

House of Delegates Primer



May 2025



142 E. Ontario
Chicago, IL 60611

HOUSE OF DELEGATES

PRIMER

Originally named Handbook of Governing Bodies
First drafted 1966, modified 2011, 2014, 2016, 2023, 11/2024, 5/2025

HOUSE OF DELEGATES

INTRODUCTION

The House of Delegates (“HOD” or “House”) is the legislative body of the American Osteopathic Association (“AOA” or “Association”). As such, it speaks for the members of the Association and for the osteopathic profession. This Handbook has been prepared so that all who participate in the annual meeting of the HOD may have a better understanding of the methods and rules under which it operates.

Since the HOD traditionally meets only once a year, many important actions must be taken at the annual meeting. In order that the many resolutions placed before the HOD may be considered carefully and expeditiously, it is necessary to have a well-established routine for the conduct of business.

This routine demands the close cooperation of the delegates of the House, the members of the Board of Trustees (“BOT”) and its officers, and the AOA staff. The delegates of the House have the duty of considering not only the wishes of their societies and their geographical regions, but also the welfare of the Association and of the osteopathic profession as a whole.

The following pages contain information regarding the organization and operation of the HOD. A careful reading of this material will give each member of the House an informed view of the activities and procedures that lead to the establishment of policy for the AOA and for the osteopathic profession.

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR DELEGATES AND ALTERNATES

Meeting Overview: The annual meeting of the HOD is held during the month of June, July or August and separate from the AOA's Annual Convention and Scientific Seminar (OMED). The AOA President may call special sessions of the House. The Delegates shall be given at least two weeks' notice; the call will include the purpose(s) of the special session.

Delegates: The AOA will provide to the chief executive officer/executive director of each divisional society, **seventy-five (75) days** prior to the first day of the annual meeting of the House of Delegates, a statement of the number of Regular Members of this Association located in the state, district or territory represented by that divisional society. In the case of the uniformed services divisional society, the notice shall include the number of Regular Members of this Association currently serving in the uniformed services of the United States.

This information is also made available on the HOD website. A list of all delegates and alternate delegates is published on the HOD website and becomes part of the meeting proceedings.

It is the prerogative of the Speaker to determine the order of business at any meeting and may vary the order if it will expedite the business of the House, subject to any objections sustained by the House. The HOD, by majority vote, may change the order of business at any meeting.

The introduction of business to the AOA House is through the presentation of resolutions on behalf of a delegation. Reports from the Board of Trustees and AOA Bureaus, Councils and Committees on topics of interest to physicians or in response to previously adopted or referred resolutions also are routinely received as business.

The resolutions are referred to a reference committee for consideration. A reference committee is a special committee that serves to expedite the business of the House and is the venue at which delegates, alternate delegates and others can support, oppose, voice concern or otherwise articulate their point of view on resolutions under consideration.

Following the testimony received in open session, the reference committee deliberates in executive session and prepares a report with recommendations to the full House. It is the HOD that ultimately takes action on all items of business.

Composition of the House of Delegates: All delegates and alternate delegates are required to be members of the AOA. The House of Delegates shall consist of delegates elected, or otherwise appointed, by the divisional societies and other authorized units, the elected officers and trustees of the Association and of such other members as may be provided for in the Bylaws. Each divisional society shall be entitled to at least one delegate.

The House includes:

- A total of **473 delegate positions** will be allocated among the divisional societies for each of the states, the District of Columbia, and osteopathic physicians serving in the uniformed services (Association of Military Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons, or “AMOPS”).
 - Each divisional society and AMOPS automatically receives one delegate. The remaining delegate positions will be allocated among the divisional societies and AMOPS based on the proportion of members of the AOA who are located in the state represented by that divisional society or in the case of the AMOPS, the proportion of members of the AOA currently serving on active duty in the uniformed services of the United States.
 - The allocation of the remaining delegates will be recalculated each year.
- Each recognized specialty college is entitled to one delegate and alternate. Specialty college delegate and/or alternate cannot serve as a member of the divisional society delegation to the AOA House of Delegates.
- The Bureau of Emerging Leaders (BEL) will designate three delegates and three alternates. The BEL will be represented in the HOD by one Resident delegate, one Fellowship delegate, and one New Physician in Practice Delegate selected by vote of the BEL. The Resident, Fellowship, or New Physician in Practice delegates or alternates cannot also serve as a member of a divisional society or specialty college delegation.
- Each osteopathic medical college (and branch campus) accredited by this Association will be represented in the AOA House of Delegates by its student council president. An alternate delegate shall be elected by the applicable student council. Both the student council president and an alternate delegate, when seated, will be seated as a member of the delegation of the divisional society representing the state in which the osteopathic college is located.
- The Student Osteopathic Medical Association (SOMA) will be represented in the House by one member of the SOMA Board selected by vote of the SOMA Board. The SOMA delegate or alternate cannot serve as a member of a divisional society delegation representing the state in which such SOMA Board Member’s osteopathic college is located.

AOA elected Officers and Trustees are ex officio members of the HOD.

Delegate seating for the HOD Business Meetings is at the discretion of the Speaker. The Speaker strives to rotate delegate seating assignments to ensure that no one society sits in front (or in back) too often. Societies can request to be seated near other societies but must do so well in advance of the meeting.

Delegate Responsibilities: During the HOD meeting, delegates have a number of responsibilities, including serving on HOD committees, participating in caucuses, and testifying at reference committee hearings. After the reference committees present their reports, the delegates have the opportunity to testify and vote on the recommendations of each reference committee.

