



## *Constitution and Standing Rules*

*Carol Kottom ~ Chairman*

The rules of a society, in a majority of cases, may be conveniently divided into these four classes, though in some societies all the rules are found under one of these heads, being called either the constitution, or the by-laws, or the standing rules.

The American Legion Auxiliary Department of Minnesota's governing rules consist of the Constitution and the Standing Rules.

**The Constitution** is the foundation of our organization and contains information that is constant. This includes, but is not limited to, the name, nature, eligibility (\*1), officers and the election procedure, the term of their position and how many consecutive terms they may serve. Also, the timeliness of the business meetings, who has voting rights and the required quorum to conduct business. The procedure for changing the Constitution is stated. This document should be reviewed yearly but should not need to be changed frequently.

The Department, District and Unit Constitutions are available on the web site [www.mnala.org](http://www.mnala.org). Changes to those documents are presented at the Department Convention by resolution. Your Unit and District should review these documents yearly.

*\*1) The American Legion, a congressionally chartered veterans service organization, determines membership eligibility for the American Legion Auxiliary, through their bylaws. This is because The American Legion created the ALA through their bylaws. ALA membership eligibility has never been under the control of the ALA, it has always been under the control of TAL.*

**Standing Rules:** The rules contain the governing details of the organization. It includes the divisions or sections of the Department and who qualifies to become a member; the officers and their duties and requirements. The annual convention and voting rights, trophies and awards, and necessary committees are also stated. The purpose of the Fall Conference and the selection of delegates to the National Convention are defined.

**Parliamentary authority** of the Auxiliary is Robert's Rules of Order newly revised and is stated as such in the standing rules. The revenue of the Department and the authorized expenditures are detailed. There is also a section of general rules. The final rule defines how to make changes to the standing rules.

**Resolutions** are formally written motions. They are used to propose changes to the Constitution and/or Standing Rules. Included in a resolution should be at least one "whereas", or reason, statement and must have at least one "resolved", or proposed, statement.

Most units spend time during their first meeting following the Department Convention reviewing the governing documents and the budgets. **This includes the District and Unit standing rules.**

Do you have to abide by your standing rules? In general, yes you do. When there are by-laws, they may provide for a specific rule to be suspended and how to do that. A motion to suspend the rule(s) generally can be adopted with a two-thirds majority and in many cases suspension of the rules may take place with a unanimous vote. Suspensions are for that session only. When by-laws do not exist, this should be covered in your standing rules.

**Resources:** [ALAforveterans.org website](http://ALAforveterans.org) has many items available that can be downloaded. Included, but not limited to, are the following:

- National Constitution & By-Laws
- Basic Parliamentarian Procedure
- Unit Guide Book
- Department Operations Guide
- Preamble to the Constitution

<http://emblem.legion.org> = National Emblem Sales, also has many of the Auxiliary reference handouts/books for sale.

Have a fun year

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