

Writing Your Chapter's Bylaws and Operating Rules

These sample bylaws and operating rules were developed to help chapters in the process of organizing and running the chapter, and to provide official documents to use to open a bank account or to meet requirements for a bulk mail permit. Chapters are urged to use the samples as a guide, and not a final product. We hope the notes below will help you expand on the sample documents to make them most effective and create a blueprint for the chapter structure you hope to achieve.

What they are. Chapter bylaws are a guide to the structure of the chapter, including how the chapter is governed, its object or purpose, how someone can become a member, the duties and obligations of members, the officers and how they are elected and for what term of office, how often there must be business meetings, the names of standing committees, the name of the parliamentary authority, and how the bylaws are amended.

Operating rules govern process and procedure within the limits set by the bylaws. Chapter bylaws provide protection for the members, and for that reason they should be hard to change, perhaps limiting the ability to amend by specifying a longer period of notice (than for operating rules) to members for approving changes, or stating that they can only be approved, with specific notice, at the chapter's annual meeting.

Chapter operating rules may be made easier to change than bylaws, perhaps by requiring that notice be put in an every-member mailing thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting. They can also help the chapter adapt to changing circumstances by listing more detailed officer responsibilities, and including provisions that allow officers to shift or share tasks or jobs, but not the responsibility for seeing that those tasks or jobs are carried out.

Legal requirements for bylaws. Some of the provisions of the bylaws are actually required by law for a 501(c)(4) (See the Legal Issues report for a detailed explanation of NOW's tax status) organization, such as having a designated president and treasurer, even if you call the office by a different name. The name of your chapter is filed with the IRS when you apply for your chapter EIN or Tax ID number, so you must officially change your bylaws if you vote to change your chapter name (hence an amendment to your bylaws), you must notify the Action Center so that the change can be noted on reports that are filed, particularly with the IRS, as well as printed materials and brochures produced at the Action Center. (There is a very good reason to state (and in practice, require) that officers of the chapter must be members of NOW, or to outline a specific process for dissolution of the chapter.)

Fiduciary responsibility. Members pay dues to NOW, and they expect the provisions of the chapter bylaws be followed in the functioning of the chapter that their contributions support. This gives them both the ability to make decisions by participating themselves, and the ability to judge decisions made by the chapter leaders, especially if they feel that provisions involving meetings—for example—aren't being followed. While it has only

happened a few times, it has been necessary for bylaws to be considered in a civil court; and banks and financial institutions are very interested in seeing the chapter's bylaws if you need to change signers on your account in light of a problem.

Parliamentary Authority. National bylaws state that Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised shall be the parliamentary authority for meetings, and—by virtue of our structure - that also applies to chapters and states. You can put this in—or not—but leaders are welcome to develop their own personal style of chairing that suggests order to debate and governs voting.

How to use this guide. Activists can use this guide for writing a new chapter's bylaws in their entirety or just in working on or re-writing one section. The "sample chapter bylaws" are not complete all by themselves—you can't just fill in your chapter's name and adopt them "as it." They are intended for guidance to you, and for your chapter to consider in writing bylaws. The notes that are underneath each section (below) tell you what ADDITIONAL details you should consider adding, and also note areas that should be covered in the chapter's Operating Rules. Anything underlined MUST be explained in greater detail in the operating rules of the chapter.

SAMPLE CHAPTER BYLAWS

Article I. Name.

The name of the organization shall be the _____ Chapter of NOW.

Name. Your chapter name must comply with NOW's policy on naming chapters, and be approved by your state president or your state's council when you apply as a convening chapter. This policy, and state approval also are required if you decide to change your chapter's name.

Article II. Purpose.

NOW's purpose is to take action to bring women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all privileges and responsibilities thereof in truly equal partnership with men. This purpose includes, but is not limited to, equal rights and responsibilities in all aspects of citizenship, public service, employment, education, and family life, and it includes freedom from discrimination because of race, ethnic origin, age, marital status, sexual preference/orientation, or parenthood.

Purpose. The sample bylaws use this language from a corresponding section of the National NOW bylaws. You can use other words, but consider that you might have to

make this language public at some point, and that you would want to make sure that your chapter's official wording includes anti-discrimination language much the same as we expect from the rest of our society.

