

**Alpha Phi Omega**  
National Service Fraternity

**National Convention Handbook**

*A guide for Voting Delegates  
of the  
Alpha Phi Omega  
National Convention*



**2008 National Convention  
Boston, Massachusetts**

## **National Convention Handbook**

*A guide for Voting Delegates  
of the Alpha Phi  
Omega National  
Convention*

*This handbook was written by Mu Omicron  
Alumni Association, Inc. as a service project for the National Fraternity.  
Regional versions were published for the  
1990 and 1992 Conventions.  
Since that time this handbook has been  
printed on a National basis.*

*Many people have contributed to this handbook. Besides the members of MOAA,  
Inc., we would like to acknowledge the contributions of:  
the Region IV staff*

*Warren Weidman (Past Region II Director)*

*mrn Tomusiak (Past Region I Director)*

*Yale Zussman (Alpha Chi Alumnus)*

*James Rodden*

*Lisa Covi (Past National Leadership Development Program Director)*

*Jeff Neurauter (National Convention Parliamentarian)*

*Mark Stratton (Region VI Director)*

*and*

*many Voting Delegates at the Conventions who provided invaluable suggestions.*

**Please send correspondence concerning this handbook and requests for additional**

**copies to:**

**Alpha Phi Omega National Office**

**14901 E. 42nd Street**

**Independence, Missouri 64055**

**(816) 373-8667**

**Email: [executive.director@apo.org](mailto:executive.director@apo.org)**

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## ***About The Handbook***

Your chapter has selected you as a Voting Delegate to the Alpha Phi Omega 2006 National Convention in Louisville, Kentucky. After the post-election euphoria subsides, you may begin to wonder, "What does it all mean? What is a National Convention all about? What does a delegate do? Was I crazy to volunteer for this job?"

This handbook will answer these and other questions (except perhaps the last one) that may arise as the convention approaches. With this handbook you can gain a head start in preparing for your important role at the convention. It will also assist you in unraveling some complexities of the convention once you are there.

The handbook is organized in four sections. The first section provides an overview of the convention and the legislative process. The second section covers actions that chapters and Voting Delegates should take before the convention to be well prepared. The third section describes the legislative process used at the convention and offers helpful hints on negotiating some challenges you may face. The final section reviews some of the rules that govern the conduct of business at the convention, including important concepts in parliamentary procedure.

This handbook is intended only as a guide, not a rule book. The Standing Rules of the convention will be adopted at the opening session. Please read all of the official National Convention literature to learn all the details about this convention. If you still have questions, please speak with your Chapter Advisor or Sectional Chair.

## ***About the Convention***

Alpha Phi Omega holds its National Convention every even numbered year in the last week of December. The location of the convention rotates between the East, South Central, West, and North Central areas. The convention consists of a Legislative Session, workshops, seminars, and social events all packed into four fun-filled days. All members of the Fraternity may attend the convention, but only two delegates from each chapter (along with National Board members and an Alumni Delegate from each region) may register to vote in the legislative proceedings. Note that when the term "delegate" is used alone in this handbook it refers only to these Voting Delegates.

### **Fellowship**

With two to three thousand Brothers all in one place, a National Convention is probably the most intense example of Brotherhood you will ever experience. The social aspects of the convention include both official events, such as the opening and closing banquets, and unofficial chapter, section, and region – sponsored events. Generally, there are also tours of the host city available. Commemorative pins, Greek items, and Fraternity memorabilia are available at the Fraternity store. Alpha Phi Omega is everywhere! Singing the Toast Song in the immense fellowship circle at the Closing Banquet brings the term "National Fraternity" into perspective.

### **Workshops and Service Projects**

Numerous workshops are scheduled throughout the convention on just about any topic you can imagine. There are also longer, more structured, sessions such as the APO LEADS programs, alumni volunteer training, and officer training. There are lots of opportunities for service to the Fraternity at the convention for both voting and non-voting delegates. Non-voting delegates can

provide service to the legislative process by volunteering to work shifts in floor services and as sergeants-at-arms (see below). All delegates can volunteer during the convention to help the convention committee staff safety and security or other requests made on site. Each convention also organizes projects for service to the community and service to the nation such as toy drives and work in local agencies. Actual events available at convention will be listed in the official convention registration packet and the official convention program. Be sure to check the convention website for advanced information on workshop and service available at convention.

### **Convention Alcohol Policy**

As participating citizens we have an obligation to comply with all federal, state, and local laws. To this end, the National Board of Directors has adopted this National Convention Alcohol Policy:

- “All Brothers of Alpha Phi Omega are responsible for compliance with laws regarding alcohol consumption;
- No alcoholic beverages will be served or consumed at convention functions (i.e., banquets, dances, casino nights, talent shows, regional or sectional meetings, etc.);
- No alcoholic beverages in open containers will be transported or consumed in common or public areas of the hotel (i.e., halls, lobbies, elevators, etc.) excluding bars open to the public;

Violation of local laws or hotel regulations while under the influence of alcohol will be viewed as a violation of the Fraternity’s Convention Alcohol Policy.”

Be sure to read all convention registration literature carefully for details of this and other policies which govern the convention.

### **Conducting the Business of the Fraternity**

Of course, the main purpose of the convention is to accomplish the business of the Fraternity. The Reference Committees and the Legislative Session are the places where this happens. The National Convention has the power to amend the National Bylaws, adopt new rituals and publications, bestow awards and recognitions, elect the National Board of Directors and adopt resolutions affecting national policies and directing the future of the Fraternity. Although many people contribute, it is the Voting Delegates who are the workhorses of the legislative process.

