

Constitution of the National Association of Law Students with Disabilities

Ratified 9/15/07

Mission Statement: The National Association of Law Students with Disabilities is a coalition of law students dedicated to mentorship; disability advocacy; and the achievement of equal access, inclusion, diversity, and non-discrimination, in legal education and in the legal profession.

Article I: Name of Organization

The name of this organization is The National Association of Law Students with Disabilities (NALSWD).

Article II: Purpose

The purpose of NALSWD is to:

- A. promote the full participation and inclusion of people with disabilities in legal education, in the areas of admissions, curriculum and academic achievement, student activities, and professional socialization and training;
- B. foster mentorship between pre-law students with disabilities, law students with disabilities, and attorneys with disabilities;
- C. identify and advance the interests and disability-access needs of law students with disabilities in academic, social, political, and economic arenas;
- D. support and advocate for professional development and opportunities available to law students and lawyers with disabilities;
- E. increase the representation of persons with disabilities in the judiciary and the legislature;
- F. promote commitment to the use of law to advance the legal and social status of persons with disabilities, and to combat structural inequities which harm people with disabilities;
- G. support and foster the creation of disability cultures and pride in legal arenas;
- H. build understanding and alliances between persons with disabilities across a range of identities, including those based on disability, socio-economic status, gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, citizenship status, nationality, and sexuality;
- I. network with and support other organizations advocating for social justice and for the interests of under-represented and marginalized groups in legal education and professions; and
- J. do all things necessary and appropriate to achieve the purposes listed herein.

Article III: Administration

Section 1: Officers

The officers of NALSWD shall be designated as the Executive Board and shall be composed of the following members: President, Vice President, Chief Information Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Conference Director, and Advisory Board Chair (non-voting). Each officer shall serve a term of one (1) year, beginning at the announcement of election results at the NALSWD Annual Conference, described in Article V Section 2, and ending at the announcement of election results at the next Annual Conference.

Section 2: Powers of the Executive Board

The Executive Board shall have general power to administer any and all programs, business projects, and matters pertaining to or concerning NALSWD.

The Executive Board shall have the power to create such staff positions and such committees as it deems necessary to carry out the business of NALSWD. Such staff persons and committee chair shall be appointed by the President and subject to the approval of the Executive Board.

Any decision of the Executive Board shall be made at a meeting that has been announced on the Executive Board listserv and in which three (3) or more officers are in attendance. This meeting may be conducted through an internet forum or tele-forum, so long as the means is accessible to all potential participants who have expressed interest.

Pursuant to Article X of this Constitution, the Executive Board is empowered to discipline any officer who is negligent in the discharge of his or her duties to NALSWD.

Section 3: Executive Board Approval

Executive Board approval is defined as an affirmative simple majority vote by the Executive Board. Abstentions are counted as negative votes for the purposes of determining a simple majority. A simple majority, used anywhere in this Constitution, means more than one-half (1/2) of the votes cast.

Section 4: Officer Responsibilities

The President shall:

- A. designate a regular monthly meeting time of the Executive Board;
- B. preside at each meeting of the Executive Board;
- C. manage staffing issues;
- D. ensure that the Membership, Outreach, and Organizational Sustainability Committee meets once each month;
- E. use multiple communication methods to communicate with the general membership;

- F. send a monthly newsletter to general membership;
- G. network with and seek advice from individuals and organizations who are or might become NALSWD allies;
- H. be willing to travel on behalf of NALSWD;
- I. stay informed of issues relating to the NALSWD mission and issues for future advocacy campaigns;
- J. build networks for future advocacy campaigns, pair resources that already exist within the network, and stay up to date on who participates in the mentorship network;
- K. serve as the Advocacy Committee Chair, as described in Article VI Section 2A; and
- L. execute other duties as assigned.

The Vice President shall:

- A. ensure that NALSWD has correct contact info for all members, as described in Article IV Sections 1 and 2, and that the information is posted in a format that is accessible for everyone;
- B. ensure that the Advocacy, Business and Fundraising, and Website and Communications Committees meet at least once each month;
- C. fill in for the President when the President is unable to fulfill his or her duties;
- D. stay in close communication with officers and members about school, work, and vacation schedules;
- E. serve as Membership, Outreach, and Organizational Sustainability Chair; and
- F. execute other duties as assigned.

The Chief Information Officer shall:

- A. set up and maintain a web-based communication forum, such as a google group, for each committee;
- B. accurately take minutes of all Executive Board meetings and post these minutes on the NALSWD website no later than seventy-hours (72) after the meeting;
- C. receive minutes of each committee meeting from each Committee Chair and post these minutes to the NALSWD website;
- D. serve as the Chair of the Website and Communications Committee;
- E. disseminate information about NALSWD activities to members as necessary; and
- F. execute other duties as assigned.

