

Resolution No. [Resolution Number] [Type]

Report: [Report] Date Submitted: 08/12/2025

Submitted By: Dr. Steven Saxe, delegate, Nevada

Reference Committee: [Reference Committee for Worksheet]

Total Net Financial Implication: [Total Net Financial Impl.] Net Dues Impact:

Amount One-time: Amount On-going:

ADA Strategic Forecast Outcome: Direct to Dentist: Increase interpersonal and digital connections with members, dental students, and future members over the next five years.

PATHWAY FOR MEMBERS IN GOOD STANDING TO SUBMIT RESOLUTIONS

Background:

The ADA Treasurer’s 2024 report documented that membership peaked in 2005 and has been in decline ever since, warning that the Association’s market share could fall below 40 percent in the next five to ten years if no corrective action is taken (2024 House of Delegates – Report of the Treasurer, page 7). The report further emphasized that such a decline would undermine the ADA’s ability to be the leading voice of oral health in the United States (2024 House of Delegates – Report of the Treasurer, page 7). Membership growth and retention are stated priorities in the ADA’s *Common Ground 2025: Strategic Plan* (ADA Strategic Plan 2020–2025, page 3), which calls for “increased participation” and “broader representation” to strengthen the Association’s leadership position.

Connecting governance access to membership growth is not speculative. The ADA’s *Common Ground 2025: Strategic Plan* (page 3) identifies “increased participation” and “broader representation” as priorities to strengthen membership. Allowing any three members in good standing to co-submit a resolution is a direct mechanism to achieve those priorities. Broader access ensures that grassroots ideas can reach the House without being delayed, blocked, or diluted, and demonstrates to members that their voice has value at the national level. In this way, governance reform is not separate from addressing membership decline, it is one of the tools to reverse it.

Right now, the Standing Rules of the House of Delegates limit resolution submission to Association agencies (including councils, commissions, and committees), constituent and component societies, trustee districts, and individual delegates (2024 Manual of the House of Delegates and Supplemental Information, page 11, section titled “Items of Business”). This means most members have no direct way to bring forward their own ideas unless they hold delegate status or navigate a constituent or component society. Several state dental associations — including Illinois, Georgia, and many others — already allow members to submit resolutions

directly to their state House of Delegates, and these systems have operated for years without governance disruption.

Under current ADA practice, member-submitted ideas often get delayed, blocked, or “watered down” as they pass through caucus or constituent review. This can strip away urgency, blunt innovation, and discourage participation. Allowing any three members in good standing to co-submit a resolution directly to the ADA House of Delegates — while keeping existing procedural safeguards like formatting requirements, deadlines, and reference committee review — would protect the integrity of member-driven proposals, broaden engagement, and send a clear message that every member’s voice matters.

Resolved, that the Standing Rules of the House of Delegates, section titled “Items of Business” in the Manual of the House of Delegates be amended as follows (additions underlined, deletions marked with strikethrough):

Items of Business

An item of business becomes the property of the House of Delegates and is subject to House action in accordance with the appropriate order of business and agenda schedule when such item is received in writing by the American Dental Association Executive Director (Secretary of the House) subject to the following conditions:

1. Reports and resolutions from Association agencies, constituent and component societies, trustee districts, individual delegates, and any three members in good standing are governed by the Association Bylaws and the Manual of the House of Delegates. The three members in good standing submitting a resolution shall have the option to request formatting support from their state constituent or their leadership and the American Dental Association. Any suggested changes by state or constituent leadership or the American Dental Association shall be limited to formatting or order, must be presented as suggestions only, and shall not be incorporated without the agreement of the submitting members prior to submission.
2. Resolutions from dental agencies not part of the American Dental Association may become items of business at the discretion of the House if received in writing by the Executive Director (Secretary of the House) at least 15 days in advance of a session.

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