### **Reference Committees**

Reference Committees convene prior to the Legislative Session to consider all of the legislative proposals which have been submitted to the convention. The committees consist of one active member from each region, another active member as chair, and 2-4 advisors. The purpose of these committees is to review all of the proposed amendments and resolutions and make recommendations regarding their adoption. In performing this task, the committees hear several hours of testimony and engage in extensive discussion in order to make an informed recommendation to the Legislative Session regarding the best course of action for the Fraternity. Since the bulk of the work is done in committee, this allows the Legislative Session to work much more efficiently. The committees may write new proposals, but they are limited in what they can propose. They may also improve proposals submitted by the members. The committees may even decide to not place a particular item on the agenda. Each committee produces a report containing the exact wording of the motions they will present to the Legislative Session along with a concise justification for each. More details on how the Reference Committees function are given in Section 3 of this handbook.

## **The Legislative Session**

After the committees finish their work, the entire delegation convenes to hear the report of each committee in turn. Each committee presents the motions that the committee has determined will be placed on the agenda. All Voting Delegates are permitted to debate each motion, and then they vote on each motion. All of this activity is governed by the National Bylaws, the Standing Rules of the convention, and Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised. Section 4 of this handbook reviews some of these rules to help you navigate this fairly complex process. The Legislative Session can sometimes be somewhat of a marathon. Fortunately, conventions usually adopt a standing rule setting a definite ending time for the session. Of course, if delegates are efficient (and appreciate the hard work the brothers serving on Reference Committees have done) they may complete the business of the day early!

## **Delegates**

Any member of the Fraternity can attend the National Convention. The highlight of every convention is the spirit of fellowship which all Brothers share. There are two types of delegates at the National Convention: Voting Delegates and Non-voting Delegates. Voting Delegates represent their chapters at the convention. Non-Voting Delegates attend the seminars and service projects and support the Voting Delegates.

## **Voting Delegates**

Each chapter gets two votes during the Legislative Session of the National Convention and should send two delegates to the convention to represent their chapter. If a chapter can send only one person to the convention, that person will cast both votes. The Voting Delegates attend all legislative sessions and vote on behalf of their chapters. Voting Delegates can also serve on the Reference Committees.

As the sample agenda at the end of this section shows, the legislative process occupies much of a voting delegate's time at the convention. The advice contained in this handbook will allow chapters to select delegates who enjoy and thrive on the challenges and opportunities that only the National Convention can provide.

Voting Delegates carry a great responsibility. According to the National Bylaws, the "supreme authority of the Fraternity" rests with the National Convention. Although being a delegate is a physically and mentally demanding and time consuming job, there are also great rewards. Voting delegates work with other delegates toward a common goal, participate in national level decisions, and provide service to the thousands who benefit from Alpha Phi Omega.

## **Non-Voting Delegates**

In addition to the two Voting Delegates, other members of the chapter can attend the National Convention as Non-voting Delegates. Non-voting Delegates participate in the seminars, workshops, service projects and other events of the convention. They also play a vital role in supporting the Voting Delegates during the Legislative Session.

Non-voting Delegates should attend the seminars and workshops at the convention to learn new skills to take back to their chapter. There are sessions on a variety of subjects, such as membership, service, and pledging. The APO LEADS courses and other leadership training will be offered. Non-voting Delegates have the opportunity to share ideas with and learn from Brothers from other chapters.

During the legislative session, Non-voting Delegates can observe the legislative process from the gallery. Non-voting Delegates may also volunteer to assist the Voting Delegates as a Floor Services volunteer. Non-voting Delegates are encouraged to check on their chapter's voting delegates periodically.

**Sample Voting Delegate Agenda**

<b>Dec. 27:</b>	Registration	Register as Voting Delegate, Get settled in room (your chapter must be in good standing)
	Orientation Meetings	All Voting Delegates Reference Committee Chairs and Advisors Reference Committee members
	Opening Session	Adopt Standing Rules, Opening ceremony, Roll-call
	Committee Meetings	Get organized, Review legislation
	Regional Meeting	Meet with your Regional Director and other delegates from region, Get organized, Discuss regional business
<b>Dec. 28:</b>	Committee Meetings	Reference Committees continue to review Legislation throughout day
	Regional Meeting	Discuss Regional Business
	Opening Banquet	Food, Speeches, and other Fun
	Committee Meetings	Continue to review legislation (if necessary)
<b>Dec. 29:</b>	Legislative Session	General Assembly, Reference Committee reports, Debates, and Votes
	Regional Meetings/ Candidates Forum	Discuss more regional business, Ask questions of candidates running for National Office
<b>Dec. 30:</b>	Legislative Session	Finish going over proposed legislation, Hear bids for the next National Convention, Elect the National Officers (must end by midnight)
	Regional Meetings	Elect the Regional Director, Recap the convention, Closing Banquet Dinner, Presentation of Awards, Toast Song, Dance

All events and times are described in your official program which will be in your convention packet.

## **Before The Convention**

Preparation is the key to a successful convention experience. The National Convention provides a unique opportunity for chapters to influence the overall policies of Alpha Phi Omega. However, introducing meaningful amendments, resolutions, or nominations at the convention will require much advance thought and planning. This is not a job to be assigned to the delegates alone. The whole chapter should discuss the upcoming convention to decide what role they will play. The advice in this section will help both chapters and delegates do the right things to get ready for the convention.

## **Chapter Activities**

Although chapters spend nearly all of their time considering local issues, preparing for the convention requires the chapter to take some time early in the convention year to think nationally. If your chapter has some ideas about the policies and personalities which shape our Fraternity, this is the time to turn ideas into action. Any chapter can propose amendments or resolutions which could range from minor wording clarifications in the National Bylaws to major policy reforms. Also, you can encourage brothers to seek National Office and support candidates for these positions. All this must take place well before the convention. Please note all legislation and proposed resolutions, as well as a vita/resume from all individuals seeking national office should submit by September 30 for delegates to review and consideration with their Brothers of their Chapters.

## **Selecting Delegates**

Chapters should select two Voting Delegates to represent them at the convention. This should be done as early as possible to allow time for making travel arrangements. Chapters should consider setting aside funds to help defray the costs associated with attending the convention. If these funds can be set aside over several semesters, it will be helpful to Brothers who are considering becoming delegates. Additionally, Chapters should verify that the individuals they select to be the voting delegates are registered members of the Fraternity – if for some reason they aren't, they will not be permitted to pick up their credentials and will be ineligible to serve as voting delegates. Also, keep in mind that any Brother that you initiate (activate) in the fall is eligible to serve as a voting delegate, provided you have sent to, and the National Fraternity has received, the appropriate fees and Applications for Active Membership to the National Office.

