

**FLORIDA DEAFBLIND ASSOCIATION**

**CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS**

**PREAMBLE**

We, the DeafBlind People, in order to proclaim our rightful share of all rights and benefits due as Citizens of the State of Florida and the Nation, to advance our social and economic welfare, to secure the best educational opportunities, to promote our touch-based language, and to enrich our DeafBlind culture, hereby ordain and establish this Constitution.

**ARTICLE I: NAME**

Section 1.1 Name

1.1.1 The name of this organization shall be Florida DeafBlind Association (FDBA).

1.1.2 FDBA established its tax-exempt status under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

**ARTICLE II: MISSION**

Section 2.1 Promoting the Mission

2.1.1 The mission of the Florida DeafBlind Association (FDBA) is to advocate for the DeafBlind individuals to have the right to achieve their maximum potential through autonomy, productivity, and integration into the community.

2.1.2 The purpose of this organization is to be a vehicle for collective action by the DeafBlind; to function as a mechanism through which the DeafBlind and interested individuals can come together to plan and carry out programs to ensure the maximum quality of life for the DeafBlind; to promote the vocational, cultural, and social opportunities for the DeafBlind; and to provide resources that encourage opportunities to integrate into the society to children, adolescents, adults, and seniors who are DeafBlind.

**ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP**

Section 3.1 Membership Information

3.1.1 The members of this organization shall be DeafBlind and others interested in promoting and supporting the mission of this organization.

3.1.2 Membership shall consist of four types:

* Active
* Associate
* Student
* Organizational

Section 3.2 Active Membership

3.2.1 Active membership shall be available to DeafBlind individuals who promote and support FDBA’s mission statement for DeafBlind residents of Florida.

3.2.2 Active members shall be eligible to make motions, to vote, and to serve on committees.

3.2.3 Active members who are residents of the State of Florida may hold office.

Section 3.3 Associate Membership

3.3.1 Associate membership shall be available to any non-DeafBlind individuals who promote and support FDBA’s mission statement for DeafBlind residents of Florida.

3.3.2 Associate members may serve on committees.

3.3.3 Associate members who are residents of the State of Florida may hold the offices of Secretary, Treasurer, and Member-at-Large.

3.3.4 Associate members shall not vote unless they hold the office of Secretary, Treasurer, or Member-at-Large.

Section 3.4 Student Membership

3.4.1 Student membership shall be available to DeafBlind students who are currently enrolled in high school or college up to the age of twenty-three (23) years old.

3.4.2 Membership fee for student membership shall be one half (1/2) of active membership fee.

3.4.3 Student members shall be eligible to make motions, to vote, and to serve on committees after they have reached the age of eighteen (18) years old.

3.4.4 Student members who are residents of the State of Florida shall be eligible to hold office after they have reached the age of twenty-one (21) years old.

Section 3.5 Organizational Membership

3.5.1 Organizational membership shall be available to bona fide national, state, and local entities who promote and support FDBA’s mission statement for DeafBlind residents of Florida.

3.5.2 Organizational members shall not have voting privileges.

3.5.3 Organizational members may not hold office.

Section 3.6 Membership Dues​

3.6.1 Membership dues shall be paid upon joining FDBA.

3.6.2 Annual membership dues are due on January 1st of each year. If a member joins during the year, then that member’s dues are due immediately upon joining the organization. However, if a member joins during the 3rd or 4th quarter, their dues are good for the next calendar year. Failure to pay membership dues by the 1st day of March of each year will result in losing membership benefits for that year.

3.6.3 Membership dues shall be determined by the Board.

Section 3.7 Non-Discrimination

3.7.1 No member, associate, or supporter shall discriminate against any individual participating in the FDBA in any form. Discrimination based on disability, sex, types of gender identity, race, or religion is strictly prohibited.

