By-laws of the American Political Science Association

Chapter I: The Council

1. Composition (Constitution, Article IV, section 2)

1.1. 23 elected officers: the President, President-Elect, 3 Vice-Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer, 16 elected Council members.

1.2. Appointed officers: Executive Director, Managing Editor of the APSR, Managing Editor of Perspectives on Politics, and the Chair of the Program Committee.

1.3. For purposes of defining the composition of the Council, the Managing Editor of the APSR is defined to include the Managing Editor of Perspectives on Politics.

1.4 "The Council may fill any interim vacancy in its elective membership until the end of the next Annual Meeting." (Constitution, V, 3)

1.5 In cases in which the role of managing editor or chair of the Program Committee is represented by co-editors or co-chairs, each role shall have one vote. The President shall designate at the time of appointment which co-chair or co-editor shall serve on the Council.

2. Beginning and End of Officers' Terms

2.1. "The terms of elective officers, except members of the Council and the Treasurer, shall extend for one year measured from the end of the program of the Annual Meeting, except that an officer's term shall in no event expire until his or her successor assumes office. The terms of members of the Council shall extend for two years, similarly calculated, and one-half shall expire each year. The term of the Treasurer shall also extend for two years, similarly calculated." (Constitution, V, 1).

2.2. The President

(a) The President's term shall begin and he or she shall assume office at the end of the program of the Annual Meeting in the calendar year following his or her election as President-Elect, or immediately upon notification by the Executive Director of his or her succession to the Presidency under one of the conditions in 2.2(b).

(b) In case of death, resignation, or inability of the President to perform the duties of his or her office, the President-Elect shall immediately succeed him or her and shall be President for the remainder of the term unless that is less than four months, in which case he or she shall serve out the unexpired term and one additional year" (Constitution, V, 3).

2.3. The President-Elect

(a) The President-Elect's term shall begin and he or she shall assume office when the Election Committee has certified his or her election to the Executive Director.

(b) The President-Elect's term shall end when he or she becomes President as specified in Chapter I, Section 2.2.

2.4. The Vice Presidents, Secretary, and Treasurer

(a) The terms of the three Vice-Presidents, the Secretary, and the Treasurer shall begin and they shall assume office when the Election Committee has certified their election to the Executive Director.

(b) The terms of the three Vice-Presidents, the Secretary, and the Treasurer shall end when the Election Committee has certified the election of their successors to the Executive Director.

2.5. Members of the Council

(a) The terms of new members of the Council shall begin and they shall assume office when the Election Committee certifies their election and the terms for which they have been elected to the Executive Director.

(b) The terms of outgoing Council members shall end when the Election Committee certifies the election of their successors to the Executive Director.

3. Powers (Constitution, VII, 2-3)

3.1. Subject to limitations specified in the Constitution (VII, 1) "The Council shall be the governing body of the Association with general charge and supervision of its business and interests in accordance with this Constitution."

3.2. Receives reports of all officers and committees.

3.3. Adopts and periodically reviews the budget.

3.4. Appropriates Association funds.

3.5. Gives recommendations upon all questions (except the election of officers) to the Annual Business Meeting.

3.6. Receives an annual audit of Association accounts.

3.7. Gives directions to officers and committees.


3.9. In the event of an emergency which prevents the holding of the Annual Business Meeting, may exercise all the powers of the Association including the election of officers.

3.10. Creates other committees for stated periods and stipulated assignments.

3.11. Proposes amendments to the Constitution.


3.13. Sets the dues for the various categories of Association membership.

3.14. Prescribes conditions for the conduct of referenda on policy questions receiving one-third or more votes at the Annual Business Meeting.

3.15. Fixes the terms and advises and consents to the appointment of the Executive Director, Managing Editor of the APSR, and chairpersons and members of all other Council and Association committees, except such ad hoc advisory committees as may be established under Chapter IV, section 1.2(h).

3.16. Fills interim vacancies in elective offices until the end of the next Annual Meeting (V, 2).

4. Meetings

4.1. "The Council shall meet once a year before the Annual Business Meeting, and oftener at its discretion or on call of the President" (VII, 2). The Council shall normally meet two times a year: (1) during the spring, and (2) immediately prior to the Annual Business Meeting.