Prior to the HOD meeting, delegates should work with their colleagues to draft resolutions for consideration at HOD meetings. Following the meeting, delegates should report highlights of HOD meetings to the leadership or membership of the organizations they represent.

Role of Alternate Delegates: Alternate delegates do not have the privilege of access to the floor but may be seated in the visitors' section until they serve in the "delegate" capacity – at which time they would move to the delegate table.

Alternate delegates may testify on resolutions and reports in reference committees and participate in caucuses. Because alternate delegates technically are not HOD members, they cannot introduce resolutions or vote. However, they can be temporarily credentialed to substitute for a delegate, and thus, speak and debate on the HOD floor, offer amendments to pending matters, and make motions and vote on the outcome of items of business. In order to access the floor, an alternate delegate must be formally recredentialed as a delegate, as described under Rules of the House of Delegates section.

Seating of Alternate Delegates: If a delegate cannot attend a meeting of the House of Delegates, then an alternate may be seated. Alternate delegates do not have the privilege of access to the floor but may be seated in the visitors' section until they serve in the "delegate" capacity – at which time they would move to the delegate table.

Alternate delegates sit apart from the delegates in a reserved seating area during the formal HOD sessions. Reserved seats for alternate delegates are not pre-assigned.

Seating at reference committee hearings and other programming is unassigned for all participants.

Credentials: Official credentials are available in advance to the chief executive officers/executive directors of the divisional societies, specialty colleges, Bureau of Emerging Leaders, the Student Osteopathic Medical Association, and the deans of accredited colleges of osteopathic medicine for distribution to their selected delegates and alternates. These credentials must be presented to the Committee on Credentials at the time of registration.

Registration: Registration for delegates and alternates is conducted from 6:30 a.m. on Friday the first day the House of Delegates convenes, until adjournment. (Early registration is available on Thursday, from 2 – 6 p.m.).

Orientation: The Speaker and Vice Speaker of the House conduct an orientation for new members of the House of Delegates and other delegates and alternates interested in attending on Friday (8 a.m.) prior to the opening of the House (9 a.m.).

Access to Floor: Members of the House of Delegate who wish to secure the floor for any purpose shall address the Speaker and identify themselves by name and delegation. Access to the floor of the House is limited to the officers and properly certified delegates of the HOD, the elected and appointed officers of the AOA; the past presidents; and when requested by the

Speaker, the chairs of AOA departments, bureaus, committees and councils; the chief executive officers/executive directors of AOA affiliated groups; and members of the AOA staff. Special Seated Ambassadors also have access to the floor of the HOD and during reference committee meetings.

Meetings begin promptly. Delegates, alternate delegates, and guests are urged to arrive early and be in their seats 15 minutes before the stated time. Similarly, delegates are urged to schedule their departures after the meeting adjourns on the last day, so that they can give full consideration to that day's business items.

Special Seating (non-delegate invitations)

Ambassador

- Qualifications – A national medical organization may apply to the AOA Board of Trustees for official ambassador status in the House of Delegates. The membership of the organization shall be national in scope and have similar interests as the AOA regarding health care policy. Each organization, upon application, must demonstrate compliance with these requirements.
- Rights and Privileges – Organizations with ambassador status are entitled to send one representative to meeting(s) of the AOA House of Delegates. The Ambassador is permitted voice in the AOA reference committee meetings and on the floor of the House of Delegates. Ambassadors would not have the right to introduce business, introduce an amendment, make a motion or vote.
- Ambassadors are invited to attend:
 - Open meetings of the AOA House of Delegates, including reference committees;
 - Caucus meetings upon invitation of that group; and
 - Official meal and reception functions of the AOA House of Delegates, including the President's inaugural reception.

Special Invited Guest Definition

- Qualifications - This Special Invited Guest (SIG) category would be open to national health care organizations that have already established a relationship with the AOA to work towards issues and goals of mutual benefit (e.g., health system reform, health and wellness initiatives, etc.). The membership base of these organizations would be categorized as health care allies.

A national health care organization whose membership base are allied professionals, may apply to the AOA Board of Trustees to be considered as a special invited guest (SIG) in the House of Delegates. The organization must be national in scope and have similar goals and concerns to the AOA regarding health care issues. Each organization, upon application, must demonstrate compliance of the requirements noted above.

- Rights and Privileges - Organizations provided SIG status would be entitled to send one representative to meeting(s) of the AOA House of Delegates. These representatives would be recognized as attendees of the HOD meeting, but would not have the right to introduce business, introduce an amendment, make a motion or vote.
- Special Invited Guests (SIG) are invited to attend:
 - Open meetings of the AOA House of Delegates, including reference committees;
 - Caucus meetings upon invitation of that group; and
 - Official meal and reception functions of the AOA House of Delegates, including the President's inaugural reception.

Schedule of House Meetings:

The annual sessions of the House of Delegates are as follows:

- Friday: The House of Delegates typically convenes at 9 a.m. Matters relating to the organization of the House, presentation of various reports from the President, Chief Executive Officer, appointed officers, staff members, chairs of departments.
 - HOD reference committee sessions are usually scheduled at 1:30 p.m. and the individual chairs determine the length of the sessions.
 - The HOD reference committees hold open hearings with the time and location announced by the Speaker. The membership of the reference committees are listed in the Agenda of the House of Delegates. All members of the AOA are invited to attend the hearings of these committees.
- Saturday: Nominations of all officers, trustees, and of the Speaker and Vice Speaker of the House of Delegates is a regular order of business typically beginning at 7:30 a.m.
 - Reports of the reference committees of the House of Delegates will begin at approximately 9 a.m.
- Sunday: Election of all officers, trustees, the Speaker and Vice Speaker of the House of Delegates is a regular order of business at approximately 7:30 am on the last day of the meeting of the House.

