

OVERVIEW OF THE REFERENCE COMMITTEE PROCESSES

REFERENCE COMMITTEE:

A. Number and composition:

1. In recent years the House of Delegates has effectively processed its business using one reference committee for meetings. If the annual or semi-annual session is expected to have a heavy load of business two or more reference committees may be used. When a key issue arises, a special “reference committee of the whole” House may be convened in addition to normal reference committees. Reference committee start times may also be staggered to accommodate delegate attendance preferences when time allows.
2. FDA components designate members to serve on the Reference Committee. The Speaker assigns persons to specific reference committees (when more than one reference committee is needed) and the President designates the Reference Committee chair.
3. The Speaker-of-the-House can form additional reference committees if needed (with solicitation for more designees from the six components as needed).
4. Subjects assigned to each reference committee when more than one is needed are clustered as much as possible by corresponding FDA staff support in consultation with the Executive Director.
5. Members of the Reference Committee are listed in the House of Delegates agenda along with the chair.
6. If any member of the Reference Committee is expected to be absent, the corresponding component is responsible for designating a substitute as far in advance as possible.

B. Roles and duties of the Reference Committee:

1. The primary duty of the Reference Committee is to hear testimony and recommend a course of action to the House of Delegates on matters which have been assigned to it by the Speaker of the House.
2. The reference committee must recommend a starting position on each issue upon which the House of Delegates may deliberate.

3. The reference committee cannot ignore an item assigned to it.

C. Reference Committee process:

1. The Reference Committee will hold a hearing to present each matter assigned to them by the Speaker-of-the-House and listen to testimony on these matters.
2. During the hearing, Reference Committee members should listen to the testimony, ask non-rhetorical questions as necessary, but never engage in debate or commentary with persons testifying.
3. Following the open hearing on all matters assigned to it, the Reference Committee will meet in executive session to determine its recommended course of action on each matter assigned to it.
4. After completion of its deliberations in executive session, and with the assistance of the Chief Legal Officer, the reference committee will create a report with its recommended actions for the House of Delegates. Members must not reveal the contents of their report to anyone until the entire document is officially released to the entire House of Delegates.

D. Staff assistance:

1. Staff serve as informational resources and assist in drafting reference committee recommendations.
2. Staff do not engage in debate or take a position on an issue.
3. Staff are instructed to hold all reference committee deliberations in confidence.
4. Staff must prepare the Reference Committee report with assistance from the Reference Committee chair and oversight by the Speaker of the House.
5. FDA officers and trustees, including the treasurer and editor, serve as informational resources available upon request by the Reference Committee.
6. A Board of Trustees liaison will be assigned to each reference committee and be available to answer questions as needed.

E. Reference Committee hearings:

1. The Reference Committee hearing will begin as noticed in the House of Delegates' agenda or as otherwise announced by the Speaker of the House.

2. No motions or voting takes place during the hearing phase.
3. The Reference Committee's chair can limit testimony if it is redundant.
4. All FDA members may attend a Reference Committee hearing and testify.
5. Non-members must identify themselves and also identify the entity whose interests they represent, if any. Such people may only attend a reference committee hearing upon invitation by the reference committee chair and with the approval of the majority of the committee's members.
5. All Reference Committee members (or their component-designated substitutes) are expected to be present at the hearings.

F. Reference Committee executive session:

1. The Reference Committee may request resources, including people, in addition to staff and officers to assist in their deliberations.
2. Bylaws changes must be reviewed by the Speaker of the House in consultation with the Chief Legal Counsel and Executive Director.

G. Reference Committee report:

1. The Reference Committee should render a “recommendation of action” with respect to each matter assigned to them. Such recommendations will consist of one of the following:
 - a. Non-controversial items can be proposed for the Reference Committee’s consent agenda. These items will be considered as a block for an up or down vote at the beginning of the chair’s report to the House.
 - b. Move the resolution on an item referred to the Reference Committee and recommend its adoption [or to vote “Yes”]; or
 - c. Move the resolution on an item referred to the Reference Committee and recommend its defeat [or to vote “No”]; or
 - d. Move a substitute resolution in lieu of a resolution on an item referred to the Reference Committee and recommend it be “Adopted” [and present the substitute]; or

- e. Refer the resolution on an item referred to the Reference Committee [to a specified body] “for [specify the purpose of the referral] and [optional: “to report back to the House of Delegates [[at its next meeting] [at its meeting on [date]]”]; or
 - f. Move to postpone consideration of the resolution definitely until [a specified date].
2. Written recommendations should include a *brief* rationale and/or justification (unless the reference committee simply recommends adoption of the resolution as it was presented to the committee itself).
 3. All resolutions must be self-explanatory and establish appropriate background information and understanding for historical reference followed by one or more resolving clauses as appropriate.
 4. The Reference Committee can initiate independent motions but only if the motion is germane to a matter that has been assigned to it as determined by the Speaker of the House.
 5. Resolutions requiring funds that are not budgeted must cite the proposed source of the fund.
 6. It is permissible for reference committees to make minor grammatical and format corrections without instituting formal amendments.
 7. Resolutions containing more than one topic should be subdivided.
 8. Every effort should be made for the Reference Committee to reach unanimous agreement. If not, the Reference Committee can tender majority and minority positions.
 9. The Reference Committee report will be emailed to all delegates as soon as it is completed.
 10. The Reference committee chair and members can reply to questions at the House of Delegates session, or make comments, but only after they are recognized by the Speaker.

VERY IMPORTANT: Reference committee chairs should briefly orient their committee members prior to convening each reference committee hearing