4.2. Committee and Council meetings, if held elsewhere than at the Association's offices in Washington, D.C., where facilities, records, and staff exist, shall be held at reasonable, convenient locations which will minimize the travel expenses of members (Council action, September 7-8, 1970).

4.3 Meetings of the Council shall be open to attendance by members of the Association. Members attending Council meetings are entitled to observe, but not participate in the Council's discussion.

5. Quorum

"Nine members shall constitute a quorum" (VII, 2).

6. Presiding Officer


6.2. In the President's absence, a temporary presiding officer shall be chosen by the Council.

7. Voting

7.1. "A majority vote of the members in attendance shall control (the Council's) decisions" (VII, 2).

7.2. At the direction of the presiding officer, votes shall be taken by voice vote, by show of hands, or by roll call; except that a roll call must be taken if requested by any Council member.

7.3 Votes may be conducted between meetings by electronic means such as email or posting on a secure website. Conduct of such a vote will allow for at least one day for electronic discussion before a
vote is taken and will be reported in minutes of the next meeting.

8. Agenda

8.1. The agenda for each Council meeting shall be established by the Administrative Committee and shall be delivered at least 14 days in advance to the Council members together with any supporting materials necessary to inform the members of the business to be discussed. In order to prepare for the first meeting of the new Council, the Administrative Committee shall be consulted in the preparation of an agenda prior to the approval of that Administrative Committee by the Council.

8.2. The agenda shall be designed to focus discussion on major policy issues, with business of lesser importance delegated to the Administrative Committee.

8.3. The Administrative Committee shall report to the Council all decisions it has made since the previous Council meeting, and its decisions shall be regarded as official Association action unless specifically disapproved by the Council.

9. Minutes

9.1. The Secretary shall keep the minutes of all Council meetings, including the wording of each motion, the names of the members making each motion, a brief summary of the arguments made and the members making them on each motion, and a record of the action on each motion, including each member's vote on each roll call.

9.2. The Secretary shall, through the National Office, deliver a copy of each Council meeting's minutes to all Council members at least 14 days prior to the next meeting.

9.3. Approval of the most recent meeting's minutes shall be the first order of business at each Council meeting.

9.4. The approved minutes of each Council meeting shall be published in an official journal of the Association.

10. Enactment of Annual Budget

The Council shall enact an annual budget and propose annual dues in such a manner as to (a) state fully all sources of income, including income for restricted purposes; (b) state the approximate costs of each of the Association's major programs; and (c) preserve a balance between projected income and expenditure, including an appropriate amount for contingencies.

11. Appropriation of Funds

11.1. The allocation of funds in the annual budget shall constitute the Council's appropriation of funds.

11.2. The Executive Director shall be responsible for disbursing funds within the terms set by the Council.

11.3. The Administrative Committee is authorized to make internal adjustments in the annual budget and special appropriations from the contingency fund authorized in the annual budget. It shall report on such adjustments and appropriations to the next Council meeting. The Executive Director shall be responsible for disbursing funds within the terms set by the Administrative Committee.

11.4. For the forthcoming fiscal year (July 1 to June 30) Committee budget authorizations are established by the Council at its spring meeting. Committees are informed prior to the beginning of the fiscal year of their budget authorization and receive reports on expenditures on request. Disbursements above budgeted levels by Committees will not be made unless approved by the Administrative Committee or the Council.

12. Reimbursement of Expenses Incurred in Association Business

12.1. Reimbursement of the travel and living expenses incurred in the conduct of official Association business shall be only for actual out-of-pocket expenses.

12.2. Out-of-pocket expenses shall, except by special authorization by the Council or Administrative Committee, include:

(a) Tourist or economy air fare (where available), train fare, or mileage and related costs for travel in private automobiles.

(b) Hotel room charges.

(c) Restaurant charges.

(d) Taxi fares.

(e) Tips.

13. Consideration of Proposed New Programs

13.1. Any proposal to the Council for a new Association program shall, except as the Council provides otherwise, include:

(a) A brief statement of the policy issues involved.

(b) A proposed budget presenting the estimated costs of the proposed program.

(c) Suggested sources of funds to support the program.

13.2. The person or persons proposing the new program shall consult the Executive Director prior to the Council meeting at which the program is considered.

13.3. Proposals for new programs shall, unless the Council decides otherwise, be referred to an appropriate Association committee for review and consideration.

