

How do I Amend a Constitution/Bylaws/Standing Rules

The ALA has moved away from presenting all motions as resolutions and reserves the use of resolutions for temporary or honorary purposes. They can be prepared and distributed in advance. Think of it like this: *Whereas*, I want to give special recognition to someone or present a motion that only applies to the coming year and *Whereas*, I have a lot of reasons for this motion, and *Whereas*, I wanted to explain my reasons in writing; therefore be it *Resolved*, that I present to you this formal resolution for all to admire and applaud.

A resolution, therefore, is a fancy motion. For handling the ordinary business of a Unit, a motion serves the purpose. See the document **Basic Parliamentary Procedure** for details on making a motion in a meeting.

The American Legion Auxiliary national organization has moved toward using a **3-column motion form** for proposing amendments to its governing documents. This simplifies the process of presenting a motion by putting the reasoning behind the motion in plain language in the *Rationale* section at the bottom of the form. These amendments are prepared in advance and sent to the voting members. Here is what goes in each of the three columns.

- **Column 1:** The precise wording of the existing bylaw or rule. If none currently exists, this is blank.
- **Column 2:** The proposed change beginning with “amend by striking out” or “amend by adding” or “amend by striking out and inserting.” Then include the existing bylaw or rule with the new words to insert in **bold** and words to be deleted with a line struck through them. If it’s a completely new rule, the entire rule would be in bold.
- **Column 3:** How the bylaw or rule will read if the amendment passes.

Below the three column table, a rationale statement explains the need for the change being presented.

What’s the big deal? The words used in governing documents have precise legal meanings. If your documents say “shall,” then it means that whatever it is, it **must** happen and it must **always** happen. If an action of the organization is challenged in court, the court will look at the organization’s governing documents to see if they have been followed. So, governing documents not only explain how the organization will function and govern itself, they have a direct impact on the rights of its members. The national organization engages a professional registered parliamentarian from the National Association of Parliamentarians to review proposed amendments for clarity and consistency with our governing documents. Engaging a professional parliamentarian can save an organization a lot of time and help protect the rights of members.

| Proposal # and Location in Constitution/Bylaws/Standing Rule | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------|
| | | |
| Current Wording | Proposed Amendment | If Adopted, Will Read |
| | | |

Proposed by:

Rationale: