board of Directors is comprised of the following individuals

- YDA National Officers
- Region Directors
- The Chair of the Association of Chartered Unit Presidents
- 6 Stakeholder Members

A quorum of the Board of Directors consists of 40% of membership with a majority of the membership being Officers.

![DNC Youth Council with the Chair and Co-Chair of the High School Democrats of America and the leadership of the YDA at the 2019 DNC Winter Meeting.](image)
The Officers

YDA is led by the President along with 8 others directly elected officers and two ex-officio officers.

In practice, the Officers meet via conference call or some other form of electronic communication to informally discuss, plan, and coordinate activities of YDA with most decisions being non-binding in nature. It is important to note that the President, Secretary, Treasurer, and the two Democratic National Committee Representatives have explicit duties and responsibilities enumerated in the YDA Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Rules and may use Officer meetings or calls to inform their how they discharge those duties responsibilities.

Newly elected Officers being sworn in at the conclusion of the 2015 YDA National Convention in Los Angeles, California

Membership

The following Officers are elected at National Conventions in odd-numbered years:

- President
- Executive Vice President
- 1st Vice President
- 2nd Vice President
- 3rd Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer

The following Officers are elected at a National Committee meeting that must take place before July in even-numbered years:

- Democratic National Committeeman
- Democratic National Committeewoman

The following individuals serve as ex-officio Officers and are excluded from the gavel order:

- The Chair of the Association of Chartered Unit Presidents
- The Chair of the Council of Region Directors
Regional Caucuses

YDA has 8 Regional Caucuses that serve to organize and advocate in their various geographies across the country. Each region has regional board that contains a Director, a Deputy Director, a Secretary, a Treasurer, a Judicial Council Representative, and a Judicial Council Alternate. Regional boards are elected at regional conferences that take place between 60 and 180 days before the National Convention. The Chair of each Regional Caucuses serves as a voting member of the National Committee.

A map and list of the Regional Caucuses can be found below:
Constituency and Issue Caucuses

YDA has Constituency and Issues Caucuses that serve to organize and advocate for a unique community or issue within the national organization. The charters of all YDA Constituency & Issues Caucuses are reauthorize or approve by the delegates of the National Convention. Additionally, the Officers of YDA Constituency & Issues Caucuses are elected outside of general session at National Convention. The Chair of each Constituency and Issues Caucuses serves as a voting member of the National Committee.

As of 2019, YDA has the following 15 Constituency and Issues Caucuses:

- College Caucus
- Women’s Caucus
- Black Caucus
- Disability Issues Caucus
- Jewish Caucus
- Muslim Caucus
- High School
- Rural Caucus
- Labor Caucus
- LGBTQA Caucus
- Hispanic Caucus
- Veterans Issues Caucus
- AAPI Caucus
- Native American Issues
- Environmental Caucus

2016 Black Caucus of the Young Democrats of America Progressive Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C.

Labor Caucus of the Young Democrats meeting and elections during the 2019 YDA Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana
Auxiliary Organizations

YDA has two auxiliary bodies: The Council of Region Directors (CORD) and the Association of Chartered Unit Presidents (ACUP). Auxiliary bodies often meet via conference call throughout the biennium and in conjunction with the meetings of the National Committee.

Council of Region Directors

CORD is comprised of the 8 Directors of the Regional Caucuses. CORD elects a Chair and a Vice Chair at a meeting of the YDA National Committee that takes place after September 1st in odd-numbered years. The Chair of CORD shall serve as an ex-officio Officer of YDA.

Association of Chartered Unit Presidents

ACUP is comprised of all the Presidents of states and territories that are chartered with YDA. ACUP elects a Chair, a Vice Chair, and Secretary and at a meeting of the YDA National Committee that takes place after September 1st in odd-numbered years. The Chair of ACUP shall serve as an ex-officio Officer of YDA.

State and territorial Presidents at the conclusion of the January 2018 Association of Chartered Unit Presidents Meeting in New York City, New York
YDA has a Select Committee on Budget, Chapter Building, Diversity & Outreach Committee, International Affairs Committee, Site Selection Committee, and Technology, Training, and Digital Integration. The Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary of each Select Committee is appointed by the President with confirmation by the National Committee. The membership of Select Committee is comprised of an appointee from each Region.

