**Constitution Revisions: The 3 W’s**

When revising your chapter constitution there are a couple of things that ought to be considered in regards to the revisions in mind: what are we revising, why are we revising it, and when will it take effect?

First we have what: what is the concern with the current article/policy/bylaw/etc.? If you have found that your chapter constitution doesn’t match with the National constitution, then naturally that is an easy fix, and usually pertains to wording. Other examples of things that may require addition or revision could be something that your chapter has always done that just isn’t in your constitution or may be worded strangely. For example, say your ritual dress code is Sunday best, but in your constitution it says “dress nicely;” in this kind of situation, consider changing the words to actually say “Sunday best,” or perhaps adding some clarification to what you expect to be seeing people wear. More often than not, many revisions are explanations of current procedures or wording changes.

However, there are some times we do experience changes that can cause a bit more stress in terms of our constitutions, which leads to our next point: why are we revising our constitution? Hopefully figuring out what you’re changing can answer this, but it never hurts to have a solid reason that you can explain the revision with. Perhaps your current system of recording service hours/points (should you have a chapter where you are required to keep track, as opposed to an honor system) isn’t working for your chapter any more, i.e. you use “one service point” for every one hour of service, but then you encounter confusion and frustration when a service project or activity doesn’t total an hour. In this kind of situation, it may be necessary to employ a “half point” for anything of a half hour or less, and if that doesn’t work, consider switching to minutes and hours to get more precise measures of service.

Knowing that something needs to be changed is an important step, and coming up with a solid substitution/change/addition is half the battle in and of itself. This brings us to our final w: when can this take effect, and when should we be revising? The first thing to know (if you run by Robert’s Rules), is that any constitution revision requires a majority vote of those present and voting, unless the amendment/addition was introduced at a previous meeting, in which case it also falls to a two-thirds (or majority) vote of quorum present. In terms of when it should take effect falls to your chapter: some revisions need to take effect immediately, whereas others may be able to wait until the next semester (perhaps it’s something you just want to have as a trial basis). Some chapter constitutions specify that any revisions passed in a semester cannot (at all) take effect until the next semester, which can limit the amount of revisions a chapter may consider in a year. As for when revisions should be happening, while it is important to have the constitution reflect the needs of your chapter, it is largely more beneficial to not constantly be changing your governing documents. Too many adjustments at one time can cause chaos for the order of your chapter’s activities, and sometimes there are times when constitutional changes are unnecessary in a given semester. One suggestion is to consider having a committee that sits down specifically to look at your constitution (on a weekly basis, every two weeks, etc.) and see if everything is working for your chapter at the time. Sometimes having a group to review your constitution can lessen the stress of your chapter from thinking that things need to change all the time, when more often than not only a couple things may need to be adjusted if at all.

If you find that something in your constitution needs updating or review, then first try to default to what is stated in the national constitution (unless of course it is a more chapter specific matter not covered by that) and go by that until a solution can be reached. Should the national constitution not yield you any results, consider asking another chapter how they handle what you’re having concerns about, or always feel free to contact your District/National Leadership.

**Happy revising!**