

Summary

Your By-Laws Committee along with the Executive Committee is asking for your vote to approve two additions to the Constitution to ensure members are given the opportunity to represent their fire departments; and also, four other recommended changes to the By-laws.

Constitution changes

The Constitutional changes that are being proposed are to ensure that your department is given the opportunity to select voting members, which will serve for one year upon selection, for the years beginning October 1st and ending September 30th.

Now the Why?

We are proposing these Constitutional changes due to an unfortunate lack of voting member selection by the member departments. A vital role of any member benefits organization is member participation. Your primary method to affect change and offer direction is through your voting member. The first step is choosing those voting members. This change will firm up and help ensure; that all departments have opportunity to be part of the future of the Association. The Association has nearly 500 departments and should have around 1100 delegates selected each year – we've had as low as 300. The By-Laws Committee feels that we must ensure that all 17,500 members have a chance to be represented and heard.

We are also proposing several By-Laws changes that affect the internal operations of the Association

Delegate and Voting Member

Changes to the Association By-Laws are needed to modernize terminology and reflect those that are selected to vote by changing the term “delegate” to “voting member”.

The term “delegate” is defined as a person sent or authorized to represent others, in particular an elected representative sent to a conference. As it relates to the Association, this term has been used in our Association’s by-laws from its inception until recent years when a “delegate” was required to attend the annual conference to cast a vote in person, but as technology has progressed the “delegate” can now vote electronically. The term delegate makes me think that it is someone we send. It is not that way anymore. But, the term voting member; implies that you are our departments voting person for the duration of the year. YOU are the face and voice, not just the person that goes to a conference. Remember, anyone can attend the annual SC Fire-Rescue. We as a department want to pick our voting member. Just a word change, but one we think can help change the mindset to the way we operate today.

The First Vice President

Currently, your First Vice President has a free year. No committees chaired and the wisdom behind this when it was done, was to give that person a chance to prepare for his or her upcoming and busy year as President. Feedback from persons in that role have not mirrored that view. Instead we propose to change that year, for the First Vice President ; to the chair of the Finance and Audit Committee The recommended changes for the elected position of First Vice President is to bolster the positions understanding of the Association’s finances prior to becoming President. But those changes, which we feel are more productive; will lead to other Executive Committee board role changes

The Fourth Vice President

Currently, the Fourth Vice President Chairs the Advisory Committee – making choices about awardees and resolutions. Again, this was done to give that newly elected person a chance to learn the operations of the Executive Committee, and we feel that it valid. We though would like to propose a change to that – to compliment the idea of that newly elected learning curve. We propose in the by-law changes; that the Fourth Vice President, as the newly elected Executive Committee member shall rotate through three key committees: Finance & Audit, Training & Education, Legislative and the Fire-Rescue Conference, to provide an in-depth understanding of four key areas of the Association. He or She would serve as ex-officio on all these boards, rotating each quarter – to ensure a good understanding of each of the upcoming vital roles they will play.

Additionally, the Fourth Vice President will no longer chair the Advisory Committee, this position will now be an appointed position by the Association's President. Advisory is still a standing committee; it doesn't change the number of or balance of power on the Executive Committee – but the Advisory Chair will now be appointed by the President. As change, but one again which we feel can make thigs run smoother.

The work that was done before us on our great Association's Constitution and By-Laws was timed tested and true – a great value. But constant review and minor improvements are of huge value in ensuring the relevancy and efficiency of your Association We believe, and hope you do to; that these changes will modernize and ensure efficacy and accountability to your South Carolina State Firefighters' Association.

For an in-depth look at the text changes of which I have spoken, please go to the Association's website scfirefighters.org/bylaws and have a close look at what we are proposing. Please feel free to contact your Association By-Laws or Executive Committee members to ask questions or make contacts. We would love to come to you and discuss these changes in person.

These changes will be mailed out to all departments in the spring of 2020 and voted on at the business meeting of the annual Fire-Rescue in June 2020. We look forward to seeing you then.

Thank You for Your Service!