Pursuant to Article VIII, Section D, Subsection 2 of the Bylaws of the National Black Law Students Association (NBLSA), the following standing rules are hereby established for the National General Assembly’s orderly operation.

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1. **GENERAL PROVISIONS AND PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

Policy Structure of the National General Assembly[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. The Standing Rules of the 51st National Black Law Students Association (NBLSA) General Assembly Plenary Sessions are hereby established under Article VIII, Section D of the NBLSA Bylaws, as a set of special rules with the purpose of regulating the procedures and conduct of Assembly business during all plenary sessions of the 51st Convention. Upon introduction of these rules by the presiding officer, these rules shall be amendable by properly made motions to amend, passed by majority vote of the assembled delegates.
2. The Standing Rules shall be subject to a passage by majority vote of the Assembly prior to the introduction or entertaining of any substantive business and shall, thereafter, be enforced by the presiding officer as the definitive rules of the plenary sessions.
3. A motion to suspend any Standing Rule, or any other applicable rule governing the proceedings of the Assembly, shall be made with particularity, indicating the specific rule(s) requiring suspension. Unless otherwise herein provided, a motion to suspend Assembly rules or any other rule relating to parliamentary procedure shall require a two-thirds vote in the affirmative.
4. The rules contained in the current edition of *Roberts Rules of Order* shall govern the plenary sessions in all cases to which they are applicable and to the extent to which they are consistent with the Bylaws and these standing rules*.* The Assembly shall also be bound to enforce any and all applicable provisions of the NBLSA Constitution, the NBLSA Bylaws, dictates of the NBLSA General Assembly, and the policies of the NBLSA Board.

Composition of the General Assembly

1. The voting membership of the General Assembly shall be the duly registered chapters of the financially-active chapters of NBLSA, via their delegates or authorized proxy voters. The Director of Membership, or their designee, shall be responsible for certifying the presence of and voting strength of chapter delegations or their authorized proxies.
2. Each chapter shall be entitled to have two (2) speaking delegates and one (1) alternate delegate present in the Assembly chamber. In the case of a tie vote, the presiding officer shall exercise a tiebreaking vote. An alternate delegate can be present at the Assembly chamber.
3. The authorized officers of the General Assembly shall be the National Chair, as its primary presiding officer, the National Vice Chair, the National Secretary, and the National Parliamentarian. The chair of the National Elections Committee shall be authorized to conduct the electoral process and the National Director of Membership shall be authorized to help maintain and recognize quorum and ascertain and resolve discrepancies in chapter voting strength, as stipulated by these rules.
4. In the case of apparent or such absence can be foreseen by the Presiding Officer unavailability of both the National Chair and the National Vice-Chair to preside over the General Assembly, the Assembly shall nominate and appoint, by 2/3 vote, a “Chair Pro Tempore” who shall preside in the absence of both the National Chair and National Vice-Chair.
5. The proceedings of the General Assembly shall be closed to the general public with the exception of the following authorized attendees:

	1. Chapter delegates, Chapter proxies, and alternate delegates;
	2. Members of the NBLSA National Board;
	3. Past NBLSA National Chairs;
	4. Past NBLSA Officers and Executives;
	5. Current and past NBLSA Advisors
	6. Members of the Board of Directors of BLSA Canada;
	7. Any other person authorized by the National Chair, or their authorized designee.

Use of Chapter Proxies

1. An active chapter unable to attend the meeting of the General Assembly shall have the right to assign, by proxy, its voting power on policy, procedural, and electoral matters to an attending chapter, provided the following requirements are met of the chapters receiving and assigning the proxy:
	1. The chapters must be active chapters member of NBLSA, located within the same Region;
	2. The chapter receiving the proxy must, itself, have voting delegates registered for the National Convention and in attendance at the plenary session of the General Assembly;
	3. The chapter assigning the voting power by proxy must complete any necessary written forms and submit such forms in a manner prescribed by NBLSA policy; and,
2. The chapter receiving and exercising the voting power by proxy shall follow all voting instructions provided by the assigning chapter. In the absence of instructions, the receiving chapter must vote in a manner reasonably construed to be in the best interest of the assigning chapter.
3. An attending chapter may only hold a proxy for two (2) other non-attending schools. All proxy forms must be received by the Director of Membership and/or the National Parliamentarian prior to the beginning of each plenary session.
4. The National Chair shall be empowered to permit further proxy forms after the beginning of plenary business.
5. **THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

