



# Constitution of the American University Residence Hall Association

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## **PREAMBLE**

We, the residents of the American University residence halls, in order to advocate for the rights, enjoyable campus experience, and general well-being of all residents; provide both fun and educational programming; and build community among all residents, do hereby establish this Constitution of the American University Residence Hall Association.

### **Article I. NAME**

The name of this organization shall be the American University Residence Hall Association. It may be abbreviated as “RHA” in this Constitution, its Bylaws, or any other official documents of the organization.

### **Article II. MISSION STATEMENT**

The Residence Hall Association serves to support and improve the quality of residence life for the students living in on-campus housing at American University. The Residence Hall Association is a consulting body that supports the development of community within all residence halls through dynamic programming, advocacy, and support. The Residence Hall Association works to unite the various residence halls and serve as the voice of all undergraduate students who reside on campus.

### **Article III. PURPOSE**

To create a unified point of communication between residential students and the larger university community. To serve as a forum for exchanging ideas, issues, and opinions of the undergraduate student residential community. To organize, implement, and promote quality activities, educational and social programs, and useful services for the residence halls. To promote community engagement through sponsoring and providing programs to benefit undergraduate student residents. To review and make recommendations on university policies and procedures in order to improve the quality of life for residents.

### **Article IV. MEMBERSHIP**

Every resident shall be considered an official member of the Residence Hall Association. They shall be eligible to serve in a leadership position thereof, so long as they meet the necessary GPA and other requirements as stipulated by the Bylaws.

### **Article V. FINANCES**

#### **Section 5.01 [Resident Fee.](#)**

- (a) The Residence Hall Association shall be funded by its members.
- (b) Each member shall pay a semestral fee established by the Residence Hall Association and Housing and Residence Life.

- i. This fee shall be enumerated in the Bylaws and shall be reviewed annually by the President of the Residence Hall Association, the Vice President of Administration and Finance, and the Residence Hall Association Advisor(s).

**Section 5.02**            Budget.

- (a) The budget of the Residence Hall Association must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the General Assembly each semester.

**Article VI.            AFFILIATION**

**Section 6.01**            The American University.

- (a) The Residence Hall Association shall be affiliated with The American University as a student organization operating under the guidance of Housing and Residence Life.

**Section 6.02**            National and Regional Affiliation.

- (a) The Residence Hall Association shall be affiliated nationally with the National Association of College and University Residence Halls (NACURH) and regionally with the Central Atlantic Affiliate of College and University Residence Halls (CAACURH).

**Section 6.03**            Affiliation Process.

- (a) Affiliation with any other organization shall only occur with a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the General Assembly.

**Article VII.            THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH**

**Section 7.01**            Executive Board Purpose and Composition.

- (a) The executive power of the Residence Hall Association shall be vested in an Executive Board. Voting members of the Executive Board shall hold their office for a term of one (1) year and be elected during a time and in a manner as stipulated by the Bylaws.
- (b) The Executive Board as a whole shall decide all matters relating to the management of the Residence Hall Association in areas not specifically delegated to individual Executive Board members, the Legislative Branch, or the hall councils.
- (c) The Executive Board shall consist of the President; Vice President of Administration and Finance; Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion; Vice President of Social Programming; Chief of Staff; Vice President of Communications and Outreach; Residence Hall Association Advisor(s), in an ex-officio, non-voting capacity; and National Residence Hall Honorary President, in an ex-officio, non-voting capacity.

**Section 7.02**            Executive Board Requirements.

- (a) Voting members of the Executive Board must be residents and must have previously served in the Residence Hall Association for a time and in a manner as stipulated by the Bylaws. They must meet the minimum GPA and other requirements as stipulated by the Bylaws, and they cannot serve as a member of a hall council while serving on the Executive Board.
- (b) No member of the Executive Board shall simultaneously hold a separate elected position within the Residence Hall Association at one time. Upon taking office, members of the Executive Board shall represent the entire residence hall community, and they shall be required to immediately resign from any hall council position.
- (c) Any Executive Board member who is on academic or disciplinary probation from the University may be subject to disciplinary charges.