14. Other Procedural Rules


Chapter II: Appointive Association Officers and Representatives

1. The Executive Director

1.1. Selection and Tenure

(a) "The Executive Director of the Association . . . shall be appointed by the Council, after it hears the recommendations of the President. (The Executive Director) shall have (a term) . . . fixed by the Council and . . . shall be eligible for reappointment" (VI, 1).

(b) The Council shall appoint the Executive Director for a term of up to five years.

(c) The salary and other terms of the appointment shall be stipulated in a contract proposed jointly by the President and the person recommended for appointment as Executive Director. The contract shall be presented to the Council and shall become operative when approved by the Council and signed by the President and the person appointed as Executive Director.

(d) At least once every two years, the president, president-elect and treasurer, after gathering comparable data, shall review the salary of the Executive Director and, if they deem it advisable, recommend to the Administrative Committee an increase above the cost-of-living adjustment approved by the Council. The same procedure will be followed in those special circumstances when it is inappropriate for the Executive Director to set the salary of an employee.

1.2. If a vacancy occurs during the Executive Director's term, the President shall, with the advice and consent of the Council, appoint an acting Director to serve until the office is filled.

1.3. Status and Duties

(a) The Executive Director shall be the chief executive officer of the Association and transact its business.

(b) The Executive Director shall:

1. have charge of the National Administrative Office;

2. assist the President and the Administrative Committee in preparing the annual budget;

3. have custody of the Association's funds, discharge its financial obligations, and arrange for an annual independent audit of the Association's accounts;
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4. formulate plans and policies for the Association and submit them to the Administrative Committee for its consideration;

5. provide information and assistance to the President, the Administrative Committee, the Council, and to the members of the Association.

6. prepare an annual report on the activities of the Association for presentation to the Annual Meeting of members;

7. arrange for the editing and publishing of PS: Political Science & Politics (including The Political Science Teacher) and other publications authorized by the Council; and

8. perform such other duties as the President, the Administrative Committee, or the Council may direct.

2. The Managing Editor of the American Political Science Review and Perspectives on Politics

2.1. For purposes of interpreting Article VI of the Constitution and these by-laws, the Managing Editor of APSR is defined to include the Managing Editor of Perspectives on Politics and reference to a Board of Editors of the APSR shall be defined to include a Board of Editors of Perspectives on Politics.

2.2. Selection and Tenure

(a) . . . the Managing Editor of the American Political Science Review shall be appointed by the Council, after it hears the recommendation of the President. (The Managing Editor of the APSR shall have (a term) fixed . . . by the Council; and . . . be eligible for reappointment* (VI, 1).

(b) The President, in consultation with an ad hoc search committee selected by the procedures stipulated in Chapter III, 1.2(h), shall review candidates for the post of Managing Editor of the APSR and shall recommend one to the Council for appointment.

(c) It shall be Council policy to appoint a Managing Editor for a total of not more than six years. The Council shall stipulate the salary and other conditions of the Managing Editor's appointment at the time of appointment.

(d) If a vacancy occurs during the Managing Editor's term, the President shall, with the advice and consent of the Council, appoint an acting Managing Editor until the office is filled.

2.3. Status and Duties

(a) The Managing Editor of the APSR shall have the final responsibility for the APSR's editorial content.

(b) The Managing Editor shall be responsible for deciding how manuscripts for articles, research notes, book reviews, book notes, and communications shall be reviewed; for deciding which manuscripts will be published; for determining the journal's format; for keeping the journal's editorial costs within the limits authorized by the Council; and for reporting annually to the Association's members on the journal's affairs.

2.4 The Managing Editor, as defined in the APSA Constitution, shall also be referred to as the Editor in Chief.

3. Chairperson and Chairperson-Designate of the Program Committee

3.1. Selection and Tenure

(a) The President-Elect shall appoint a Chairperson-Designate of the Program Committee for the Annual Meeting to be held during the President-Elect's term as President, to take office on appointment.

(b) The Chairperson-Designate shall become Chairperson of the Program Committee, including membership on the Council, on the first day after the close of the Annual Meeting whose program was organized by his or her predecessor, and terminate at the end of the last day of the Annual Meeting whose program he or she organized.

3.2. Powers and Duties

The Chairperson and Chairperson-Designate of the Program Committee shall, within the rules and guidelines made by the Council, be responsible for the organization of all aspects of their respective Annual Meetings except the Annual Business Meetings.