OPERATION OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Meetings begin promptly. Delegates, alternate delegates, and guests are urged to arrive early and be in their seats 15 minutes before the stated time. Similarly, delegates are urged to schedule their departures after the meeting adjourns on the last day, so that they can give full consideration to that day's business items.

Officers: The Speaker of the House of Delegates is the presiding officer. The Vice Speaker presides over the House in the absence or at the request of the Speaker and assumes all duties of the Speaker. The Speaker and Vice Speaker are members of the HOD, with all of the associated rights and privileges. The Secretary of the House is the CEO of the AOA.

Duties of House of Delegates: The House of Delegates serves as the legislative body of the Association while the Board of Trustees serves as the administrative executive body. The duties of both are defined in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Association.

The powers and duties of the House as defined in Article VI of the Constitution and Article V of the Bylaws, make it the authoritative body of the Association on matters within its purview. The House can determine Association policy, enact, amend and repeal the AOA's Constitution and Bylaws and the Code of Ethics, and create special committees. The House also has the duty of electing officers and trustees of the AOA and the Speaker and Vice Speaker of the House. It also concurs with the annual budget as per the Constitution and Bylaws.

The Board of Trustees provides for the maintenance and supervision of the AOA offices, hires the CEO, Chief Financial Officer, General Counsel, and the AOA Editor. The staff prepares and the Board approves the annual budget, supervises financial affairs, approves the appointments of the chairs of departments, bureaus, committees and councils (selected by the President-elect) selects the time and place of the annual meeting and clinical assembly, and reviews all reports and makes recommendations to the House of Delegates.

Resolutions and Communications to House of Delegates: Resolutions and communications involving AOA policy come to the House of Delegates from several sources: the President of the AOA, the Board of Trustees and its bureaus, committees and councils, the divisional societies and affiliated organizations. **Individual submissions are not allowable.**

The Board of Trustees reports annually to the House of Delegates on the Association's activities during the past year through the CEO or president, or designee. Divisional societies and affiliated organizations frequently direct resolutions on the establishment of policy to the House of Delegates. District societies, when seeking similar action, should pursue such action through their divisional societies.

The employed staff of the AOA may also make recommendations to the House but only through an appropriate entity such as the BOT or an individual bureau, committee, or council. The HOD receives many recommendations for consideration each year and is responsible for acting on them to the best of their ability to meet the changing needs of the Association and of the profession.

The deadline for resolutions to be processed is typically in early May. Late resolutions may be accepted following approval. **All resolution submissions will receive a confirmation email from AOA staff acknowledging receipt of the resolution. It is the responsibility of the affiliate society submitting the resolution to confirm receipt if an acknowledgement is not received within 2 business days.**

In an effort to "Green the AOA's Footprint," business of the AOA House of Delegates will be

available in downloadable form on the [Annual Business Meeting of the AOA webpage](#) located on the AOA Website. The resolutions will be available prior to the meeting of the HOD and will be available in three versions – one inclusive document, by reference committee report and as single resolutions. Other materials available via the site [Annual Business Meeting of the AOA webpage](#) will include:

- (1) Agenda and Reports – contains the agenda of the House, AOA delegates roster, list of delegates and alternates, members of the reference committees, rules and order of business and the annual reports.
- (2) Communications – letters received from affiliated organizations that are informational in nature.
- (3) Supplemental Reports – reports received after posting of the agenda.
- (4) Resolutions – items for action.
- (5) Amendments to Constitution and Bylaws of the AOA.
- (6) A report to the House of Delegates regarding any amendment to the basic documents of any of AOA's affiliated organizations

Only late resolutions approved by the Committee on Rules and Order of Business and reports of the HOD Reference Committees will be provided as paper versions.

Delegates and alternates are asked to bring the above materials to the meetings of the House. It is the responsibility of the Delegates and Alternates to come prepared by reviewing the various reports and resolutions they are being asked to deliberate.

RULES OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES (for more detail see Appendix A and B)

Seating of Delegates: A delegate having been seated shall remain the credentialed delegate throughout the meeting. In the event that a credentialed delegate has failed to qualify and assume their seat when the House convenes on the second day of the meeting, the designated alternate may be credentialed and seated. If a delegate, having been seated, is unable to be present due to physical disability or other cause(s) acceptable to the House, an alternate may be credentialed and seated for that roll call period and continue as a delegate until the previously seated delegate returns for duty at the subsequent roll call. In that event, the alternate delegate who has been seated may, by direction of the House, be dropped from the roll and the previously seated delegate shall return to their seat in the House.

Quorum: One-half of the accredited delegates of the House shall constitute a quorum.

Rules of Order: The meetings of the House of Delegates and of all other bodies of the AOA are governed by *Roberts's Rules of Order Newly Revised 12th Edition*, except in such instances as are specifically provided for in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Association or

in the order of business that may be adopted from time to time. The order of business and any special rules adopted at the beginning of the meeting will govern the procedure unless unanimously suspended. Any special order of business must be submitted to the Committee on Rules and Order of Business for approval.

Reports: All reports of officers and committees, except supplemental reports, are made available electronically to each delegate and alternate delegate prior to the opening of the House of Delegates. This includes all resolutions and communications for consideration by the House received up to that time. All supplemental reports are presented to each delegate before such report is considered by the House.

Reports shall not be read verbatim to the House of Delegates, except by consent of two-thirds of the members present and voting.

