

Constitution
And By-Laws
Of the
Washington Literary Society
And Debating Union

At the University of Virginia



Founded 1831

Constitution Revised

1845 1903

1867 1980

1881 1992

1898 1994

2000 2002

2005

- 16. Notice of Elections
- 17. Presentations
- 18. Adjournment

Section 2: Presentations

The presentations shall include literary presentations and debate as provided for in Article VI, Section 1.

Article V

Miscellaneous

Section 1: Presidential Address

The President shall have the privilege of addressing the Society at any time after having called the Vice-President or a member to the chair.

Section 2: Overriding a Decision of the Chair

An appeal from the decision of the President, in order to be valid, must be sustained by 2/3 of voters.

Section 3: Early Adjournment

To adjourn the Society before the regular business has been transacted shall require a vote of two-thirds of the members present; and no member who has moved to adjourn shall be allowed to make similar motion during the same evening.

Section 4: Invalid Excuses

Ignorance of the Constitution and Bylaws shall not be regarded as an excuse for any offense.

Section 5: Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Society shall begin on June 1 and shall end on May 31.

Article VI

Amendments and Suspension

All propositions to amend or add to these Bylaws shall be stated in writing, laid on the table at least one week, and shall require a vote of two thirds of active members present and eligible. No such member may abstain from such a vote. The Society, by a majority vote of the members present, may suspend any article or section of an article from the Bylaws for one evening.

Constitution of the Washington Literary Society and Debating Union

Article 1

Membership

Section 1: Membership Criteria

Any present or past student of the University of Virginia may become a member of this Society. The Society shall not discriminate based on age, citizenship, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, sexual orientation, or status as a disabled, Vietnam, or other veteran.

Section 2: Active Members

Members must pay dues into the treasury each semester, in an amount fixed by resolution of the Society, if they are to be considered active. If dues are not paid within one month of the beginning of the semester, the delinquent shall be notified by the treasurer; if not paid within two weeks of said notification, the delinquent shall be considered inactive.

Section 3: Provisional Members

Individuals may become provisional members of the Society by signing the membership roll. A provisional member who completes at least one scheduled literary presentation, one scheduled debate, and who performs at least one act of service for the Society in a semester, may be inducted into the Society at the end of the semester, provided that he has fulfilled all other requirements for active membership, and that he has attended 2/3 of the meetings in the semester.

Section 4: Honorary Members

Any individual whom the Society deems worthy of its courtesy may be elected an honorary member by a two-thirds vote of the members present at a regular meeting.

Section 5: Resumption of Active Status

Any inactive member of this Society may reconstitute himself an active member, unless he has resigned or been expelled from the Society, by paying any dues owed for the semester.

Section 6: Resignation of Membership

Whenever any member wishes to resign, he shall make known his desire to the Secretary in writing, or to the Society via means of a general announcement, stating his reasons. Upon the receipt of the letter, or general announcement to the Society he may be permitted to withdraw.

Section 7: Expulsion of a Member

Any member guilty of gross misconduct, or violation of the oath of membership, may be expelled from the Society by a 4/5 vote of the active membership of the Society. The charges must be made in writing to the Secretary one week before the vote can be taken. The Secretary must make all reasonable efforts to notify any member of the charges against him in a timely manner.

Section 8: Induction

The induction ceremony shall occur on the next-to-last meeting of each semester. The induction ceremony shall be as follows: The President and members of the Society shall rise, the Sergeant-at-Arms shall escort the members-elect to the rostrum, the Secretary shall read the preamble, and the President shall administer the obligation, after which the provisional members shall sign the Constitution. No induction is necessary for honorary members.

Article II

Officers And Their Election

Section 1: Elected Officers

The elected officers of the Society shall consist of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Reporter, and Sergeant-at-Arms.

Section 2: Term of Office

The term of office for all officers, save the Treasurer, is one semester. The term of office for the Treasurer is one year.