Quorum and Voting

1. The General Assembly, in order to transact business, must recognize the existence of a quorum, pursuant to Article III, Section D, subsection 4 of the NBLSA Constitution.
2. The presiding officer shall be responsible for establishing the presence of a sufficient quorum, ensuring that enough eligible chapters are in attendance at the plenary session for the transaction of Assembly business. Accordingly, once the business of the plenary session begins, each delegate shall be required to sign in and out of the session, to ensure that quorum is maintained throughout the session.
3. Any delegate may call for quorum by raising a point of order if it is suspected that a quorum does not exist, at which point the presiding officer shall confirm the presence of a quorum prior to resuming Assembly business. The delegate raising the point of order may not interrupt a speaker. The point of order as to the absence of quorum shall not affect prior actions unless upon clear and convincing proof the point of order can be given retroactive effect upon a ruling by the presiding officer, subject to appeal. The National Secretary and National Director of Membership shall keep a record of the registered chapters in attendance at each plenary meeting of the National General Assembly.
4. An act of the General Assembly, where not otherwise provided, shall be deemed passed upon gaining a majority of available votes in the affirmative. Vote calculations, per chapter delegation, shall be ascribed as provided by Article III, Section B of the NBLSA Constitution. This rule shall be subject to the following exceptions:

	1. Votes on legislation and procedural motions, i.e., motions on parliamentary motions or non-substantive questions, as provided by *Robert’s Rules of Order*, shall utilize the vote threshold noted in the guidelines and each chapter shall receive one vote.
	2. Amendments to the NBLSA Constitution and/or Bylaws shall require a two-thirds vote of the National General Assembly.
	3. Suspensions of the Standing Rules shall require a two-thirds vote of the National General Assembly.
	4. Abstentions shall not be allowed on procedural motions.
5. Votes may be taken by voice vote, by show of voting placard, or by formal roll call of the chapter delegations. A vote by unanimous consent may be requested by the maker of a particular motion and entertained by the presiding officer, where applicable.
6. In the event that the presiding officer cannot reasonably ascertain the outcome of a vote by acclimation or by show of voting placards, the presiding officer shall commence a formal roll call vote on the measure, which shall ask of their vote in the affirmative/negative/abstention and the number of available votes being used.

Speaking Rights and Decorum

1. The National General Assembly shall have power to control the speaking rights, time, or frequency of any attendee to the plenary meetings. The presiding officer and parliamentarian, in the interest of efficiency and the prudent conduct of plenary business, are empowered to recommend motions for limitations/extensions of speaking rights, time, or frequency.
2. Rights to speak in debate, make point/motions, requests, and vote are granted to duly registered Chapter delegates and authorized proxies who are present during session.
3. The authorized attendees that are granted authority to seek recognition and speak in debate on questions pending before the Assembly and raise points of information include the Founder, NBLSA advisors, past national officers, current national officers and executives, and other pre-determined guests.
4. Delegates and authorized attendees seeking to speak on a question pending before the Assembly must first be recognized and assigned the floor by the presiding officer before speaking unless an intervening point obviates such recognition or as permitted by *Roberts Rules of Order*. Upon recognition, the speaker shall state their name and law school or in the case of alumni, their name and prior authorized position. This rule may not be suspended.
5. When seeking the floor, the presiding officer shall be addressed as “Mister National Chair.” The presiding officer shall then acknowledge the speaker and may grant them the floor. The speaker shall begin each speaking opportunity with their name and the name of the school whose chapter they represent.
6. At no time shall any delegate or authorized attendee reference any member or other person by name. Delegates and authorized attendees are to refer to other speakers or plenary attendees in the third-person or by their official title where applicable, e.g., “the delegate from XYZ Law School,” “the previous speaker,” or “Mr. National Chair.”
7. At no time shall a member be allowed to use slanderous, unprofessional, or otherwise offensive language towards delegates and/or authorized attendees of the National General Assembly, the presiding officer, or authorized members of the public during speaking in plenary sessions. The presiding officer shall have sufficient authority to enforce this rule and call delegates/authorized speakers to order, as may be found in *Robert’s Rules of Order.* Unruly delegates, members, or guests may be asked to leave by the Presiding Officer.
8. If in the opinion of the presiding officer or a delegate, an attendee of a plenary session is disruptive to the proper conduct of the business before the General Assembly and, upon reasonable admonition by the presiding officer, the offending attendee fails to refrain from such actions or maintain proper decorum, the presiding officer may excuse the delegate or attendee from the plenary session. The order from the Chair shall revoke the rights of the attendee to attend the remainder of the plenary session in which the order was made.
9. **DEBATE, DISCUSSION, & MISCELLANEOUS**