Article II(a) Affirmative Action

The Chapter is committed to the inclusion of diverse voices and experiences, and to that end commits to affirmatively act to achieve a diverse membership and leadership. Specific goals and affirmative measures shall be outlined in the Chapter's operating rules.

Affirmative Action Plan. Your chapter needs to have an affirmative action plan in order for you to receive your provisional chapter charter. This should be mentioned in the bylaws (the above is just a sample) and spelled out in more detail in the operating rules. It should apply to the behavior of the entire chapter and not just to having some number or percent of officers being people of color, and should include becoming aware of the various diversity in your community, having diversity workshops or consciousness raising sessions for your own members, and reaching out to groups (attending their meetings, subscribing to their newsletters, and urging your members to participate in their events), all BEFORE you invite anyone to join. There are additional resources available on the chapters-only section of NOW's website, and you can contact the field/chapter staff at the National Action Center for additional help.

Article III. Membership

Any person who subscribes to its purpose and who is a member of National NOW may be a member of the _____ Chapter of NOW. A new member may join National NOW and the chapter simultaneously upon payment of dues.

Membership. Our national bylaws state that anyone who subscribes to our purpose (essentially, anyone who agrees with our issue positions) may join upon payment of dues. This section is important as it spells out who is (and is not) entitled to make decisions (i.e. vote) about chapter policy, budget or actions.

Article IV. Policy

The Chapter shall be bound by the National NOW bylaws and policy.

Policy. In addition to saying that the chapter is bound by National NOW policy and bylaws, you may want to state that the chapter may pass policy governing your own chapter structure and activities. You may want to state that an officer (usually the Secretary or an Administrative Officer) will be responsible for keeping a file of chapter policies up to date, and include that responsibility in that officer's job description or list of duties in your operating rules.

Article V. Meetings

The Chapter shall hold at least eight (8) membership meetings each year. One of these meetings, designated the annual meeting, shall be the meeting at which election of officers shall take place. All members must receive at least ____ days notice of the annual meeting at which elections will be held. Additional requirements regarding the number of types of meetings, and notice for those meetings, shall be contained in the operating rules of the Chapter.

Meetings. The purpose of chapter meetings is to give the membership access to the leadership and to decision-making processes within the chapter. Eight (8) is a suggested number from a "chapter standards" policy. Any meeting at which decisions are made regarding spending money or creating policy for the chapter, or at which a substantive decisions are considered, such as the chapter planning a march or endorsing a local initiative, should be advertised to all chapter members, not just the ones with email. Some chapters prefer to do their work more through standing or ad hoc committees, holding a variety of meetings held such as committee meetings, new member meetings and event planning meetings. One suggested format is to have chapter leader (i.e. board) meetings

scheduled regularly, with monthly or bi-monthly chapter meetings devoted to issue discussion, welcoming new members or getting chapter input and participation in events. Other meetings, such as committee meetings, can be scheduled as needed.

The bottom line is that if you provide a variety of opportunities during the chapter year for members to meet officers and other members, and to know about and be involved in things that the chapter does, it doesn't matter quite so much what you call the meetings. Inclusion of all members is a basic underlying tenet of NOW, and writing it into your bylaws and operating rules can avoid a host of problems in the future.

Note: It is very important, both in the bylaws and operating rules of the chapter, to define how many days' notice must be given before a meeting at which decisions are to be made. Standard in most bylaws and operating rules is thirty (30) days. In the present day with electronic communication, that may seem unnecessary, but keep in mind that every member of the chapter (or every member of the chapter board) must receive the same amount of notice regardless of the method by which the notice is sent.

To think about: There are multiple challenges when it comes to notice. Unless every person who needs to know about a meeting has e-mail (in some cases this would mean *every* chapter member), there may be issues involving some people receiving notice several days before others do. If you do a newsletter, even a quarterly one, you can include meeting notices for several months in advance – and this would provide the required written notice to members about meetings. Notice for meetings involving changing bylaws or operating rules, or for chapter elections, voting on important chapter positions or actions, approving budgets, and annual goal setting should be considered with care. Notice required in national bylaws certainly establishes some number of days of notice that should be given.

Notice can also protect the chapter against hasty decisions, made by too few people, and sometimes not in the best interest of all the members or the organization.