Section 3: Rules of Election

All officers mentioned in section one of this article shall be elected by ballot, provided there be more than one candidate. A majority of votes cast shall be necessary for election. If after the first ballot there be no election, a vote shall be taken on the three candidates receiving the highest number of votes; and if the second ballot be indecisive, the candidate receiving the lowest number of votes shall be dropped, and the contest shall be between the two remaining

5. Presentation of a humorous anecdote which is met with silence or which is considered totally devoid of humor by 4/5 of the membership.

Section 7: Further Penalization

If a fine is not paid within three weeks after imposition and no excuse is rendered therefore, the delinquent shall be notified thereof by the Treasurer, and then if not paid within one week after such notification, the fine shall be doubled, and thereafter ten cents per week shall be added until the fine is paid; if such fine is not paid within one month after such notification the delinquent shall be suspended and if such fine is not paid in one month he shall be suspended permanently and will stand expelled.

Article III

Rules Governing the Exercises

Section 1: Rules of Order

The rules of Parliamentary Practice as set forth in the Robert's Rules of Order shall govern this Society in all cases in which they are not inconsistent with the Constitution and Bylaws.

Section 2: Floor Speeches

No debater shall be invited to deliver a floor speech during his own debate.

Article IV

Order of Business

Section 1: Order of Business

1. Call to order
2. Recitation of the Motto
3. Special events and contests
4. Roll Call
5. Readings and action on the fines of the previous meeting
6. Reading and adoption of minutes of the preceding meeting
7. Special announcements
8. Announcement of program for current and next meeting
9. Induction of provisional members into active membership
10. Election and Installation of officers
11. Inaugural address of the President
12. Treasurer's report
13. Report of committees
14. Unfinished business
15. New business

Bylaws

Article I

Meetings

Section 1: Regular Meetings

The Society shall meet each Thursday evening during the semester promptly at 8 o'clock.

Section 2: Other Meetings

Other official meetings may be convened by the President, after public notice is given.

Article II

Penalties

Section 1: Penalties of the Society

The penalties imposed by this Society shall consist of fines, suspensions, and expulsions. Fines may be assessed by the President as per Article III, Section 2.

Section 2: Failure to Perform as Scheduled

A member who fails to deliver an essay or an oration, or to deliver an exposition, or to debate when regularly appointed, shall be fined fifty cents.

Section 3: Dereliction of Duty

Any officer or member of a committee who fails to perform his official duty shall be fined no less than twenty-five cents nor more than five dollars.

Section 4: Criminal Offense

Any member found guilty of a misdemeanor shall be fined twenty-five cents.

Section 5: Indecent Language or Action

Indecent, personal, or scurrilous language or action shall be punished by a fine of one dollar.

Section 6: Miscellaneous Fines

All fines in this section shall not be over twenty-five cents nor less than ten cents.

1. Interrupting the proceedings by loud conversation.
2. Persistence in resolutions, motion and remarks ruled out of order.
3. Speaking without rising and respectfully addressing the Chair.
4. Leaving or entering the hall while a member is speaking.

candidates. All other officers not named in section one of this article shall be appointed by the President.

Section 4: Time of Election

The elections shall be held on the last meeting of each semester to select officers for the following semester. In case the election is not completed, it shall be the order of the day at each succeeding regular meeting of the Society until all the officers shall be elected.

Section 5: Entry of Office

The officers shall be installed and enter upon their duties immediately upon election.

Section 6: Oath of Office

The President shall administer to the President-elect the following oath, and the latter shall then in like manner install the other officers:

Oath

Do you solemnly promise to faithfully execute the duties of your office, to uphold the Constitution, and to endeavor, by all honorable means, to promote the welfare of the Society?

Section 7: Eligibility

No member shall be eligible for the same office for more than four successive semesters. Only active members of the Society who are presently students at the University of Virginia may serve as officers. No person shall be eligible to hold more than one elected office in any given semester.

Section 8: Selection of Candidates

Members who wish to declare candidacy for a particular office may submit a memorandum to the President on the night of elections. The President shall also accept nominations for each elected office from the floor immediately before each election. The President shall announce the election for each office in the order specified in section one of this article. The President will yield the floor to each candidate in the reverse order of his nomination.