Referral of Report and Resolutions: Prior to each session of the House, the Speaker of the House will prepare a list of recommended business referrals to reference committees. This list will be available at the opening meeting of the House and be subject to amendment or approval on vote by the HOD. The Speaker has the power to refer any resolution to a special committee, or the House may recommend the appointment of a special committee.

Resolutions on the Appropriation of Funds: No funding appropriation(s) can be made by the House except upon recommendation of the Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees. All resolutions, motions or otherwise, requiring the appropriation of funds must first be referred without discussion to the Finance Committee. An adverse ruling on such motions may be overruled by a three-fourths vote of the House. A statement of estimated fiscal impact be included with all resolutions, including those without a funds appropriation request. This information is generated by staff and reviewed and approved by the Finance Committee.

Introduction of New Business on Last Meeting Day: No new business shall be introduced on the last day of the House of Delegate's meeting except by a two-thirds consent of those members present, provided two-thirds of the seated delegates are in attendance.

Presentation of Resolutions and Other Items of Business: Within the limitation of the rule on the presentation of new business on the last meeting day of the House of Delegates, any delegates may present an item of business from the floor. Resolutions and other items of business should be presented on behalf of bureaus, committees, councils, or AOA-chartered and affiliated organizations by a credentialed delegate. These items must be presented as far in advance as possible and provided to the Secretary of the House so that copies are made available to House members.

Amendments to Constitution, Bylaws and the Code of Ethics: The Constitution may be amended by the House at any annual meeting by a two-thirds vote of the total number of delegates credentialed for voting, provided that the amendment(s) will have been presented to the House and filed with the CEO at a previous annual meeting. These amendments must be published in the JOM no less than two months nor more than four months prior to the meeting at which they are to be deliberated. Amendments to the Constitution are first presented as

“read-only” for consideration and considered for action at the following year’s annual meeting of the House.

The Bylaws may be amended by the House at any annual or special meeting by a two-thirds vote of the total number of delegates accredited for voting, provided that the amendment shall have been filed with the CEO at least **two months** before the meeting at which the amendment is to be deliberated. Upon receiving a copy of the amendment, the CEO will have the amendment(s) published in the JOM at least **one month** before the meeting. At this meeting, the Board of Trustees may revise the proposed amendment if necessary to secure conformity to the Constitution and Bylaws and then refer it to the House for final action no later than the day prior to the end of the meeting. Changes to the Bylaws take effect upon adoption. There is not “read-only” provision for initial consideration as exists with proposed amendments to the Constitution.

The Code of Ethics may be amended by the House of Delegates at any annual meeting by two-thirds vote of the total number of delegates credentialed for voting, provided a copy of the proposed amendment is filed with the CEO at least **90 days** before the annual business meeting at which it is to be deliberated. Upon receipt of the proposed amendment(s), the CEO will have the proposed amendment published in the JOM not later than one month before the annual meeting at which the amendment is scheduled for consideration.

Voting: The method of voting in the House of Delegates is usually determined by the Speaker of the House who may call for a voice vote, show of hands, standing vote, electronic vote, roll call of the delegations, and/or ballot vote.

If the result of a vote is uncertain or if a division is called for, the Speaker will have the option of asking for a standing vote of delegates. The standing vote count will be made by tellers appointed by the Speaker and reported to the Secretary. It is essential that voters remain standing until the Speaker has indicated that the count is completed. The same procedure is then followed for recording the negative vote. The Committee on Credentials is charged with supervising the counting of roll call votes in the House of Delegates, as specifically requested by the Speaker.

Nominations: Nomination of all officers and trustees of the AOA, and nomination of the Speaker and Vice Speaker of the House of Delegates, except nominations of those otherwise provided for in the Constitution, will be a regular order of business in the House during the annual meeting. Nominations may be made from the floor immediately preceding the balloting. Nominating speeches should not exceed two minutes.

Elections: Election of officers and trustees and the Speaker and Vice Speaker shall take place during the annual meeting of the House. Only properly credentialed delegates are permitted to participate in the elections of the House. Contested elections are held under the supervision of the Committee on Credentials.

All elections shall be by ballot except as outlined in this section and a majority of all votes cast are necessary to elect. In recording such a vote, each divisional society shall be given one

vote for each 20 Regular Members of the AOA located in the area represented by that division and such votes may be cast by any one of the delegation then seated or divided among the various members of the delegation as the delegation shall decide. If there is one nominee for a given office or trusteeship, it is the duty of the Secretary to cast the elective ballot for that nominee.

Conflict of Interest: Members of the House of Delegates who have a substantial financial interest or a leadership position in a commercial enterprise, which interest will be materially affected by a matter before the House of Delegates, must publicly disclose that interest before testifying at a reference committee on the matter or speaking on the floor of the House of Delegates on the matter.

Conduct of Business by the House of Delegates: Each member of the House of Delegates and the AOA Officers resolutely affirm a commitment to be courteous, respectful and collegial in the conduct of House of Delegate actions. Although differences of opinion may lead to spirited debate, ad hominem attacks are prohibited. Video or audio recording or streaming of house proceedings is prohibited, unless otherwise approved in writing in advance by the Speaker, Vice Speaker and Secretary of the HOD.

REFERENCE COMMITTEES OF HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Reference Committees: There are nine (9) reference committees of the House of Delegates. All are appointed by the Speaker of the House except the Committee on Credentials and the Joint Board/House Budget Review Committee whose members are appointed by the Speaker and the President. In choosing members for HOD committee service, the Speaker is encouraged to appoint a committee diverse in terms of specialty and geographic representation, race, ethnicity, age, gender, and sexual orientation.