All work of the Select Committees is forwarded in the form of a “Report” to the representatives of the National Committee for approval. A quorum of a Standing Committee consists of representatives from 40% of chartered units.

You can find the example of the duties of the Select Committees below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Budget Committee</strong></th>
<th><strong>Chapter Building Committee</strong></th>
<th><strong>Diversity &amp; Outreach Committee</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Review the budget recommendation from the administration  
  Provide updates at each in person National  
  Make recommendations for the biennial budget of YDA | • Review and approves plans and programs for chapter building submitted by chartered units and local chapters.  
  • Make recommendations on chapter building grants to states | • Work with the regional and constituency caucuses to ensure inclusion in all aspects of YDA  
  • Work to establish recommended guidelines to encourage participation by groups underrepresented in Democratic politics and YDA |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>International Affairs Committee</strong></th>
<th><strong>Site Selection Committee</strong></th>
<th><strong>Technology, Training, and Digital Integration</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Build and maintain relationships with other international political youth organizations  
  • Communicate with the Board and the YDA membership about opportunities to partner with or attend other international political youth organization events  
  • Act as a liaison to international youth organization leaders who want to visit the US and partner with YDA | • Create criteria for and receive and review bids for National Committee meetings and make recommendations to the committee and Executive Board for which city should be chosen  
  • Create criteria for and receive and review bids for National Convention and make recommendations to the National Committee for which city should be chosen  
  • Provide guidance to bidding cities for how to be successful in their bid | • Review and approval of plans and programs relating to technology, training, and digital integration.  
  • Provide advice on ongoing technological infrastructure including the website, any customer relationship management system, and intranet that YDA utilizes.  
  • Work with the Trainings Director to develop systems to record and digitize training be optimized for widespread access via the internet. |

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12 The Budget Committee leadership is appointed by the Treasurer  
13 The Diversity & Outreach Committee also has a representative from each Constituency and Issue Caucus
Standing Committees

YDA has a Standing Committee on Campaigns, Credentials, Legislation Resolutions, and Rules. The Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary of each Standing Committee is appointed by the President with conformation by the National Committee.

Each state or territory can send one delegate to these committees to be their voting representative; state or territorial leadership can designate who that representative is. All work of the Standing Committees is forwarded in the form of a “Report” to the representatives of the National Committee for approval. A quorum of a Standing Committee consists of representatives from 25% of chartered units.

You can find the example of the duties of the Standing Committees below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaigns Committee</th>
<th>Credentials Committee</th>
<th>Legislation Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Identify and provide guidance to the administration on campaign spending priorities as well as coordinating campaign invasions and phone banks</td>
<td>▪ Receive and review proxy forms and make recommendations to the committee</td>
<td>▪ Review every federal (Congressional and/or United States Senate) legislative submissions and National Constitutional Amendments submitted for consideration of support or opposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Make recommendations on campaigns grants to states and track reporting on campaign activities in states.</td>
<td>▪ Provide a credentials report at each National Committee meeting, submitting a copy to the Secretary for the minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resolutions Committee</th>
<th>Rules Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ Create, receive and review resolutions and make recommendations to the committee for which ones should be submitted</td>
<td>▪ Receive and review rules changes and make recommendations to the committee for which ones should be approved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ Provide a Resolutions report at each National Committee meeting, submitting a copy to the Secretary for the minutes</td>
<td>▪ Provide a Rules report at each National Committee meeting, submitting a copy to the Secretary for the minutes and to update any necessary sections of the YDA charter and bylaws</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Judicial Council

The Judicial Council investigates, arbitrates, resolves, and reports on serious disputes or misconduct which do not fall within the jurisdiction of the Standing Committee on Rules and Charter, Credentials, or Resolutions Committees prior to their final resolution by the National Committee. The Judicial Council also commences impeachment proceedings against Officers and Board Members.

The Judicial Council can also hear cases involving disputes regarding the election or impeachment of members who are members of the National Committee by virtue of their office, but only after all means of adjudication provided for in the YDA Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Rules or the governing documents of a chartered unit have been exhausted.

The Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary of each The Judicial Council is appointed by the President with conformation by the National Committee. The membership of the Judicial Council is comprised of a Judicial Council Representative, and a Judicial Council Alternate from each of the 8 regional caucuses.