Section 9: Decorum

Once the President has yielded the floor to the candidate, no member of the house shall interrupt the candidate until he yields the floor. The President shall ask the candidate to yield the floor when his time limit has elapsed. If the President deems that the candidate has strayed from topic of a question or has resumed his speech, or if the candidate persistently ignores or postpones the questions of certain members of the house, the President may interrupt the candidate and ask him to adhere to election decorum.

Section 10: Time Limits

Candidates for the offices of President and Vice President shall limit their speeches to ten minutes. Candidates for other offices shall limit their speeches to five minutes.

Section 11: Question Period

After each candidate has completed speaking, the President shall invite the members of the house to ask him questions. The candidate—who officially has the floor—will choose his questioners. The question-and-answer period shall be closed by motion after debate has been exhausted.

Section 12: Floor Speeches

When all candidates have completed speaking, the President shall open the floor for discussion to all members of the house who are not candidates. No member may speak for more than five minutes. Once the President has yielded the floor, no member of the house may interrupt the speaker until the time limit has expired. After each speech is over, the members of the house may ask the speaker questions.

Section 13: Process of Voting

After the tellers have collected the ballots, the President shall then ask twice, "Honorable members, have you all voted?" After which any member entitled to vote and desirous of so doing must come forward immediately and deposit his ballot. The President shall then declare the balloting closed, and no further ballots shall be recognized.

Section 14: Ballot Counting

The tellers, after collecting the ballots, shall proceed to the Secretary's desk and shall then count the ballots; the Secretary shall make a memorandum of the result and deliver it to the President, who shall announce the result. The Sergeant-at-Arms shall see that no one save the tellers and the Secretary be near the desk when the vote is being canvassed.

Article III

Duties of Officers

Section 1: General Duties

All officers shall show appropriate decorum during meetings and at all times when they are representing the Society.

Section 2: President

The President shall preside at the meetings of the Society. The President shall preserve order and decorum in the hall; shall construe and enforce the Constitution and Bylaws of the Society, shall appoint all committees named in this Constitution, ordered by the Society, or created by himself; shall appoint and have the power to remove all non-elected officers and officers pro-tempore; shall convene all called meetings of the Society hereinafter provided for in the Bylaws; and shall give notice of every election at least one week beforehand. The President shall be an ex-officio member of all committees of the Society.

The President shall impose all fines and read them before the Society at the next meeting. The President shall also decide on all excuses for non-performance of duty.

Section 1: Organizational Purpose

This Society is organized exclusively for an educational purpose.

Section 2: Reasonable Compensation

No part of the earnings of this Society shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the Society shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article XIV, Section 1. No substantial part of the activities of the Society shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Society shall not participate in, or intervene in, (including the publishing and distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidates for public office. Notwithstanding this or any other provision of these articles, the society shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on by any organization exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

Section 3: Asset Distribution

Upon dissolution of the Society, assets shall be distributed for one of more exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by a court of competent jurisdiction of the county in which the principle office of the Society is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations as said court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

Section 2: Membership and Terms

The membership of the Board of Trustees shall consist of six alumni of the Society as well as the Current President of the Society, who shall sit as a regular board member while serving.

Board members shall be chosen by the president of the Society in the spring of each year. Members shall serve three-year terms, with two alumni members being selected each year.

All past presidents of the Society at the end of their terms as President shall automatically become ex-officio members of the Board, entitled to all the regular privileges of Board members, save voting.

Section 3: Operating Rules

The Board of Trustees shall elect from among their membership a Chairman and a Secretary and adopt such rules or bylaws as may be necessary for the fulfillment of their function. The Board shall meet at least once every twelve months. The Secretary shall notify all voting members at least two weeks before the meeting date as assigned by the Chairman. Such notice may be waived by consent of all voting members of the Board.