Neither these sample bylaws or operating rules provide for a chapter committee or the board to vote in an emergency situation online or by phone, with the major problem being that all members can't join in any discussion about what is being voted upon. You might address issues around emergency votes in several places in your operating rules. Robert's Rules permits emergency decisions to be made in a telephone conference call, but only by unanimous consent of all members of the group making the decision, such as a chapter board.

Article VI. Dues

Section 1. Dues and specifics relating thereto shall be set forth in the operating rules of the Chapter.

Section 2. The fiscal year shall be January 1 to December 31.

Dues. You shouldn't state a dues amount, since dues are set by the national and state organizations and the amount could change. You must make a sliding scale available to any person for any reason. This might be a good place to emphasize your commitment to including all women by putting in writing the fact that your chapter has a sliding scale and that it is available to anyone for any reason. (See treasurer's job description.) Your chapter's fiscal year can begin with the month of your annual meeting and election of officers, or not. Many chapter leadership teams want to pass their own budget based on their own goals, rather than have the fiscal year reflect the calendar year.

Article VII. Officers/Board

Section 1. The officers shall be a President and a Treasurer and such other officers as may be determined by the operating rules. The composition and duties of the Board of Directors shall be specified in the operating rules of the Chapter.

Section 2. The officers and board shall be elected annually at the annual meeting. The time and date of the annual meeting shall be set forth in the operating rules of the Chapter.

Officers/Board. You must have a president and treasurer, and these must be separate people. This is a legal requirement. It's best to spell out officer duties, or even what additional positions you want to have as chapter officers, in your operating rules so you can adapt to the changing needs of the group. If you feel strongly about your leaders having some experience with the organization (having attended a certain number of meetings or having been a member for a certain length of time) you could put that here, or in the "officers" section of your operating rules. Also, some chapters prefer to have two year terms for their leaders. This is also where you would specify term limits, if any, for your chapter officers.

Article VIII. Committees

Type of committees, their purpose, leadership, and membership shall be determined by the operating rules of the Chapter. Committee chairs are appointed by the president of the chapter, with the advice and consent of the board of directors, for a one year term.

Committees. While you probably shouldn't mandate specific committees here in your bylaws, it's more important to describe how their chairs are appointed, and to do it here if you want it to be uniform. Does the president recommend appointment to the chapter

board, with the board voting whether to approve the person, or does the president appoint individuals based on who she or he prefers to work with? Can committees be created by the president over and above the ones named in the operating rules? Do committee chairs vote on your chapter board? These issues can be addressed here or in the operating rules.

Article IX. Nominations

The nominating procedure shall be determined by the operating rules of Chapter.

Nominations. The procedure should be spelled out directly in the operating rules of the chapter, but the requirement of having some kind of specific process for nominating people for election to chapter office (perhaps how many months a nominations chair is to be appointed in advance of your chapter's annual meeting), how the chair and members are chosen, should be spelled out here. (For example, "A nominating committee chair and at least two members will be elected/appointed by the (president) (chapter board) (X months) prior to the chapter's annual meeting, and specific processes involving the committee's work shall be determined in the operating rules of the chapter.")

Article X. Elections

Officers and board members must be elected by a majority vote or a majority of preferences counted in the final tally, if preferential voting is used. All members of the Chapter [who have been a member for more than ___ days] are eligible to vote and all members must be notified at least ___ days in advance of the election by the procedure prescribed in the operating rules of the Chapter. Other specific provisions relative to elections are detailed in the operating rules of the Chapter.

Elections: National NOW and NOW's nine regions all use preferential voting when more than two people are running for an office or position. This process is spelled out in National NOW policy, so that particular system doesn't have to be outlined in your chapter bylaws or operating rules, only a stipulation that this is a way you will proceed if you have more than two people running for the same office. The bylaws should specify how long someone must be a member in order to vote in a chapter election, and how and how much notice (see section on "Notice" above in Article V. Meetings) about the meeting needs to be given to members. They should specify how the elections committee chair (or perhaps the whole committee) should be chosen.

Article XI. Delegates to the National Conference

Delegates and alternates to the national conferences shall be elected in the number, manner, and timing determined by the national bylaws and National Credentials Committee. All Chapter members must be notified thirty (30) days in advance of this election. Further procedures for the election of delegates and alternates shall be detailed in the operating rules of the Chapter.

