

LCA Approves New Constitution

Office of the Constitution Committee

Liberia Community Association

DFW/Parts Adjacent

September 2, 2009

Fellow Liberians and Friends of Liberia:

The Liberian Community Association of Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex has a new constitution. The proposed draft was approved unanimously on October 31, 2009, after nearly 3 hours of deliberation. Some changes were made to the document, based motions and adoptions by the body.

Major Constitutional Changes from the 1994 By-Laws

One of the issues the Chairman of the Committee had to address was whether the constitution was being amended, revised, or rewritten. The clarification was made and accepted by the body, but for the benefit of everyone else, I will include the following comment: the mandate of the Constitution Committee was to use the 1994 LCA Constitution, as a platform, and propose relevant changes as necessary and the LCA members were to decide whether to accept or reject the proposals. The Commission was not told specifically to amend, revise, or rewrite the 1994 Constitution. However, it is important to know that amendment and revision, in a political sense, could be synonymous terms (that is, having meanings that are similar).

Amendment may be defined as: “an alteration or addition to a motion, bill, constitution, etc.

“...The process of formally altering (changing) or adding to a document or record.”

“In government and law, an addition or alteration (change) made to a constitution, statute, or legislative bill... “

Revision: “amendment or alteration: to alter (change) something already written or printed, in order to make corrections, improve, or update.”

Perhaps the best definition came from a Liberia youngster who said: “when I think about amendment, I think about small changes to a document; revision to me is making big changes to a document; you see what I mean...?” Yes, I see what he means, and those small changes can have a big impact. So, when LCA members receive a copy of the constitution, they can determine whether it was **amended** or **revised**. In either case, the process is the same. The changes have to be voted on by the general body.

10 Major Changes

New Provision	Article	Session
The official means of communication now includes the Internet; teleconference, etc.	IV	4
The Chaplaincy shall be an elected position.	V	1
There shall be a general auditor to be appointed by the general assembly who shall conduct an audit of an administration before leaving office.	V	2
Election shall be held on the 2 nd Saturday of June in an election year.	V	8
Newly elected officers will be installed immediately after the election; inauguration shall follow as soon as possible.	v	9
The outgoing administration shall turn over office to elected officers in 2 weeks,		
from date of election.	V	10
The Election Commission shall be elected by the general body on the 3rd Saturday in October of a year proceeding the general election year, and shall remain in office until a successor is appointed.	VI	3, 5
The voting age is reduced to 16, and, except for children 16 years or younger, all members of LCA, above 16 years old shall be required to pay dues.	VII	2
30% of all funds raised by LCA for a non-LCA member will be retained by LCA for charity purposes.	VII	6
Amending the Constitution will require 2/3 majority votes.	XII	1

Much time has been devoted to the elections process. The Constitution addresses the policy and politics of organizing elections. It was important to answer this all-important question: “should a sitting president of LCA be given a constitutional authority to cancel elections or change the Election Commission for parochial or any reason said to be in the best interest of the community? It was important to address this question because the 1994 Constitution does not assign the responsibility of elections or appointment of an election commission to the President of LCA or another entity. Since the constitution has been silent on the subject, LCA Presidents have assumed it was their constitutional right to appoint the Election Commission. Generally, for the last 14 years, the Liberian Community appeared to have tolerated the de facto claim. That changed recently when an attempt was made by the outgoing leadership to cancel the presidential election, change the Election Commission, and organize new elections. That was the wakeup call, and everyone was unanimous in making sure that the current Constitution protects the election process.

Therefore, in the 2009 Constitution, the Election Commission of three individuals will be appointed by the assembly and reappointed or changed at LCA discretion, not the president. On the other hand, no member of the Commission can run for an elected office while on the Commission.

Personally, I extend my profound thanks to all members of the Constitution Commission for their candid deliberations and tedious work on the document. We also enjoyed a lot of good food in all the three different homes we met for the laborious but worthwhile task.

To the Liberian Community, we say thank you for your suggestions via email, phones, and face-to-face encounters. Your suggestions are the basis for this document.

Lastly, I am thankful to the President, Mrs. Lorena-Diggs Travell, for making the revision of the Constitution a top priority of her administration. As a result, she put a team together from Arlington, Dallas, Euless, and Fort Worth to produce

a draft constitution in three months into her administration. This is a monumental accomplishment.

“In unity, strong success is sure; we cannot fail.”

John S. David, PhD
Chairman, LCA Constitution Committee