The Chief Financial Officer shall:

- A. maintain and keep accurate records of all incoming donations, dues, and other monies;
- B. manage all correspondence related to procuring, building, and maintaining relationships with monetary sources;
- C. actively apply for grants to fund NALSWD activities;
- D. make a final financial report between administrations, described in Article XI Section 2;
- E. make a financial report at the Annual conference, as described in Article XI Section 3;
- F. serve as the Chair of the Business and Fundraising Committee; and
- G. execute other duties as assigned.

The Conference Director shall:

- A. identify a date and location of the next NALSWD Annual Conference;
- B. create a conference planning committee no later than six (6) months prior to the conference;
- C. plan for all aspects of the conference which include but are not limited to:
 - a. housing;
 - b. transportation;
 - c. accommodations, both for conference sessions and for lodging, for example, CART, ASL, alternative format of conference materials;
 - d. meals;
 - e. reception;
 - f. working closely with the Chief Financial Officer to secure funding;
 - g. collaborate with Impact Career Fair personnel;
 - h. secure a conference facilitator;
 - i. plan the conference content and schedule; and
 - j. identify and invite a keynote speaker and other panelists;
- D. publicize the NALSWD Annual Conference to law schools;
- E. appoint a Constitutional Caucus Director from the NALSWD general membership who shall:
 - a. maintain an email account for NALSWD Constitution business;
 - b. disseminate a copy of NALSWD's Constitution no later than two (2) weeks before the annual conference;
 - c. solicit suggestions for amendments and compile any proposed amendments received;
 - d. present at the NALSWD Annual Conference proposed amendments as have been refined by the Constitutional Caucus for a vote by the general membership; and
 - e. execute other duties as assigned.
- F. appoint from the general membership of NALSWD an Elections Director to oversee the electoral process pursuant to Article VIII; and
- G. execute other duties as assigned.

The Advisory Board Chair shall:

- A. coordinate a national mentorship network; and
- B. serve as a non-voting member of the Executive Board.

Section 5: Resignation of Officer or Committee Chair

- A. Any officer or committee chair may resign at any time. Resignation must be submitted by email to the Executive Board at least two (2) weeks prior to the effective date of resignation.
- B. When an officer or committee chair resigns, the President shall appoint a replacement from the general membership. If the President resigns, the Vice President shall succeed the President and then appoint a replacement for the Vice President position. If the former Vice President appoints an individual who is already a member of the Executive

Board to the vacant Vice President position, the former Vice President shall fill any and all officer positions by appointing officers until all positions are filled.

Article IV: Membership

Section 1: General membership

General membership shall consist of matriculated law students with disabilities, or individuals who, because of a medical or disability leave from legal education, intend to return to legal education. General members are committed to the purposes of NALSWD as stated in Article II of this Constitution. General members are the only voting members of NALSWD.

Section 2: Affiliate membership

- A. Associate Membership: Associate membership in NALSWD is limited to law graduates, designated organizations, or individuals that engage in one or more primary activities that promote the purposes of NALSWD and demonstrate some awareness of disability rights movements and advancing the rights of persons with disabilities.
- B. Honorary Membership: Honorary membership may be extended to any person nominated by the general membership and approved by a simple majority vote of the Executive Board.
- C. Pre-Law Division: NALSWD shall include a pre-law division that will act as a liaison between prospective law students and general members. It will also enable the affiliation and input of prospective law students on issues related to disability accommodations and access in admissions and recruitment.

Section 3: Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity Clause

NALSWD will not discriminate against an individual or group on the basis of disability, socio-economic status, gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion, citizenship status, nationality, or sexuality. Further, NALSWD will endeavor to promote diverse participation and access across demographics, inclusive of disability, socio-economic status, gender, race and ethnicity, age, religion, citizenship status, nationality, or sexuality.

Section 4: Rights of Membership

Only general members in good standing shall have the right to hold any office, other than the Advisory Board, or the right to vote in elections

Section 5: The primary purpose of NALSWD is to build and strengthen the national organization.