#### **Section 7.03**            Executive Board Responsibilities.

- (a) All Executive Board members shall work toward the mission and purpose of the Residence Hall Association, implementing the policies of the President and the General Assembly.
- (b) They shall serve as active and contributing members of the Executive Board, attend Executive Board meetings, transition successors appropriately, and complete other duties as assigned by the President or by the General Assembly.

#### **Section 7.04**            Executive Board Recess Powers.

- (a) The Executive Board shall also fulfill the role of the General Assembly during the summer, winter, and spring recesses of the same, as defined by the Bylaws, when there is not enough time to bring matters directly to the General Assembly, as determined by the President.
  - (i) The President shall report such instances to the General Assembly at its next meeting.
  - (ii) The President may, with unanimous consent from the Executive Board and the Residence Hall Association Advisor(s), amend the Bylaws under the aforementioned conditions.
- (b) Neither the Executive Board as a whole nor any smaller groups or members thereof shall have the authority to unilaterally amend this Constitution.

#### **Section 7.05**            Prohibition of Major Outside Commitments.

- (a) The President shall not be permitted to hold another major leadership position beyond responsibilities related to the Residence Hall Association, as defined by the Bylaws.

- (b) Voting members of the Executive Board shall not be permitted to be employed by a University office related to residential life, as detailed in the Bylaws, during the academic year following their election.

Section 7.06            The President.

- (a) The President shall act as chief executive officer of the Residence Hall Association and serve as chief spokesperson and representative for the Residence Hall Association in all official capacities.
- (b) Other powers and responsibilities of the President shall be enumerated in the Bylaws.

Section 7.07            The Vice President of Administration and Finance.

- (a) The Vice President of Administration and Finance shall act as the chief financial officer of the Residence Hall Association.
- (b) Other powers and responsibilities of the Vice President of Administration and Finance shall be enumerated in the Bylaws.
- (c) The powers and responsibilities of the Parliamentarian shall be executed by the Vice President of Administration and Finance. These powers and responsibilities shall be enumerated in the bylaws.

Section 7.08            The Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion

- (a) The Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion shall act as the chief advocacy officer of the Residence Hall Association as well as the chief liaison between the Executive Board and the various hall councils.
- (b) Other powers and responsibilities of the Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion shall be enumerated in the Bylaws.

Section 7.09            The Vice President of Social Programming.

- (a) The Vice President of Social Programming shall act as the chief social programming officer of the Residence Hall Association.
- (b) Other powers and responsibilities of the Vice President of Social Programming shall be enumerated in the Bylaws.

Section 7.10            The Vice President of Communications and Outreach.

- (a) The Vice President of Communications and Outreach shall act as the official liaison between the NACURH, the CAACURH, and the Residence Hall Association.

- (b) Other powers and responsibilities of the Vice President of Communications and Outreach shall be enumerated in the Bylaws.

#### Section 7.11            The Chief of Staff.

- (a) The Chief of Staff shall act as the chief administrative officer of the Residence Hall Association.
- (b) Other powers and responsibilities of the Chief of Staff shall be enumerated in the Bylaws.

#### Section 7.12            The National Residence Hall Honorary President.

- (a) The National Residence Hall Honorary President shall act as the liaison between the Residence Hall Association and the National Residence Hall Honorary and shall encourage positive communication and relations between the same.
- (b) Other powers and responsibilities of the National Residence Hall Honorary President shall be enumerated in the Bylaws.

#### Section 7.13            The Advisor(s).

- (a) The Advisor(s) shall advise the Residence Hall Association and any of its hall councils on issues of university policy and resources that may be pertinent to the Residence Hall Association's activities.
- (b) Other powers and responsibilities of the Advisor(s) shall be enumerated in the Bylaws.

