

Resolution 212 — Optimizing the House of Delegates Structure and Operations

Author: Dr. Steven Saxe, Delegate

IF YOU VOTE YES

A YES vote supports the action requested in the resolving clauses.

This resolution directs the ADA to modernize House of Delegates operations by transitioning ceremonial and non-governance activities to digital formats by 2026, limiting speeches to four minutes, and updating nomination and election procedures to allow pre-recorded video submissions instead of live floor nominations. The goal is to reduce travel, cost, and paper waste, align with ADA's digital strategy, and improve accessibility for working dentists.

IF YOU VOTE NO

A NO vote keeps the House bound to outdated and costly traditions. It accepts current Board behavior and resists reform that would make the ADA more efficient, sustainable, and accessible to members. Saying NO means continuing unnecessary ceremonies, excess travel, and paper waste when practical, modern alternatives are available.

SUMMARY

This resolution strengthens the House of Delegates as ADA's supreme governing body by focusing its time on policy, not ceremony. It replaces non-governance activities with digital recognition, shortens speeches, and updates the Manual and Standing Rules to allow video nominations and speeches. These changes respect tradition while saving time, cost, and environmental impact.

Board of Trustees — Thank You for the Referral

We Trust the ADA Agencies Will Act Promptly

The Board agrees governance reform is needed but recommends referral to the upcoming governance study, now accelerated to 2026 instead of 2027. While the Board's recognition of urgency is appreciated, the House should ensure these improvements are not delayed or diluted. Referral is acceptable only if followed by swift, transparent implementation reflecting the members' directive.

TALKING POINTS

- Modernizes HOD operations for fiscal responsibility and efficiency.
- Reduces travel, cost, and environmental waste through digital tools.
- Keeps the House focused on its true role: policymaking, not ceremony.

- Enhances access for working dentists through shorter, hybrid meetings.
- Implements technology already available and tested since 2012.
- Upholds ADA's fiduciary duty to members by cutting wasteful practices.
- Encourages transparency and accessibility in officer nominations.



Prepared by Dentistry in General Advocacy Coalition

<https://dentistryingeneral.com/digac>

Resolution No. 212 New

Report: N/A Date Submitted: June 6, 2025

Submitted By: Dr. Steven Saxe, delegate, Nevada

Reference Committee: A (Business, Membership and Administrative Matters)

Total Net Financial Implication: None Net Dues Impact: _____

Amount One-time: _____ Amount On-going: _____

ADA Strategic Forecast Outcome: None

1 OPTIMIZING THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

2 The following resolution was submitted on Thursday, June 5, 2025, by Dr. Steven Saxe, delegate,
3 Nevada.

4 **Background:** The American Dental Association (ADA), as the national voice for the dental profession,
5 must continually evaluate whether its governance structure supports fiscal responsibility and meets
6 member needs in a changing environment. ADA members expect their dues to be used effectively and
7 ethically. According to the *Manual of the House of Delegates*, “The House of Delegates, as the legislative
8 and governing body, is the supreme authority in the American Dental Association” (*Manual of the House*
9 *of Delegates*, p. 4).

10 The House of Delegates continues to allocate time and resources to ceremonial activities, including the
11 installation of trustees and officers, spouse recognitions, and scripted speeches—which require
12 coordinated travel arrangements, staff planning, event production and media preparation. While these
13 acknowledgments are meaningful, they could be transitioned respectfully to professional digital formats or
14 featured in official publications to preserve recognition while reducing logistical demands and associated
15 costs. This aligns with the ADA’s stated commitment to financial sustainability and operational efficiency
16 ([Common Ground 2025: ADA Strategic Plan](#), April 2021, *Finance Goal*).

17 Environmental concerns also merit attention. The continued use of printed reference committee reports,
18 delegate packets, and physical testimony documents results in substantial paper waste. Reducing printed
19 material and unnecessary travel aligns with the *Finance Goal* in *Common Ground 2025* to ensure
20 financial sustainability and the *Organizational Goal* to improve overall effectiveness and capacity at all
21 levels of the Association.

22 Since the adoption of House Resolution 74H-2012, Transition to an Electronic House of Delegates
23 (*Trans.2012:407*), more than a decade ago, advances in technology, member habits, and ADA’s digital
24 platforms have made a broader digital-first model both feasible and beneficial to operational efficiency.