The following is a general description of the items assigned to each of the reference committees or (in the case of Rules and Order of Business, non-reference special committee):

CREDENTIALS:

The Committee is appointed by the President. It receives and validates the credentials of the delegates and alternates, maintains a continuous digital roll call, determines the presence of a quorum, supervises voting and election procedures and makes recommendations on the eligibility of delegates and alternates to a seat in the House when a seat is contested.

RULES AND ORDER OF BUSINESS:

This Committee presents the agenda and recommends for approval such rules as are necessary for the conduct of the business of the House and make recommendations on acceptance of late resolutions. The report of this Committee is prepared in collaboration with the officers of the House and is presented at the opening of the annual session. The committee is not a reference committee and does not normally hold open hearings but does provide sponsors of "late resolutions" an opportunity to explain the reasons for the lateness of the resolution.

RESOLUTIONS:

This Committee drafts resolutions expressive of the sense of the meeting.

EDUCATIONAL AFFAIRS:

This Committee considers matters relating to osteopathic education, colleges of osteopathic medicine, postdoctoral training programs and other matters as determined by the Speaker. These resolutions are numbered in a 200 series (e.g., 200, 201, etc.).

PROFESSIONAL AFFAIRS:

This Committee considers matters relating to osteopathic healthcare facilities, advocacy, legislation, membership and conventions, and other matters as determined by the Speaker. These resolutions are numbered in a 300 series (e.g., 300, 301, etc.).

PUBLIC AFFAIRS:

This Committee considers matters relating to public and industrial health, research, wellness and well-being, and other matters as determined by the Speaker. These resolutions are numbered in a 400 series (e.g., 400, 401, etc.).

CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS:

This Committee considers the choice of words, phraseology, style and merits of all proposed amendments to the Constitution, Bylaws, and the Code of Ethics, and makes recommendations as necessary. These resolutions are numbered in a 500 series (e.g., 500, 501, etc.).

AD HOC COMMITTEE:

This Committee considers materials relating to physician practice / socioeconomic issues, affiliate relations, health insurance and communication activities, and other items determined by the Speaker. These resolutions are numbered in a 600 series (e.g., 600, 601, etc.).

JOINT BOARD/HOUSE BUDGET REVIEW:

This Committee is composed of four members from the Board of Trustees, appointed by the President; four members from the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker; and the Treasurer of the Board of Trustees, as a Consultant. It acts as a reference committee to review the AOA strategic plan and budget. These resolutions are numbered in a 700 series (e.g., 700, 701, etc.).

GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR REFERENCE COMMITTEES

Duties/Responsibilities: The primary responsibility of a reference committee is to recommend to the House an appropriate course of action on matters that have been placed before it. This duty should be accomplished by:

- evaluating all resolutions received by the committee,
- receiving testimony during reference committee meetings,
- basing its recommendations on the best information and advice that is available, and
- making decisions in the best interests of the public and the profession.

It is not the duty of the reference committee to attempt to prevent the House from taking action on any matter that has been presented. Nor is it the committee's duty to accept automatically and without deliberation the opinions of its own members or the opinions of those who have testified.

The reference committee fulfills its duty when it takes into consideration all of these factors and advises the House to approve, disapprove, amend, postpone, or replace by a substitute resolution, any resolution that has been placed before it.

Authority: Reference committees have a good deal of authority but must act within the standing rules of the House and within the framework of the Constitution and Bylaws. The reference committees may not only recommend action on resolutions before them but may also propose resolutions on their own initiative. They may call upon the officers, members of the Board of Trustees, committees, and the members of the staff when they desire to gain information. They may make an explanation of the committee's decision before recommending to the House that a resolution be approved, disapproved, amended, postponed or replaced by a substitute resolution.

Referral of Items of Business to Reference Committees: The reference committees receive items of business for consideration by referral from the House of Delegates. At the opening meeting of the House, the list of referrals prepared by the Speaker is presented to the House for approval. Hearing no objection, the list stands as presented. The House, at its discretion, may refer a resolution to a different reference committee.

Other items of business may be referred to a reference committee by the Speaker of the House during the course of business. A listing of all resolution referrals made to the reference committees will be made available as soon as possible after the House recesses. This list, in effect, constitutes the agenda for the meetings of the reference committees.

Conduct of Hearing: The primary duty of a reference committee is to receive and evaluate opinions so that it may present a well-informed recommendation to the House. Opinions are received during the open hearing that is conducted by the reference committee. During actual deliberations of the committee, the committee and its staff will meet in executive session.

All members of the AOA have the right to attend reference committee hearings and participate in the discussion, whether or not they are members of the House of Delegates. Guests may be permitted to provide testimony if appropriate and with prior approval from the Speaker.

Duties of the Chair: The chair of the reference committee should preside at both of the above meetings and should carry out the usual duties of a chair in maintaining order, facilitating the transaction of business and in ruling on length and pertinence of discussion.

The chair should not permit the making of motions or the taking of formal votes at an open hearing, since the objective of the hearing is to receive information and opinions and not to make decisions of any sort that would bind the reference committee in its subsequent deliberations. The final motions should be held in executive session as noted above.

The chair should ensure that all who want to be heard are heard but should be watchful against prolonged holding of the floor by one or more persons at the expense of others who may wish to counsel with the committee. The chair, with the consent of the committee, may place reasonable limitations on discussion and debate.

Committee members may ask questions to be sure that they understand the opinions being expressed or may answer questions if a member seeks clarification; however, the committee members are not to engage in debate with those presenting testimony or express opinions during the hearings. Their responsibility is to listen carefully and evaluate all the opinions presented so that the reference committee may provide the voting body with a carefully considered recommendation.

