

## **CONSTITUTION OF THE GEORGIA ASSOCIATION OF BLACK WOMEN ATTORNEYS**

*(Revised November 10, 2005)*

RECOGNIZING that racism is the most serious impediment to the economic, social and political advancement of Black people; and that Black Women are particularly victimized by such racism;

RECOGNIZING that the legal system is inadequate in and of itself to address and redress the peculiar problems of Blacks and especially Black Women;

RECOGNIZING that elimination of the devastating effects of racism requires that new laws be forged, rights be safeguarded, and that unique, creative and innovative legal remedies be fashioned;

RECOGNIZING that this struggle cannot be waged or won in the courts alone, but through a coalition of community, religious, political and individual forces and through both legal and extra legal efforts;

RECOGNIZING the strength of Black Women in this community and in the world through their numbers, their contributions and their abilities;

RECOGNIZING the severe under-representation of Black Women in positions of responsibility in government and in the private sector;

RECOGNIZING that in this community and the world there is a need for analysis of, communication of, and advocacy for issues and conditions that are peculiar to and affect Black Women;

RECOGNIZING that we are not just lawyers, but lawyers who seek to remedy the oppression of all people of color;

WE, the members of the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys ("GABWA" or "the organization"), do hereby authorize this CONSTITUTION for the purpose of committing our resources collectively to:

- 1) Identify and analyze legal issues which affect the lives of Black people in the local, state and national communities;
- 2) Collaborate with organizations for a mutual exchange of plans and programs toward the achievement of social, political and economic equality for Black people;
- 3) Educate Blacks, individuals and organizations to the powers and limitations of the court system; and explore and expose remedies which supplement the abilities of the court system and compensate for its inadequacies;
- 4) Provide for an informed and reliable voice through which the needs and demands of the Black community may heard;
- 5) Advocate for more representation by Black Women, wherever laws and policies affecting Black people are made;
- 6) Take all of the steps necessary to help Black people gain those rights and privileges guaranteed them by law, by morality and by justice.

### **ARTICLE I - MEMBERSHIP**

#### **SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS**

Membership in the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys is available to any person meeting one of the following criteria:

##### **A. Regular Member**

A Regular Member is an individual, current in her dues, who is a law school graduate licensed to practice law in the United States of America.

## **B. Student Member**

A Student Member is an individual, current in her dues, who is enrolled in law school and who has an interest, real or tangential, in the goals of the organization.

## **C. Associate Member**

An Associate Member is an individual, current in her dues, with an interest, real or tangential, in the goals of the organization, but is neither a licensed attorney nor a law student.

## **SECTION 2. TERM OF MEMBERSHIP**

Membership in this organization for Regular and Associate Members shall be from year-to-year, commencing on January 1 of each year. The term of membership for Student Members shall run from September 1 of each year through August 30 of the next. Membership for Student Members in their third year of law school shall expire on December 31 of the year in which they graduate.

## **SECTION 3. REGIONAL CHAPTERS**

There shall be Regional Chapters of the organization for the benefit of the organization's members residing in the Macon, Augusta, Albany, Columbus and Savannah areas. The purpose of the Regional Chapters is to facilitate the involvement of the organization's members residing and/or working in all areas of the state. The Regional Chapters shall each have a Regional Vice President, elected by the full membership of the organization. The Regional Chapters shall not collect separate or additional dues or maintain separate or additional organizational agendas.

## **ARTICLE II - VOTING**

Voting in GABWA shall meet the following criteria:

- A. A Regular Member shall have one vote.
- B. Except for the Student Member-at-Large, a Student Member is a non-voting member.
- C. An Associate Member is a non-voting member.
- D. The official membership roster, indicating the membership category of each member, will be maintained by the Treasurer.

## **ARTICLE III - ADMINISTRATION**

### **SECTION 1. OFFICERS**

- A. The officers of GABWA shall be the President, President-Elect, Vice President, Vice President of Technology, the current Vice Presidents of all active Regional Chapters, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Parliamentarian and Historian.
- B. Regular Members, current in their dues at the time of their nomination, are eligible for any elective office, except President-Elect and Vice President. Only individuals who have been Regular Members of the organization for the two years immediately preceding the year in which they would hold office of President-Elect or Vice President shall be eligible to run. Regular Members shall be eligible to serve in only one elective office per term.
- C. Duties:

President. The President shall be the Chair of the Executive Board. The President shall plan, schedule and preside at General Body and Executive Board meetings of the organization. She shall have and exercise general charge and supervision of the affairs of the organization and shall perform such other duties as may be assigned to her by the

Executive Board. The President shall appoint the Chair of each Standing Committee. The President shall be an ex-officio member of each Standing Committee, and, upon the expiration of her term, shall automatically become a member of the Executive Board for the next year, in the Office of Immediate Past President.