Section 3.8 Dignity and Respect

3.8.1 The Board reserves the right to take appropriate steps to remove disruptive or abusive member(s) from the state conferences, meetings, social media platforms, and other FDBA functions and remove membership privileges for one (1) year.

3.8.2 Any member may be disciplined and/or expelled for violation of the Constitution, for violation of the policies of the Florida DeafBlind Association, or for conduct unbecoming to a member of FDBA, by a majority vote of the active members present and voting at any regular business session of this organization or by two-third (2/3) vote of the Board of Directors.

3.8.3 Any person who feels that he/she has been unjustly expelled from this organization may appeal to the voting members of Florida DeafBlind Association at the Board or State Meeting which may – at its discretion – consider the matter and make a binding decision. Until the decision to suspend or expel is reversed by the voting members of FDBA, the ruling of suspension or expulsion shall continue in effect.

**ARTICLE IV: BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Section 4.1 Board of Directors

4.1.1 The officers of this organization shall be: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. The duties of those officers shall be those customarily associated with their respective offices.

4.1.2 Three Members-at-Large will be elected to serve on the Board of Directors.

4.1.3 The Officers and Members-at-Large will constitute the Board of Directors. The Officers and Members-at-Large shall be elected every four years by a majority vote of the members of this organization present and voting at the state meeting. There will be no voting by proxy.

4.1.4 Board members shall be at least twenty-one (21) years of age.

4.1.5 Each Board member must have been a member in good standing for at least twelve (12) consecutive months prior to the date of when ballots for their election are counted.

4.1.6 Each board member is expected to have access to Internet service and to possess email address(es).

4.1.7 Each respective position is eligible to serve two (2) consecutive four-year terms. Each board member is eligible to run and be elected for a different position right after serving for two (2) consecutive four-year terms.

4.1.8 Board members shall assume their respective positions effective right after the election.

Section 4.2 Officers

4.2.1 President, Vice President, and two (2) Members-at-Large must be an active member.

4.2.2 Secretary, Treasurer, and one (1) Member-at-Large must be either an active member or an associate member.

4.2.3 Secretary and Treasurer must possess both skills appropriate for the office and computer/technical abilities.

4.2.4 Election of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three (3) Members-at-Large shall be every four (4) years beginning in 2011.

Section 4.3 Resignation

4.3.1 Resignation must be submitted in writing to the President or to the Secretary.

Section 4.4 Removal from the Board

4.4.1 Board members may be removed for failure to carry out duties or for other good and sufficient reasons by a two-third (2/3) vote of the Board.

Section 4.5 Vacancies

4.5.1 The Board shall have the power to fill board vacancies as they may occur between elections.

**ARTICLE V: DUTIES OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Section 5.1 The President

5.1.1 Shall preside at all meetings of the FDBA.

5.1.2 Shall see that the policies of the FDBA and the decisions of the Board are carried out.

5.1.3 Shall represent the organization, or delegate such authority, whenever and wherever it is to be represented.

5.1.4 Shall sign all legal papers with the approval of the Board.

5.1.5 Shall have the power to appoint standing and other committees and shall appoint committee chairpersons, with the approval of the Board.

5.1.6 Shall be a member of the Board, shall have voting privileges, and shall be an ex-officio member of all committees to ensure communication for the Board of Directors.

Section 5.2 The Vice President

5.2.1 Shall assume the duties of the President in the absence of the President.

5.2.2 Shall assist the President.

5.2.3 Shall chair or serve on specific committees or subcommittees that are appointed by the President.

5.2.4 Shall be a member of the Board and have voting privileges.

Section 5.3 The Secretary

5.3.1 Shall keep a record of the proceedings of the FDBA at its various meetings and prepare them for distribution as may be directed by the Board.

5.3.2 Shall post (have available) minutes of all meetings three (3) weeks after the respective meetings have been held.

5.3.3 Shall notify each member of the FDBA of upcoming meetings.

5.3.4 Shall have charge of all papers and correspondence of the FDBA except that which properly belongs to other officers.

