

## How to Propose Legislation

### Background

Have a great idea on how to make our Bylaws easier to understand? Think you have the answer to our financial issues? Want to revise one of our Rituals to make it more meaningful and elegant? Fantastic! Doing these things is a great form of service to the fraternity. However, in order to make your ideas heard at the National Convention, there are a few steps you have to follow. The process for changing (amending) the Articles of Incorporation, National Bylaws, Standard Chapter Articles of Association, Rituals, Ceremonies, Insignia, or Toast Song are outlined in Article XIV, Section 2 of our Bylaws:

*SECTION 2. PROCEDURE FOR AMENDMENT. Every proposed amendment to the Articles of Incorporation, National Bylaws, Standard Chapter Articles of Association, rituals, ceremonies, symbols, or Toast Song shall be submitted by a duly initiated member or an officially recognized group of the Fraternity to the National Executive Director in writing or electronically at least ninety (90) days before the first legislative session of the next National Convention. All proposals shall be submitted by the National Executive Director to the chapters and the National Board of Directors at least eighty (80) days before the first legislative session of the next National Convention. Other provisions related to the procedures for such proposals, including corrections and omissions thereto, shall be included in the Fraternity Operations and Policy Manual.*

*Written testimony pertaining to any proposal may be submitted to the National Executive Director no later than the opening session of the Convention. Fifteen (15) copies shall be provided. The National Executive Director shall be responsible for transmitting such testimony to the appropriate Convention reference committee.*

*All proposals submitted shall be considered by an appropriate Convention reference committee, prior to the opening of the legislative session of the convention. Such committee shall determine the proposals to be placed on the agenda of the legislative session of the convention. Such committee shall also have the power to propose amendments to lesser documents to maintain consistency with proposals made to superior documents.*

*Proposals not placed on the agenda of the convention may be brought to the floor only by a delegate from the chapter proposing the amendment, or by a member of the Fraternity who proposed it and is present as a delegate at the convention, or by a petition signed by all of the delegates present from five chapters.*

Okay, so what does all this mean? First, let's consider what each of these documents is and what they do.

Articles of Incorporation – This document, created in 1968 after the last constitutional convention, is what establishes Alpha Phi Omega as a legal entity under Missouri law. Its primary purpose is to define what the fraternity is, establish its non-profit status, and address other issues required by law for the creation of a full-fledged non-profit organization. This is the most high-ranking document of the fraternity and takes precedence over all other documents.

National Bylaws – These are the primary rules that tell us how to operate, how we are to be structured as a national organization, and who has what powers and responsibilities. The Bylaws define the governance of the fraternity and are the second most important document after the Articles of Incorporation. If you're considering a proposal to change the Bylaws, make sure there is no similar section in the Articles of Incorporation. If there is, you'll need to propose an amendment to both documents in order for your idea to be eligible for adoption since the Bylaws cannot conflict with the Articles of Incorporation.

Standard Chapter Articles of Association – The third and lowest level document in our hierarchy forms the basis for all chapter bylaws. Those of you who have recently chartered or sponsored a petitioning group are probably most familiar with this document. If you are considering a change to the Standard Chapter Articles of Association, be sure to check both the National Bylaws and the Articles of Incorporation for similar sections and propose amendments to these higher-level documents in order to maintain consistency.

Fraternity Operations & Policy Manual – This manual, created by action at the 2010 National Convention, may also be amended through this process although it may also be amended by immediate action of the National Convention or by the National Board of Directors (i.e. it does not require the 90 day notification period). This document contains managerial and procedural instructions for the operation of the Fraternity in contrast to the structural information in the bylaws that pertain to the rights and duties of our various types of members, officers, and elected and appointed leaders.

Rituals, Ceremonies, Insignia, and Toast Song – While these items have no bearing on the documents discussed above, they are all extremely important to our history and traditions and are a large part of what binds us all together. If you are a brother in the fraternity, you should be familiar with most of these items:

### **Rituals**

Pledge Ritual  
Initiation Ritual

### **Ceremonies**

Petitioning Ceremony  
Chartering Ceremony  
Opening & Closing Ceremonies  
Installation Ceremony  
Memorial Ceremony

### **Insignia**

Fraternity Crest  
Fraternity Key  
Petitioning, Pledge, & Service Pins  
Fraternity Handshake  
Society of Life Members Pin

There is no specified hierarchy among this class of items however it is important that they be consistent in order to avoid confusion. (Sorry, links to these items cannot be included here – please refer to the copies in your chapter’s ritual kit.)

Resolutions – What if you want to suggest a theme for the next National Service Week or have a great idea for a new award? These types of proposals are what we call resolutions and do not affect the legal documents or the rituals etc. discussed above. In many cases, these types of issues do not require pre-notification as described in Article XIV, Section 2 of the Bylaws, however doing so is always appreciated by the voting delegates from other chapters. The one major exception to this would be a resolution regarding the time and place for our next national convention. The Bylaws require preliminary notification to the National Executive Director by July 1st and a formal proposal prior ninety days prior to the beginning of the legislative session for all national convention time and place bids.

### **Process**

So, you have the ideas of what you’d like to change and a description of the documents that you can change, now let’s look at the process part of Article XIV, Section 2 of the National Bylaws. “Every proposed amendment...should be submitted to the National Executive Director in writing or electronically at least ninety (90) days before the first legislative session of the next National Convention.” Pretty straight forward – you have until September 29, 2023 (90 days prior to December 28th when the legislative session begins) to get your proposal to the National Office and the National Executive Director. You have two choices on how to convey this information – in writing i.e. via the US Postal Service or an express delivery service such as UPS or FedEx or electronically i.e. via email [executive.director@apo.org](mailto:executive.director@apo.org). In this age of electronic communication, we expect that nearly everyone will opt for the latter. Regardless of which method you choose, your proposal must be in the proper format and in the proper template in order to ensure that it is properly included in the legislative packet. Using these templates is also a great help to the national office staff and the several volunteers who process the incoming proposals.

<a href="#">Click here to download the Amendment Template</a>	<a href="#">Click here to download the Resolution Template</a>
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**Please Note: these templates are MSWord documents and must be returned to the National Office as MSWord readable files. If you wish to do your proposal writing and editing using another word processor or text editor, that is your prerogative so long as the final document you email to the National Office can be read by MSWord. In addition, please DO NOT change any of the fonts, font sizes, table settings, line spacing, or other document settings as these have been selected to streamline this process.**

**In addition, amendments must be proposed based on the current version of the applicable document. Proposals with citations to superseded documents will be considered invalid and out-of-order and will NOT be brought to the convention floor.**

Once your proposal is received, the National President or his designee will assign it to the appropriate legislative reference committee. After the September 29th deadline when all proposals are in, the legislation will be assembled by the national office staff and mailed to each chapter within ten days (by October 9th, 2023).

If you need help in writing your proposal, please contact your chapter advisors, sectional staff, Section Chair, regional staff, or Region Chair. If you have any questions pertaining specifically to these templates or the process for submitting legislation, you may send an email to the National Convention Legislative Director at [legislative.director@apo.org](mailto:legislative.director@apo.org).