**What are NOT grounds for a grievance?**

* Simply disliking an idea, an executive board’s decision, or the way an event was handled.
* Disliking a decision from an e-board member whose responsibility it is to make such decisions.
* Issues of a personal nature unrelated to harassment, bullying, or other items listed in the Code of Conduct.
* A decision to not grant an extension on a deadline.
* Mere absence from a scheduled meeting.
* Simply disliking a person.

**Things to keep in mind before filing a grievance**

* The local and regional grievance committees as well as the national committee on standards of discipline are comprised of law students. Although it is encouraged that committee members work with diligence, please be mindful that those members have other responsibilities as law students and as BLSA members and as such may not respond or decide as quickly as one would like.
* CCing or BCCing other BLSA members on emails or law school faculty/administration immediately escalates an issue as some members will feel attacked, particularly if this is the first time it is being brought to their attention. Blind copying other members is still improper and it may prove futile if the person who was blind copied gets involved or reveals what was in the email to the other party.
* During meetings, if there is an issue with a member and this is the first time the matter would be brought to their attention, kindly refrain from addressing it among other members. Instead, speak to them privately about it first and try to resolve the issue. Creating acrimony during meetings is against procedure and is mentioned in *Roberts Rules of Order*.
* There might be times where you will disagree but the key is disagreeing without being disagreeable. As long as everyone is acting within the best interests of the association, there shouldn’t be any unresolvable strife.
* Should you ascertain specific procedures aren’t being correctly followed by an e-board member, please advise first your local or regional parliamentarian. Then collectively bring it to the attention of that individual, but definitely lean on the advisement of the regional parliamentarian whom will be able to assist with interpreting this issue. If after addressing to the individual and the actions still persist in violation of your governing documents, then you should consider if redress should be made with regards to filing a grievance.

**Procedure for filing a grievance**

* Filing a grievance should not be your first resort.
* First, try to resolve it on your own **privately**. In-person conversations are best but phone calls and emails suffice (in that order). In the initial phases of a dispute, do not bring the matter to the attention of other BLSA members. For example, if Jane the chapter secretary took issue with something John, the chapter treasurer, said or did, Jane should try to resolve it alone with John first before bringing the matter to Mary, the chapter president, or the general membership.
	+ Document the resolution attempts you have taken. Examples of how to do this are by keeping a list of dates and what measures you took to resolve the matter or the solutions proposed.
	+ When scheduling an in-person meeting or phone conference, make sure it’s being scheduled with the responsibilities and preferences of all members involved. To continue with the previous example, Jane cannot simply call a meeting for tomorrow at 1pm just because she is free and then file a grievance when John doesn’t show up. John is willing to meet but works until 5 pm then has evening classes. Such meetings, including phone conferences, must be arranged for the convenience of all parties.
* Consult the NBLSA Code of Conduct, the NBLSA Constitution, and NBLSA Bylaws. In order to file a grievance, you must clearly identify what action that is being offered as the main complaint of the grievance aligns to a direct violation of something mentioned in the aforementioned documents. Please be cautious to try not to fit a “square peg into a round hole”, using your best judgment, cite only those provisions that apply to the situation. Avoid making overly unsound attenuated connections between the issue and a provision. The governing documents of NBLSA can all be found on the NBLSA website at nblsa.org under the Governing Documents tab.
* It is encouraged that you printout and handwrite the NBLSA grievance forms. Grievances submitted to NBLSA are to be based on violations of the governing documents, violations of the Code of Conduct, or an appeal from a decision of the regional board. Any supporting documents must be submitted in 1 attachment with all pages numbered. Multiple submissions are not permitted.
* The grievance form (the scanned form is one attachment in one email along with the supporting documents) and supporting documents (the second attachment in one email alone with the form) are to be submitted to the National Committee on Standards of Discipline via email to the National Vice-Chair [vice-chair@nblsa.org] and National Secretary [secretary@nblsa.org]. You may also cc the National Parliamentarian, if you wish [parliamentarian@nblsa.org].
* After a grievance is filed at the national level, it will be reviewed to ascertain if there are indeed sufficient grounds. Even if there are, the National Board of Directors have discretion on what matters/appeals are to be considered. The aggrieved party will be notified if no sufficient grounds were identified; the respondent will not be notified under those circumstances.
* Please be mindful that the grievance (documents, hearing, etc.) is confidential and may not be shared with anyone outside of the parties, the National Board of Directors, and the National Parliamentarian.
* Your point of contact will be the National Parliamentarian. Please **email** the National Parliamentarian with any questions or concerns. Phone calls/texts may be granted at the discretion of the National Parliamentarian. As a procedural matter, the National Parliamentarian does not vote along with the Board of Directors and as such it is in your best interests to contact her instead of any member on the board of directors. This applies to both the aggrieved party and respondent. Use your best judgment as to the frequency and duration of such contact.
* If there are sufficient grounds, notification will be made to the respondents along with the aggrieved party’s form and supporting documents will be sent to the respondents for their answer. Notification is to occur within 48 hours of receiving a proper grievance. Respondents are not required to answer but *may* do so. It is recommended that respondents provide a response. The respondents have 5 business days in which to respond from the date and time of their notification.
* After the respondent sends their forms or the 5-day period has elapsed, all parties will be informed as to next steps including the hearing or if any further documentation is needed from either party. If documentation is requested by the Board, the party has 72 hours with which to provide the documentation to the Board.
* The National Committee on Standards and Discipline reviews the matter first and conducts an initial investigation and then provides their recommendations to the Board of Directors.
* The hearing can be a phone conference call with all parties and all parties will be notified as to its parameters.
* Upon motion and a vote, the Board of Directors, outside of the presence of the parties, will decide as to what measure is to be taken, if any.