

SOCIETY OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE

PROCEDURES FOR REQUESTING GOVERNANCE AND POLICY CHANGES

I. Procedures for Amending the Constitution

In regards to Amending the Constitution and By-Laws, the SBL Constitution provides this provision:

Article X. Amendment

This Constitution may be amended by a majority vote of the members of the Society voting at its Annual Business Meeting, on recommendation of the Council, such amendment having been proposed at least a year in advance and circulated to the members of the Society at least six months prior to the Annual Business Meeting at which final action is to be taken.

II. Procedures for Submitting Policies to the SBL Council for Consideration

The SBL Council has adopted procedures for committees or groups of members to follow in to request changes in governance principles or policies.

A. Guidelines

Members of the SBL have a number of informal avenues and resources for advancing interests of the Society within its current structures. Not least of these is the voluntary leadership model that is the basis of a learned society and membership organization. Members serve in over 1,500 voluntary roles, including steering committees, editorial boards, program units, committees of Council, and Council. Individuals in these positions develop agendas for the Society and are accessible to any fellow member in the Society. Individual are encouraged to influence the direction of the organization through these avenues.

From time to time, members of the Society of Biblical Literature ask the SBL Council that governs the Society to make a governance or policy change. The SBL Council has adopted the following guidelines for proposals and procedures for committees or groups of members to follow in preparing governance proposals to come before Council for consideration, approval, or endorsement.

1. Guidelines for Proposals

In order for the Society to take informed action on requests for changes to governance practices or policies, proponents should provide thorough and convincing arguments. These guidelines set forth the content and format for a well-argued proposal for the Society's consideration of a governance change.

To make a decision to support a governance or policy change, the SBL Council will expect three items: (1) a proposal for the requested change, (2) evidence that the proposal has been endorsed by at least ten percent (10%) of its current membership or has the unanimous support of an SBL governance committee that is generating the proposal, and (3) a draft of the proposed governance revision or policy.

Proposals may be submitted to the Society's executive office, and the Executive Director will forward it to the Chair and members of the Executive Committee of Council.

Proposals may be submitted by committees or group of members at any time and should include the following elements:

1. Concern. The proposal should contain a brief description of the governance or policy concern.

2. Relevance. Governance and policy proposals should provide evidence for the ways in which the issue falls within the boundaries of the Society's mission. This section should include a discussion of how the policy reflects an optimal practice for the governance of the Society.

2. Recommendations. Proposals should specify policy recommendations, not just concerns. If a policy seeks action, it should specify upon whom such action is urged and detail the action being sought. The proposal should specify what policy such action affects and show consideration for the operational and financial implications of such action.

3. Strategic Analysis. Proponents for new policies need to provide a strategic description of the context in which SBL policy will be used and how it relates to the SBL Mission.

4. Statement. The proposal must include a draft text for the governance principle or policy.

In its responsibilities as a fiduciary of the Society, the SBL Council may determine whether or not a request for a policy change is appropriate. The SBL Policy Manual contains guidelines for SBL Council.

B. Procedures

1. Any SBL committee or group of members may submit a proposal to the Society's executive office for a policy consideration, and the Executive Director will forward it to the Chair and members of the Executive Committee of Council.

2. The Executive Committee of Council is intended to act as a catalyst and resource on policy issues, not as a censor or arbiter of what policies SBL should or should not endorse. The Executive Committee will review the proposal for conformity with the above guidelines. The committee may request that the proponents revise the proposal accordingly, may suggest coordination with various SBL sections or committees having similar concerns, and may suggest additional means of supporting the proposed policy perspective.

3. The Executive Committee must submit to the Executive Director and the Finance Committee all proposals deemed to have fiscal implications before they appear on the Council agendas so that the executive office can provide fiscal information as required in by SBL policy.
4. The Executive Committee will place the proposal on the agenda for the next Council meeting. If there is insufficient time to properly address step 3, the proposal will be placed on the next possible Council meeting agenda.
5. The SBL Council will make a final decision regarding its support of the proposal. Council may endorse the proposal as presented, may request revisions to strengthen the form or substance of the proposal, may send to an existing committee or name a task force to address, or may decline endorsement. Proponents who disagree with the decisions of the Council are free to communicate their concerns to the Council through the Executive Director.
6. If the proposal involves an Amendment to the Constitution and By-laws, Council will follow Article X of the SBL Constitution (see above).

C. Communication with Members

1. The Executive Director disseminates the policy to membership. The Executive Director may issue a press release.
2. As needed, committee handbooks will be revised to reflect new policy.
3. The SBL executive office will post all policy revisions on the SBL website and in the SBL Policy Manual.