Article XIII

Succession

Section 1: Procedures

In the case that an elected officer of the Society is no longer an officer due to removal, resignation, or other causes, special election shall be held for the vacated office. The election shall be held at the meeting directly following the announcement of the vacated office. The announcement shall constitute the one-week notice required for elections in Article III, Section 2. Except when otherwise specified in this amendment, elections shall follow the procedures laid out in Article II.

Section 2: Eligibility

In addition to the terms set forth in Article II, Section 7, other elected officers may run for the vacated office on the condition that, should they win the office, they resign their former post. If this happens elections shall continue until all offices are filled.

Section 3: Term Limits

The partial term of office held by both the officer who vacates the office, and the one that fills it, shall count as a full semester toward the four successive semester limit set out in Article II, Section 7.

Article XIV

Tax Exemption

On the night of installation, the President may deliver an inaugural address.

Section 3: Vice-President

In the absence of the President, the Vice President shall occupy the chair and perform all the duties of the presiding officer. The Vice President shall also be responsible for orientation of provisional members, for recording the attendance of provisional members at meetings, and for recording the fulfillment of the provisional requirements. The Vice-President shall be responsible for all presentations including debates and literary readings. The Vice President shall serve as ex-officio chairman of the Topics Committee. The Vice President shall sit to the right of the President.

Section 4: Treasurer

The treasurer shall collect and keep all funds of the Society and disburse the same. The Treasurer shall keep in a book complete and correct records of all accounts of the Society, including, but not limited to, all receipts and disbursements, expenditures, outstanding debts owed to and by the Society, and other documentation pertinent to the financial standing of the Society. Additionally, the Treasurer shall keep a separate account detailing the financial relations and standing of each member with the Society. The treasurer shall be responsible for completing and filing all necessary documentation with the appropriate federal and state agencies regarding the tax and corporate status of the Society. The Treasurer shall make a full report at the last regular meeting of the Society and when requested by the President which report shall be requested by the Secretary. The Treasurer may request the assistance of other members in the performance of his duties.

The Treasurer shall prepare a budget and Student Activity Fund (SAF) request at the request of the President. The budget and the SAF request shall be prepared and presented to the Society before the SAF deadline at the request of the President.

The Treasurer shall collect all unpaid fines in an efficient and timely manner.

The Treasurer shall furnish the Secretary on the night of the Presidential elections a list of the members entitled to vote.

It shall be the duty of the Treasurer and the Secretary to deposit with the Librarian of the University the Society records when they are filled.

The books and records kept by the Treasurer shall be subject to review on a yearly basis, or as determined necessary by the President, by a committee of members appointed by the President. This committee shall include no more than five appointed members and no fewer than three appointed members. The committee shall appoint one of its members to make a full report to eh Society on the last regular meeting of the semester in which the review occurs. This committee shall be created for the sole purpose of reviewing the books and records of the Treasurer and shall be dissolved immediately following the report to the Society.

Section 5: Secretary

The Secretary shall keep a careful record of the proceedings of the Society; shall carefully preserve all the records and documents that may be entrusted to his care; shall transcribe in a book kept for the purpose all amendments and additions to the Constitution and to the Bylaws of the Society; shall call and record the roll at the beginning of every meeting; shall record into the minutes book all fines imposed upon any member of the Society by the President; and shall perform all duties naturally incident to the office of Secretary. The Secretary shall also be the ex-officio chair of the Final Committee. The Secretary shall sit to the left of the President. It shall be the duty of the Treasurer and the Secretary to deposit with the Librarian of the University the Society records when they are filled.

Section 6: Reporter

It shall be the duty of the reporter to handle all publicity for the Society. The Reporter shall serve as ex-officio chair of the Awards and Medals Committee. The Reporter may, with the aid of other members, produce a magazine for the Society, and may do so in conjunction with another organization.

Section 7: Sergeant-at-Arms

The Sergeant-at-Arms shall see that on election nights none but active members are admitted to the hall and that during the induction ceremonies none but members of the Society are admitted to the hall. The Sergeant-at-Arms shall act as the President's ministerial officer in enforcing order. The Sergeant-at-Arms may appoint, when necessary, one or more temporary assistants to aid in enforcing order. The Sergeant-at-Arms shall be responsible for organizing social functions as directed by resolution of the Society.