25 Furthermore, consolidating the in-person portion of the HOD into a three-day format—by conducting
26 preparatory sessions virtually in advance—would enhance accessibility for working dentists, reduce
27 costs, and uphold the authority of the House as the voice of ADA membership. It is understood that some
28 of these matters may be under current review by the Speaker and Board task force; however, this
29 resolution seeks to establish member-driven direction through clear policy, rather than relying solely on
30 internal studies.

The ADA has a fiduciary responsibility to structure its governance in ways that honor member investment and uphold the profession's integrity. These proposed updates aim to align the House of Delegates with widely accepted governance practices—such as reducing procedural overhead, adopting digital materials, and streamlining meeting structure—consistent with the ADA's defined governance duties and strategic direction. As stated in the *2025 ADA Governance and Organizational Manual*, "The Board of Trustees carries out the policies of the House of Delegates and has the power to establish ad interim policies when the House of Delegates is not in session and when such policies are essential to the management of the Association," and, "The House of Delegates... establishes, in collaboration with the Board of Trustees, the strategic direction of the Association" (pp. 8–10)

Resolution

212. Resolved, that the ADA transition ceremonial and non-governance activities during the House of Delegates session to digital formats in time for the 2026 House of Delegates, except for components that are part of the installation service, including:

- Digital recognition of retiring officers, trustees, and trustee spouses
- Digital remarks by the ADA Alliance and ADPAC Chair

and be it further

Resolved, that all live speeches delivered by the ADA President, President-Elect, and Executive Director be limited to four (4) minutes each, and be it further

Resolved, that the ADA *Governance and Organizational Manual*, Chapter VI. Elective Officers of the Association, Section B. Nominations, be amended as follows (additions are underlined; deletions are ~~stricken through~~):

1. President-Elect and Second Vice President. ~~Nominations for the offices of President-elect and Second Vice President shall be made in accordance with the order of business. Candidates for these elective offices shall be nominated from the floor of the House of Delegates by a simple declaratory statement, which may be followed by an acceptance speech not to exceed four (4) minutes by the candidate from the podium, according to the protocol established by the Speaker of the House of Delegates. Seconding a nomination is not permitted. No nominations or acceptance speeches shall be delivered from the floor of the House of Delegates. Nomination statements and acceptance speeches shall be submitted electronically in video format not to exceed four (4) minutes each in accordance with the protocol established by the Speaker of the House of Delegates. These pre-recorded materials shall be made available to all delegates prior to the first meeting.~~

2. Treasurer. The search for Treasurer shall be announced in an official publication of the Association in November of the final year of the incumbent Treasurer's term, together with the recommended qualifications for that position as provided in the *Bylaws*. Candidates for the office of Treasurer shall apply by submitting a standardized Treasurer *Curriculum Vitae* form to the Executive Director at least one hundred twenty (120) days prior to the convening of the House of Delegates. Each candidate's application shall be reviewed by the Board of Trustees. At least sixty (60) days prior to the convening of the House of Delegates the Executive Director shall provide all members of the House of Delegates, with each candidate's standardized Treasurer *Curriculum Vitae* and the determination of the Board of Trustees as to whether the candidate meets the recommended qualifications for the office of Treasurer. ~~No other candidate shall be nominated from the floor of the House of Delegates. Nominations shall be made in accordance with the order of business. Each nomination may be followed by an acceptance speech not to exceed four (4) minutes by the candidate from the podium, according to the protocol established by the Speaker of~~

~~the House of Delegates. Seconding a nomination is not permitted. No further nominations for the office of Treasurer shall be accepted from the floor of the House. No nominations or acceptance speeches shall be delivered from the floor of the House of Delegates. Candidates for the Office of~~

Treasurer shall submit a nomination statement and acceptance speech electronically in video format, not to exceed four (4) minutes each in accordance with the protocol established by the Speaker of the House of Delegates. These pre-recorded materials shall be made available to all delegates prior to the first meeting. If there are no eligible candidates for the office of Treasurer when the House of Delegates meets, the term of the incumbent Treasurer shall be extended by one (1) year. Should the incumbent Treasurer be unwilling or unable to serve an additional one (1) year term, the office of Treasurer shall be filled in accordance with the vacancy provisions of this chapter of the *Governance Manual*. Under these circumstances, former Treasurers of this Association not otherwise eligible to serve as Treasurer due to term limits will be eligible to serve as Treasurer until the House of Delegates can elect a Treasurer.