Delegates to the National Conference. Your chapter is allotted a number of delegates to the National Conference each year based on your total membership as of a certain date (120 days) preceding the conference. Your operating rules should spell out how they are to be elected in your chapter, and what notice needs to be given to members about this election. Only members who have paid dues at least ninety (90) days prior to the national conference are eligible to be elected as a delegate or alternate.

Article XII. Grievance Procedure

There must be a grievance procedure specified in the operating rules of the Chapter.

Grievance Procedure. The best time to consider a grievance policy for the chapter is *before* there are any problems that arise between or among members. It's suggested that you put details in the operating rules so if the process you choose initially doesn't work well for your group, you can change it without too much trouble. Look over the national grievance policy for ideas and read over the section in the operating rules part of this report.

Article XIII. Operating Rules of the Chapter

There shall be a set of operating rules for the Chapter which must detail the items referred to in these bylaws and may contain any other operating rules determined by the Chapter. The operating rules must be accepted by a 3/5 vote of the Chapter members present and voting and must provide a method for amending the rules to give the membership advance written notice of an intended change and requires a 3/5 vote of the members present and voting.

Operating Rules of the Chapter. This language from the Sample Bylaws is fine, although you may want to put the notice requirements here (number of days of advance notice of the meeting at which the proposed amendments will be voted on) in this section also.

Article XIV. Amendments

These bylaws may be amended by a 2/3 vote at (*any*) (*the annual*) meeting of the Chapter providing:

- The proposed amendment has been submitted to the president 60 days in advance of the meeting.
- The proposed amendment has been mailed to the members 30 days in advance of the meeting or published in an every member publication 30 days in advance of the meeting.

Amendments. Most chapters prefer to make bylaws difficult to amend. Members who don't participate regularly appreciate knowing that there is certain stability to the chapter's operation. A few chapters in NOW have experienced a group of individuals who become active in a chapter and work to change the chapter to fit their own purposes, which may not be NOW's goals or priorities. Making bylaws harder to amend, and operating rules easier to amend, is recommended for these and other reasons. Also, it is important to change bylaws when they don't work. If you inherit bylaws and operating rules that appear to be current but don't make sense to you, chances are they were written many years ago. Our society has changed as well, along with the way information is disseminated, the distance people often commute to jobs, and even the population density in various areas. Change them to fit the way you want to structure the chapter, but follow the rules to make those changes.

Article XV. Dissolution

The Chapter may be dissolved upon a 2/3 vote of its members present and voting, after advance notice of no less than ____ days to every member that dissolution of the chapter will be considered at that meeting. Upon dissolution of the Chapter, the board and officers shall, after paying or making provisions for payment of all liabilities of the Chapter, remit all remaining assets to the state NOW organization, National NOW, or any local Chapter of NOW.

Dissolution. If the chapter leadership decides it is in the best interest of the group to dissolve, they cannot take this step without notifying the entire chapter membership (U.S. mail is best), and asking them to approve taking this step. Please discuss this step with national chapter development staff before you start the process – you'll need to keep documentation of the letter you send, with the date and the minutes of the meeting at which the vote was taken, and proof of the decision's transmittal to state NOW and to National NOW. All assets of the chapter must remain within the organization, either being given to other chapters, your state organization or National

NOW.

Date adopted: _____

Sample Operating Rules

These are suggested operating rules – they are not official. Chapters are urged to give serious thought to their structure and to adapt these as they wish. Questions may be referred to the National NOW office.

Article I. Meetings

Chapter meetings shall be held at least eight (8) times a year, at such dates, times, and places as determined by the Chapter board. Any number present shall constitute a quorum, except for the annual meeting at which a quorum shall consist of at least 10% of the actual Chapter membership.

Meetings. You might want to specify quorums for meetings other than the annual meeting, or to say what combination of officers or what number of officers must be present. Also consider numbers of meetings your chapter must have, and to whom those meetings are directed, since the purpose of a quorum is to make sure that a healthy percentage of people are involved in the ongoing operations of the chapter, or are at least informed and involved for serious decisions. (See the discussion of meetings in the Sample Bylaws section.)