Rules for Debate/Discussion

1. For each applicable legislative/policymaking item, e.g., resolutions, amendments to NBLSA governing documents, or main motions, there shall be a presentation by the sponsor or author of the item, a period of questions, and a period of debate. The General Assembly may place restrictions or dispense with these items at its discretion, by passing motions to suspend the rules. For reports, officer presentations, or non-transactional announcements or addresses, the presiding officer may open the floor for questions following the presentation.
2. Each presentation of legislative/policymaking item and periods of questioning shall be set to a default length of five (5) minutes. The Assembly may choose to limit, extend, or otherwise adjust the length of the presentation or questioning by motion, insofar as the ability to adequately present the item under consideration is not unreasonably infringed.
3. For all periods of debate attached to a legislative/policymaking item requiring National General Assembly consideration, a default time limit of ten (10) minutes shall be allotted to each respective point in the item’s consideration. The Assembly may choose to limit, extend, or otherwise adjust the length of either the debate or the questioning sections by motion, insofar as the ability to adequately present the item under consideration is not unreasonably infringed.
4. Amendments to pending legislation must be properly moved and submitted to the National Secretary in writing prior to a vote on the amendment.
5. For any question pending before the body, each speaker may raise 2 two-minute speeches for each question before the body; however, the Assembly may extend, further limit, or suspend regulations on the frequency and/or length of points of debate by motion. In recognizing members for debate, the presiding officer shall give preference to persons having not spoken on the question before the Assembly prior to returning to previous speakers.
6. All debate, points of information, i.e. inquiries of a non-parliamentary nature, and other points/motions to amend shall be germane to the question or legislative item pending before the body, unless the point or statement raised inherently obviates such a requirement. In addition, General Assembly delegates shall not be empowered to make motions that are found to be dilatory, repetitive, or to otherwise prevent the orderly and prudent conduct of plenary business, in explicit nature or implicit intent. The presiding officer shall have power to rule out of order debate, questions, points, motions and other speech not in compliance with this provision and those rules adopted by the Assembly or provided by *Robert’s Rules of Order*.
7. A Motion to extend time for debate shall not exceed 20 minutes. No more than 2 motions to extend time will be allowed per discussion.
8. The Constitution and Bylaws Committee as proponents of legislative amendments shall be empowered to make legislative amendments (“manager’s amendment”) to their own legislation to which they have agreed in advance. The Constitution and Bylaws Committee shall be empowered to make amendments to its own resolutions and propose such amendments on the floor.

Procedures Governing Elections

1. Elections shall be governed by the electoral rules of the NBLSA Constitution, NBLSA Bylaws, the National Elections Committee, and by National Election policies passed by the National Board. The presiding officer shall strictly conduct the election, as with all plenary business, in a fair and impartial manner.
2. Chapters shall be eligible to receive a ballot for elections so long as they have recorded attendance for 75% of all plenary sessions held during the National Convention. This rule shall extend to any chapter proxy held by the same chapter.
3. For any electoral process providing opportunities for questioning of candidates prior to the transmittal of ballots, delegates, proxies, alumni, current national board members, past national board members and national advisors may pose questions, where provided in the rules. In all other events during the electoral process where the floor is open for nominations, debate, or other speech on business, speaking rights shall be limited to chapter delegates/proxies and the officers of the Assembly, i.e., the presiding officer, the National Secretary, the Parliamentarian, and where applicable, the National Director of Membership and the chair of the National Elections Committee.
4. During voting and the submission of ballots, the presiding officer shall be empowered to excuse all authorized plenary attendees who are not engaged in the business of conducting the election, until such time as the election has concluded. All business, debate, and conversation shall be ceased until such time as ballots have been submitted.

Chair’s Privilege

1. The Chair’s Privilege shall be defined as the general power of the National Chair to grant speaking rights to a person or group, not otherwise able to speak, for a specific purpose. The Privilege may not be used to grant unfettered speaking rights to any person.
2. The Privilege shall also describe a time limit during the conduction of elections, not longer than twenty minutes in length, in which only the current or any former National Chair shall be permitted to pose questions to the candidate(s) for the office of National Chair without intervention from any other delegate or authorized attendee. During this time frame, the National Chair may extend said privilege to any authorized attendee present in the room, except as curtailed by the General Assembly by motion.

Miscellaneous

1. These rules shall neither remove nor supplant the authority or responsibilities of the National Chair, National Parliamentarian, or National Secretary as may be granted by the NBLSA Constitution, NBLSA Bylaws, *Robert’s Rules of Order*, NBLSA custom, or other NBLSA policy.
2. Should a delegate have a question about procedure during the session, said delegate may make a parliamentary inquiry directed to the National Chair. The National Chair may consult the governing documents and/or *Roberts Rules of Order*, consult with or direct the National Parliamentarian to respond, or some combination thereof.
3. Delegates, members, or guests having questions or concerns about plenary when not currently in session (prior to or after the session) may direct the same directly to the National Parliamentarian.
4. Delegates and members shall at all times during the plenary session comport themselves in accordance with the NBLSA Code of Conduct.
1. For the purposes of the Convention, the “General Assembly” refers to delegates and proxies from participating chapters at the plenary sessions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)