If two or more brothers from your chapter are attending the convention, you must have two Voting Delegates; however, if your chapter can only send one brother to the convention, he/she will be able to cast two votes. The delegates you choose must be active members or chapter advisors. Of course, it is recommended that chapters select two active members whenever possible.

Chapters should also check at this time to be sure that they are not “behind” in any chapter paperwork or fees, which need to be submitted to the National Office.

**Only chapters in good standing will be allowed to register Voting Delegates at the convention. Check with your Sectional Chair, the Fraternity's website, or the National Office early to be sure everything is in order.**

## **Preparing and Submitting Amendments**

All proposed amendments to the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Standard Chapter Articles of Association, rituals, ceremonies, insignia or Toast Song, along with bids for the location of the next convention, must be submitted to the National Executive Director at least 90 days

(September 30) before the beginning of the legislative session. It is important for chapters to begin thinking well in advance of this date so they can submit well-researched and well-worded proposals.

When submitting an amendment, read through the affected documents to make sure all the provisions necessary to achieve the desired result are changed. If a relevant change is not made, your proposal may cause internal conflicts within documents, or it may not achieve its desired result. Although the reference committees can correct some of these oversights, it is obviously desirable to present them with legislation that is ready for the convention floor. The convention is restricted in its ability to make amendments or changes to a proposal. It cannot change the amendment to be broader in scope than what was proposed and circulated prior to the convention. For example:

- If a chapter proposes an amendment to increase a fee from \$10 to \$12, the convention can either reject the amendment (which would leave the fee at \$10), adopt the amendment (which would raise the fee to \$12), or pass an amendment to raise the fee to a new value anywhere between \$10.01 and \$12. They cannot raise it to a level higher than \$12, nor can they lower the fee, since both would be outside the scope of the original proposal.

Because of this restriction, it is often preferable to write proposals which are broad in scope. The convention then has the flexibility to adapt the amendment to the Fraternity's needs, based upon information which may come to light during the convention.

Since many amendments submitted at past conventions were difficult to interpret or understand, the 1988 Convention voted to require a written rationale be submitted with all proposals. The more information you supply, the more the reference committee has to work with. Keep in mind, however, that your rationale should only be as long as it needs to be – if you have a fair amount of supporting documentation, you can provide several copies of that documentation to the Executive Director at the Convention, who will then send it to the Reference Committee. A well crafted rationale is the best way to get your proposal on the agenda and, hopefully, adopted. One of the major reasons why otherwise good proposals fail is poor communication of the rationale.

The convention website is where you will find templates for legislation. All legislation must be submitted in this form. If your chapter is new to amendment writing, it is a good idea to ask your Sectional Chair and Regional staff to review your proposal before you submit it to the Executive Director.

### **Reviewing Proposed Amendments and Resolutions**

Chapters will receive a copy of all the proposed amendments about 80 days before the convention, as well as any resolutions that have been received by that date. This business will be considered by the appropriate Reference Committee, and may come before the Legislative Session. The **chapter** should carefully review the proposed amendments. Whether the entire Chapter or a smaller group of interested brothers is involved in this review, the voting delegates should be heavily involved in this process. If questions come up during this review, contact your Sectional Chair for more information.

If your chapter has very strong views on a particular proposal, or pertinent facts to add to the debate, the Voting Delegate should understand these issues well enough to testify in front of the Reference Committee and/or present your argument during floor debate. Written notes are highly recommended since your opportunity to speak will have stringent time limits.

While it is important for Chapters to discuss proposed amendments and resolutions prior to convention, your responsibility as a voting delegate is to listen to the debate on the floor of the legislative session and decide what is best for the future of the National Fraternity. The convention is meant to be a deliberative body where delegates gather to consider the issues presented and make a decision based on the evidence and arguments presented. Therefore, voting delegates should not be couriers who simply come to report how their chapter wishes to vote. If that were the case chapters could simply send in their votes by mail and a convention would be unnecessary.

## **Delegate Preparation**

### **Reference Committee Membership**

If the responsibilities of any Reference Committee interest you, contact your Regional Director as early as possible and ask to serve on that committee as your region's representative. Committees differ greatly in the type and amount of legislation that they consider. Talk to your Regional Director to get an idea of which committee would be right for you. Committees serve an important function in discussing legislation and setting the agenda. A good job by the reference committee greatly expedites the conduct of business in the Legislative Session.

### **Studying Proposed Legislation**

If you are a Reference Committee member, examine the proposed legislation your Reference Committee is responsible for in depth before the convention. Come up with a list of questions or points you'd like to discuss when the legislation is discussed by your committee. Examine the issues from both the pro and con side. Remember that a seemingly senseless amendment may be an excellent idea, once the reasons behind it are explained, and vice versa. An open mind is essential. Thorough preparation will help you during committee debates and when writing the committee report.

### **Travel Arrangements**

You must do this early! Mid-September is about right if you hope to get the reservations you want at a reasonable price. Remember, the convention happens right in the middle of the holiday travel season. Be sure to check with a travel agent to find discount rates, which may be lower if you plan ahead. If the convention is in your area, you might want to check with your Sectional Chair, nearby chapters, or the website to set up carpools or other cost-efficient transportation.

### **Hotel Reservations**

The official convention registration packet will provide complete details about hotel accommodations at the convention hotel. Hotel reservations are not included in the convention registration fee. Each delegate must make a reservation directly with the convention hotel. Although the convention planners block off a large number of rooms at a special convention rate, there are sometimes room shortages. To be sure you receive a room in the convention hotel, make your reservations as soon as you know you will attend the convention. When you make your reservation, be sure to mention that you are part of the Alpha Phi Omega National Convention. The convention room rates are generally much lower than the normal rate that you would otherwise pay.