It is the responsibility of the chair to review and approve the reference committee report, as prepared by AOA support staff, prior to publication. The chairs should coordinate this activity with their reference committee secretaries.

Testimony: Each individual speaking to an issue must be recognized by the reference committee chair while at a microphone. When called upon, the individual should:

- Identify oneself by name;
- Specify whether testifying as an individual, or offering testimony on behalf of a delegation, caucus or affiliate (and if so, state the name of the group);
- Disclose any conflicts of interest with respect to the issue at hand. AOA policy defines a conflict of interest as “having a substantial financial interest or leadership position in commercial enterprise, which interest will be materially affected by a matter.” A substantial financial interest is further defined as 5% or greater ownership stake and/or receiving \$25,000 or more annually from a commercial entity.
- Clearly state his or her intent in offering comments – provide testimony in support or opposition of the resolution or recommend a compromise position or a substitute resolution or resolved.
- Offer general background or propose alternative language, if appropriate; and
- Direct testimony to the Reference Committee, not to other hearing participants.

Wording for alternative language or a proposed substitute resolution should be submitted in writing to reference committee staff. Written material that accompanies the testimony may also be presented to the reference committee staff for discussion at the committee’s executive session.

Executive Session: Following its open hearing, a reference committee goes into executive session to deliberate and to construct its report. It has the prerogative to call into its executive session anyone it may wish to hear or question. The reference committee reviews the testimony that was submitted and discusses its options for disposing of each item. During executive session, the reference committee may review existing AOA policy and directives, background material from other sources, or medical journals. The reference committee may also consider substitute resolutions that were presented during the open hearing. Legal counsel and other AOA senior leadership team members are available to all reference committees during their deliberations.

A reference committee has wide latitude in its efforts to facilitate expression of its recommendations on assigned business. A reference committee may choose to amend a resolution, consolidate kindred resolutions by constructing a single substitute, or recommend that an item be adopted, not adopted or referred.

Secretarial Assistance: Each reference committee will be provided with staff to assist the committee in the development of their report. These staff have expertise in the committee’s defined responsibilities and should be used as a valuable source of information and experience. Verbatim minutes of the reference committee will not be taken; however, committee staff will assist in the development of a cohesive report that will be acted upon by the House as a whole.

Preparation of Report: The reports of the reference committees to the House are nothing more than the comment and the recommendation of the committee on the materials that it has had under consideration.

All recommendations to the House must be placed in the standard resolution form. Resolutions should be worded with the utmost clarity and must contain only a single topic. Resolutions containing more than one topic must be divided so that the House can vote intelligently on a single question. The wording of a resolution is most important, since an improperly worded resolution will not give the delegates a clear and immediate idea of the question on which they are being asked to vote.

If the report of a committee contains no resolutions, the reference committee should merely state that it has noted the report and make such comment as it may desire. It is not proper to recommend that the report be “received” or “approved”. If the reference committee wishes to approve some item in the report, it must draft a suitable resolution. The reports should be as brief as possible. Long sections of material that the delegates already have before them, should not be repeated.

Reports: Every effort should be made by the members of a reference committee to reach unanimous agreement. If this is not possible, the committee shall work together in good faith to present a report.

Presentation of Reports to House of Delegates: The reports of the reference committees are presented by their Chair and / or the Vice Chair.

The Speaker will announce the order that the reference committee reports will be heard and acted upon.

In the event of debate or discussion, the Chair and members of a reference committee are free to reply to any questions or to comment. If the Chair desires, they may call on a member of a bureau, committee, or council, member of the Board of Trustees or staff to supply the information requested. The Chair of the committee, however, should be prepared to comment on the position that their committee has taken.

Guidelines, a Tutorial on Parliamentary Procedure and HOD Resolution Protocol are noted in Appendixes A and B of this document.

Tutorial on Parliamentary Procedure

Everything You Wanted to Know but were Afraid to Ask!

Introductory Comments

To assist in the smooth operation of the American Osteopathic Association's House of Delegates deliberations, the AOA Speaker and Vice Speaker have developed a "Tutorial on Parliamentary Procedure."

While this tutorial in no way replaces the Rules of Order as defined by Roberts's Rules of Order Newly Revised 12th Edition, it does provide a concise summary of the parliamentary procedures used to facilitate the business of the House of Delegates.

TUTORIAL GUIDE

1. Say "I move", instead of "I make a motion".
2. In Resolutions, amendments to "Resolves" are discussed before any "Whereas" amendments.
3. Resolutions will be stated to the House in the following way -- "I present for consideration Resolution 109";
 - a. "the Committee recommends it be approved and I so move".
 - b. "the Committee recommends it be amended as follows and approved, and I so move".
 - c. "the Committee recommends it be disapproved. To start debate, I move the Resolution be approved". (All motions should be stated in the affirmative.) If you agree with the decision of the Committee, you will vote "**nay**", against the Resolution.
 - d. Since resolutions come from a Committee, they do not need a second.
4. All amendments will be "old material crossed out", or printed in red in PowerPoint, and NEW MATERIAL IN **BOLD CAPS**". This will not be printed on every Resolution.
5. A Resolution or Motion, once the House has begun, may be withdrawn only by the Delegation.
6. Regardless of whether or not the maker of a motion accepts a "friendly amendment," it must be opened to debate and voted on formally, unless adopted by "unanimous consent."

