

GRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT
Proposed By-Laws Amendment: Membership Policy
March 13, 2014

I. LEGISLATION: BY-LAWS AMENDMENT

Following is a set of proposed amendments to the By-Laws to clarify various matters of membership and set clear requirements for conducting and voting on GSG business. It is recommended that these amendments be considered on the Senate Floor as a single main motion

Definition of Excused Absence

Amend the By-Laws to add Article I, Section 7, clause (b), which shall read:

- (b) A Senator may request excuse from absence at a public GSG meeting due to exceptional circumstances from the Membership Officer in advance of the meeting. Such an excused absence will not count against the Senator's fulfillment of his/her duties.

And amend the By-Laws Article II, Section 2, clause (a) 4 to insert a new item following item a, which shall read:

- b. Grant Senators excuse from absence at public GSG meetings at his/her discretion.

Definition of Quorum

Amend the By-Laws to add Article VIII: Conduct of GSG Meetings, Section 1: Quorum, which shall read:

- (a) Quorum is defined to be a simple majority of active Senators.
- (b) Senators who have an excused absence from a GSG public meeting are counted as being present at that meeting for the purposes of determining whether quorum is met and determining the number of votes needed to pass legislation.
- (c) Quorum must be present at the time the Senate Floor is opened in order to conduct any official GSG business.

Clarification of Voting Procedures

Amend the By-Laws to add Article VIII, Section 2: Voting Procedures, which shall read:

- (a) All votes taken shall require an appropriate majority or supermajority of those Senators present, excepting abstentions, to be in favor of the motion.
- (b) Senators who are granted an excused absence shall submit their votes for pending legislation to the Membership Officer in advance of the meeting.

[Note that clause (a) clarifies how the votes specified in the following locations are to be taken: Constitution Article VI, Section 1; By-Laws, Article V, Section 1, clause (a) 2; By-Laws Article VI, Section 1; By-Laws Article VII, Section 1.]

And amend the By-Laws Article V, Section 1, clause (a) to insert a new item following item 2, which shall read:

3. Removal of an officer requires a two-thirds Senate vote.

II. MEMBERSHIP POLICY: INTERPRETATION AND CLARIFICATION OF “EXCUSED ABSENCES”

The following policy is intended as an interpretation and clarification of excused absences, as (vaguely) defined and referenced in the above By-Laws amendments. It is recommended that this be approved as a standing policy by a majority vote.

Implications of the Policy

The Membership Officer has the authority to grant an excused absence for a Senator who has a legitimate excuse for not attending a meeting. The granting of an excused absence should be understood to indicate a cooperative exchange between the Senator and the Membership Officer, where the Senator has already made appropriate effort to secure his/her attendance and to arrange a proxy. This exchange should ensure that the Senator fully understands that he/she must still perform his/her duties in absentia, as described below.

A Senator who must leave the meeting early should follow the same procedures to notify the Membership Officer of his/her absence, request that it be excused, and submit votes for items of legislation for which he/she may be absent.

Expectations for Senators Granted an Excused Absence

A Senator who is granted an excused absence has a responsibility to submit a vote for each item of legislation on the agenda. To be specific, the excuse releases the Senator from fulfilling the duty of attendance (By-Laws Article II, Section 3, clause (c), item 1), but it does *not* excuse the Senator from fulfilling the duty of voting (*loc. cit.* item 2).

Votes must be submitted to both the Membership Officer and Parliamentarian in writing (email is acceptable) by noon of the day of the meeting. The submitted vote should specify one of the following for *each* item of legislation:

- Unconditional approval: a vote in favor of the legislation, even if the original legislation is amended.
- Conditional approval: a vote in favor of the original legislation, and either an abstention or a vote against the legislation if it is amended on the floor.
- Denial: a vote against the legislation, whether in original form or amended.
- Abstention: abstaining from the vote on the legislation.

A vote of abstention is the default vote cast for a Senator with an excused absence on an item of legislation introduced on the floor.

Senators who are granted an excused absence are expected to give careful consideration to the legislation at hand and, accordingly, to cast an informed vote. As a guideline, an abstain vote should not be a Senator’s default vote and should be cast only if there are extenuating circumstances.