## **What to Bring**

When you register for the convention, you will be able to sign up for the Fellowship and Closing banquets. Even if you attend these, you will still have a few meals on your own to explore local restaurants. You should plan on bringing sufficient funds to cover these meals, souvenirs, sightseeing and other expenses. This is in addition to the conference registration, hotel room, and transportation. As was mentioned before, chapters should, if at all possible, budget some money to defray the cost of the convention for their delegates.

In addition to money, be sure to bring some semi-formal clothes for the banquets. You will not have a lot of time for running errands, so bring adequate supplies of incidentals.

If your chapter is sending other brothers to the convention besides the Voting Delegates, ask the others to check up on you periodically during the general session. You will be able to pass notes to them via Floor Services volunteers asking for things you need on the floor (e.g., snacks (no meals) and drinks). They can pass the requested items to you, again using Floor Services volunteers.

## **Time Management**

The majority of your time at the convention will be taken up with legislative activities, so Voting Delegates should not sign up for sightseeing tours or other activities like the all-day APO LEADS Explore course which occur during the convention without carefully checking the schedule first. A review of the official convention schedule will give you an idea of how full your schedule will be. If you want to do some sightseeing after the convention, the hotels usually extend the convention rates for a couple of days after the end of the convention.

## ***At The Convention***

As a Voting Delegate, the two activities which will take up most of your time at the convention are the Reference Committee meetings and the Legislative Session. This section describes these two important functions and also provides some guidelines about politics and convention policies.

## **Reference Committees**

The Reference Committees serve an important function at the convention. Each committee reviews all proposed amendments and resolutions under their area of responsibility and discusses each item in depth. The committee then decides which will make it onto the agenda of the convention's Legislative Session.

If your chapter has introduced legislation to be considered at the convention, it is a good idea to contact the Reference Committee which will work on your legislation. This should be done early so you don't miss an opportunity to testify before the committee.

Also, if your chapter wants to suggest a nomination for one of the national officers, you should go to the Nominating Committee room the first night of the convention and ask to testify before the committee. Please be sure to talk to the person you wish to nominate so that he/she can either agree or not to be nominated. Election to the Board of Directors (nationally elected or regionally elected officer) demands time, skills, and financial resources. All members of the Board of Directors should be held to the highest levels of accountability for the responsibilities of the office.

Generally, there are four types of reference committees: those that will only review and work on legislation, those that will only review one of the Fraternity's many programs, those that review both legislation and programs, and a committee responsible for nominating brothers for election to National Office.

Committees with legislative responsibility will have several legislative proposals to consider. Those proposals have been referred to these committees by the National President. These committees will study the proposals in great detail and decide whether or not to recommend their adoption to the convention.

Program-review committees generally do not have legislation to consider. Rather, they will be assigned one of the Fraternity's programs (e.g., Leadership Development, Scouting & Youth Services, etc.) and perform an in-depth review of those programs. To assist in this work, these committees are usually provided with a report of the person tasked to head up that program (such as the Leadership Development Program Director or the Chair of the National Scouting & Youth Services Committee, in the case of the examples above). These committees will review those reports, any related publications or materials for those programs, and may even decide to subpoena specific individuals to help in the committee's review.

Committees that have both responsibilities will review a particular program area (such as Membership & Extension) as well as any legislation affecting or related to that area.

Lastly, the task of the Nominating Committee is to recommend the best slate of candidates to fill the various National Officer positions elected by the convention. The committee will not only interview potential candidates for National Office, but will also research the positions and candidates' qualifications by interviewing other brothers.

### **Committee Organization**

The following list is a sample of the reference committees that will exist for 2008:

1. Alumni
2. Awards & Appreciations
3. Chapter/Finance/Operations
4. Leadership Development
5. Marketing
6. Membership & Extension
7. National Organization
8. Nominating
9. Rules & Credentials
10. Scouting & Youth Services
11. Service & Communication
12. Time & Place

NOTE: The exact list of Reference Committees will vary from convention to convention depending on what business is submitted. The list of committees will be sent to you 80 days prior to the beginning of the convention along with the proposals that will be considered at the convention.

Each committee consists of a delegate from each region and a chair. In addition, each committee will have two to four alumni as advisors. The advisors and the committee chair are appointed by the National President before the start of the convention.

The committee chair should be prepared to lead and organize the activities of the committee. He or she will preside over the discussion of the various topics on the agenda. The chair should appoint a committee secretary to record the discussions and decisions of all topics. The chair may also appoint a timekeeper if the committee agenda is heavy and a sergeant-at-arms to keep order.

The advisors will help the committee to remain focused, but generally remain in the background. Additionally, advisors provide expertise on legislative technique that may help the committee with wording or understanding the history of a particular issue.

### **How Committees Operate**

The committee begins by prioritizing the legislation before it. They will group similar proposals and possibly eliminate some proposals which are redundant or not pertinent. They will then create a schedule which lists each proposal that the committee will discuss. This schedule may be posted on their door to inform people who wish to testify before the committee.

Several proposals may concern the same issue; the committee will sift through these common items and come up with the best possible motion to present to the Legislative Session. While doing this, keep in mind that the most broadly worded motion gives the convention the greatest latitude in passing a motion that best meets the Fraternity's needs.

The committee should examine each issue from both the pro and con sides and how it affects individual chapters and the Fraternity as a whole. In addition to discussion by committee members, the committee will hear testimony by interested parties and disinterested parties who can provide factual or background information. This will not only improve the quality of legislation which makes it onto the agenda, but will also allow the committee to better answer questions and objections which are raised on the floor. Many a promising amendment has failed because of a negative argument that was not effectively countered during the debate on the floor of the Legislative Session.

The committee may decide not to include a particular proposal on their agenda for various reasons. Realize, however, that the Voting Delegates can still make a motion to bring the proposed legislation up during the Legislative Session. This may occur when someone feels strongly that a proposal should be adopted. The committee's decision to kill the proposal should have been based on sound reasoning, and the committee should be prepared to present these substantive arguments if a request is made to bring a motion to the floor even though it was not reported out by the committee.