Article II. Dues

New members' dues shall be \$35.00 or as changed by the state organization. Reduced dues are available on a sliding scale beginning at (\$10.00 or \$15.00). Renewing members' dues shall be determined by National NOW.

Dues. NOW's national dues have remained at \$35 for most states for quite a while, but a number of states have set their dues at \$40. This would be a good place to specify a bottom amount that someone can pay (\$10 or \$15), and to specify that the chapter should create a new member fund (some chapters call it a "sisterhood fund" into which contributions can be put to help supplement the chapter treasury when new members

come forward who might not be able to pay even the sliding scale minimum. You should not call these "hardship" dues or any other such offensive term, or set up a process through which someone has to call or specifically ask to pay this lower amount. It is strictly "honor system" regarding paying the minimum dues. You should also not ask someone to do work for the chapter to "make up" being "allowed" to pay a lower amount (this is essentially workfare, which NOW opposes). Note: You cannot charge chapter members a higher amount for dues than your state's official dues, but you can certainly ask people for additional contributions to support the chapter.

Article III. Officers and Board.

A. The officers and their duties shall be:

1. The President, who shall be the principal spokesperson and administrator of the Chapter and manage the day-to-day affairs of the Chapter between board and Chapter meetings. The president shall preside at all board and Chapter meetings.

2. The Vice-President, who shall assist the president and shall chair meetings in the absence of the president.

3. The Secretary, who shall take and retain the minutes of both board and Chapter meetings and attend to general Chapter correspondence.

4. The Treasurer, who shall receive all funds of the Chapter and shall deposit them in such bank as may be designated by the board, and who shall disburse the funds by check in accordance with the budget or vote of the membership, and who shall make regular written reports to the board and membership.

B. These officers shall constitute the board. The board shall meet at least _____ times a year. The president or a majority of the board may call board meetings.

C. Vacancies. In the event of a vacancy in the office of president, the vice-president shall assume the office of president. Vacancies in other elected positions shall be filled by appointment by the board as soon as possible after the vacancy occurs.

D. Qualifications and terms of office.

1 All officers shall have been members of NOW for six (6) months prior to election. Each officer shall serve a one-year term, and no officer may serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

2. No person may hold two offices concurrently.

3. Officer's terms shall begin on _____ following the meeting at which they are elected and shall run through _____ of that year.

4. Any person who is appointed to fill a vacancy or who assumes the office of president due to a vacancy shall be eligible to serve two full consecutive terms in that office.

Officers and Board. You may designate as many officers as you wish, but a president (or coordinator) and treasurer are the minimum. The descriptions of their duties should be fairly straightforward. They can also state additional responsibilities, or divisions of work, such as having an action vice-president who coordinates the issue or action agenda of the chapter with committees or task forces who want to work specifically on an issue through the chapter, and having an administrative vice president who works with task forces or committees to address the administrative work of the chapter, for example, the newsletter, the budget, new member recruitment and retention, and publicity or press.

1) You should specify, if you wish, how many terms the individuals may serve. This forces the chapter to pay attention to leadership development and bringing in new people as a priority. You will need to specify when the officers begin their duties – at the end of the meeting at which the election is held? Or at some date following the meeting, sometimes in conjunction with a transition meeting or goal setting meeting.

2) Because of the nature of activists' lives, many chapters have found it helpful to add a section that creates the opportunity for officers to redistribute tasks (the secretary who is supposed to do the newsletter hates to create publications, but the VPAdministration loves these types of tasks --- rather than amend the operating rules just for this set of officers make it possible for them to trade off). Such a section could read: "The officers of the chapter may redistribute various tasks assigned to them, but not the responsibility for seeing that they are completed."

Article V. Committees

Ad Hoc Committees. The Board shall have the power to appoint committees for specific purposes and dissolve them when those purposes have been fulfilled. Chairs of ad hoc committees shall be members of the Chapter and shall be appointed by the Board.

Standing Committees. The Board shall have the power to appoint standing committees for the purpose of collaborative work on issues or administrative tasks. Chairs of said committees must be members of the Chapter and shall be appointed by the Board [or by the president with the consent of the board]. Committee chairs serve for a _____ year term (and are members of the board *ex officio*).

