

SAMPLE BYLAWS

The ACBL does not suggest adapting these bylaws for your district without first consulting an attorney. Every district is different and may have special considerations. These sample bylaws are intended to point out many of the issues that your district might want to consider when writing or amending its bylaws. All districts are required to have a current copy of their bylaws on file with ACBL.

These sample bylaws are designed for a district that is incorporated according to the applicable state statute. The ACBL highly recommends, but does not require, districts to be incorporated entities. There may be advantages to your district to be incorporated as a 501 (c) 4 rather than a 501 (c) 7. ACBL has a memo on file that discusses this issue and will send it to district officials upon request.

D&O Insurance is highly recommended but not required, either by law or by the ACBL. Currently this insurance is available to all units and districts free of charge. (Link to D & O Insurance information)

As of January 1, 2007 all non profit organizations will be required to file this form whether or not your organization has formally applied for IRS tax exempt status.

These sample bylaws are designed for Districts incorporated or based in the United States.

Updated November, 2006.

Note: When filling in a number it is best to use both the spelled out and numeric form, e.g. “not less than seven (7) nor more than thirty (30) days.

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When the bylaws are amended they are not required to be filed with any state agency. However, tax-exempt organizations must file their amended bylaws with the IRS. See IRS Publication 557, Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization.

Incorporation is not required to be a district of the ACBL, but it is highly recommended. Whether or not your district is incorporated, it should be organized and operated as a nonprofit entity according to the laws of your state, and it should take the steps necessary to qualify as exempt from federal income tax. See the introductory paragraph of this document.

If your district includes more than one state you may choose the state in which you incorporate. Some research of the state laws should help you decide in which state you wish to incorporate.

The purposes are consistent with IRS criteria for recognizing tax-exempt status under section 501(c)4. The purpose statement must not conflict with the purposes stated in your articles of incorporation.

Registered Office/Agent. For most districts, the district secretary will serve as the agent. The registered

(DISTRICT NAME) DISTRICT (#), INC.

ARTICLE I

NAME; PURPOSES; OFFICES

Section 1.1 Name. The name of this organization shall be the (DISTRICT NAME) District. The (DISTRICT NAME) District is also known as ACBL District (DISTRICT #) (and referred to in these Bylaws as the "District").

Section 1.2 Incorporation. The District is incorporated as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the state of (the State name) and shall be governed by the nonprofit corporation law of the state of (the State name).

Section 1.3 Purposes. The purposes for which the District is organized are: to foster community welfare in the furtherance of the game of contract bridge in its various forms of competition; to promulgate high standards of conduct and ethics to its members and to enforce such standards; to provide organized bridge activities and services to satisfy the social, recreational, and competitive needs of the membership and the community; to conduct tournaments and other competitive events as permitted by the American Contract Bridge League; and to conduct such other activities as may be in keeping with its principal objectives.

Section 1.4 Registered Office and Registered Agent. The registered office of the corporation shall be located in the State of _____ at such place as may be fixed from time to time by the Board of Directors

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office can be the home address of the secretary. In most states, the Secretary of State must be notified of a change of registered agent.

The ACBL Board of Directors has final and undisputed authority over district boundaries.

Membership in a district is dependent upon membership in a unit within the district's jurisdiction.

*If your district has been incorporated as a membership organization, include the last sentence in Article IV, Section 4.1 Members. If your district is not incorporated as a membership

upon filing of such notices as may be required by law.

ARTICLE II

AMERICAN CONTRACT BRIDGE LEAGUE

The District is a separate legal entity that interacts with the American Contract Bridge League (ACBL) and exists for the purposes specified in Article I of these bylaws. In its interaction with the ACBL the District and the ACBL members that reside in the district shall be subject to and abide by the bylaws and regulations of the ACBL as in existence and amended from time to time by ACBL. The District shall conduct its affairs in a manner consistent with the rules, regulations, policies, procedures, and bylaws of the ACBL. No rule, regulation or bylaw adopted by the District shall be inconsistent with or be in contravention of the rules, regulations and bylaws of the ACBL.

ARTICLE III

ACBL DISTRICT JURISDICTION

A unit is the geographical area within a district which is presently or may in the future be assigned to it by the Board of Directors of the ACBL. The units within which the District has ACBL jurisdiction are such units as are presently or may in the future be assigned to it by the Board of Directors of the ACBL.