Most committees put off writing the report until after their portion of the agenda has been set and they are tired. Instead, the committee should summarize the reasons for and against each piece of legislation at the time they make their decision to place the item on the agenda, while the reasons are still fresh in their minds. If possible, actually write a rough draft of that part of the report before the committee moves on to the next piece of business. If you can bring a laptop or notebook computer to the committee meeting, it will prove extremely helpful in writing the committee's report.

## **Resources Available to the Committees**

The committee will have to consider amendments which have not been clearly explained by the chapter or member proposing them. The committee is responsible for obtaining sufficient information to evaluate each proposal and deciding which proposals will be presented to the legislative session by the committee.

Often, interested parties will request to testify before the committee. This testimony will provide much information about the matter, but will certainly be biased toward one side of the issue. Additionally, committees have the power to subpoena various Fraternity officials or other knowledgeable persons as witnesses to obtain further information on the proposals. Once the committee decides who they want to subpoena, they notify the committee's Sergeant-at-Arms who then takes the steps necessary to get the person to testify before the committee. This method can reveal much information and clear up confusion.

All reference committees will be provided with a variety of materials, both in printed form and in electronic format, to help them in their deliberations. As a general rule, reference committees will receive the report from the reference committee from the previous convention, any related publications and reports, copies of the National Bylaws, the ritual manual (for Rituals & Traditions), and so on.

Please remember the members of the National Board are busy people with many responsibilities at the convention. Be considerate of this and do not over-use the power to subpoena.

## **The Committee's Report**

After many hours of discussion, your committee will have come up with a set of amendments, resolutions or other proposals to place on the agenda. Some committees may have recommendations on how to change or improve one or more of the Fraternity's programs. After the committee has decided which items it wishes to recommend to the Legislative Session, it still has a report to write. Although the reasons for adopting the amendments and resolutions you are placing on the agenda will be very clear to the committee members, you must remember that there are 300 or so other delegates that do not know what the legislation is all about, or why they should vote for it. In fact, major misconceptions may exist about some proposals that could cause them to be rejected.

The best weapon you have to counter these problems is a clear, concise, and complete committee report. In this report, the committee summarizes all the legislation on the agenda and presents the justification for each item. Although the motions themselves must be formally worded, the justification should explain the reasons for and effects of the motion in terms which are easy to understand. A well written report will include the strongest pro arguments as well as facts to refute the major con arguments and clear up possible areas of misunderstanding. In some cases, the committee report may also include an opposing "minority opinion" which will be presented to the general session.

As a committee member, you may want to "talk up" some of the legislative items coming from your committee with other delegates. This can be done formally at regional meetings, or informally at meals, parties, etc. The idea is to be sure the Voting Delegates are informed on the issues. However, when stating opinions on controversial issues, be sure to differentiate between the "committee opinion" and your personal feelings. Above all, remember that your duty as a Voting Delegate is to do what you believe is in the best interests of the National Fraternity.

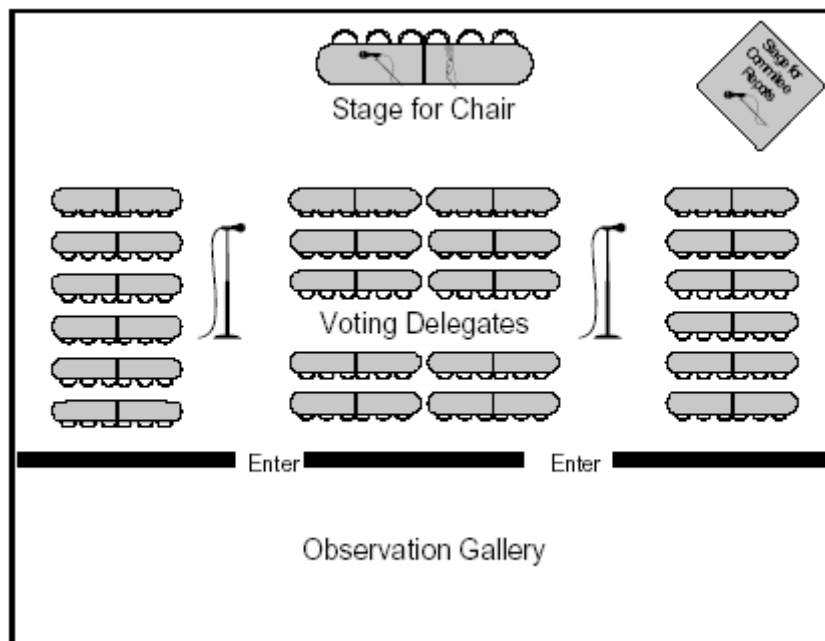
### Final Preparation Before the Legislative Session

Select an articulate member of the committee to give the report to the general session. This does not have to be the committee chair. A well delivered report can forestall protracted debate on the floor. The legislative session can be confusing and people can be distracted. Delegates will no doubt bring up some contrary opinions during the discussion period. Committee members (other than the committee’s presenter) should be prepared to go to the microphones to speak in favor of their amendments, but do not over do it. A good understanding of the pro and con considerations will again be helpful.

Keep in mind that the report should accurately reflect the outcome of the committee’s work. If, between the adjournment of the committee and the presentation of the committee’s report to the Legislative Session, a committee member develops an additional perspective not covered by the report, he or she should recruit another voting delegate to speak to it from the floor. If not, that committee member will have to leave the committee’s place at the dais to speak from the floor to express this perspective.

### The Legislative Session

The legislative sessions are fairly fast paced and can be a bit confusing. A lot of material has to be covered in a short period of time. Reading through the proposed amendments before discussion begins will help reduce the confusion.