Matters can be referred to the Judicial Council by:

- The President,
- The Chair of the Judicial Council
- A majority vote of the National Committee; upon receipt of a petition signed by no fewer than 25 members of the National Committee.
- A complaint by either a survivor of, or witness to, or advocate for a survivor of an overt act
- A petition signed by no fewer than six members of the Judicial Council submitted to the Chair of the Judicial Council and the President.

Impeachment

Officers and Board Members are subject to impeachment and removal from office for misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance of assigned duties or for violation of the Charter, the Bylaws, or any rule of the Young Democrats of America, the Democratic Party, or for the commission of high crimes and misdemeanors.

Impeachment proceedings may be initiated upon majority vote of the Judicial Council, which shall serve its resolution and a Bill of Particulars to the accused by registered mail within ten days of its action.

Not less than 20 days nor more than 60 days subsequent to service of the Impeachment Resolution and Bill of Particulars upon the accused, the Chair of the Judicial Council shall convene an open hearing in a mutually agreeable location or via videoconference, teleconference, or online conference to hear evidence of the impeachment and the defense of the accused. The accused shall have the right to be accompanied by Counsel and to present and cross-examine witnesses and present evidence in his or her defense.

The Judicial Council may upon majority vote dismiss the impeachment or recommend to the National Committee removal from office of the accused, such recommendation shall be accompanied with its findings of fact and conclusions of law. The notice of dismissal or recommendation for removal shall be served upon the accused by registered mail within 5 calendar days.

Upon receipt of an affirmative recommendation for removal of an Officer, the National Committee, meeting not less than thirty 30 days after such notice, shall consider said removal as a special order. The National Committee shall be empowered to remove Officers and Board Members it adjudges guilty of stated charges upon its majority vote.
Amendments

The YDA Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Rules can be amended by electronic vote, at any National Committee Meeting or at a National Convention.

Submissions for National Committee Meetings

For amendments to the YDA Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Rules be considered at National Convention they must be submitted at least 21 days in advance to the Chair of the Convention Committee on Rules and the YDA Secretary. All proposed amendments will be made publicly available by the YDA Secretary at 14 days before the start of any National Committee meeting. The YDA Charter states that only members of the National Committee may submit amendments at National Committee meetings.

Submissions for Convention

For amendments to the YDA Charter, Bylaws, and Standing Rules be considered at National Committee Meetings they must be submitted at least 21 days in advance to the Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules and the YDA Secretary. All proposed amendments will be made publicly available by the YDA Secretary at 14 days before the start National Committee Meeting.

Charter

The YDA Charter may be amended by a:

- 2/3 vote of the registered Delegates to the National Convention voting and present
- 4/5 vote of the National Committee voting and present

Bylaws

The YDA Charter may be amended by a:

- Majority (50% + 1) vote of the registered Delegates to the National Convention voting and present
- Majority (50% + 1) vote of the National Committee voting and present

Standing Rules

The YDA Standing Rules may be amended, adopted, or suspended by a:

- 2/3 vote of the registered Delegates to the National Convention voting and present
- 2/3 vote of the National Committee voting and present

Resolutions Submissions

Proposed resolutions can be submitted up to 15 days before a National Committee meeting. All proposed resolutions will be made available to the National Committee and the general public by the YDA Secretary at 10 days before the start of any National Committee meeting. Additionally, resolutions presented to the Standing Committee of Resolutions with the signatures of the 15 members of the National Committee shall be eligible to be considered by the Standing Committee of Resolutions regardless of timeliness. The YDA Charter states that only members of the National Committee may submit resolutions at National Committee meetings.
Electronic Methods

Meeting by Videoconference, Teleconference, or Online Conference.

Official meetings of the Board of Directors, Standing Committees, Select Committees, and Judicial Council may be held by videoconference, teleconference, or online conference, provided that the following provisions apply:

1. Members shall be allowed full participation in un-muted and un-censored real-time discussion, and all members must be able to hear or see the communication from all other members.

2. Attendance by members participating can be accurately recorded.

3. Roll call votes shall be taken on any vote upon the request of one member.

4. No Officer or National Committee member may interfere with the procedures regarding notification or execution of a videoconference, teleconference or online conference without providing to the convening officer conclusive evidence that said meeting would cause direct financial or legal harm to YDA.