#### Section 7.14            Line of Succession.

- (a) In case of the removal of the President from office, or of their death, resignation, or inability to discharge their powers and duties, those powers and duties shall pass to the Vice President of Administration and Finance.
- (b) The General Assembly, through the Bylaws, may provide for the case of removal, death, resignation, or inability of both the President and Vice President of Administration and Finance, declaring what officer shall then act as President. Such officer shall act accordingly, until the disability is removed, or a President is elected.

#### Section 7.15            Compensation.

- (a) Each member of the Executive Board shall receive compensation as stipulated by the Bylaws, which shall neither be increased nor diminished during the period for which they have been elected or appointed.

- (b) Other members of the Executive Branch may receive compensation in accordance with the Bylaws.

Section 7.16            The Administrative Board.

- (a) There shall be an Administrative Board to assist the Executive Board and members thereof. Members of the Administrative Board shall be appointed by the President with a simple majority vote of the General Assembly to serve as support staff to the Residence Hall Association.
- (b) The Chief of Staff shall serve as Chair of the Administrative Board and shall oversee all activities thereof.

Section 7.17        Executive Board Vacancies.

- (a) In the case of a vacancy in the Office of President of the Residence Hall Association the Parliamentarian shall organize a special election to fill the vacancy within two (2) weeks.
- (b) In the case of a vacancy of an office of the Executive Board, the President shall fill the vacancy by appointment, subject to the consent of the General Assembly.

**Article VIII.        THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH**

Section 8.01            Composition of the General Assembly.

- (a) The legislative power of the Residence Hall Association shall be vested in a General Assembly.
- (b) The General Assembly shall be composed of the following members:
  - i. Representatives chosen every fall by the residents of the various halls.
  - ii. Members of the Executive Board, in a non-voting, ex-officio capacity.
    - a. The President may vote in the case that they are presiding over an equally divided General Assembly.
  - iv. Members of the Administrative Board, in a non-voting, ex-officio capacity.
- (c) Each residence hall shall choose three (3) Representatives to serve in the General Assembly. The Hall Council President from each Hall Council shall also serve as a representative

Section 8.02            General Assembly Officers.



- (a) The President shall be Chair of the General Assembly, but shall have no vote, except in the case of a tie.
- (b) In the absence of the President, an alternative presiding officer shall be stipulated in the Bylaws
  - i. If said alternative presiding office is not a voting member of the GA they shall have no vote except in the case of a tie.
  - ii. If said alternative presiding officer is a voting member of the GA they may vote as they normally would as a voting member of the General Assembly.

### Section 8.03      Impeachment Powers of the General Assembly.

- (a) The General Assembly shall have the sole power of impeachment of members of the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, and the hall council executive boards.
- (b) A member on trial for impeachment shall be ineligible to execute any of their duties and responsibilities, including presiding over the General Assembly
- (a) Judgement in cases of impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from office and disqualification to hold any office under the Residence Hall Association; but the party convicted shall nevertheless be liable and subject to indictment, trial, judgement, and any resultant penalties in accordance with local, state, and federal law as well as university policy.

### Section 8.04      Elections.

The times, places, and manner of holding elections for Representatives of the General Assembly shall be stipulated in the Bylaw

#### Section 8.05            Vacancies.

When vacancies happen in the representation from any hall, the executive authority thereof shall take all appropriate measures to fill the vacancy in accordance with relevant provisions of the Bylaws and any applicable hall council charter.

#### Section 8.06            Meeting and Quorum Requirements.

- (a) The General Assembly shall assemble at least once a month, excepting the summer, winter, and spring recesses, and such meeting shall be on the first Monday of the month, unless they shall appoint a different day in the Bylaws.
  
- (b) A simple majority of Representatives of the General Assembly shall constitute a quorum to do business, but a smaller number may be authorized to compel the attendance of absent members in such manner and under such penalties as the Bylaws may provide.

#### Section 8.07            Rules of Procedure and Disciplinary Action.

The General Assembly may determine the rules of its proceedings through the Bylaws, penalize its members for disorderly behavior, and, with the concurrence of two-thirds (2/3), expel a Representative.