4. American Political Science Association Representatives to Other Organizations

When the Association is invited to name an Association representative or representatives to other organizations, such as the International Political Science Association, Social Science Research Council, American Council of Learned Societies, Consortium of Social Science Associations, National Coalition for History, and American Association for the Advancement of Science, the President shall, with the advice and consent of the Council, select a nominee for each post.

Chapter III: Constitutional Committees

These shall include all committees and boards established by the Constitution.

1. Administrative Committee

1.1. Composition and Selection

(a) The Administrative Committee shall consist of the President, President-Elect, Treasurer, and four other elected members of the Council appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Council.

(b) No appointed officer shall be eligible to serve on the Committee.

1.2. Powers and Duties

The Administrative Committee shall:

(a) Call Council meetings in addition to those called by the Council itself whenever in the Committee's judgment such a meeting is desirable.

(b) Solicit suggestions for agenda items from Council members and prepare the agenda for each Council meeting.

(c) Prepare the agenda for the Annual Business Meeting.

(d) Recommend the annual budget for action by the Council.

(e) Make special appropriations from the contingency funds under the conditions stated in Chapter I, 11.3.

(f) On behalf of the Council, dispose of policy issues deemed of insufficient weight to require decisions by the Council.

(g) On its own initiative or as directed by the Council, from time to time commission reviews and evaluations of Association programs and relationships with other organizations.

(h) On the recommendation of the President, establish ad hoc advisory committees, advise and consent to the appointment of their members, and fund them by appropriations from the contingency fund.

1.3. Reporting to the Council

(a) The Administrative Committee shall deliver to each member of the Council at least one week prior to each Council meeting a written report of its actions taken under 1.2(e) and (h).

(b) The Council shall question and discuss any items in this report it chooses, and no action taken by the Administrative Committee under 1.2(e), (f) and (h) shall become Association policy if specifically disapproved by the Council.

2. Nominating Committee

2.1. "After each annual meeting the President shall appoint with the advice and consent of the Council and with due regard to geographical distribution and the fields of professional interest, three members to a Nominating Committee of six, to serve for two-year terms; and the President shall designate the chair. The Committee may canvass the membership directly or indirectly for suggestions, and shall submit to the next Annual Business Meeting one nomination for each elective office to be filled, except the Presidency. These nominations shall be announced to the memberships, by any convenient means, well in advance of the Annual Meeting* (V, 2). Because the President-elect succeeds
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1. Council Committee on Rules

1.1. Composition and Selection

(a) The Committee on Rules shall consist of three members of the Council, one of whom shall be designated chairperson, appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Council.

(b) They shall serve for one year, and shall be eligible for reappointment.

1.2. Power and Duties

(a) The Committee shall annually review the actions of the Council and include any changes or additions made by the Council in the By-Laws. In addition, the Committee shall also recommend to the Council any additions, deletions, and modifications of the By-Laws it deems desirable. The revised By-Laws shall be published in an official APSA publication at least every three years and shall always be made available on request to any member of the Association.

(b) The Committee shall also review the Council’s Rules of Procedure governing the
conduct of the Annual Business Meeting and recommend to the Council any additions, deletions, and modifications it deems desirable. Any proposed changes in these Rules of Procedure shall be published on the Association’s website, with email notification to members, by February 1 for comment, and in the form finally approved by the Council after considering member comments, by April 1.

(c) The Council shall take final action on the Rules of Procedure after the announced deadline for receiving comments has passed. The Rules of Procedure thus adopted shall be made available to the memberships.

2. Council Committee on Elections

2.1. Composition and Selection

(a) The Committee on Elections shall consist of three members of the Council, one of whom shall be designated as chairperson, appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Council.

(b) They shall serve for one year, and shall be eligible for reappointment.

2.2. Powers and Duties

(a) The committee shall implement the Association's By-Laws and the Council's directives in supervising the conduct of elections of the membership for contested offices, constitutional amendments, and referenda on resolutions receiving one-third or more votes at the Annual Business Meeting.

(b) The Committee shall supervise the counting of the ballots and certify the results to the President and the Executive Director. The Executive Director shall notify the candidates as expeditiously as possible.

3. Audit Committee

3.1. Composition and Selection

(a) The Audit Committee shall consist of three members: two from the Council not serving on the Administrative Committee or Finance Committee and one from the Trust and Development Board of Trustees. One of the members shall serve as Chair. Members and the chair shall be named by the President with the advice and consent of the Council.