ARTICLE IV

MEMBERSHIP

Section 4.1 Members. All ACBL units which are or hereafter come into being within the geographical boundaries of the District are automatically Member Units of the District so long as they remain within the District, without requirement of any petition or formal action on the part of the Unit. (ACBL members who are members of any Member Unit of the District shall be deemed members of the District.)*

Section 4.2 Rights and Obligations. In accordance with the procedures established by the ACBL Board of Directors and the District Board of Directors, the Member Units shall have voting rights and other legal

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organization, omit the last sentence of this section.

Membership Meetings. If your district is not incorporated as a membership organization you may not need this section.

Annual Meeting. Some states require an annual meeting of the membership. If your district “forgets” to hold its meeting, this section protects your district against involuntary dissolution.

You may wish to specify other formulas for the number of directors or Member Units required to be in agreement for calling a Special Membership Meeting.

Notice. Some state laws set out the minimum period of time prior to a meeting that notice must be given. Check the nonprofit statute for your state.

Quorum. Some state laws set forth

rights or privileges in connection with the governance of the District. The Member Units shall be required to abide by the bylaws, regulations, policies, code of conduct, and ethics standards established by the ACBL.

Section 4.3 Termination of Membership. A member shall remain a member of the District unless and until he changes his residence to a unit outside the jurisdiction of the District, without taking the necessary steps to retain membership in a Member Unit, per ACBL regulations.

ARTICLE V

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Section 5.1. Annual Meeting. The Annual Meeting of the District shall be held at such time and place as may from time to time be fixed by the President [or the Board]. The agenda of the Annual Meeting shall include presentation of annual reports and transaction of such other business as may properly come before the meeting. Failure to hold an annual meeting shall not work a forfeiture or dissolution of the District or invalidate any action taken by the Board of Directors or Officers of the District.

Section 5.2. Special Meetings. Special meetings of the membership of the District may be called by the President or by [specify a number or percentage] of the Board of Directors. A special meeting shall be called by the President on petition by not less than [specify number or percentage] of Member Units entitled to vote.

Section 5.3. Place of Meeting. All membership meetings of the District shall be held within the geographical limits of the District.

Section 5.4. Notice of Meetings. Notice, written, printed or by electronic transmission, stating the place, day and hour of the annual meeting and, in the case of a special meeting, the purpose or purposes for which the meeting is called, shall be delivered not less than ___ nor more than ___ days before the date of the meeting, by or at the direction of the President, Secretary or officers or persons calling the meeting, to each member entitled to vote at such meeting.

Section 5.5. Quorum. [Specify a number] of members in good standing

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a minimum percentage of members, such as 10%, that are required for a quorum. The state requirement often may be overwritten if an organization sets a different number or percentage for a quorum in its bylaws.

Proxy Voting. ACBL regulations stipulate that no proxy voting shall be permitted at membership meetings.

Directors. Some (but not all) states require directors to be at least eighteen years old. ACBL regulations specify only that District Board Members and District Officers must be “members in good standing.”

Fiduciary Duties. Nonprofit board members operate within a unique legal arena. Under well established principles of nonprofit law, board members must meet certain standards of conduct in carrying out their duties to the organization.

The Board is responsible for knowing and complying with all applicable laws, including, but not limited to, IRS requirements for filing information returns.

[or a percentage of the total members and a percentage of the member units] of the District shall constitute a quorum at any meeting of the membership.

Section 5.6. Proxy Voting. No proxy voting shall be permitted at membership meetings.

ARTICLE VI
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 6.1. Powers and Duties. The management of all business, property, interests, and other affairs of the District shall be vested in its Board of Directors. Among the powers hereby conferred is the power to impose sanctions upon members in accordance with ACBL rules and regulations, to delegate non-policy making authority to members who are not directors, and in general, to take such other and further actions as may from time to time be necessary to further and implement the purposes and aims of the District as set forth in Article I. The Board of Directors is the sole judge of its own membership.

Section 6.2. Directors’ Fiduciary Duties and Standards of Conduct. Each director is subject to a duty of loyalty to the corporation and a duty of care in the performance of his duties as a director.

Section 6.3. Nomination and Election of Directors. (Insert language.)

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Nomination and Election. Your district may choose to specify how the directors will be selected, whether election by the whole unit or by the unit board of directors. Some districts have ex officio board members who are designated by other positions they hold. For example, Unit Presidents or the District Director may be members of the District Board.

Number. Some states require a minimum of three. Most districts chose to have more than three. There is generally no upper limit imposed by state law. You may wish to designate a range of District Board Members.

Term of office. If you choose to use term limits the following commentary is appropriate: No director may serve more than ___ consecutive terms. Any term of more than ___ year(s) shall be deemed to be a ___ year term for the purpose of eligibility for re-election. Some units establish staggered terms for directors, to minimize yearly turnover. Instead of a calendar year term, the term may run from annual meeting to annual meeting.

