

The Bylaws Committee has completed a first draft of proposed changes to the LifeRing Bylaws, in accordance with the "Motion on Behalf of the Board of Directors to Study and Prepare to Implement Absentee Voting" that was passed at the 2012 Congress. The text of this motion is available at lifering.org. We made every effort to collect input from members, and we thank those who offered opinions - we have tried to keep this input in mind while crafting a proposal that also fulfills the charter of the 2012 Absentee Voting motion.

Proposed modifications and additions to the Bylaws are reproduced in their entirety below. We have added two new articles (12 and 13) and a new subarticle (5.4.1), and have made changes to two existing subarticles (5.4 and 6.7). In plain language,

- 1) Conveners are automatic Delegates for Public Meetings that do not elect someone else (5.4), otherwise the definitions of who gets to vote are unchanged.
- 2) Delegates must register with the Service Center prior to Congress (5.4.1) if they wish to vote at Congress or by Absentee Ballot.
- 3) Congress continues as it does now, but certain matters called out in Article 12.1 can trigger a subsequent Absentee Election. Contested elections, including Board elections, automatically go to Absentee Election, and for other matters (proposed changes to the Bylaws, directives to the Board), the vote at Congress is for ratification only and need only be a majority vote (12.3). Contested elections and ratified proposals are then voted upon in a subsequent Absentee Election, with passing thresholds determined by the Bylaws and Robert's Rules of Order; proposals that are not ratified by Congress are dead.
- 4) All registered Delegates may vote in the Absentee Election, whether or not they were present at Congress (12.2). This means that Delegates who are present at Congress may vote twice in some cases, for ratification of a proposal and again by Absentee Ballot - this is no different from a government committee, where members vote within the committee and possibly again on the floor.
- 5) The Board will select a Registrar for the Absentee Election, who will be responsible (with Board approval) for establishing most of the mechanics of the Absentee Election (12.4, 12.5). We did not feel it appropriate to codify these details within the Bylaws.
- 6) Proposals and election nominations may be made in absentia to the Registrar prior to Congress (13.1), and the Registrar will present them to Congress (13.2). Proposals submitted in absentia may be modified by Congress, just as proposals presented to Congress in person currently may be modified prior to a vote (13.3).
- 7) Documentation (full name, history, statements, etc.) may now be required of election nominees, whether or not they are present at Congress, and the details of the required documentation will be published in advance of Congress (13.4).
- 8) Since contested elections will no longer be settled at Congress, outgoing seat holders may vote in the Board meeting that follows Congress (6.7).

We are now asking for member input into this process, and specifically into the proposed Bylaws amendments, prior to submission for consideration by the Board. Feedback may be posted here, or sent by email to JeffK at liferingj_livermore@yahoo.com.

5.4. Procedures for electing meeting delegates shall be consistent with generally accepted principles of democracy and fairness, striving for simplicity and consensus. At meetings at in-patient facilities and at halfway houses and similar institutions with highly transient populations

, or in the event any meeting fails to elect a delegate, the convener shall be recognized as the delegate.

5.4.1 Each delegate's name, contact information, and basis of eligibility for serving as a delegate shall be registered with the Service Center no less than 30 days prior to the annual Congress.

6.7. Annual meeting. The Board shall meet face-to-face each year at the conclusion of each annual Congress, if feasible; and newly elected directors will begin their service at the commencement of that meeting, unless the election is decided by Absentee Ballot as described in Section 12, **in which case the previous holders of those seats may vote at that board meeting.**

Article 12. Absentee Elections

12.1 Matters considered by Congress pertaining to the following shall trigger a subsequent Absentee Election:

12.1.1 Proposed Bylaws amendments ratified by Congress.

12.1.2 Contested elections.

12.1.3 Directives to the Board of Directors ratified by Congress.

12.2 Voters for the Absentee Election shall consist of all registered delegates.

12.3 For matters specified in Section 12.1, a simple majority vote at Congress shall constitute ratification for a subsequent Absentee Ballot vote.

12.4 The Board of Directors shall appoint a Registrar for the Absentee Election, and the Registrar's responsibilities shall include the following:

12.4.1 Prepare the Absentee Ballot for approval by the Board of Directors, including all measures ratified by Congress.

12.4.2 Receive absentee votes from delegates.

12.4.3 Verify the validity of each vote.

12.4.4 Tally the votes and certify the results.

12.4.5 Publicly post the results within 10 days of the close of voting.

12.5 The Absentee Ballot shall be publicly posted by the Board of Directors within 5 days of the close of Congress, and voting shall commence immediately and continue for 30 days past the date of public posting.

Article 13. Motions and Nominations to Congress

13.1 Motions and nominations submitted to Congress by delegates in absentia must be submitted in writing to the Registrar at least 30 days prior to Congress.

13.2 The Registrar shall present absentee motions and nominations to Congress.

13.3 All absentee motions are subject to amendment by Congress.

13.4 The Registrar, with approval by the Board of Directors, shall publish uniform guidelines outlining documentation required of election nominees 3 months in advance of Congress.