

**Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service
Atlanta Branch
CONSTITUTION and BYLAWS
October 2008**

PREAMBLE

Whereas, the advancement of public health knowledge and the elevation of the professional standards and efficiency of public health workers in general, and the promotion of the interests and welfare of the United States Public Health Service and its officers in particular, are objectives to which we subscribe, and

Whereas, the Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service, Incorporated, has, for many years, actively and earnestly labored on behalf of these purposes, and

Whereas, we approve of the work of the Association and believe that the effectiveness and usefulness of its efforts can be further extended by the formation of local branches; be it

Resolved, that we constitute such a branch of the Commissioned Officers Association and pledge ourselves to advance public health knowledge and practice, in every possible way, and to make this Branch an outstanding example of cooperative endeavor, subscribing fully to the objectives and purposes of the National Association as set forth in its constitution.

CONSTITUTION

Article One: Name

This organization shall be known as the Atlanta Branch of the Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service, Inc. hereinafter called the Branch.

Article Two: Objectives and Purposes

The Branch and its individual members shall be guided in their activities by the objectives of the Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Services, Inc., hereinafter called the Association. These objectives are outlined in the Constitution of said Association.

The chief purposes of the Branch are:

- Advance the PHS Commissioned Corps by uniting and serving Atlanta-based Commissioned Officers and advocating their interests through leadership and communication,
- Furnish a medium for the Commissioned Officers in the Atlanta area to contribute their individual and collective efforts along lines of value to public health workers in general,

- Encourage and foster proper and helpful relationships between Commissioned Officers, their respective professions, other public health workers and the community as well as other uniformed services, and
- Advance the aims of the National Organization.

Article Three: Membership

The membership of this Branch shall consist of the following:

General Membership

Commissioned Officers of the United States Public Health Service who are members of the Association and who subscribe to the Constitution and Bylaws adopted by this Branch shall be members of this Branch upon the payment of Branch and National Association annual dues.

Honorary Lifetime Membership in ACOA

Commissioned Officers of the United States Public Health Service who make a distinguished contribution to the health professions and officers who have held the office of Surgeon General, Deputy Surgeon General and Assistant Surgeon General shall be eligible. An ad hoc committee appointed by the President shall decide the criteria. Not more than 1 honorary member shall be elected in any one calendar year. Notification of any honorary membership will be transmitted to COA.

Article Four: Governing Body

The governing body and officers of this Branch shall be known as the Executive Committee and shall include the President, Immediate Past President, Vice President/President Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer, respectively and up to eight (8) Executive Committee members who shall be Members-at-Large and, at the Executive Committee's discretion, a Branch Liaison to the Association. These positions shall also have voting power.

The transaction of official business of the Executive Committee shall require a quorum of half of the Executive Committee members plus one. When an officer has a conflict of interest they shall declare their conflict and abstain from voting.

Article Five: Amendments

Every proposal to amend this Constitution shall be submitted in writing to the Executive Committee. Upon approval by eight members of the Executive Committee, the Secretary shall submit the proposal in writing to each member of the Branch. Members shall within fifteen (15) days return the proposed amendment either approved or disapproved. Affirmative votes by 3/4 of those members returning ballots shall constitute approval and shall be adopted at the next Executive Committee meeting. Members who do not return their ballots shall be regarded as "approval" votes.

Article Six: Dissolution Clause

Any action to dissolve the Atlanta Branch of the Commissioned Officers Association must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of eligible voting members of the Executive Committee present at a meeting called to specifically consider such action, for which meeting prior written notice has been issued to all Executive Committee members eligible to vote in accordance with the provisions of these bylaws. If the Atlanta Branch of the Commissioned Officers Association at its own option shall cease to exist, all property real or personal shall be transferred to the Commissioned Officers Association of the United States Public Health Service or its successor, after payment of all debts.

BYLAWS

Article One: Meetings

General membership meetings will be held a minimum of 4 times yearly. Notification of meetings will be made in the Atlanta Branch newsletter and website. Executive Committee meetings will be held monthly.

Article Two: Committees

Committees shall be comprised of one or two members of the Executive Committee and if possible, one or more officers from the general membership. The committees shall be nominated by the President and ratified by the Executive Committee.

Section One: Program Committee

This committee will be chaired by the Vice-President and can include Members-at-Large or officers from the general membership. The Committee will solicit input from the Executive Committee and the membership for suggested topics and speakers for meetings; present plan for approval by Executive Committee for all topics and speakers; provide a report of Program Committee activities at each Executive Committee meeting; and work closely with the other Executive Committee members regarding inclusion of topics/speakers in Branch activities and events.