**The Legislative Floor**

### Discussion and Voting

As shown on the sample floor map, there is restricted access to the floor. This allows the “Floor Services” personnel to check each brother’s convention badge and only allow on the floor voting delegates, section chairs, non-voting delegates representing chapters which are not in good standing and petitioning groups. When entering and exiting the floor, you will only be allowed to use these areas.

There are microphones on the floor to allow delegates to voice their opinions on issues before the assembly. To be recognized by the chair, you must proceed to a microphone and hold up a green, red, or white card. The chair will recognize delegates at each microphone in sequence. Once recognized by the chair, state your name, the chapter that you represent and your intent for obtaining the floor.

Since amendments to motions cannot change the intent or expand the scope of the motion, delegates should limit their discussion to alternatives which are possible. The final section of this handbook presents more details about the conduct of business and how to use parliamentary procedure.

You should plan to be on the floor throughout as much of the general session as possible. No one can cast your vote if you are not present on the floor, except for unusual circumstances where you actually leave the convention entirely (e.g., illness).

When considering an issue, remember that the Reference Committee spent 8 to 12 hours reviewing and debating the merits of the proposal before presenting it to the legislative session. They have examined alternative proposals, checked out all the nitty-gritty details, become subject matter experts, and considered what is the best course of action for the Fraternity.

### **Floor Services**

There are volunteers available on the floor to carry messages and packages between delegates and others. They may also be of assistance if you have questions concerning the conduct of the legislative session. Messages may also be sent to Regional Directors, Sectional Chairs, or to people in the gallery.

Please keep in mind that messages between delegates on the floor may be used for support and questions, but cannot be used for caucusing or lobbying since that is forbidden on the convention floor.

### **Lobbying and Campaigning**

Campaigning or lobbying for what you believe in is a fact of life and takes place on various subtle and not so subtle levels at the convention. If you recognize it going on, it can be amusing to watch, educational, and hopefully beneficial.

The most obvious lobbying which takes place is for the next convention location. You may hear a pitch for one of the bidding cities even before you get to your hotel room. The cities may have hospitality suites where you can get information about what each city has to offer as a convention site, including vital information such as statistics on hotel elevator capabilities and the like. You can also get assorted freebies such as stickers, buttons, etc. Go to the suites, have fun, and gather information to make a decision for the city that will be the best convention location.

Brothers who are running for National Office campaign at the convention. They make formal and informal presentations. The idea is to ensure that you have all the information needed to make an informed decision in the election.

Various emotional and controversial topics will be discussed during the convention. For example, one controversy at recent conventions was changing the words of the Toast Song. You should realize that members feel strongly about these issues and respect their opinions,

even if you disagree with them. We are all in the same Fraternity, and this should be remembered during debate.

You may want to spend some time lobbying for the amendments that you feel strongly about. As long as it is not done on the convention floor, it is perfectly acceptable. The more delegates who know the reasons behind an amendment before it comes up for vote, the better the chance of a decision which most benefits the Fraternity. Give careful thought to an issue before making a decision. Many issues are ones that members instinctively vote against. However, careful consideration can reveal that the issue may be the best course of action when confronted with the reality.

Convention politics are not bad; they are a necessary and valuable part of the legislative process. If delegates are aware of politicking, they can use it to garner and spread valuable information. As a delegate, your main responsibilities are to be informed on the issues and to vote according to what you believe is best for the Fraternity.

If any questions arise about these issues, do not hesitate to contact your Regional Director or Sectional Chair for advice.

### **A Final Word**

As you have read, there is a lot going on at the National Convention. The delegates make many important decisions at the convention which determine the future direction of the Fraternity. There are big important issues and little mundane issues; all must be discussed and voted on. The process can be both frustrating and confusing. However, the rewards outweigh any negative aspects.

Hopefully, this handbook has helped prepare you to successfully navigate the seas of the National Convention. Although delegates must work hard, they should also have a lot of fun. So smile, and remember to have a good time at Nationals!

By the way, please take a few moments after the convention to write down anything you wished we had told you about in this handbook. Send your comments to the National Office and we'll include your hints and ideas in the next edition.

### ***Rules of the Convention***

We all encounter rules every day, sometimes they help, other times they hinder. The National Convention is no exception. Both the legislative and the committee sessions are run following parliamentary procedure. These rules don't bend as easily as some others. But, if you are familiar with the rules, you can use them to your benefit and avoid undue frustration. This section highlights some of the fundamentals of parliamentary procedure that you'll need to know as a delegate. It also gives some hints on how to use these rules correctly to achieve your goals.

The National Convention conducts the Legislative Session according to Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, modified by "Standing Rules" adopted for each convention. The Standing Rules are specific rules that the convention agrees to follow during its sessions. Be sure to read the Standing Rules carefully. Where they differ from Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, the Standing Rules have priority.

## Why Use Parliamentary Procedure?

Although parliamentary procedure may sometimes appear cumbersome, these rules were developed to facilitate the transaction of business and assure specific rights to all delegates. The vote of the majority decides what the convention will do, but at the same time the rights of those in the minority are protected. For example, everyone has the right to express an opinion about a topic whether agreeing with or opposing the idea. The presiding officer, or chair, should be impartial despite any personal opinions.

Additionally, business is transacted in a specific and logical order; only one issue is dealt with at a time. Because of this, you can follow the flow of business.

### Definitions

The largest stumbling block in dealing with parliamentary procedure is, in many cases, the terminology. In order to transact business efficiently and effectively, parliamentary procedure has given everything a name. Rules can then be attached to those names. These definitions will help you understand the discussion that follows:

- Abstain** When a delegate chooses not to vote on a *motion*.
- Majority** In order to be adopted, most motions require a *simple majority*, or more than half the votes cast. However, some motions require *two-thirds* or *three-quarters majority*. Also note that the number needed for a majority can be calculated based on the number of delegates registered, the number present and voting, or other means. For example, changes to the Fraternity Bylaws, rituals, or Toast Song require a three-quarters majority of the total votes cast by those registered delegates *present and voting* to be adopted.
- Motion** A formal proposal by a committee or a delegate, directing the convention to take a specific action. The common types of motions are main motions, secondary motions, and incidental motions.
- Parliamentarian** A person who advises the chair, officers, committees, and delegates on matters of parliamentary procedure.
- Present and voting** Refers to the total number of delegates who are actually present and choose to vote on a particular *motion*. Delegates who are absent or who *abstain* are not counted in this total. This term is sometimes used to qualify the number of votes required for a motion to be adopted, as in “two-thirds majority of those present and voting.”
- Question** Synonymous with *motion*. “*The question*” is the specific issue that the Delegates are currently considering.
- Quorum** The number of delegates which must be present on the convention floor in order to transact business. Quorum at the convention is two-thirds of the registered delegates entitled to vote.
- Resolution** A call for action, an official statement of opinion or a declaration of intent by the Fraternity.

