The Speaker

Graduate and Professional Student Assembly
of the
University of Pennsylvania

GA/44/RES/16
A/Const/44/Amend.6
GA/44/BILL/18/R.2

Adopted March 15, 2023
Abstract

The ad hoc Committee on Constitutional Revisions was constituted by the GAPSA General Assembly on October 12, 2022 to review the GAPSA Constitution and recommend amendments.

These amendments create the office of Speaker, to implement the idea that the meeting chair shall, to whatever extent possible, have no opinion about the merits of pending business and serve only to impartially guide effective procedure, so that the opinion of the General Assembly may emerge unhindered.

RESOLVED, by the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly of the University of Pennsylvania,

Section 1. That Article II(D)(6) is amended by striking out “President” and inserting “Chair”;

Section 2. That Article II(E)(4) is amended by striking out “Chair” and inserting “Speaker”;

Section 3. That Article II(F)(1) (as amended in Bill 13) is amended by inserting “and the Speaker” after “Executive Board members” and before “are ex officio non-voting members of the General Assembly”;

Section 4. That Article III(D)(2) (as amended in Bill 11) is amended by striking out “the President or the Executive Vice President” and inserting “the Speaker”;

Section 5. That Article III(D)(4) (as amended in Bill 11) is amended by striking out “the President” and inserting “the Speaker”;

Section 6. That Article IV(A)(3)(a) (as amended in Bill 13) is amended by striking out “The President is the default choice” and inserting “The Speaker is the default choice”;

Section 7. That Article IV(A)(2) (as amended in Bill 13) is amended by striking out “and (6) Vice President for Advocacy” and inserting “(6) Vice President for Advocacy, and (7) Speaker”;

Section 8. That Article V(A)(2)(a) is amended by striking out “General Assembly meetings and”;

Section 9. That Article II is amended by adding section (G), named “Speaker”, with the following paragraphs:

“(1) The Speaker shall chair meetings of the General Assembly.
“(2) The Speaker is chosen primarily for the ability to carry out the duties of the office: to impartially preside, maintain order, protect substantive rights, support open deliberative discourse, facilitate rough consensus wherever possible, and promote community. The Speaker may not bring or report any proposals whatsoever and must remain strictly impartial and silent on the merits of any question (even to “provide context”) before the General Assembly. The Speaker cannot waive these duties without resigning. The Speaker must have a working command of Robert’s Rules, the GAPSA Constitution and Bylaws, any Special Rules of Order, and any other standard operating procedures used by GAPSA.

“(3) The General Assembly shall elect a Speaker after the annual election of Executive Officers or whenever the position is vacant, provided the election is announced to the GAPSA membership at least ten (10) days prior. The election procedures shall be the same as for elected Executive Officers. Elected members and members-elect (except outgoing members) of the Executive Board may not run for Speaker if there are other qualified candidates.

“(4) The term of Speaker begins at noon on May 15 and lasts for one year and until a successor is elected. The Speaker may be removed by a three-fourths vote of no confidence.

“(5) The Speaker (or the assembly, if the Speaker is vacant or unwilling) may appoint a chair pro tempore for a particular meeting with the approval of the assembly.

“(6) The Speaker is invited to attend the meetings of the Executive Board and of any Council, Division, or Committee (and also any (sub)committee of any of the preceding) and may not cast a vote in any of these.

"Section 10. That the first Speaker elected under these amendments shall take office no sooner than noon on May 15, 2023; the President shall continue to chair General Assembly meetings until then;

Section 11. That the official abstract of these amendments is “These amendments create the office of Speaker, to implement the idea that the meeting chair shall, to whatever extent possible, have no opinion about the merits of pending business and serve only to impartially guide effective procedure, so that the opinion of the General Assembly may emerge unhindered.”;