Committees: This section should elaborate on the process of delegating work in your chapter. It might seem easier to function as a "committee of the whole," but it doesn't help development of new leadership, and doesn't encourage leaders to delegate. You should consider requiring committees to submit budgets for events they plan, and designate that the chapter receive the proceeds from fundraising they may do. Committees also offer good opportunities for newcomers to get involved in the chapter, but make sure committee chairs restrict decision-making to actual chapter members. (Note: Some chapters use the word "committees" to refer to groups addressing administrative responsibilities, and the term "task forces" for groups working on issues, such as violence, reproductive rights, or diversity within the chapter.)

Keep in mind that, if you give committee chairs a vote on your chapter board, the outcome may affect a) the number of officers and leaders required for meetings (i.e., your quorum), and b) any balance on your board of differing viewpoints, especially if the president nominates these chairs for approval by the board. Some chapters place limits on the number of committees functioning at any given time.

Article VI. Nominations

The Chapter board shall approve an election committee at least ninety (90) days prior to the annual meeting. The election committee shall solicit nominations for offices from the entire membership beginning at least sixty (60) days prior to the annual meeting. At least thirty (30) days before the annual meeting, the names of those persons who have been nominated [and a candidate statement of up to _____ words] shall be mailed to each Chapter member with a notice of the date, time and place of the annual meeting. Nominations may be made from the floor at the annual meeting.

Nominations. The sample bylaws appear to assume that the election and nominations committees are one and the same. You might spell out here whether you want them to be separate. This might also be a good place to specify that a member of the nominations or elections committee may not be a candidate for office or part of a candidate's campaign. Nominations have to be taken by the chair from the floor of the elections meeting, so in your annual meeting rules you may want to spell out what proof of membership someone planning to run must offer in order for their nomination to be accepted by the chair.

Article VII. Elections

1. The election of officers shall take place at the annual meeting, which shall be held in _____ of each year.

2. Elections shall be conducted by the Elections Committee. Preferential balloting shall be used if more than two persons are running for the same office.

Elections. This section can add additional specifics about the elections process for the chapter, such as how materials of the candidates can be distributed to members (Mailing? Posting on web site?). Things to consider for policy may include how ballots from members whose qualification to vote might be in question are to be handled, and how the results will be announced to the candidates and chapter members.

Article VIII. Delegates to the National Conference

1. Any member of the Chapter who qualifies for election as a delegate/alternate to the National Conference shall be eligible to run for election. If the Chapter is unable to fill all of its allotted delegate slots with Chapter members, any eligible member of NOW may be elected.
2. All Chapter members are eligible to vote. There shall be separate ballots for delegate and alternate. Each member may cast as many ballots as there are delegate and alternate slots to be filled.
3. Notice of the election of delegates and alternates shall be given as far in advance as possible. All nominations shall be from the floor. The president shall appoint at least two non-candidates to conduct nominations and elections.

Delegates to the National Conference. The language in Section A. is important because if your chapter doesn't fill all the seats to which you are entitled with members or your own chapter, these seats can be signed over to any member of NOW, from any chapter or state, who is eligible to be a delegate at the National Conference. In this way, your chapter can be represented fully at a national conference even if your members don't/can't fill some or all of your available delegate positions. You may want to decide whether or not your substitute delegate must vote based on positions the chapter members want to support at a conference. The chapter president must sign the forms authorizing them to fill the delegate seat, and the name of the president on the form must agree with the officers your chapter lists on the membership database at the National Action Center.

Article IX. Grievance Procedure

In the event of a grievance involving the violation of a specific NOW policy or bylaw, each side to the controversy will designate one arbitrator and these two arbitrators will select a third arbitrator. Any person who has a conflict of interest

may not serve as an arbitrator. The arbitrators, acting as a grievance committee, will conduct a private hearing on the matter at which both sides to the controversy may present their case. The arbitrators shall endeavor to resolve disputes to the mutual satisfaction of the parties, but if they are unable to do so, the majority's decision becomes the decision of the grievance committee. If a party is dissatisfied with the decision, they may utilize the state NOW grievance procedure.