The Program Committee also will be responsible for coordinating requests to solicit volunteers for events sponsored by external groups (e.g., events planned and coordinated by groups other than the Atlanta branch of the Commissioned Officers Association). Requests must be submitted to the Program Committee at least 10 days in advance of the event. If the Committee agrees to support the activity, then the request should be forwarded to the Executive Committee for final approval. The Executive Committee will only issue thank you letters to officers who volunteer for events coordinated by the Executive Committee. Thank you letters will not be issued to volunteers of events coordinated by external groups (such as career fairs and science fairs). Requests for staffing career fairs are special requests, with the guidelines below.

Career Fair Day Request Guidelines:

- The Program Subcommittee will handle requests for support of job fairs, career days, and other recruiting activities which fall beyond what an individual officer can cover.

- Support for recruiting activities will be coordinated with CDC's Commissioned Corps Personnel Office (CCPO) to ensure that both groups are not working the same issue in parallel. CCPO has lead if they choose to take it.
- Requests for support should be made at least ten business days (2 weeks) in advance of the activity. More time may be required if support requirements go beyond sending an email to the ACOA distribution list requested volunteers. Request with fewer than ten business days notice will be honored on a case-by-case basis.
- If ACOA is asked to support a recruiting activity, support will be limited to issuing an announcement of the activity and helping the lead AR coordinate volunteers. Requests for financial support of any amount must be submitted to the Executive Committee using the Request for ACOA Funds form, and approved by the Executive Committee. Requests sent out to the distribution list will be approved according to Executive Committee-approved procedures and must contain details of how many officers are required, expectations for the volunteers, and a point of contact (the AR lead for the activity). A suggested uniform may be included, but a specific uniform may not be mandated without the written approval of the LUA.
- Support will not be considered for the following: activities that require special display materials (for instance, hands-on activities, demonstrations, give-aways), or that require special licensing or regulatory issues (blood pressure screening, for example).
- If the backdrop from the Rockville ARP program is requested, that request will go directly to Rockville from the lead AR for the activity, and not through the Executive Committee.
- Wearing of the uniform for recruiting activities is required.

Section Two: Membership Committee

The Treasurer will chair this committee and will direct the maintenance and development of the membership of the Branch.

Section Three: Community Service Committee

This committee shall be chaired or co-chaired by one (1) or two (2) Member-at-Large officers appointed by the President and ratified by the Executive Committee. The purpose of this committee will be to further the goals and objectives of the Branch through a commitment to community service.

Section Four: Elections Committee

The President shall appoint an Elections Committee of three (3) members, when possible. The Immediate Past President will serve as the Chairperson, and the other two members will be jointly selected by the President, Immediate Past President and President -Elect. Members of the Elections Committee cannot be running for a position on the Executive Committee.

Section Five: Communications Committee

The President shall appoint a Communications Committee to oversee the publication of the Branch newsletter and the web site. This committee shall be chaired or co-chaired by one (1) or two (2) Member-at-Large officers and one or more officers selected from the general membership, who will serve as editors of the newsletter and maintain the web site (webmaster).

Section Six: Professional Development Committee

The President shall appoint a Professional Development Committee. This committee shall be chaired or co-chaired by one (1) or two (2) Member-at-Large officers, and at least one or more officers from the general membership. Senior officer(s) can be asked to serve as advisors to the committee. This committee will consider issues regarding officer professional development to include, but not necessarily limited to, category-specific career development, officer evaluation, officer promotion, professional training and education, leadership development and mentoring.

Section Seven: Special Projects Committee

This committee shall be chaired or co-chaired by one (1) or two (2) Member-at-Large officers appointed by the President and ratified by the Executive Committee. The purpose of the committee shall be to address special projects which develop throughout the year and other duties as assigned by the President.

Article Three: Dues and Assessments

Section One: Annual Dues

The annual dues of members shall be ten dollars (\$10) paid with annual Association dues or directly to the Branch Treasurer. Dues shall be payable in advance of the first day of July of each year. The fiscal year for dues purposes begins on July 1 and ends on the following June 30.

Section Two: Unpaid Dues

Any member whose dues are unpaid forfeits membership. Membership is reinstated upon payment of dues.

Section Three: Transfer

Any officer transferred into the Atlanta area after July 1 who was in good standing with dues paid in another local branch in the geographical area of the officers previous assignment, is entitled to full membership rights in this Branch for the balance of the fiscal year. It will be this officer's responsibility to inform COA of their transfer and desire to be a member of ACOA. Otherwise, ACOA may inform COA if it becomes aware of officers residing in the Atlanta area that should be listed as members of the local branch.

Section Four: Honorary Members

Any member deemed an honorary member of ACOA shall not be required to pay chapter dues nor shall they be eligible to hold office or vote.

