



FLORIDA DEAFBLIND ASSOCIATION
CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS 2026

PREAMBLE

We, the DeafBlind people, in order to proclaim our rightful and equal share of all rights and benefits afforded to citizens of the State of Florida and of the Nation; to advance our social and economic welfare; to secure accessible educational opportunities; to promote our touch-based languages, including Tactile American Sign Language (TASL) and ProTactile (PT); and to preserve and enrich our DeafBlind culture; do 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 has been recognized as a tax-exempt organization under Section 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 is to advocate for DeafBlind individuals and support their right to achieve their maximum potential through autonomy, productivity, and full integration into the community.

2.1.2 The purpose of this organization is to serve as a vehicle for collective action by DeafBlind individuals; to function as a mechanism through which DeafBlind individuals and interested persons may come together to plan and carry out programs that promote the highest possible quality of life for DeafBlind people; to promote educational, cultural, social, and community opportunities for DeafBlind individuals; and to provide resources that encourage full participation and inclusion in society.

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 two types:

- A. DeafBlind
- B. Community

Section 3.2 DeafBlind Membership

- Shall be available to DeafBlind individuals who reside within the contiguous United States and who promote and support FDBA's mission statement.
- Shall be eligible to vote and serve on committees.
- DeafBlind members who are full-time residents of the State of Florida shall be eligible to make motions and hold office.

Section 3.3 Community Membership

- Shall be available to non-DeafBlind individuals who promote and support FDBA's mission statement.

- May serve on committees.
- Community members who are full-time residents of the State of Florida may hold the offices of Secretary, Treasurer, or Member-at-Large.
- Shall not be eligible to vote unless serving as Secretary, Treasurer, or Member-at-Large.

Section 3.4 Membership Dues

3.4.1 Membership dues shall be paid upon joining FDBA.

3.4.2 Annual membership dues are due on January 1 of each year. Members who join during the first or second quarter shall pay dues upon joining for the current calendar year. Members who join during the third or fourth quarter shall pay dues upon joining, and their membership shall remain valid through the following calendar year. Failure to pay annual membership dues by March 1 will result in the loss of membership benefits for that year.

3.4.3 Membership dues shall be determined by the Board.

3.4.4 A member may be granted Lifetime Membership status upon making a contribution of \$400 or more. Lifetime membership status does not change the member's membership type or voting rights.

3.4.5 Any member who was granted lifetime membership status prior to the adoption of these amended Bylaws shall retain lifetime membership status and shall not be required to pay annual membership dues.

Section 3.5 Non-Discrimination

3.5.1 No member of any of the two membership types shall discriminate against any individual participating in FDBA activities or programs. Discrimination based on disability, sex, gender identity, race, religion, or any other protected characteristic is strictly prohibited.

Section 3.6 Dignity, Respect, and Safety

3.6.1 All members and participants shall treat one another with dignity and respect and shall conduct themselves in a manner that supports a safe and welcoming environment at FDBA activities and functions.

3.6.2 The Board reserves the right to take appropriate action when a member or participant engages in disruptive, threatening, abusive, or unsafe conduct. Such action may include removal from a business session at the state conference, an in-person

general session, a Board session, an FDBA social media platform, or any other FDBA activity or function.

3.6.3 Any member or participant who commits a crime in connection with FDBA, its members, participants, activities, or functions may be removed from membership or prohibited from further participation in FDBA activities and functions, subject to applicable law and the circumstances of the offense.

3.6.4 A member whose membership privileges have been suspended or terminated may appeal the decision by submitting a written appeal by email to the Board of Directors within thirty (30) days of receiving notice of the suspension or termination. The Board shall review the appeal and make a final decision. The suspension or termination shall remain in effect unless the Board reverses or modifies the decision.

ARTICLE IV: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 4.1 Board of Directors

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

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

4.1.3 The Officers and Members-at-Large shall constitute the Board of Directors. The Officers and Members-at-Large shall be elected every four (4) years by a majority vote of the eligible voting members participating in the in-person business session held during the state conference, including absentee ballots approved by the Board of Directors. Voting by proxy shall not be permitted.