Section 8: Appointed Officers

The President shall, within his tenure of office, appoint at least the following positions: an Alumni Chair, an Historian, a Parliamentarian, and a Provisional Chair.

The Alumni Chair shall keep records of all of the Society's graduated membership and shall assist in coordinating contact between the Society and its alumni.

The Historian shall keep records of all of the Society's activities and dealings, both private and public. The Historian shall submit his records to the University of Virginia's special collections in order to have those records placed in the Washington Society archives. The Historian shall prepare, in the spring of each year, a slide show to be presented at the Finals Banquet. The Historian shall be the keeper of the lore of the Society, and shall be in charge of organizing a history meeting each semester in order to educate the membership about the Society's past.

The Parliamentarian shall advise the President and other officers, committees, and the general membership about parliamentary procedure. The parliamentarian's role during a meeting is purely an advisory and consultative one, since parliamentary rules give the chair final authority to rule on any question of order or to answer inquiries about procedure. The Parliamentarian shall be the keeper of the Society's rules of parliamentary procedure.

Section 4: Presidential Vote

The President shall vote only in the case of a tie.

Section 5: Abstentions

Abstentions shall count neither to support nor to oppose any motion before the house.

Section 6: Quorum

One-fourth of active members shall constitute a quorum of the Society.

Article X

Amendments

All propositions to amend or add to this constitution, directly or indirectly, shall be stated in writing, laid on the table at least two weeks, and shall require a vote of at least two-thirds of those present and eligible to adopt them. No such member may abstain from such a vote.

Article XI

Removal of Officers

Any officer of the Society who having been duly elected, shows inability to perform the duties of his office efficiently, or neglects or omits to perform the same without reasonable, adequate or proper excuse, or any President who fails to keep order and enforce the Constitution, shall be liable to a removal of office by a two-thirds vote. The charges must be made to the Secretary in writing one week before the vote can be taken. The Secretary must also notify any officer of such charges made against him.

Article XII

Board of Trustees

Section 1: Purpose

The purpose of the Board of Trustees shall be generally to assist in the proper management of the Society and its financial assets and possessions; to encourage and coordinate alumni participation; to advise the Society on all legal and financial matters; to assist with fundraising and contributions; to protect the rights and concerns of the Society whenever necessary; to ensure the Society's continuation and existence at the University; and to maintain Washington Hall upon its reacquisition.

Section 5: Other Awards or Medals

The officers of the Society shall, at the end of each semester, present an award or medal to the Society member deemed to be the best debater, an award or medal to the Society member deemed to have been the best orator of a literary presentation, and any other award or medal deemed worthy by resolution of the Society.

Section 6: Presentation of Awards and Medals

The awards and medals for the fall term shall be presented by the President of the Society to the successful contestants at the annual banquet. The awards or medals for the spring term shall be presented at the induction ceremony of that semester.

Article VIII

The Badge and Pin

Section 1: Badge

The badge of the Society, to be worn on public occasions, shall be a plain white satin rosette.

Section 2: Pin

The pin of the Society shall be of gold or silver and shall bear a symbol of the Society as set by resolution of the Society.

Article IX

Voting

Section 1: Eligibility for Policy Matters

Only active members of the Society who have witnessed the entire debate on a question may vote in elections or on matters of policy before the Society. Candidates running for an elected office may vote in that election.

Section 2: Eligibility for Other Matters

Any member of the Society may vote in a decision to confer honorary membership status, or for the selection of the Finals Orator. Any member of or visitor to the Society may vote to determine the winner of a debate, or a procedural matter.

Section 3: Proxies

Under no conditions may a vote be cast by proxy.