Section Five: Expenditure of Funds

Any action to be taken by the Branch which involves an expenditure of funds greater than \$25 shall be submitted to the Executive Committee for consideration and requires a simple majority vote for approval.

Article Four: Responsibilities/Expectations of Executive Committee

Section One: President

- Presides at Executive Committee and Membership meetings
- Serves as ex-officio member of all committees
- Appoints members to chair ad hoc and permanent committees
- Officially represents the Branch in all matters relating to the Association
- Serves as voting delegate at the Association House of Delegates annual meeting or may appoint a delegate as necessary
- Serves as liaison for Commissioned Corps interests with Agency leadership (CMS, CDC, ATSDR, HRSA, EPA, OS/HHS Regional Office, FDA, BOP, etc.) employing Commissioned Officers
- Signs all official correspondence for Branch; may delegate as necessary
- Approves newsletter for publication, information posted to the web site and general membership email correspondence
- Appoints an officer who is not a member of the Executive Committee to perform an annual audit of the financial accounts of the Branch
- Authorizes the Treasurer to sign or personally signs checks obligating Branch funds
- Assures that correspondence from the Association is conveyed to the Executive Committee and to the membership
- Provides written information after Executive Committee meetings for inclusion in the Branch newsletter
- Other duties as required

Section Two: Vice President/President Elect

- In the absence of the President, assumes all duties and functions of that office.
- Serves as Chairperson of the Program Committee.
- Prepares correspondence for signature by the President inviting guest speakers, confirming their participation, and follow-up sending letters of thanks
- Serves as the liaison with the National organization and COA board members
- Provides written information following each Executive Committee meeting for inclusion in the Branch newsletter
- Reviews the Constitution and Bylaws of the Branch every three years and provides a written report to the Executive Committee identifying any proposed changes
- Other duties and assignments requested by the President
- Serves as Parliamentarian during Executive Committee meetings

Section Three: Secretary

- Records all proceedings of the Executive Committee meetings; prepares written minutes for Executive Committee
- Submits reports of meetings to the Association Board member designated as liaison to the Branch, as necessary
- Prepares notices of upcoming membership and Executive Committee meetings
- Prepares the call for proposed House of Delegates resolutions
- Submits to the Association resolutions for consideration by the House of Delegates
- Maintains attendance records for all Executive Committee meetings
- At the request of the President, prepares official correspondence for all Branch activities with the exception of the Program related correspondence
- Maintains official files of Branch activities
- Notifies the Association of results of elections
- In conjunction with the President, develops a written agenda for all meetings
- Provides written information after Executive Committee meetings for inclusion in the Branch newsletter
- Manages the email distribution list and distribution of announcements
- Other duties and functions as requested by the President

Section Four: Treasurer

- Collects all dues and coordinates these activities with National COA
- Maintains the Branch funds
- Prepares checks for payments of all legitimate expenses incurred by the Branch
- Signs all checks authorized by the Branch President (may be delegated authority by the Branch President to sign checks independently as necessary); responsible for change of signature authorization following Executive Committee elections
- Responsible for collecting funds from the membership at meetings and social functions of the Branch for meals, beverages, etc.
- Provides status of funds and membership reports at Executive Committee meetings
- Maintains financial records according to professionally accepted standards
- Prepares an annual projected budget for chapter activities and events in November of each year for the following calendar year; (the budget will be made available within 15 business days to the membership upon written request)
- Serves as Chairperson of the Membership Committee
- Provides written information after Executive Committee meetings for inclusion in the Branch newsletter
- Other duties and functions as requested by the President

Section Five: Members-At-Large (8), and the Branch Liaison to the Association (if appointed)

- Serve on at least one committee as a chair or co-chair
- Represent views of the membership at Executive Committee meetings
- Assist in the recruitment of members for the Branch

- Assist in the dissemination of information to the membership
- Provide written information after Executive Committee meetings for inclusion in the Branch newsletter
- Other duties and functions as requested by the President

Section six: Immediate Past President

- Provides guidance and assistance to the President and the Executive Committee in carrying out their duties and functions relating to the Branch
- Serves as Chairperson of the Elections Committee
- Introduces new Executive Committee to the membership at first meeting following election
- Provides written information after Executive Committee meetings for inclusion in the Branch newsletter
- Other duties and functions as requested by the President

Section seven: Attendance

Executive Committee members are expected to attend all scheduled Executive Committee meetings. For the purposes of this section the annual Executive Committee retreat typically held each January is considered to be a scheduled Executive Committee meeting in addition to regularly scheduled monthly meetings. Members are strongly encouraged to attend all meetings in person. If necessary, Executive Committee meetings may attend via telephone conference call; however this method should be used only when attendance in person is not possible.