#### Section 8.08            Member Requirements.

Representatives of the General Assembly shall not be permitted to simultaneously hold any Executive Branch office that requires confirmation by the General Assembly.

#### Section 8.09            Bills.

- (a) Every bill which shall have passed the General Assembly, shall, before it becomes effective, be presented to the President of the Residence Hall Association. The President shall demonstrate their approval by signing it.
  
- (b) If the President does not approve, however, they shall return it, with their objections, to the General Assembly, which shall proceed to reconsider it. If after such reconsideration, two-thirds (2/3) of the General Assembly agrees to pass the bill, it shall become effective.
  
- (c) In all such cases [of a bill being considered by the General Assembly], the votes of the General Assembly shall be determined by yeas and nays, and the names of the Representatives voting for and against the bill shall be recorded, unless unanimous consent is reached by the General Assembly to suspend this procedure and vote by other means.
  
- (d) If any bill shall not be returned by the President within five (5) days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to them, the bill shall become effective as if the

President had signed it, unless the President is unable to return the bill because the General Assembly is in summer, winter, or spring recess as defined by the Bylaws.

Section 8.10            Powers of the General Assembly.

- (a) The General Assembly shall have the power to establish advocacy initiatives;
- (b) To make financial allocations to the various entities of the Residence Hall Association as well as outside organizations;
- (c) To establish both educational and social programming;
- (d) To ensure the proper exercise of executive and administrative functions of the Residence Hall Association;
- (e) To require reports and updates, either public or private, from members of the Executive Branch;
- (f) To confirm appointments made to positions in the Executive Branch as stipulated by the Bylaws;
- (g) To amend and approve Residence Hall Association governing documents;
- (h) To create standing and select committees;
- (i) To take all legislative action which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the aforementioned powers and all other powers vested by this Constitution and its Bylaws in the Residence Hall Association, or in any department, office, or other entity thereof.

Section 8.11            Prohibited Legislation.

- (a) No ex post facto legislation shall be passed.

**Article IX.            THE HALL COUNCILS**

Section 9.01            Purpose.

- (a) Each residential community shall have its own elected government, known as a hall council, to manage its financial operations, programming, and advocacy.

Section 9.02            Composition.

- (a) The Residence Hall Association President shall, with unanimous consent from the Executive Board and the Residence Hall Association Advisor, organize residence halls into hall councils prior to the elections of the Hall Council Executive Board.
- (b) Each hall council shall have a hall council executive board, a hall council advisor, and other members appointed in accordance with the Bylaws.
- (c) Each hall council executive board shall be composed of a President, Vice President of Administration & Finance, Vice President of Diversity & Inclusion, Vice President of Social Programming. Their duties and responsibilities shall be enumerated in the Bylaws.

### Section 9.03 Elections.

- (a) The times, places, and manner of holding elections for hall council executive board members shall be stipulated in the Bylaws.

### Section 9.04 Vacancies.

- (a) When vacancies happen in any positions on a hall council, the President thereof shall take all appropriate measures to fill the vacancy in accordance with relevant provisions of the Bylaws and the relevant hall council charter.
- (b) If there is a vacancy in the presidency of a hall council, the Parliamentarian shall organize a special election to fill the vacancy within two (2) weeks. There shall be an acting President which shall be determined in the order listed herein:
  - i. Vice President of Administration and Finance
  - ii. Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion
  - iii. Vice President of Social Programming
  - iv. Vice President of Communications and Outreach
- (c) Should a hall council be entirely vacant, the President of the Residence Hall Association shall be empowered to declare that hall or group of halls to be an unincorporated area in accordance with § 9.08 of this Constitution.
  - i. This designation shall only last until such a time as elections can be held, which shall be determined by the Parliamentarian.

### Section 9.05 Hall Council Charters.

- (a) Hall Councils shall be empowered to create their own rules of procedure and policies in order to effectively govern the hall council. These shall be compiled in the form of a hall council charter, which shall be subordinate to this Constitution, its Bylaws, and any duly passed legislation.