The Provisional Chair shall assist the Vice President in educating provisional members in the art of oratorical rhetoric and debate; shall assist the Vice President in the integration of new members into the Society; shall be responsible for the organization of social gatherings of the provisional class in order to build a sense of unity therein; shall be available on an *ad hoc* basis to work individually with members of the provisional class. The Provisional Chair shall, in conjunction with the Vice President, organize workshops to educate the provisional class in the art of oratorical rhetoric and debate; including but not limited to holding practice debate rounds and listening to literary presentations and oratorical expositions.

Article IV

Duties of Committees

Section 1: Topics Committee

This committee shall consist of members appointed by the President and shall be chaired by the Vice-President. This committee shall submit to the Vice-President potential topics for debate.

Section 2: Conference Committee

This committee shall consist of members appointed by the President and its members shall serve on the Smith-Simpson foreign policy debate committee. This committee will meet with the Jefferson Society to organize the Smith-Simpson debate to be held early in the spring semester.

Section 3: Awards and Medals Committee

This committee shall consist of members appointed by the President and shall be chaired by the Reporter. This committee shall plan and administer all contests of the Society.

Section 4: Final Committee

This committee shall consist of members appointed by the President and shall be chaired by the Secretary. It shall be the duty of this committee to make all necessary arrangements for the Final Celebration Banquet, which celebration shall take place each year on or near the anniversary of the birthday of George Washington.

Section 5: Special Teams Debate Committee

This committee shall consist of members appointed by the President and shall organize debates between the Society and other groups.

Section 6: Tournament Committee

This committee shall consist of members appointed by the President and shall be responsible for organizing and holding a high school tournament in competitive debate and oratory. The committee chair shall be the Director of the high school tournament. The Tournament

Committee shall be empowered to determine the staff of the high school tournament, subject to the President's approval.

Article V

Intercollegiate Debate and Forensics

Section 1: Intercollegiate Teams

The Society may sponsor one or more teams to compete in intercollegiate debate or forensics tournaments.

Section 2: Team Members

Teams sponsored by the Society may only consist of active members of the Society and persons who have paid a fee determined by resolution of the Society into the treasury.

Section 3: Director

Each team shall have a director appointed by the President who shall organize practices, trips to tournaments, and other activities of the team.

Section 4: Treasurer

Each team shall have a treasurer who shall manage all funds for the team, shall keep detailed accounts of all monetary transactions, shall prepare a budget, and shall submit all requests for reimbursement to the Treasurer of the Society.

Section 5: Fundraising

Each team, for purposes of fundraising, may organize a tournament or other activities.

Article VI

Regular Exercises

Section 1: Regular Program

The regular program of the Society shall consist of at least one literary presentation and at least one debate, not necessarily in that order. The Vice-President shall have power to appoint orators to take part in the regular program.

Section 2: Announcement of Format

At the beginning of the program, the Vice-President may announce the format of each debate or literary presentation, specifying speech times and order.

Section 3: Voting on Debate

After the conclusion of the debate, the house shall vote to determine which side did the better debating. The President shall instruct the Society to vote not on their sentiment, but on the quality of the debate.

Section 4: Commentary

After the debate has been voted upon, one member of the Society may be called upon to deliver a brief commentary on the debate.

Section 5: Attendance at Meetings

The meetings of the Society shall be opened to visitors at all times except during elections, when no one but active members shall be admitted, and during the induction ceremony when only members of the Society shall be admitted. The Society, however, may exclude at any time by a majority vote all visitors for one particular night. Visitors or members may be excluded from one particular meeting when, in the opinion of the chairman, their conduct interferes with the progress of the meeting. The chairman may be overruled in this regard by a 2/3 majority of active members present.

Article VII

Awards and Medals

Section 1: Awards and Medals

The Society shall present awards and medals for excellence in literary and oratorical contests. There shall be separate public contests for medals, and in no case shall the Society award a medal for which there is only one contestant.

Section 2: Judges

The medalists shall be chosen by judges selected by the Committee for Awards and Medals.

Section 3: Fall Contest

The Society shall, each fall, sponsor a public contest for non-original oratory, and present an award or medal for the best speech.

Section 4: Spring Contest

The Society shall, each spring, sponsor a public contest for original literary endeavor, and present an award or medal for the best presentation.