7. Amendments to the original motion or resolution are “1st order.” Amendments to a pending amendment are of “2nd order.” Only one amendment of each order can be pending at any time. No amendment above the 2nd order will be allowed until disposition of the pending 2nd order amendment is resolved.
8. Amendments, and amendments to amendments, must be seconded.
9. Do not misuse the motion to “Table”:

- a. “Postpone temporarily” (motion to table) terminates at the end of the current meeting. It supersedes all other motions except recess and adjourn, it requires a second, is not debatable, and requires a majority vote. It may be taken from the table only during the current meeting, which requires a motion and a second, is not debatable, and requires a majority vote.

The purpose of the motion to lay on the table is to set aside routine business to turn to something more urgent. Because it is not debatable, requires a majority vote, and has a high precedence, members are sometimes tempted to use the motion to kill the main motion. This is an improper use of the motion to table and is an example of how parliamentary procedure earns the adverse term - “railroading”

Another misuse of the motion to lay on the table is to confuse the motion with the motion to postpone to a certain time. Often, when a member wishes to postpone a main motion until later in the same meeting or until a later meeting (only the following meeting according to Robert’s Rules), the member uses the motion to lay on the table rather than the proper motion: the motion to postpone to a certain time.

- b. “Postpone definitely” sets a definite future time or date for debate. It needs a second, can have brief debate, is amendable only to time or date, and needs a majority. If a member wishes to suppress action on a main motion, they should move to postpone it indefinitely, which is debatable. Improper use of the motion to table allows tyranny of the majority – there is nothing wrong with majority rule as long as it includes the right of the minority to speak.
- c. Confusion results between the motion to postpone definitely and the motion to lay on the table (postpone temporarily). Often, members use the motion to table when they really mean to postpone definitely. There is no such motion as “to table until the next meeting.”
- d. Finally, and probably most importantly, someone of ill-will could move to “table” a sensitive issue, no debate would be allowed, and it would require only a majority vote. The assembly might then forget “to remove it from the table”, and it would die a quiet, unnoticed death when the final gavel ending the meeting came down.

10. Saying "Call the question" means to vote immediately. It requires a second, is not debatable, requires a two-thirds majority, and must stand alone and not in combination with any other motion.
11. A "Motion to Reconsider" can be made only by a member of the prevailing side.
12. All members who wish to comment in debate should have a turn before another member speaks yet again.
13. When discussing a Motion, Resolution, or Amendment, please state up front, whether you speak in SUPPORT OF, or OPPOSITION TO, the item at hand.
14. Respect other members by taking discussion outside of the room and by turning off cell phones and other portable electronic devices.

HOUSE OF DELEGATES RESOLUTION PROTOCOL

AOA affiliates, AOA bureaus, committees or councils, the AOA President and the AOA Board of Trustees to the House of Delegates, may introduce resolutions. Resolutions are submitted to ask the AOA to take a formal position or action on a particular subject (e.g., health care reform, public health issues, physician socioeconomic / practice concerns), revise and/or negate current policies of the AOA, or to modify AOA's Constitution and Bylaws. Resolutions may also request the AOA take a direct action, for example, advocate on a particular issue, study an issue for report back at a date-certain meeting, write a letter on behalf of a particular issue or concern, etc. These "directives," if approved, are normally given to one of the various bureaus, councils and committees of the AOA for handling. Below are recommendations to assist in the preparation of a resolution.

A resolution template is available for use by all authors. This template (link from osteopathic.org) provides an outline of the resolution document and notes the following:

- Title – succinct name of resolution,
- Author – group(s) introducing resolution,
- Whereas statements – clear, concise 1 – 2-line statements noting the rationale and reasoning for presenting the resolution,
- Resolved statements – clear, concise 1-line statements of intent, actionable request, and/or affirmative actions. Resolved statement(s) should serve as stand-alone items of policy and/or terms of intent.
- Background information – this section is created by staff to reflect current AOA policy, recount the historical action on that specific, and related, topics and other relevant background that may be useful to the delegates.
- Fiscal Impact – estimated financial impact to the AOA.

Available to all members of the AOA and the public are two searchable tools: the [Resolution Portal](#) and the [Policy Portal](#). These tools provide the ability to review the full resolution as well as the policy statements approved by the House of Delegates including sunset policy review, from 2017-2021 and is searchable by date and/or title. This program, updated annually within 30 days of the conclusion of the House of Delegates meeting, reflects all actions from that meeting. Prior to submitting a resolution, the author(s) should search the listing of AOA policy statements to ensure there is not a conflicting policy or to find policy that currently exists that could be modified to serve the need of the author(s).

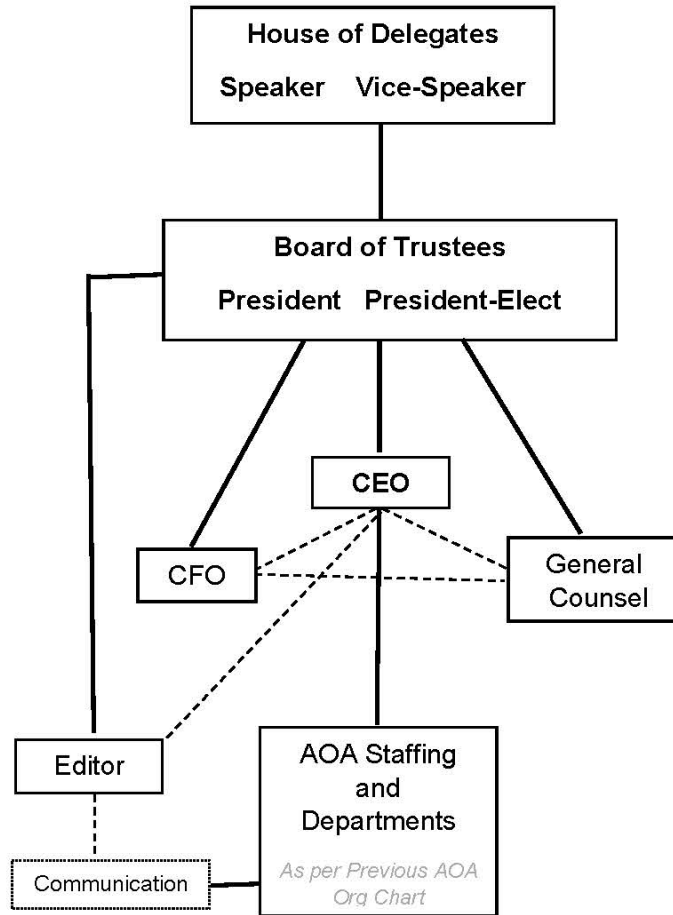
Policies set by the House of Delegates are part of a 5-year sunset review process. The AOA's bureaus, committees and councils review each policy. As part of this process, those entities review the policy and respond to the following questions:

