

AMERICAN BOARD OF TRIAL ADVOCATES  
AMENDED BYLAWS OF THE HOUSTON CHAPTER

I. **CHAPTER OFFICERS**

**Section 1.** (a) The Officers of the Chapter shall be, in descending rank order, President, President-Elect, Vice President-Foundation, and Secretary/Treasurer. The Secretary/Treasurer shall be elected by the Chapter at the Chapter Annual Meeting.

(b) All Officers shall be elected for a one-year term. The term of each Officer shall begin on January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year following their election. Each officer shall elevate one rank with the President taking the ex-officio title of Immediate Past President. In other words, the outgoing Secretary/Treasurer elevates to Vice President-Foundation; the outgoing Vice President-Foundation elevates to President-Elect; the outgoing President-Elect elevates to President; and the outgoing President assumes the ex-officio title of Immediate Past-President.

(c) The Chapter shall elect at least one representative to the National Board of Directors to serve three-year terms as provided in Article IV section 5 of the Constitution of the Association. (Constitution). If the Chapter has more than one representative, their terms shall be staggered so as not all expire in the same year. There shall be no restriction on the number of terms a representative to the National Board from this Chapter may serve.

**Section 2.** The Chapter Secretary shall keep a complete record of all proceedings and correspondence of the Chapter, shall send notices of meetings to members of the Chapter as required, shall keep a current roll of the members of the Chapter, and shall perform all other duties usually appertaining to the office of Secretary. The duties of the Chapter Secretary may be delegated, in whole or in part, to the Executive Director.

**Section 3.** The Chapter Treasurer or their designee, who must be a member of Executive Committee, shall perform the duties usually assigned to this office, and as further set out in these Bylaws. Among other duties, the Treasurer shall keep an accurate account of the revenue and expenditures of the Chapter and shall, at least once each year, report promptly to the appropriate person at National ABOTA on the finances and provide all other related information requested by the National President or his or her designee.

**Section 4.** The President of the Chapter, with the prior consent or subsequent ratification of a majority of Chapter Officers actually present and voting at any Officer's meeting, shall have the power to make expenditures or to incur indebtedness on behalf of the Chapter up to a limit of \$5,000 for any single transaction. Expenditures or incurrence of indebtedness in excess of \$5,000 for any single transaction may be made by the President of the Chapter only after prior approval of a majority of a quorum of the Chapter Officers actually present and voting at any Officer's meeting duly called for that purpose.

**Section 5.** The Chapter shall have a Nominating Committee comprised of the Executive Committee and up to three persons appointed by the President-Elect to serve on the Nominating Committee during that President Elect's term. The Nominating Committee shall

submit to the Chapter, at least two weeks before the Chapter Annual Meeting, the nominees for election of the next Secretary/Treasurer and any expiring terms for representative to serve on the National Board of Directors for the upcoming calendar year. The Nominating Committee should take into consideration any candidate's dedication to the work of the Chapter, leadership skills, reputation, and such other matters as the members of the Nominating Committee feel are appropriate.

**Section 6.** The Chapter Vice President-Foundation's duties are to educate the Chapter about ABOTA Foundation, increase ABOTA Fellowship membership, act as the Chapter's liaison with ABOTA Foundation leadership, and promote financial support for ABOTA Foundation through programs such as the Guardian Ad Litem program where Chapter members donate their ad litem fees to ABOTA Foundation.

## **II. THE CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Section 1.** The Chapter shall have an Executive Committee comprised of the elected Officers, the Immediate Past President, the Chapter Representative(s) to the National Board of Directors, and such other members as the Chapter President may choose to include on the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall have the powers and duties necessary and appropriate for the administration of the business and affairs of the Chapter, subject to the limitations of these Bylaws, and of the general laws of the State of Texas, including:

- 1) the power to make rules and regulations for the government of the Chapter members and officers, and for the management of the affairs of the Chapter;
- 2) the power to incur indebtedness when necessary for legitimate functions of the Chapter as provided in these Bylaws;
- 3) the power to levy and collect such dues and assessments as may be established from time to time by majority vote of those voting from the membership of the Chapter;
- 4) the power to raise funds in any lawful manner to assist in producing ABOTA programs and taking other actions in furtherance of the ABOTA goals;
- 5) the power to establish procedures for the selection, nomination and election of new members that are not inconsistent with the provisions of the National ABOTA Constitution and Bylaws;
- 6) the power to call a general meeting of the membership of the Chapter at least once each calendar year and at other times for valid and legitimate purposes; and
- 7) all other powers necessary and proper for carrying out these powers and the goals of ABOTA, not inconsistent with the National Constitution and Bylaws.

**Section 2.** If in the discretionary judgment of the Chapter Executive Committee, an officer is or becomes unable, unsuitable or is disqualified to serve while in office or before taking office, the Chapter Executive Committee may, by a vote of 2/3rds of the Committee members, remove that officer and name another in the Chapter to serve the remainder of the term.

**Section 3.** Meetings of the Executive Committee may be called at any time by the Chapter President or any two Chapter Officers upon three days advance notice by mail, telephone, email, or any similar electronic means reasonably calculated to provide Executive Committee members with notice of the meeting.