Executive Committee members shall notify the President and/or Secretary of any planned absences in advance and provide their report to one of the other Executive Committee members. Members are permitted up to four (4) excused absences from scheduled Executive Committee meetings during the year. More than four (4) excused absences are grounds for review and possible removal or replacement of that individual by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Executive Committee. Executive Committee members should make every effort to avoid unexcused absences. More than one (1) unexcused absence is grounds for review and possible removal or replacement of that individual by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Executive Committee.

Attendance records at Executive Committee meetings will be maintained by the Secretary. Any member determined by the Secretary to have in excess of one (1) unexcused absence or five combined excused and unexcused absences will be brought to the attention of the President and Vice President. At their discretion, this issue may be placed on the next Executive Committee meeting agenda. Executive Committee members found to be in violation of this section will be notified of any pending action and extended the opportunity, at their option, to come before the remaining Executive Committee members at the next scheduled meeting to provide extenuating circumstances, if applicable, or indicate why they should not be replaced prior to a vote of the Executive Committee on the matter.

Article Five: Order of Business

The order of business of the Executive Committee shall include the following: (1) call to order; (2) introduction of newly elected members and guests; (3) reading and adopting of the minutes of the previous meeting; (4) President's report; (5) Vice-president's report; (6) Treasurer's report; (7) other reports; (8) reports of committees; (9) old business; (10) new business; and (11) adjournment.

Article Six: Elections

The ballot prepared by the Elections Committee will be submitted to the membership by October 31 of each year. Ballots must be returned by the date stated on the ballot, ballots returned after that date will not be counted. The results of the election as determined by the majority vote of those officers returning ballots will be verified by the Elections Committee and announced to the membership.

All active duty and retired PHS Officers in good standing with COA and ACOA that are assigned to the Atlanta metro area, and meet basic readiness requirements (retired officers excepted) as set forth by OFRD, are eligible to run for office. Officers shall serve for a period of one calendar year commencing January 1 of each year. The officer elected as Vice President will serve as President in the year immediately following election as Vice President and will serve as Immediate Past President in the year after serving as President.

The Executive Committee may hold a special election to fill vacancies at any meeting of the Executive Committee. The majority vote of those Executive Committee members in attendance shall be required to elect. The Executive Committee has the option of selecting new Executive Committee members from those officers who ran for office but were not elected.

In the event the President is unable to complete his term of office, the Vice President assumes the Presidency and serves without a Vice President until the next regular election. The Vice President who in this manner assumes the office of President completes the term of office of the previous President and then serves an additional year as President. (No one can therefore serve as President or Vice President unless elected by the membership.)

Should it arise that BOTH the President and Vice President/President-elect are unable to fulfill their terms, and if both leave office before either one can be replaced, then a special election will be held per Section seven, article six, and a new President and Vice President/President-elect will be elected. The Immediate Past President will serve as the acting President until new leadership is elected. The Immediate Past President will chair the special election committee. This special election will be held without delay.

Article Seven: Amendments

Every proposal to amend these Bylaws shall be accomplished in the same manner as amendments to the Constitution. (Article Five-Constitution)

Article Eight: Rules of Order

The general procedure of meetings of the ACOA EC shall follow the "Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised" on parliamentary procedure, insofar as they do not conflict with any provisions of the ACOA Bylaws.

Article Nine: Wearing the Uniform at ACOA Events

Uniform wear at events sponsored by the Executive Committee must be approved by the Local Uniform Authority (LUA) except for:

- Formal dinners such as the Anchor & Caduceus Dinner
- USO support activities
- Recruiting events such as Career Fairs
- ACOA meetings
- Where the uniform is worn in connection with official duties

In addition, the following guidelines will apply:

a. The exercise of the rights of freedom of speech and assembly does not include the right to borrow the inherent dignity, prestige, and traditions represented by uniforms of the U.S. Public Health Service to lend weight and significance to privately held convictions on public issues.

b. Members of the U.S. Public Health Service (including retired members and members of Reserve components) are prohibited from wearing uniforms of the USPHS while attending or participating in, or continuing to attend or participate in, a demonstration, assembly, or activity with knowledge that a purpose of such demonstration, assembly, or activity is the furtherance of personal or partisan views on political, social, economic, or religious issues except:

(1) In connection with official duties or as otherwise authorized in advance by competent authority; or

(2) Incident to attendance at or participation in a bona fide religious service or observance.

c. ACOA will not endorse, nor will request approval from the LUA for, uniform wear at events held for the purpose of lending substantial weight or significance to privately held convictions or interests; would be so construed by an observer; or that the demonstration, assembly, or activity does relates to matters in public controversy.

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