5.3.5 Shall be a member of the Board and have voting privileges.

Section 5.4 The Treasurer

5.4.1 Shall keep an accurate, verifiable account of all FDBA monies received and disbursed.

5.4.2 Shall collect membership dues, shall draft receipts for paid membership dues, and shall notify each member of when their membership dues need to be renewed in order to remain as a member in a good standing.

5.4.3 Shall keep the Secretary informed of all members of good standing and their current contact information.

5.4.4 Shall report all bills and make payments, following authorization by the Board.

5.4.5 Shall prepare the quarterly and annual financial statements.

5.4.6 The funds of this organization shall be deposited in a bank that is selected by the Treasurer with the approval of the Board.

5.4.7 Shall be a member of the Board and have voting privileges.

Section 5.5 Members-at-Large

5.5.1​ Shall assist the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer as needed.

5.5.2 Shall chair or serve on specific committees or subcommittees that are appointed by the President.

5.5.3​ Shall be spokesperson for the general members of FDBA.

5.5.4​ Shall be a member of the Board and have voting privileges.

**ARTICLE VI: ELECTION**

Section 6.1 Election Committee

6.1.1 The Election committee shall be appointed by the President and approved by the Board six months before the election to take place at the State meeting.

6.1.2 The Election committee shall be composed of an active member, an associate member, and a representative of an outside agency. The committee members shall not run for any office or position in this organization.

6.1.3 The Election committee shall conduct nomination process and compile secret ballots to be provided for voting at the State Meeting.

Section 6.2 Voting ​​

6.2.1 Active members and associate members who serve on the board need to be present at the state meeting in order to vote during the election. The proxy for the absent active member or associate member who serves on the board is not permitted.

6.2.2 Counting of ballots shall be done by all three (3) Election Committee members.

6.2.3 Each officer shall be sworn in using the following as the oath of office: "I solemnly promise to observe and uphold the Bylaws of the Florida DeafBlind Association and to perform the duties of my office to the best of my ability; so help me God."

**ARTICLE VII: MEETINGS**

Section 7.1 State and Board Meetings

7.1.1 This organization shall hold an annual meeting at the time and place chosen by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall conduct the business of the organization and hold an open meeting with the body of the paid members at the annual State Meeting.

7.1.2 A quorum for the State Meetings of the general membership shall consist of at least one-third (1/3) of the members registered and in attendance for the meeting.

7.1.3 The President of this organization may call a special meeting of the Board at any time he/she, or a majority of the Board of Directors, deems such action to be necessary.

7.1.4 A quorum for the Board Meetings shall consist of at least three-fourth (3/4) of the Board.

7.1.5 FDBA’s daily business shall take place by communication between members of the Board of Directors. Communication may occur via email, in person, or by chat platforms in a manner which promotes equal access to effective communication for all board members.

7.1.6 Regular management of FDBA financial business shall be carried out by the Board of Directors. At the discretion of the Board of Directors, some aspects of financial business are shared with the paid and active members of FDBA.

**ARTICLE VIII: AMENDMENTS**

Section 8.1 Amendments

8.1.1 The revised and updated constitution may be approved by two-third (2/3) of the paid members. The revisions and updates shall not become effective until they have been presented to the members for voting of approval. The voting may be done via email or at the State Meeting.

**ARTICLE IX: DISSOLUTION**

Section 9.1 Dissolved Organization

9.1.1 FDBA may be dissolved by a vote of two-third (2/3) of the current voting members.

9.1.2 In the event of dissolution, all liabilities of FDBA will be paid and residual assets of FDBA will be exclusively conveyed to Florida and Virgin Islands - DeafBlind Collaborative (FAVI-DBC) for the purpose of being used for the welfare of DeafBlind individuals.

Started July 2005

Revised October 2008

Revised November 2015

Revised September 2019

Revised April 2023