Length of office. Some state laws have a limit on the length of time a board member may stay in office. Otherwise, the duration of the term and term limits are options for the district.

Regular and Special Meetings

Section 6.4. Number. The Board of Directors shall consist of [number (#)] members. All directors must be members in good standing of the ACBL as well as members of a Member Unit.

Section 6.5. Term of Office. [number (#)] directors shall be elected each year for terms of office of [number (#)] year(s), the terms to commence (specify a date). All Board Members shall hold office until their successors are elected and qualified or until their sooner death, resignation or removal.

Section 6.6. Regular and Special Meetings. The Board shall establish a schedule for regular meetings. Regular meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held, with proper notice, not less frequently than once per (specify a time be held, with proper notice, not less frequently than

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Adjust the schedule to meet your district's needs.

Meetings. Some state laws require that boards meet at least once a year. The frequency and scheduling of board meetings is a district option.

Notice. Proper notice of board meetings is essential. Actions taken during a board meeting without proper notice according to state law may be invalidated. Check your state statute. Some states do not permit notice by e-mail.

Waiver of Notice. This section, if used, provides a mechanism for calling a meeting when it is not possible to meet the legal requirements of notice.

Conference Telephone. State laws vary. Check your state statute.

Quorum. An abstention has the practical effect of a "no" vote. You may have more complicated formulas for establishing a quorum.

Vacancies. If your district has ex officio members you may wish to

once per (specify a time period). Special meetings of the Board may be called at any time by the President, or upon the written request of [number (#) or percentage] or more of the members of the Board of Directors. Members of the Board of Directors may participate in a meeting of such board by means of a conference telephone or similar communications equipment by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can hear each other at the same time and participation by such means shall constitute presence in person at a meeting.

Section 6.7. Notice. Notice, written or printed, of any regular or special meeting stating the place, day and hour of the meeting shall be mailed no fewer than ___ days nor more than ___ days prior to the date of the meeting. Notice may be provided only by electronic transmission (e-mail) to those members of the Board of Directors who so consent.

Section 6.8. Waiver of Notice. Attendance of a director at a meeting shall constitute a waiver of notice of such meeting, except where a director attends for the express purpose of objecting to the transaction of business because the meeting is not lawfully called or convened. A waiver of notice signed by the director or directors, whether before or after the time stated for the meeting, shall be equivalent to the giving of notice.

Section 6.9. Participation in Meeting by Conference Telephone. Members of the Board may participate in a meeting through use of conference telephone or similar communications equipment, as long as members participating in such meeting can hear one another.

Section 6.10. Quorum. A majority of the Board of Directors, representing a majority of the member Units shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting of the Board of Directors.

Section 6.11. Vacancies. All vacancies in the Board of Directors, whether caused by resignation, death or otherwise, may be filled by the affirmative vote of a majority of the remaining directors. A director elected to fill any vacancy shall hold office for the unexpired term of his predecessor and until a successor is elected and qualified.

Section 6.12. Removal. A Director may be removed for cause at any

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insert language to specify that those positions will be filled according to rules and regulations covering election to those positions.

Removal of a director. Removing a sitting director is not only emotionally charged, it is frequently the basis of a lawsuit. **Refer to your state statute** and proceed with care. You may choose to define “for cause” in your bylaws, in fact some states require it.

Proxy Voting. Proxy voting is not permitted by ACBL regulation.

Officers. Some states require minimally a President and Secretary. Most states allow as many officers as the organization wishes. Some states limit which offices can be held by one person. Check your state statute. If your officers serve for a calendar year, insert “January 1 through December 31” into the second sentence of 7.1.

President. Term limits for serving as President are recommended but not required.

meeting of the Board of Directors provided two-thirds of those present shall so vote. The Director subject to removal for cause shall be notified in writing of the grounds for such removal. Such notice shall be delivered by certified mail. The grounds for such removal must be submitted with the notice of said meeting and said Director shall have a reasonable opportunity at said meeting to object to and argue his removal with representation by counsel of his choosing at his own expense.

Section 6.13. Resignation. Any director may resign at any time by delivering written notice to the President or the Secretary, or by giving oral or written notice at any meeting of the Board of Directors. A director’s resignation will take effect upon delivery of notice unless the notice of resignation specifies a later effective date. Acceptance of a director’s resignation will not be necessary to make it effective.

Section 6.14. Voting by Proxy. Voting by proxy is not permitted.