- Are the policies still relevant?
- Has the policy directive been met?
- Are there recommended modifications and/or updates that should be made to the existing policy?
- Should the policy be afforded additional review based on changes in medical practice, changes in laws and legislation, etc.?
- Should the policy be merged with another policy to make it a stronger statement?
- Should the policy be sunset (discontinued)?

AOA policies are consistently used when advocating on behalf of osteopathic physicians, osteopathic medical students, the osteopathic profession, and patients to assist in the development of legislation and regulatory language assisting DOs, osteopathic medical students and patients. They may also be utilized in the governance of the Association.

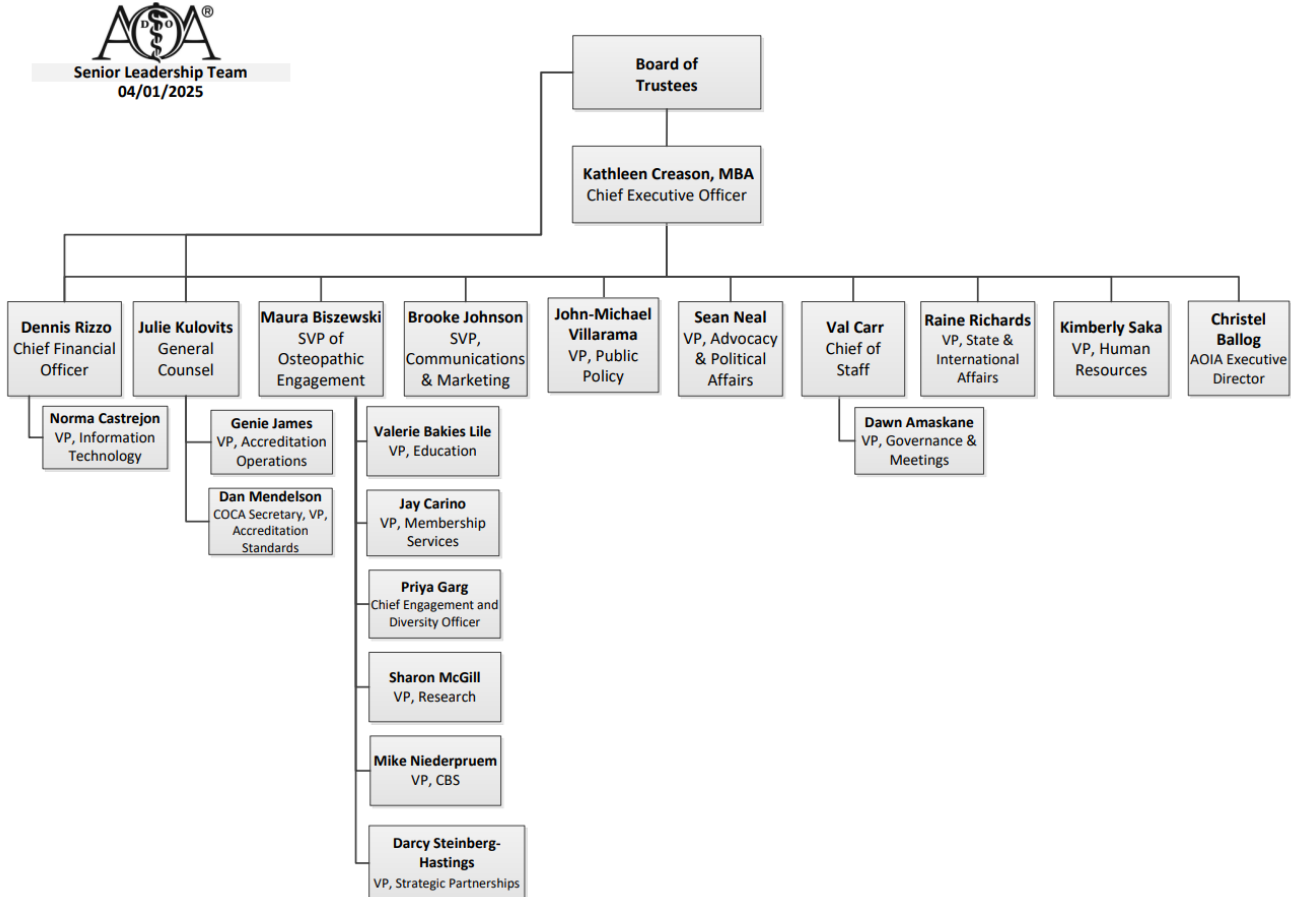
Organizational Charts (Governance and Staff)

Governance



Organizational Charts (Governance and Staff)

Staff





A M E R I C A N
O S T E O P A T H I C
A S S O C I A T I O N