President-Elect. The President-Elect shall perform such duties as the President and Executive Board may assign, and, except as otherwise provided, the duties of the President or Vice-President is unable to perform her duties or is absent from a meeting where she would otherwise preside. The President-Elect's primary function shall be to plan for the upcoming year. The President-Elect shall succeed the President at the beginning of the new year.

Vice President. The Vice President shall perform the duties of the President in her absence, disability or at the President's request. The Vice President also shall be responsible for ensuring that each Standing Committee is fully operational and abiding by the organization's Constitution and Bylaws.

Regional Vice President. All Regional Vice Presidents shall serve as points of contact and information for members and others in their respective Regional areas. The Regional Vice Presidents shall maintain communication with the President via telephone, mail and any other effective means. The Regional Vice Presidents shall represent the ideas concerns and issues of members residing and/or working in their respective Regions to the President and Executive Board. The Regional Vice Presidents shall coordinate the organization's meetings or other activities in their respective Regions at the President's request.

Vice President of Technology. The Vice President of Technology shall be responsible for maintaining and updating the website and the organization's electronic list-serve in order to achieve effective communication among the membership. The Vice President of Technology also shall be responsible for procuring such services necessary to carry out the functions of her position.

Secretary. The Secretary shall keep the minutes, books, documents and records of the Executive Board and General Body meetings and any other meetings of the organization, receive and keep all reports to the organization, give all notices required and maintain the mailing list.

Treasurer. The Treasurer shall formulate the annual budget in consultation with the Executive Board and all Standing Committee Chairs. She shall monitor the administration of the budget. She shall supervise the receipts and make a monthly financial report to the Executive Board. In addition, the Treasurer shall monitor the administration of all funds received or expended on behalf of the GABWA Foundation, Inc. The Treasurer shall maintain custody of all funds, property, securities and financial books and records of the organization. She shall write checks for expenditures as directed by the Executive Board. The Treasurer shall receive all funds and deposit them in the appropriate accounts.

Assistant Secretary. The Assistant Secretary shall be responsible for preparing and mailing the monthly newsletter. She also shall serve as a Chair of the Newsletter Committee.

Parliamentarian. The Parliamentarian shall keep order at all meetings in accordance with the most current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Historian. The Historian shall compile records and photographs of GABWA's activities throughout the year and create a scrapbook of the organization's activities for that year. The Historian shall be the custodian of any photography equipment (e.g., camera) and historical records of the organization.

Vacancies: The President shall fill any vacant position on the Executive Board by appointment. If the Presidency is vacant, the Vice President shall ascend to the Presidency.

## **SECTION 2. EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The governing body of GABWA shall be the Executive Board. The Executive Board shall be vested with the power to act on behalf of the organization in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws. The Executive Board may adopt such rules, policies and procedures for the conduct of its business as shall be deemed advisable and may, in the execution of powers granted, appoint sub-committee or agents to work on specific problems or reports. The Executive Board shall meet at least once a month and shall report any action taken at the next regular meeting of the membership. When exigent circumstances require immediate action, the Executive Board is authorized to decide and act on the response deemed appropriate by the Board.