**Second** When a person (other than the one making the motion) agrees that a *motion* should come before the convention for consideration. Most motions (except those which are from a committee) require a second before they can be considered further.

## **The Process**

Conceptually, parliamentary procedure follows a very simple step by step process to efficiently accomplish business. The following steps relate to most motions, no matter the type of motion:

- Statement of the motion by a delegate or member of a committee
- Second
- Restatement of the motion by the chair
- Discussion
- Closing debate
- Vote
- Announcement of the result

### **Statement of motions**

The first step in bringing a motion before the assembly is having the motion stated by a delegate or reference committee. Only one main motion can be considered by the convention at a time. Each main motion must be voted upon or disposed of before the convention can proceed to another main motion. Main motions at the convention will generally come from the Reference Committees. Resolutions and amendments to the Bylaws are considered main motions.

### **Second**

All main motions not originating from a reference committee and all other secondary and incidental motions must be seconded before the chair will allow the motion to be considered. This requirement makes sure that at least one other delegate thinks the motion is worth being considered by the assembly.

### **Restatement by the Chair**

After a motion has been made and seconded, the chair will restate the motion before allowing debate to proceed. This practice does two things. First, it ensures clarity so that the wording of the motion is exactly as the maker of the motion intended it and everyone hears it correctly. Second, it transfers ownership of the motion from the maker to the assembly. The assembly may now do whatever it wishes with the motion.

### **Discussion**

Every delegate has the right to express his/her opinion about a motion. In order to efficiently transact business at the convention, the Standing Rules of the convention limit the number of times and length of time a delegate can speak on each motion. In past conventions delegates were allowed to speak for up to three minutes the first time and up to two minutes a second time. It is during this step that delegates may make amendments or other motions affecting the main motion.

### **Closing debate**

This is generally done by the chair after all discussion on a motion has finished, in which case he/she simply asks "Are you ready to vote on the motion?" If no one indicates that they wish to debate further, the motion is put to a vote.

This step may also be reached by a motion to “close debate.” When this motion is made, the chair will ask the delegates to vote on whether they wish to stop debate and move to a vote on the motion currently being discussed. If the motion to close debate is adopted, the chair will immediately take the vote on the motion which was being debated. Note that the first vote only decides whether to vote on the motion immediately or to continue debate.

### **Voting**

When the assembly is ready to vote on a motion, the chair restates the motion and explains the effect of an “aye” (for) or “no” (against) vote. Most voting at the National Convention is initially taken by voice vote. The “aye” votes are taken first, followed by the “no” votes. The chair makes a decision as to whether a motion passes or fails based on what he/she hears and announces the outcome of the vote.

If a delegate doubts the outcome announced by the chair, the delegate can call for a “division,” where a standing vote is taken. Those delegates voting “aye” are called to stand first, followed by those voting “no.”

Delegates can also request a ballot vote if they wish; the procedure for doing this is usually determined by the standing rules. In previous years, it took ten percent of the delegates present on the convention floor to request a ballot vote. Election of National Officers has also been by ballot vote according to past standing rules.

### **Announcement of the Result**

Immediately after taking the vote, the chair will state the outcome of the vote. First, the chair states the count – “the ayes have it” or “the vote is 175 in favor and 50 against”. The chair will then announce the affect of the count – “the amendment is adopted/defeated”. Finally, the chair will announce the next item of business, which could be a new main motion or simply returning to debate on a currently pending motion.

### **Motions**

There are different types of motions. Each type serves a different purpose and has specific rules regarding how and when it may be used.

#### **Secondary motions**

During discussion, in addition to speaking for or against the main motion, a delegate can make secondary motions. These are actions which help the convention to act upon main motions. Secondary motions can be considered while a main motion is still on the floor. While several secondary motions may be on the floor at once, each one must be voted upon or disposed of prior to going back to debate on the main motion. To make secondary motions, a delegate may gain the floor using either a red or green card at the microphone.

The more common secondary motions are:

#### ***Postpone Indefinitely***

This is similar to postponing definitely except that no time is set to resume discussion. Its effect is to kill the motion without voting on it.

#### ***Amend***

A motion to amend is a motion to change the wording of the motion currently being debated. An amendment must be closely related to the subject of the main motion. It cannot be something new. An amendment can be amended, but this is as far as the amending process can go. When an amendment is passed, this does not mean that the main motion

has been passed. The wording of the main motion has simply been changed. The main motion can be discussed more and will still have to be voted upon in its changed form.

**Refer to Committee** A motion to refer to committee means that the assembly will no longer discuss the motion. By adopting this motion, the convention directs a committee to investigate or otherwise deal with the motion.

**Postpone Definitely** The assembly will immediately stop discussing the present motion. Consideration of the motion will resume at some time in the future.

**Limit or Extend  
Limits of Debate**

This motion can limit or extend the amount of time the assembly as a whole will discuss a motion, the amount of time and/or number of times an individual delegate may speak on a specific motion, or the total number of speakers that will be heard before voting will occur. This motion takes a two-thirds majority and temporarily changes the debate limits adopted in the Standing Rules.

**Close Debate**

This is a motion to stop debate on the currently pending motion and go immediately to a vote. This motion is made by saying “I move to close debate” or “I move the previous question.” When this motion is adopted, all debate stops and the chair immediately goes on to taking the vote.