### Section 9.06            Meetings.

- (a) Hall Councils shall be required to meet at least twice a month, excepting the summer, winter, and spring recesses.
- (b) All members, excepting the hall council advisor, shall have voting rights in meetings of the hall council.
- (c) A simple majority of voting members of the hall council shall constitute a quorum to do business, but a smaller number may be authorized to compel the attendance of absent members in such manner and under such penalties as the Bylaws may provide.

### Section 9.07            Hall Council Advisors.

- (a) The hall council advisors shall be mentors and professional staff liaisons between Housing and Residence Life and their hall councils. They shall advise their hall councils on programming and advocacy initiatives, and they shall ensure the proper exercise of the financial responsibilities of their hall councils.
- (b) Hall council advisors shall be present for meetings of their hall council and their hall council executive board.
- (c) Hall council advisors shall be informed in advance of all contracts and financial transactions. They may require reasonable updates and briefings on current and future occurrences within their hall council.
- (d) In cases of misfeasance, malfeasance, or nonfeasance of duties by a hall council advisor, the hall council shall immediately inform the Residence Hall Association Advisor(s).

### Section 9.08            Unincorporated Areas.

- (a) The President of the Residence Hall Association shall be empowered to appoint an Area Governor of any part of campus that is not already incorporated into a particular hall council.
- (b) The Area Governor shall, along with the Residence Hall Association Advisor(s) or their designee, operate with the full rights, privileges, and responsibilities of a hall council. Their community government shall be known as an Area Council. They may appoint, with a simple majority vote of the rest of their Area Council, additional members.
  - i    Members of unincorporated areas beyond the Area Governor shall not receive votes in the General Assembly.

Section 9.09      Prohibition of Association.

- (a) No hall council shall, without the consent of the General Assembly, enter into any official and substantial association with another hall council or organization.
  
- (b) Nothing in this section shall prohibit hosting joint events between hall councils, and such events shall not require the prior consent of the General Assembly unless they involve all hall councils.

**Article X. IMPEACHMENT AND REMOVAL FROM OFFICE**

Section 10.01      Grounds for Impeachment.

- (a) Should any member of the Residence Hall Association, including members of the Executive Branch, the Legislative Branch, or a hall council executive board, fail to attend to the duties of their office as outlined in this Constitution and its Bylaws, the General Assembly may impeach that individual and remove them from office.

Section 10.02      Disciplinary Procedures.

- (a) Due process and the procedure for carrying out the removal from office and other disciplinary action shall be defined in the Bylaws.
  
- (b) The General Assembly shall make the final determination on impeachment and removal from office, and such action shall only be taken with a two-thirds (2/3) vote.

Section 10.03      Forfeiture of Compensation.

- (a) Any member who receives compensation shall forfeit any remainder of their compensation for the rest of their term upon their removal from office.

**Article XI. RESIGNATION**

Section 11.01      General Stipulations.

- (a) Any member of the Residence Hall Association who holds a leadership position shall have the right to resign from their position at any time.
  
- (b) Resigning without giving two (2) weeks' notice shall place the member in bad standing with the Residence Hall Association; however, exceptions may be made for extenuating circumstances.
  - (i) A member seeking an exception must submit the request in writing to the Executive Board, which shall make a decision within one (1) week following the receipt of said written request.

Section 11.02      Submission of Resignations.

- (a) Members resigning from their hall council shall submit their resignation in writing to the president of their hall council, who shall then immediately notify the hall council advisor.
- (b) Members resigning from any other position in the Residence Hall Association shall submit their resignation in writing to the President of the Residence Hall Association.
- (c) Should the President of the Residence Hall Association resign, they shall submit their resignation in writing to the next Executive Board Officer in the line of succession and the RHA Advisor.

Section 11.03      Forfeiture of Compensation.

- (a) Any member who receives compensation shall forfeit any remainder of their compensation for the rest of their term upon their resignation.