Grievance Procedure. In detailing how you want this procedure to happen, keep in mind that it must be fair to all parties, and must appear that way, even to people outside the chapter. An awkward or poorly spelled out policy can haunt the chapter for years. Typically it's easiest to have a three member (if for some reason you want to include more people, be sure to specify an odd number) group, with a member chosen by each side in the dispute, and a chair chosen by those committee members, as is spelled out above. Also keep in mind that individuals cannot "skip" a level of the organization, for example going straight to the National NOW Board of Directors, just because they think they will not prevail at a chapter or state level. They must start at the level at which the grievance occurred and appeal to the next level if they believe the first level has not correctly decided their grievance.

- It is important to spell out that a grievance is a violation of a specific NOW policy or bylaw, and you may want to require that the grieving party specify a requested remedy. Problems that have resulted in hurt feelings or ongoing problems unrelated to policy violations (someone who is rude in meetings or perhaps someone who is overly negative or dismissive of new ideas) are more appropriately dealt with through mediation by an outside group or at a special meeting devoted to resolution or management of this type of situation.
- You may also want to address that disputes involving money must be addressed confidentially.
- You may want to also specify whether the committee has the power to ask that results of the grievance be kept confidential.

Article X. Amendments to Operating Rules

A. These operating rules may be amended provided that such amendments are proposed by the board or by any five (5) Chapter members. Written notice of

proposed amendments must be given to all Chapter members at least thirty (30) days before the meeting at which the proposed amendment is to be voted on.

B. Amendments to these Operating Rules must be approved by 3/5 of those members present and voting.

Amendments to Operating Rules. Be sure to state an alternative in addition to the chapter leaderships' proposal of amendments (this can also apply to bylaws if the chapter leaders wish it), such as a number of chapter members who are required to propose a change.

a. Very importantly, be sure to write down the date the operating rules and bylaws of the chapter they were adopted. Most word processing programs allow you to indicate a date on each page. Number each page. If a meeting was called to approve change to the operating rules, include in the chapter's file a copy of the newsletter or other notice used to let members know about the meeting. With bylaws, include a copy of the method of notice. With change adopted to either document, include minutes of the meeting at which the vote took place.

b. Be sure to send copies of your new or newly revised chapter bylaws and/or operating rules to your state leadership, and to the chapter development department at the National Action Center, again being sure to date the materials you send.

Article XI. Affirmative Action and Diversity Outreach

The chapter's affirmative action and diversity outreach plan shall consist of the following (this is an example of a plan):

- The chapter shall maintain current demographic information about the area in which we are located.
- The chapter shall conduct
 - at least (2) workshops or sessions per year devoted to general diversity and/or coalition building work
 - have a standing committee which directs this activity as well as other work and outreach
- The chapter will have the following procedures in place for outreach:
 - membership in coalitions dedicated to community diversity
 - urge diverse membership in coalitions with which we work

- inclusion of organizations dedicated to diverse groups on newsletter mailing lists, speakers lists, and event planning committees or task forces
- requests of organizations dedicated to diverse groups to include us in their outreach
- The chapter will set specific and realistic goals for membership, participation, and leadership of a diversity that reflects the community and our issue work.

According to the National NOW bylaws, "Subunits shall have an affirmative action plan aimed at increasing diversity of participation at all levels of NOW." The above language is vague because your goals will (and should) differ based on your own community and your chapter makeup. Your chapter can fulfill this requirement in any way you find to be successful, but it is suggested that this be in your operating rules so that you can easily revise the plan as you become more successful in your approach to diversity.

Date of Adoption: _____

Regular standing meeting nights and locations, for both membership and board meetings, are helpful for many reasons, including that any publication (including chapter brochures) could carry the notice, and special mailings would only be required for annual meetings or special matters.

A NOW's chapters' sliding scale for dues collected from new members, and information about sending in memberships to the National Action Center, are explained in the section of the chapters-only site which addresses membership recruitment and retention. Since you must send in at least \$10 for each member, you can decide to set \$10 as a "lowest" amount, or agree that any amount is acceptable and the chapter will add any funds necessary to equal the \$10 amount, perhaps through a "sisterhood fund" which accepts donations for that purpose.

As of February 2006, dues are \$40 in California, Arizona, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Indiana, Connecticut and Missouri.

National NOW collects renewal dues (mailing notices, updating records, etc.) from all members by the National NOW Action Center, and rebates the appropriate percentage to the state and chapter.