ARTICLE VII

OFFICERS

Section 7.1. Designations. The officers of the corporation shall be a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. All officers shall be elected for terms of [number (#) year(s)] by the (Board of Directors or by the membership). Officers shall hold office until their successors are elected and qualified.

Section 7.2. President. The President shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Directors, shall have general supervision of the affairs of the corporation and shall perform such other duties as are incident to the office or are properly required of the President by the Board of Directors. A Director may not serve as President for more than [number (#) consecutive [year(s) or term(s).]

Section 7.3. Vice President. During the absence or disability of the President, the Vice President shall exercise all the functions of the President. The Vice President shall have such powers and discharge such duties as may be assigned to him from time to time by the Board

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of Directors.

Section 7.4. Secretary. The Secretary shall issue notices for all meetings, shall keep minutes of all meetings, shall have charge of the corporate books, and shall make such reports and perform such other duties as are incident to the office, or are properly required of the Secretary by the Board of Directors.

Secretary. Some districts do not require that the Secretary be a member of the Board of Directors.

Section 7.5. Treasurer. The Treasurer shall have the custody of all monies and securities of the corporation and shall keep regular books of account. The Treasurer shall disburse the funds of the corporation in payment of the just demands against the corporation or as may be ordered by the Board of Directors and shall render to the Board of Directors, from time to time as may be required, an account of all transactions undertaken as Treasurer and of the financial condition of the corporation. The Treasurer shall perform such other duties as are incident to the office or are properly required by the Board of Directors.

Treasurer. Some districts do not require that the Treasurer be a member of the Board of Directors. The finances of the unit must be kept in accordance with the law of the state in which the unit is incorporated and in accordance with sound accounting principles.

Section 7.6. Delegation. If any officer of the corporation is absent or unable to act and no other person is authorized to act in such officer's place by the provisions of these Bylaws, the Board of Directors may, from time to time, delegate the powers or duties of such officer to any other officer, director or other person it may select.

Section 7.7. Removal. (Insert language.)

Removal of an officer. Removing a sitting officer is not only emotionally charged, it is frequently the basis of a lawsuit. **Refer to your state statute** and proceed with care. You may choose to define "for cause" in the bylaws, in fact some states require it.)

Section 7.8. Vacancies. In case any office shall become vacant by reason of death, resignation, removal or otherwise, the directors then in office may appoint a successor or successors for the unexpired term.

Section 7.9. Compensation and Reimbursement of Officers. The officers of the District shall serve without compensation but may be authorized to receive reimbursement of expenditures made on behalf of the District. (If any of your officers are paid for performing the duties of their office you must develop your own language for this section.)

Compensation. Officers generally serve without compensation. If

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you do pay officers they are statutory employees, per the IRS. Consult your tax advisor if your district pays its officers.

While it is not illegal to compensate nonprofit board members or officers, the IRS and several nonprofit ethics groups strongly recommend against it.

A Disciplinary Committee required by ACBL, whether or not it is mentioned in the bylaws.

Executive Committee. Many state laws require that an executive committee that may make decisions on behalf of the board between meetings be made up only of members of the board of directors.

It is not necessary to designate committees in the bylaws, nor is it prudent to create an excessive number of committees.

Section 7.10. Resignation of Officers. Any officer may resign at any time by delivering written notice to the President, the Secretary, or the Board of Directors, or by giving oral or written notice at any meeting of the Board of Directors. Any officer's resignation will take effect upon delivery of notice unless the notice of resignation specifies a later effective date. Acceptance of an officer's resignation will not be necessary to make it effective.

ARTICLE VIII

COMMITTEES

Section 8.1. Establishment. The President, with the approval of the Board of Directors, shall have the power to create and appoint the members of such standing and special committees as he may deem necessary or appropriate, designate the chairs thereof and assign functions thereto. The members of committees need not be members of the Board of Directors.

Section 8.2 Executive Committee. The Board may designate, from among its directors, an Executive Committee. This committee shall have powers as provided by resolution of the Board of Directors except as prohibited by nonprofit law. Rules governing meetings of the executive committee shall be as established by the Board of Directors, or in the absence thereof, by the committee itself.

Section 8.3 Other Committees. Other committees shall be established at the discretion of the President. Each committee may adopt rules for its meetings which are not inconsistent with these bylaws.

Section 8.4. Term of Office. Each member of a committee shall serve for [number (#) year(s)] and until a successor is appointed unless the committee is sooner dissolved.

ARTICLE IX

AMENDMENT OF THE BYLAWS

These bylaws may be amended, altered or repealed and new bylaws may be adopted by a vote of [number (#) members or (2/3) majority of the members present] at any meeting of the members at which a quorum

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is present, and not otherwise.