- A. The Executive Board of the organization shall consist of the President, Vice President-at-Large, Vice President-Macon Subchapter, Vice President-Columbus Subchapter, Vice President-Augusta Subchapter, Vice President-Albany Subchapter, Vice President-Savannah Subchapter, Vice President of Technology, President-Elect, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Treasurer, Historian, Parliamentarian and Chairs of the Standing Committees, as specified herein. In addition, the President may appoint one Student representative and two Members-at-Large to serve on the Executive Committee.
- B. The Members-At-Large and Student Member-At-Large shall be appointed by the President and shall serve the organization at the request and pleasure of the President.
- C. The business affairs of the Executive Board may only be conducted when a simple majority of the Executive Board members for the current administrative year are present. Any action of the Executive Board shall be deemed adopted by the full Executive Board when a simple majority of the Executive Board members present have approved the action.
- D. Each member of the Executive Board, as defined in paragraph A above, shall be entitled to one vote, which may be used to vote on the affairs presented to the Executive Board. In the case of Standing Committee chairs, that vote may be exercised by either the chair or, in her absence, her designee. It shall be the responsibility of each member of the Executive Board to faithfully administer the Constitution and Bylaws of the organization.
- E. All Chairs of the Standing Committees, as defined in the Constitution and Bylaws, shall attend each Executive Board meeting. If a Standing Committee Chair cannot attend an Executive Board meeting, she shall either appoint a designee to attend in her place or provide a written report to the Vice President for the purpose of reporting on the activities of her respective Committee.

## **SECTION 3. TERM**

The term of office for all elected officers and other members of the Executive Board shall be one calendar year commencing on January 1 of each year.

## ARTICLE IV - COMMITTEES

### SECTION 1. STANDING COMMITTEES

GABWA will conduct its affairs through the following Standing Committees, each led by a Chair:

- A. Community Service Committee. The Community Service Committee shall become directly involved with the community by formulating and implementing projects that respond to the immediate and long-term needs of the people. Furthermore, the Community Action Committee shall spearhead GABWA's efforts to (1) sponsor at least one annual project with a designated beneficiary; and (2) to perform other project throughout the year for the benefit of the community.
- B. Fundraising Committee. The Fundraising Committee shall raise funds for the general treasury or for other specific purposes as determined by the Executive Board.
- C. Inter-Bar Relations Committee. The InterBar Relations Committee shall establish and maintain relationships with various legal organizations.
- D. Judicial Review Committee. The Judicial Review Committee shall review and rank municipal and state judicial applicants for vacancies and make recommendations to the appropriate Judicial Qualifying Committee(s) within the relevant jurisdiction(s). Recommendations shall be made based on each applicant's character, temperament, professional aptitude, experience, and demonstrated qualifications for office. The Committee should also concern itself with monitoring significant legal decisions and the performance of local judges and informing GABWA's membership of the same.
- E. Legal Education Committee. The Legal Education Committee shall provide educational programs for the benefit of the community and furnish referrals to those who need assistance.
- F. Membership Committee. The Membership Committee shall plan and promote activities for the purpose of increasing membership in the organization, create and maintain current membership applications, and coordinate the involvement of members and others in the organization's Standing Committees and activities.
- G. Newsletter Committee. The Newsletter Committee shall assist the Assistant Secretary in the editing and publication of the organization's monthly newsletter.
- H. Political Action Committee. The Political Action Committee shall closely follow the proposals, developments and enactment of all state and local legislative, as well as any and all federal legislation of special interest to the organization. Where appropriate, the Political Action Committee shall analyze the substance of such legislation and recommend to the body its opinion concerning the same. Upon approval of the membership, the Political Action committee shall be directed to take appropriate action to: (1) render any assistance sought by elected officials in lobbying for legislative change; (2) engage in the endorsement of candidates for public office; (3) draft, or assist in drafting, legislation necessary for the good of the organization and the public; and/or (4) to encourage passage of such legislation.
- I. Student Programs Committee. The Student Programs Committee shall create and promote activities for the purpose of fostering positive mentoring relationships with the organization's student members and increasing student membership and involvement in the organization.

### SECTION 2. AD-HOC COMMITTEES

The President has the discretion to create Ad-Hoc Committees to ensure that the organization's goals and objectives are met.

#### ARTICLE V - CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

The Constitution shall be amended by a two-thirds vote of the voting members present after they have been provided notice of the proposed amendment(s) and the date, time and location of the meeting at which the membership will vote on the proposed amendment(s).

For purposes of this Article only, "notice" shall be: (1) an announcement at the regularly scheduled General Body membership meeting immediately preceding the meeting at which the proposed amendments will be voted, (2) notification in the organization's newsletter disseminated prior to the meeting at which the membership will consider the proposed amendment(s), and (3) at least ten (10) days written notice to the membership via the organization's electronic list-serve.

For purposes of amending the Constitution, a quorum shall consist of at least fifteen (15) Regular Members present.

#### ARTICLE VI – BYLAWS

The Constitution of the organization shall be carried out in accordance with its current Bylaws as adopted by the Executive Board.