Article V: Meetings

Section 1: Executive Board Meetings

- A. In addition to the NALSWD Annual Conference, the Executive Board must conduct a minimum of twelve (12) board meetings each year.
- B. Each incoming Executive Board, before the NALSWD Annual Conference is adjourned, must establish the date and time for the first regular board meeting, which shall be held no later than ten (10) days after the last day of the Annual Conference. At the first regular board meeting, the President shall determine the schedule for the remaining board meetings, subject to the Board's approval.
- C. All officers and committee chairs are required to attend, or send a representative to, every Executive Board meeting. Officers or committee chairs who do not attend and do not send a representative must show good cause for their absence. Good cause will be determined by a simple majority vote of the Executive Board. Where the Executive Board finds an officer or committee chair was absent without good cause, the Executive Board, by a simple majority vote, may impose appropriate disciplinary measures, up to and including expulsion from the Executive Board.
- D. Minutes of all Executive Board meetings will be available within seventy-two (72) hours after each meeting and will be posted on the NALSWD website.

Section 2: NALSWD Annual Conference

The Executive Board shall convene a meeting near the beginning of each school year, which shall be known as the NALSWD Annual Conference. The NALSWD Annual Conference must not convene during the specified time allocated for the Fall Multi-State Professional Responsibility Exam.

Article VI: Committees

Section 1: NALSWD Committees

- A. NALSWD shall support at least the following four (4) committees at all times: Advocacy Committee; Membership, Outreach, and Organizational Sustainability Committee; Website and Communications Committee; and Business and Fundraising Committee.
- B. Each committee shall be chaired by an officer as outlined in Article III.
- C. Committee Chairs shall appoint committee members from the membership.
- D. The Executive Board may appoint additional committees as necessary.

Section 2: Committee Descriptions

- A. The Advocacy Committee shall:
 - a. identify an advocacy issue related to NALSWD's mission for NALSWD to pursue;
 - b. collect resources and develop strategies to address the selected advocacy issue;

- c. launch the determined advocacy campaign;
 - d. give status updates on progress toward the advocacy campaign to enable members to become involved in the advocacy efforts at the monthly meetings of the Executive Board; and
 - e. execute other duties as assigned.
- B. The Membership, Outreach, and Organizational Sustainability Committee shall:
 - a. maintain a current database of members and keep it posted online in an accessible format;
 - b. work closely with the advisory board and national network of mentors;
 - c. foster pre-law and 1L support by creating and maintaining a listserv for interested individuals;
 - d. develop and implement a membership drive; and
 - e. execute other duties as assigned.
- C. The Website and Communications Committee shall:
 - a. create and disseminate public relations materials on behalf of NALSWD;
 - b. keep NALSWD's website content updated by:
 - c. working closely with a web developer to maintain accessibility of new website features;
 - d. maintaining a good working relationship between NALSWD and its web developer; and
 - e. troubleshooting website problems as they arise, receiving feedback and communicating it to the web developer or addressing the issue themselves; and
 - f. execute other duties as assigned.
- D. The Business and Fundraising Committee shall:
 - a. lead efforts to raise funds through dues, building relationships with law firms, and building relationships within the disability community;
 - b. develop and update a prospectus to situate NALSWD to compete for grants;
 - c. oversee the process of securing and maintaining NALSWD's corporate status; and
 - d. execute other duties as assigned.

Article VII: Voting

The general membership of NALSWD may adopt resolutions upon a simple majority vote.

Article VIII: Election of Officers

Section 1: Notice of annual election

The Elections Director, as appointed by the Conference Director, shall give timely notice of the date, time, and location of the annual election meeting, which should occur at the NALSWD Annual Conference. The Elections Director shall also give notice of the process by which members may vote by absentee ballot.

Section 2: Administration of elections

The Elections Director shall administer the nomination and election processes of Executive Board officers, unless he or she is running for an office or cannot perform the duties of moderating the election. If the Elections Director is running for an office, another officer of the Executive Board shall administer the election process upon a simple majority vote of the Executive Board as to who shall oversee and administer the election process.

Section 3: Declaring candidacy

Each candidate for office is required to complete a Candidate Application Form before he or she can participate in the electoral process. It is the responsibility of each candidate to request the candidate application form from the Elections Director, prior to declaring his or her candidacy. The Elections Director shall provide all necessary accommodations to assist prospective candidates in completing the application, whenever a candidate requests accommodations.