4.1.4 Each Board member shall have access to Internet service and a valid email address.

4.1.5 Board members may serve an unlimited number of terms. A Board member may run for and be elected to the same position or a different Board position upon completion of a four (4)-year term.

4.1.6 Board members shall assume their respective positions immediately following the election.

Section 4.2 Officers

4.2.1 The President, Vice President, and two (2) Members-at-Large must be DeafBlind members.

4.2.2 The Secretary, Treasurer, and one (1) Member-at-Large may be either DeafBlind members or Community members.

4.2.3 The Secretary and Treasurer must possess the skills appropriate for their respective offices and have sufficient computer and technical abilities to perform their duties.

4.2.4 The President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and three (3) Members-at-Large shall be elected every four (4) years.

Section 4.3 Resignation

4.3.1 A Board member wishing to resign shall submit the resignation in writing to the President or Secretary.

Section 4.4 Removal from the Board

4.4.1 A Board member may be removed for failure to perform the duties of the position or for other good and sufficient cause by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board. The Board member shall receive written notice stating the reason for the proposed removal at least thirty (30) days before the Board takes a final vote. The Board member shall have thirty (30) days from the date of the written notice to submit a written appeal or response. The Board shall consider any appeal or response before taking its final vote on removal.

ARTICLE V: DUTIES OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 5.1 The President

- Shall preside at all business sessions of FDBA.
- Shall ensure that FDBA policies and decisions of the Board are carried out.
- Shall represent FDBA, or delegate such authority, whenever representation is needed.
- Shall sign legal documents with the approval of the Board.
- Shall appoint committees and committee chairpersons with the approval of the Board.
- Shall serve as a member of all committees, except the Election Committee, as part of the President's official duties to maintain communication with the Board.

Section 5.2 The Vice President

- Shall assume the duties of the President in the President's absence.
- Shall assist the President as needed.
- Shall chair or serve on committees or subcommittees as appointed by the President.

Section 5.3 The Secretary

- Shall keep accurate records of FDBA business sessions and prepare minutes for distribution as directed by the Board.
- Shall make business sessions minutes available within three (3) weeks following each business session.
- Shall notify members of upcoming FDBA business sessions.
- Shall maintain FDBA records, papers, and correspondence except those assigned to other officers.

Section 5.4 The Treasurer

- Shall keep accurate and verifiable records of all FDBA funds received and disbursed.
- Shall collect membership dues and notify members when dues are due for renewal.
- Shall keep the Secretary informed of members in good standing and their current contact information.
- Shall report bills and make payments as authorized by the Board.
- Shall prepare quarterly and annual financial statements.
- Shall deposit FDBA funds in a financial institution selected with the approval of the Board.
- May chair or serve on committees or subcommittees as appointed by the President.

Section 5.5 Members-at-Large

- Shall assist the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer as needed.
- Shall chair or serve on committees or subcommittees as appointed by the President.
- Shall serve as representatives of the general membership of FDBA.

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 at least six (6) months before the election.

6.1.2 The Election Committee shall consist of three (3) individuals: one (1) DeafBlind member, one (1) Community member and one (1) representative from an outside organization. Election Committee members shall not be candidates for any Board position in the election they are conducting.

6.1.3 The Election Committee shall conduct the nomination process, prepare the secret ballots, and oversee the election. Ballots shall be made available in print, Braille, and tactile formats to ensure equal access for all eligible voting members.

6.1.4 The Election Committee shall administer the election in accordance with these Bylaws. The Committee shall read, follow, and carry out the election procedures established in these Bylaws and shall have no authority to propose, recommend, or direct changes to the Bylaws.

6.1.5 A candidate for the Board shall be at least twenty-one (21) years of age.

6.1.6 A candidate for the Board must have been a member in good standing for at least twelve (12) consecutive months prior to the date on which the ballots are counted.