3. Speaker of the House of Delegates. The search for Speaker of the House shall be announced in an official publication of the Association in November of the final year of the incumbent Speaker of the House's term. Candidates for the office of Speaker of the House shall apply by submitting a *curriculum vitae* along with a statement supporting their qualifications to the Executive Director at least one hundred twenty (120) days prior to the convening of the House of Delegates. At least sixty (60) days prior to the convening of the House of Delegates the Executive Director shall provide all members of the House of Delegates with each candidate's *Curriculum Vitae* and statement of qualifications for the office of Speaker of the House. If no candidate has applied and submitted the required documentation, then the Association shall inform all delegates of this circumstance and the period to apply shall be extended to thirty (30) days prior to the convening of the House of Delegates. Only candidates who have applied and submitted the required documentation shall be nominated from the floor of the House of Delegates. If thirty (30) days prior to the convening of the House of Delegates no candidate has applied and submitted the required documentation then the Association shall inform all delegates of this circumstance and also inform them that nominations shall be permitted from the floor of the House of Delegates. Nominations for the office of Speaker of the House shall be made in accordance with the order of business. ~~Each nomination may be followed by an acceptance speech not to exceed four (4) minutes by the candidate from the podium, according to the protocol established by the Speaker of the House of Delegates. Seconding a nomination is not permitted. No nominations or acceptance speeches shall be delivered from the floor of the House of Delegates. Candidates for the office of Speaker of the House shall submit a nomination statement and acceptance speech electronically in video format, not to exceed four (4) minutes each in accordance with the protocol established by the Speaker of the House of Delegates. These pre-recorded materials shall be made available to all delegates for review prior to the first meeting.~~ If there are no candidates for the office of Speaker of the House nominated when the House of Delegates meets, the term of the incumbent Speaker of the House shall be extended by one (1) year. Should the incumbent Speaker of the House be unwilling or unable to serve an additional one (1) year term, the office of Speaker of the House shall be filled in accordance with the vacancy provisions of this chapter of the *Governance Manual*. Under these circumstances, former Speakers of the House not otherwise eligible to serve as Speaker due to term limits will be eligible to serve as Speaker until the House of Delegates can elect a Speaker of the House.

and be it further

Resolved, that the section titled Nomination Procedures in the Standing Rules of the House of Delegates published in the *Manual of the House of Delegates* be amended as follows (additions underlined; deletions ~~stricken through~~):

1 Nominations for President-elect, Second Vice President, Treasurer and Speaker of the House of
2 Delegates are made ~~from the floor of the House of Delegates at the first meeting by a simple~~
3 ~~declaratory statement and may be followed by an acceptance speech not to exceed four (4)~~
4 ~~minutes by the candidate from the podium, according to the protocol established by the Speaker~~
5 ~~of the House of Delegates. Seconding a nomination is not permitted.~~

6 ~~The nominations of these officers will be made at the first meeting. Nomination statements and~~
7 ~~acceptance speeches electronically in video format shall be made prior to the first meeting. The~~
8 details of the nomination procedure are set forth in the *Governance Manual*.

9 The nominations for membership to councils by the Board of Trustees shall also be made at the
10 first meeting. The nomination of council members is governed by the provisions of Chapter VIII of
11 the *Governance Manual*.

12 No additional nominations will be accepted after the first meeting.

13 **BOARD COMMENT:** The Board of Trustees deeply appreciates the effort and thoughtful intent behind
14 the governance resolutions presented this year. We recognize that our Association stands at an important
15 juncture, where a purposeful review of the ADA governance structure is essential to ensure it continues to
16 meet the evolving needs of our profession and our membership.

17 Although the once-every 12-years governance study previously postponed and now scheduled for 2027
18 to allow time for the development of the Strategic Forecasting Committee processes, we believe that
19 current circumstances warrant accelerating this review to next year. This will enable the ADA to address
20 governance in a timely and forward-thinking way.

21 While the individual resolutions before the House of Delegates highlight important aspects of governance,
22 the Board believes they will be most effective when considered as part of a comprehensive evaluation of
23 the organization's overall governance model. Looking at these issues together, rather than in isolation,
24 will help the Association avoid fragmented or unintended consequences and instead create a cohesive,
25 future-focused framework.

26 Therefore, the Board recommends that these governance-related resolutions be referred to the next
27 governance study. A report and recommendations will be brought back to the House of Delegates,
28 ensuring that the House can deliberate on well-vetted, coordinated proposals that reflect a unified vision
29 for the future governance of our Association.

30 **BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Vote Yes on Referral.**

31 **BOARD VOTE: UNANIMOUS**