(b) Designated members shall serve until the completion of the annual audit for the fiscal year they were appointed and shall be eligible for reappointment so long as they retain eligibility for designation.

3.2. Power and Duties

(a) The Audit Committee shall retain an auditor for the Association, within the budget specified by the APSA Council, and shall oversee all audit work. The auditor shall be rotated at least every five years.

(b) The Audit Committee will receive reports from the auditor on behalf of the Association.

(c) The Audit Committee will establish and oversee whistle blower protections for officers and staff with respect to financial matters.

(d) The Audit Committee will assure and oversee that adequate internal controls exist for the Association's accounting and finance.

4. Finance Committee

4.1. Composition and Selection

(a) The Committee on Finances shall consist of the Treasurer who will be designated chairperson, and two other members of the Council, appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Council.

(b) Designated members shall serve for one year, and shall be eligible for reappointment so long as they retain eligibility for designation.

4.2. Power and Duties

(a) The Committee shall examine and interpret the trends in Association finances.

(b) The Committee shall oversee patterns of revenues and expenditures relative to budget.

(c) The Committee shall “review and approve” arrangements for managing APSA funds, receipts, and disbursements.

(d) The Committee shall work closely with APSA’s Director of Finance and with the Executive Director.

4.3 Reporting to the Council

(a) The Committee shall report on the above matters to the Council and advise the Administrative Committee on financial matters relative to performance of the Association.

(b) The Committee shall present to the Council the tax Form 990 of the association before it is filed with the US Internal Revenue Service. The Council shall be given no less than seven days to review the Form 990.

Chapter V: Special Purpose Committees

All special purpose committees are established by the Council with members and chairs appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Council.

1. Standing Committees

1.1. Standing committees are established to deal with ongoing needs and concerns of the Association.

1.2. Standing committees normally consist of six members, with overlapping three-year terms.

1.3. The budget for standing committees is set each year by the Council; the Council’s deliberation on each committee’s annual budget shall include a determination of whether that committee should continue.

1.4. The President shall be an ex-officio member of all standing committees.

1.5. All members of standing committees shall be members of the Association.

2. Award Committees

2.1. Award committees are established for the sole purpose of selecting recipients of Association awards.

2.2. Award committees normally consist of three members appointed for one-year terms.

2.3. Award committees receive no funds for meetings, although postage and telephone expenses may be reimbursed by the Association.

3. Project Committees

3.1. Project committees are established to oversee Association projects supported by external funds.

3.2. The duration, size, and length of members’ terms may vary according to the requirements of the project.

3.3. Project committees shall report regularly to the Council on the projects for which they are responsible.

Chapter VI: Elections

1. Ballots and Participation

1.1. Mail ballots are defined to include electronic ballots.

1.2. Associate members of the Association do not qualify as members for purposes of voting at the Annual Business Meeting (though they may attend), for voting in elections, or for proposing nominations for office, resolutions or Constitutional amendments.

Chapter VII: Organized Sections

1. History and Purpose

1.1. Organized Sections were established by action of the APSA Council in September 1981 as a means to build community around areas of research within political science. They function as autonomous elements of the APSA, bound by its Constitution and legal status.

2. Governance

2.1. Organized Sections are components of APSA as a whole, and thus are bound by its Constitution and legal status and accountable to the Council.

2.2. Organized Sections must maintain uniform and consistent by-laws outlining policies for section administration, elections, and finances.
(a) A current copy of such bylaws must be on file with the Association.

3. Membership

3.1 Sections serve as small membership entities within the Association. Sections may charge membership dues, which will be collected as part of the overall dues collection of the Association.

3.2 Members of Organized Sections must simultaneously be members in good standing of the APSA.

4. Oversight

4.1 Committee on Organized Sections

(a) shall be appointed by the APSA president and approved by the Council.

(b) monitors section activities and may formulate plans and policies for consideration by the Council.

(c) approves the creation or termination of sections with consent from the Council

(d) updates the Organized Section Handbook with the approval of the Council.

4.2 Organized Section Handbook

(a) provides broad guidelines on procedures governing Sections and their operations.

Note: The By-Laws of the American Political Science Association reproduced below were approved by the Council on September 2, 1981, with subsequent amendments and most recently approved on April 14, 2012.