**Article XII.      PARLIAMENTARY AND JUDICIAL  
AUTHORITY**

Section 12.01      Parliamentary Authority.

- (a) *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, Eleventh Edition shall be applied to all questions of parliamentary authority and procedure that are not addressed by this Constitution or its Bylaws.

Section 12.02      Judicial Authority, Review, and Interpretation.

- (a) If any questions regarding the interpretation of this Constitution or its Bylaws arise, the Parliamentarian shall provide an interpretation of the passage or passages in question. This shall be done in accordance with the Bylaws.
- (b) The Parliamentarian shall also be empowered to declare void any legislation, policies, procedures, regulations, hall council charters, or any provisions or passages thereof, should they run contrary to this Constitution, its Bylaws, or any provisions or passages thereof. This shall be done in accordance with the Bylaws.
- (c) Any action taken by the Parliamentarian under this Section may be overridden by a one-third (1/3) vote of the General Assembly.

**Article XIII.      STATEMENTS OF NON-DISCRIMINATION,  
ANTI-HAZING, AND COMPLIANCE**

Section 13.01      Statement of Non-Discrimination.

- (a) The Residence Hall Association shall be an equal opportunity organization and shall prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, age, religion or religious creed, disability or handicap, sex or gender, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation military or veteran status, immigration status, economic class or standing, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state, or local law as well as those protected by university policy.
- (b) The Residence Hall Association is committed to supporting a diverse and inclusive work environment and residential community.

Section 13.02      Statement of Anti-Hazing.

- (a) The Residence Hall Association does not condone or encourage any act of hazing being conducted by or associated with its members.
- (b) This Constitution defines hazing as an intentional act or method of initiation into a group, organization, or team that subjects another person, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, to conduct that may injure, abuse, humiliate, harass, or intimidate that person.

Section 13.03      Statement of Compliance.

- (a) The Residence Hall Association and its members shall comply with all university and campus policies and regulations as well as local, state, and federal laws.

**Article XIV.      AMENDMENT**

Section 14.01      Minor Amendments.

- (a) Changes to this Constitution that solely alter formatting or grammar may be made by the Parliamentarian at the direction of the President so long as they do not significantly alter the meaning or intent behind any section. This may be overridden by a one-third (1/3) majority vote of the General Assembly.

Section 14.02      Major Amendments.

- (a) Amendments to this Constitution other than those described in § 14.01 of this Constitution must be submitted in writing by a Representative of the General Assembly.
- (b) Each amendment shall be submitted to the Parliamentarian as a Resolution to Amend the Constitution.
- (c) Once formatted by the Parliamentarian, proposed amendments shall be debated by the General Assembly, which shall then make a recommendation to the hall councils.



- (d) Each hall council shall conduct a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote on whether or not to approve the amendment.
- (e) For the amendment to be adopted, it must pass in three-fourths (3/4) of the hall councils.

## **Article XV. RATIFICATION AND ENACTMENT**

### Section 15.01 Ratification.

- (a) A vote, in the form of an Act to Ratify this Constitution of the American University Residence Hall Association, shall be put forth to the Residence Hall Association General Assembly.
- (b) Ratification shall require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of votes cast in the General Assembly in favor of ratification and enactment.
- (c) The President of the Residence Hall Association shall then sign this Constitution along with the Parliamentarian and the Residence Hall Association Advisor(s) to finalize ratification.

### Section 15.02 Enactment.

- (a) Upon ratification, this Constitution, dated September 24, 2017, shall immediately go into effect, and shall supersede and retain precedence over all previous constitutions and all duly adopted Bylaws, legislation, hall council charters, regulations and policies of the Residence Hall Association or provisions thereof.

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ADOPTED ON SEPTEMBER 24, 2017

**Samuel Rogers**

President of the Residence Hall Association

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**Andrew Kelly**

Residence Hall Association Acting Parliamentarian

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**Jason Timpson**

Residence Hall Association Advisor

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**Emily Butler**

Residence Hall Association Advisor