Section 4: Voting rules and procedures

- A. Executive Board officer positions will be filled by a simple majority vote of eligible members who vote at the Annual Conference or who vote in the election by absentee ballot. The number of voting members shall be established before voting begins.
- B. Voting members participating in the conference shall elect a President, Vice President, Chief Information Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and Conference Director.
- C. The names of the candidates for office shall be clearly announced at the Annual Conference so that these names are available to all participating members.
- D. Each candidate shall deliver a speech stating why he or she should be elected. If a candidate requires a reasonable accommodation to deliver his or her speech, the candidate must request the accommodation as soon as possible prior to the election; the Elections Director shall ensure that the accommodation is provided.
- E. At the conclusion of the candidates' speeches, voting shall take place. Votes shall be cast in the most accessible way possible.
- F. For voting members who are unable to attend the conference, absentee voting shall take place through the most technologically feasible means.
- G. A simple majority of the votes is required to attain election to each office. Votes will be compiled from both conference and absentee voting before election results are announced.
- H. In the event of a tie, a run-off election will take place between the candidates who received the most votes. The candidate with the most votes at the end of the run-off election will win the office for which he or she is running.

Section 5: Announcement of election results

After all votes are counted, the Elections Director shall announce election results at a designated time at the Annual Conference.

Section 6: Duties of new officers

- A. After the announcement of voting results, the new officers shall be sworn in by reciting the oath of office, to be administered by the Conference Director or other designated individual.
- B. Oath of office: I have read and understand my officer and committee chair responsibilities as detailed in the NALSWD Constitution, and I will execute all of these responsibilities to the best of my ability. In doing so, I will regularly read and respond to voicemail and email communications regarding NALSWD business; communicate early and often to the Executive Board regarding any challenges I face in fulfilling my duties; attend NALSWD meetings; and do all other things necessary and appropriate to uphold, preserve, and advance NALSWD. I understand the disciplinary procedures in place should I fail to fulfill my duties as a NALSWD officer and committee chair.

Article IX: Advisory Board

The Executive Board shall assemble an Advisory Board of past student leaders and knowledgeable professionals to provide it with expertise, guidance and support. The Executive Board shall appoint an Advisory Board member to serve as Chair of the Advisory Board. The Advisory Board shall confer quarterly, and the Chair of the Advisory Board shall be included in Executive Board meetings. The Advisory Board shall be invited to attend and participate in the NALSWD Annual Conference.

Article X: Disciplinary Proceedings

Section 1: Authority

NALSWD is empowered to make and enforce its own rules and to require that its members and officers refrain from conduct injurious to NALSWD or its purposes. The Executive Board will have the power to censure its members.

Section 2: Board Removal

- A. If any officer or committee chair misses more than two (2) consecutive meetings or goes for two (2) weeks or longer without responding to communication regarding the organization, the Executive Board may confer and by simple majority vote to appoint a replacement. This conference may happen over email, phone, or any other means of communication that is accessible to all the members of the Executive Board.
- B. An Executive Board member may be censured, expelled, suspended, or otherwise removed from office after due process and by an affirmative vote of no less than two-thirds (2/3) of the Executive Board.
- C. Notice of disciplinary action shall be given to the Executive Board member in writing.

Section 3: Review of disciplinary measures

All disciplinary measures must be reported by the Board to the general membership at the NALSWD Annual Conference. Disciplinary measures are subject to review by the general membership.

Article XI: Financial Affairs

Section 1: Dues

Annual membership dues may be assessed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Executive Board. The Executive Board will determine the amount of dues, and the Chief Financial Officer shall collect dues, should they be assessed.

Section 2: Final financial reports between administrations

A final full disclosure of all funds received and disbursed within any given fiscal year, including those received and disbursed at the Annual Conference, must be disseminated by Chief Financial Officer to the newly elected Executive Board no later than one (1) month after the Annual Conference.

Section 3: Financial report for Annual Conference and annual audit

A financial report of money in the NALSWD treasury or in any NALSWD account must be made by the Chief Financial Officer to the general members at the Annual Conference. The financial records of NALSWD must be submitted annually to a certified public accountant for audit immediately after the first regularly scheduled Executive Board meeting. This inspection report shall be completed within the first sixty (60) days of the new fiscal year.

Article XII: Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of NALSWD shall extend from September 1 of the present year to August 31 of the following year.

Article XIII: Parliamentary Authority

NALSWD is empowered to establish its rules of order through the adoption of some form of parliamentary authority.

Article XIV: Amendments

Any general member may propose an amendment to this Constitution in writing to the Constitutional Caucus Director for review. Valid amendment proposals must be clearly stated and justified.

Article XV: Ratification

Section 1: Constitution effective

The Constitution of NALSWD becomes effective immediately upon ratification. Ratification will occur upon two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the general members present or voting absentee at the NALSWD national meeting designated as the ratification meeting.

Section 2: Amendments effective

Any amendment shall become effective upon a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of the general members present or voting absentee at the NALSWD Annual Conference, unless a later effective date is designated in the proposed amendment.