**Incidental motions**

These are motions which are “incidental” to the business at hand. Generally they are related to the main motion or the conduct of the meeting in such a way that they must be decided immediately before business can proceed. For this reason, most are not debated and some can be made at any time, even if it means interrupting the speaker. To make incidental motions, a delegate may gain the floor using a white card at the microphone.

A few of the more common incidental motions are:

**Point of Order**

If a delegate believes that the chair is not enforcing the rules, he/she can point out the situation using this motion. This can be done at virtually any time. After the point of order is stated there is no discussion and the chair will issue a ruling on your point (possibly after conferring with the parliamentarian).

**Appeal from the  
Decision of the Chair**

The chair is responsible for ruling on questions of parliamentary procedure. If a delegate feels that the chair has ruled incorrectly, he/she may use this motion to request that the assembly vote on whether the decision of the chair was correct. Unlike the other motions mentioned here, this motion needs a second and can be debated in a limited manner by the delegates.

**Division of the Assembly**

If a delegate doubts the accuracy of the chair’s announcement of the outcome of a vote, he/she may request a more formal vote be taken. Generally, this motion is made by going to a microphone

and requesting a “Division!” after the chair announces the outcome of the vote.

***Parliamentary Inquiry***

A request for the chair to answer a question about parliamentary procedure or the motion on the floor. This is not a request for a ruling by the chair on whether something is being done correctly, but merely a request for an explanation.

***Point of Information***

A question related to the facts of the motion being discussed. All questions are directed to the chair, who may answer the question or ask another to provide an answer. It is acceptable to interrupt whoever is speaking to raise a point of information. No discussion or voting is necessary; the chair will act to resolve your question immediately.

**An Example**

So how do you apply all of this stuff? Here is an example to give you an idea of how things flow:

- There is a main motion on the floor from the Finance Committee to raise the Annual Active Membership Dues from \$15 to \$25 per active member.
- After listening to the rationale presented by the Finance Committee, you feel that \$25 is too high and that a better amount is \$20 per active member.
- You would go to a microphone on the floor and hold up a green or red card. When the chair calls your microphone number and card color, you would say “I am Jane/John Doe from Chi Psi Omega Chapter, I rise to make an amendment.”
- When asked to proceed by the chair, you would say “I move to amend the motion to substitute \$20 for \$25.”
- The chair will determine if your motion is in order. If it is, he/she will allow you to proceed.
- You would then wait for someone to second your motion.
- Once your motion to amend has been seconded, the chair will say “It has been moved and seconded to substitute \$20 for \$25.” As maker of the motion you will be given the first chance to speak; you will have up to three minutes to state your reason for changing the amount from \$25 to \$20.
- You would then return to your seat.
- Discussion will continue. If you wish you may go to a microphone on the floor to speak on your amendment for a second time for up to two minutes.
- Once discussion on your motion to amend is finished, it will be put to a vote. If it passes, the original motion will be amended to include your proposal of \$20. If your amendment fails, the original motion will remain at \$25. In either case, discussion of the main motion will start up again.
- If you feel that the National Finance & Operations Committee should review this motion further, you can propose to refer the motion to committee by obtaining the floor and saying “I move to refer the motion to the National Finance & Operations Committee.”
- Or, if you feel that debate on the motion should be limited to a specific length of time, you would obtain the floor and say “I move to limit the length of the debate to fifteen minutes.”
- Or, if you feel the discussion has gone on long enough and wish to put the motion to a vote, you would obtain the floor and say “I move to close debate.”

- If at this point you are confused as to what is being voted on, you would go to the microphone and say “Point of information. What are we voting on?” The chair will then restate the motion on which the vote is currently being taken.

If the motion is put to a vote and the voice vote is close, you may feel that the announcement of the chair is not accurate. You could then call for a more accurate vote to be taken. You would go to a microphone and say either “Division!” or “I call for division.”

### **When All Else Fails (or “What Is Going On?”)**

As you can see parliamentary procedure can get complicated. Every motion has specific rules attached to it determining when it can be used, whether it can interrupt someone who has the floor, whether it can be discussed before a vote is taken, whether it requires a second, and the type of vote required to adopt the motion. The above discussion described some of the more commonly used motions and terms. There are many other motions that were not described. Although you don’t have to be an expert at parliamentary procedure to succeed as a delegate, if you are interested in learning more you should obtain a copy of Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised.

If you are familiar with the basics of parliamentary procedure and pay close attention to the proceedings, you should have no problems being a successful delegate. However, you should always remember that as a member of the convention delegation, you have the right to know at all times what question is before the convention and what its effect will be. Always ask a question if you don’t understand what is happening.

## Parliamentary Motions Guide

<b>Motion</b>	<b>Debatable?</b>	<b>Amendable?</b>	<b>Vote Required</b>
<b>Adjourn</b>	No	No	Majority
<b>Recess</b>	No	Yes	Majority
<b>Question of Privilege</b>	No	No	None
<b>Close Debate</b>	No	No	2/3
<b>Limit or extend debate</b>	No	Yes	2/3
<b>Postpone Definitely</b>	Yes	Yes	Majority
<b>Refer to Committee</b>	Yes	Yes	Majority
<b>Amend</b>	Yes	Yes	Majority
<b>Postpone Indefinitely</b>	Yes	No	Majority
<b>Main Motion</b>	Yes	Yes	Majority

<b>Motions dealing with the General Conduct of the Meeting – No order of Precedence</b>			
<b>Motion</b>	<b>Debatable?</b>	<b>Amendable?</b>	<b>Vote Required</b>
<b>Point of Order</b>	No	No	None
<b>Appeal from the Decision of the Chair</b>	Qualified	No	Majority
<b>Division of the Assembly</b>	No	No	None
<b>Parliamentary Inquiry</b>	No	No	None
<b>Point of Information</b>	No	No	None
<b>Suspend the Rules</b>	No	No	2/3