6.1.7 The Board shall have the authority to fill any vacancy on the Board that occurs between elections. The person appointed shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term.

Section 6.2 Voting

6.2.1 Eligible voting members must be present at the in-person business session at the state conference to vote in the election. If an eligible voting member is unable to

participate in person due to unforeseen circumstances, an accessible absentee or electronic ballot may be permitted with written authorization from the Board. Proxy voting shall not be permitted.

6.2.2 All three (3) Election Committee members shall participate in counting and verifying the ballots to prevent undue influence and promote transparency in the election process.

6.2.3 Each newly elected officer shall take the following oath of office: "I solemnly promise to observe and uphold the Bylaws of the Florida DeafBlind Association and to faithfully perform the duties of my office to the best of my ability; so, help me God."

ARTICLE VII: BUSINESS SESSIONS

Section 7.1 Business Sessions

7.1.1 FDBA shall hold an annual in-person business session at the state conference at a time and place determined by the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors shall conduct the business session, which shall be open to all state conference participants, including FDBA members and non-members.

7.1.2 A quorum for the annual in-person business session at the state conference shall consist of at least one-third (1/3) of the eligible voting members registered for the state conference.

7.1.3 The President may call a special Board business session at any time when the President or a majority of the Board of Directors determines that such a session is necessary.

7.1.4 A quorum for a Board business session shall consist of at least three-fourths (3/4) of the Board of Directors.

7.1.5 The regular business of FDBA may be conducted through communication among members of the Board of Directors. Communication may occur by email, in person, through chat, or through other communication platforms in a manner that provides equal access to effective communication for all Board members.

ARTICLE VIII: CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Section 8.1 Amendments

8.1.1 The Board of Directors may propose revisions or amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws. Any proposed revision or amendment shall first be approved by the Board of Directors and then presented to the eligible voting members for final approval. A two-

thirds (2/3) vote of the eligible voting members who cast a vote shall be required for adoption. Voting may be conducted via email.

ARTICLE IX: GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 9.1 Organizational Property

9.1.1 All equipment, supplies, documents, records, keys, technology, and other property purchased by or donated to FDBA shall remain the property of FDBA.

9.1.2 Any FDBA property in the possession of a Board member, committee member, or other individual shall be returned when that person leaves the position or when requested by the Board.

Section 9.2 Conflict of Interest

9.2.1 An FDBA Board member may serve as a Board member, officer, or in another leadership position with another organization, provided that such service does not create a significant conflict with the member's duties and responsibilities to FDBA.

9.2.2 Board members shall maintain the confidentiality of Board discussions, records, financial information, member information, and other confidential matters. Such information shall not be disclosed outside the Board unless authorized by the Board, required by law, or reasonably necessary to conduct FDBA business.

9.2.3 Board members shall act in the best interest of FDBA and shall avoid or disclose any situation in which their responsibilities to another organization, personal interests, or other obligations may create a conflict of interest with their responsibilities to FDBA.

9.2.4 A Board member who has a direct or indirect personal or financial interest in a matter before the Board shall disclose that interest to the Board and shall not vote on that matter.

Section 9.3 Organizational Email

9.3.1 FDBA shall provide an official organization domain email address to the President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

9.3.2 These officers shall use their assigned FDBA email addresses for all official FDBA business throughout their terms of office.

9.3.3 Official FDBA correspondence and records shall not be conducted through personal email accounts when an FDBA email address has been provided.

9.3.4 Refusal to use the assigned FDBA email address shall be grounds for removal from the Board in accordance with Section 4.4.

ARTICLE X: DISSOLUTION

Section 10.1 Dissolution

10.1.1 FDBA may be dissolved by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the current DeafBlind members.

10.1.2 In the event of dissolution, after any outstanding obligations have been satisfied, all remaining assets shall be transferred exclusively to DeafBlind Access of the South (DBAS), provided that DBAS is recognized as an organization described under Section 501©(3) of the Internal Revenue Code at the time of distribution, for the purpose of supporting the welfare of DeafBlind individuals.

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