Amendment. You may choose to have additional requirements for amending the bylaws. Check your state statute before limiting the rights of the members to amend the bylaws. Careful thought should be given to major decisions such as amending the bylaws. Absent specific language to the contrary, the requirement of a “two-thirds vote,” for example, simply means that there must be the approval of two-thirds of a **quorum** in order for the measure to pass.

Indemnification. Check your state laws and consult legal counsel.

Publication. District option. It is not required to have an official publication. Use this section if your district has one.

Inoperative Portion. Legal protection in case one part of the bylaws inadvertently runs afoul of state law.

Interpretation. Eliminates the need for “him/her”, “he/she”, etc.

ARTICLE X

INDEMNIFICATION

[If you chose to have an indemnification article check the state laws]

ARTICLE XI

MISCELLANEOUS

Section 11.1. Publication. The official publication of the District shall be as designated by the Board of Directors and shall be published by the District.

Section 11.2. Inoperative Portion. If any portion of the Bylaws shall be invalid or inoperative, then, to the extent reasonable and possible, the remainder shall be valid and operative, and effect shall be given to the intent that portion held invalid or inoperative manifests.

Section 11.3. Interpretation. Whenever the context indicates, the masculine gender shall encompass the feminine and neuter, and the singular shall encompass the plural or vice versa. The headings are solely for organization, convenience and clarity. They do not define, limit or describe the scope of these bylaws or the intent in any of the provisions.

Section 11.4. Books and Records. The District shall keep correct and complete books and records of accounts and shall keep minutes of all proceedings of its Board of Directors and membership meetings.

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Records. State law often dictates what records must be made available to an organization's members. Federal law requires that a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization's copies of the organization's annual information returns (IRS Form 990) for the most recent three years be available for public (not just membership) review.

Fiscal Year. A fiscal year that coincides with the calendar year is common but not required. It is not necessary to state the fiscal year in the bylaws, although many districts do so.

Loans. Seriously, don't even think about doing it. The district could jeopardize its tax-exempt status. This clause does not preclude an advancement of expenses that will be later accounted for.

Dissolution. The expectation is that the duration of the district as a corporation shall be perpetual. The Dissolution Article serves to protect the tax-exempt status of the organization.

Nonprofit Status. This does **not** mean that it is improper for

Section 11.5. Fiscal Year. The fiscal year for the Corporation shall run from (month, day to month, day.)

Section 11.6. Loans. The corporation will not make loans to any director or officer. Any director or officer who assents to or participates in the making of any such loan shall be liable to the Unit for the amount of such loan until the repayment thereof.

ARTICLE XII

NONPROFIT STATUS and DISSOLUTION

This Corporation is not organized, nor shall it be operated, for pecuniary gain or profit, and it does not contemplate the distribution of gains, profits or dividends to its members. It is organized solely for nonprofit purposes. On the dissolution or winding up of this Corporation, assets remaining after payment of, or provision for payment of, all debts and liabilities of this Corporation shall be distributed according to the regulations and policies of the ACBL. If this Corporation holds any assets in trust, they shall be disposed of in such a manner as may be directed by judgment of a court of appropriate jurisdiction.

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revenues to exceed expenses. It does mean that the organization's resources are dedicated to its nonprofit purposes and neither insiders nor private individuals shall improperly benefit from the unit's assets.

Certification. This is a reminder that whenever you amend your articles of incorporation or bylaws, IRS regulations state that you must submit a "conformed copy" of the changes to the appropriate district office of the IRS. This information may be included when you file your annual Form 990. If the information is included there, Line 77, which asks whether changes in the organizing or governing documents of the organization have been made, must be answered in the affirmative. Otherwise, the information must be sent under separate cover to the appropriate IRS office.

A "conformed copy" of the changes is simply one that agrees with the original document and all amendments. Photocopies are fine. If the copies are not signed, they must be accompanied by a signed declaration of an authorized officer of the corporation certifying they are complete and accurate copies of the organizing or governing documents. If a number of changes are made, attach a copy of the entire revised document.

CERTIFICATION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The undersigned hereby certifies (i) I am the _____ of the District, a nonprofit corporation, (ii) the above Bylaws are a true, correct and complete copy of bylaws adopted at a duly held meeting of the _____ (membership) on the ___ day of _____, 200__, and in accordance with the laws of the State of _____, and (iii) the Resolutions are in full force and effect on the Effective Date hereof and have not been amended on or subsequent to the Effective Date.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto executed this Certificate in my official capacity on ___ day of _____, 200_.

By: _____

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