**Section 4.** A majority of the membership of the Executive Committee shall constitute a quorum at meetings of the Executive Committee; however, at the discretion of the President, the votes of any absent members of the Executive Committee may be received by letter (including written electronic communication) addressed to the Secretary on any issue brought for vote before a quorum present; provided that the Secretary shall have addressed in writing to the absent member the exact resolution or issue submitted to a vote, and provided further that the absent member's letter of vote shall be received by the Secretary prior to the meeting.

### **III. CHAPTER COMMITTEES**

#### **A. Standing Committees**

The Chapter shall have Standing Committees as outlined below.

**Section 1.** A Chapter Membership Committee shall be appointed by the President from the members of the Chapter. The Membership Committee shall be chaired by the President (or their designee) and shall aid the Chapter Executive Committee in the job of recommending and vetting nominees for membership as provided in the ABOTA Constitution, Article III, Sections 1 through 3, or terminating membership as provided in Article III Section 4. No person may serve on the Membership Committee for more than three consecutive years. The Chapter Executive Committee shall consider, but shall not be bound by, the recommendations of the Membership Committee. An affirmative vote of three-fourths of a majority of a quorum the Chapter Executive Committee shall be necessary to recommend a nominee to membership in the Association except where otherwise specifically provided in these Bylaws.

**Section 2.** The Chapter Program Committee shall be chaired by a Presidential appointee, and the Chair will solicit members to provide assistance, arrange, and sponsor all events given in the name of the Chapter and shall provide for speakers on appropriate topics. Chapter Programs may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- 1) The James Otis Lecture Series;
- 2) Civility Matters;
- 3) Civics Education;
- 4) Trial Training;
- 5) Bench Banter;
- 6) Teacher's Law School;
- 7) CLE programs;
- 8) Diversity and Inclusion

**Section 3.** The Chapter Diversity Committee shall be chaired by a Presidential appointee who shall be concerned with the exploration, formulation, and recommendation of

policies and activities of the organization designed to improve diversity of membership and attract accomplished trial lawyers from a broad spectrum of those practicing in the jurisdiction of the Chapter.

**Section 4.** The Nominating Committee shall be chaired by the Chapter's President-Elect. The Nominating Committee's purpose is to vet candidates recommended by the Chapter prior to the Chapter Annual Meeting for Secretary/Treasurer and National Board of Directors Representatives, present nominees for those positions to be voted on by the membership at the Chapter Annual Meeting. The Nominating Committee should use a vetting process similar to that used by ABOTA for its national officer candidates.

#### B. Additional Committees

The Chapter President may appoint ad hoc committees in addition to the standing committees described above.

### **IV. MEETINGS OF THE CHAPTER**

**Section 1.** Chapter Annual Meeting. There shall be at least one Annual Meeting of this Chapter to be held at any convenient place to be selected by the Chapter Officers. The time and place of the Annual Meeting shall be announced in writing to each member in good standing at least one month in advance. At the Annual Meeting, annual reports of Chapter Officers and Committee Chairs may be delivered. At the Annual Meeting, the President shall present to the members in attendance the recommendations of the Nominating Committee for the election of the Secretary/Treasurer and Chapter representatives to the National Board of Directors. The members in attendance at the Annual Meeting shall vote on the Secretary/Treasurer the Chapter representatives to the National Board of Directors. The person who receives a majority of the votes cast for each position shall be elected. The Chapter may conduct such other business and call for votes on issues as the Chapter Officers determine, provided proper notice be given as set forth in these Bylaws.

**Section 2.** Other Meetings of the Chapter. The time and place of meetings other than the Annual Meeting shall be selected by the President or by such individual or committee as designated by the President for this purpose, and written notice shall be given by the Secretary to each Chapter member in good standing at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. Business may be transacted at such meetings only if a quorum is present

**Section 3.** Conduct of Chapter Meetings. All meetings shall be conducted by the President, or in his absence, by the President-Elect. All matters requiring the vote of the members shall be presented by a motion from the floor by a member eligible to vote. All motions must be seconded by an additional member eligible to vote before being voted upon. The voting shall be by voice or by ballot according to the discretion of the presiding officer, except for issues requiring a secret ballot under these Bylaws. A simple majority shall suffice to carry any motion unless otherwise specified prior to the voting by the presiding officer. Motions will be acted upon in the order presented. Any motion that fails to be seconded shall be a nullity.

**Section 4.** Voting. At any meeting of the general Chapter membership, only members actually present and registered may cast votes on any issue presented for the vote of the general membership, except that in voting on amendments to these Bylaws, or in voting on any other business that has already been the subject of a particular and timely written notice to the membership by the Secretary, an absent member may vote by proxy. In order to cast a proxy vote, the member shall provide written notice to the Chapter Secretary, or their designee (Executive Director), at least three (3) days in advance of the meeting and must expressly describe the authority of the person designated as a proxy.

## **V. NEWMEMBERS**

### **Section 1.** Qualifications

To be admitted to membership in ABOTA from this Chapter, a trial lawyer who is of high personal character and honorable reputation shall have been invited by the Chapter to apply and who has met the qualifications as prescribed in Article III, Section 2 of the Constitution and Bylaws of the American Board of Trial Advocates which are incorporated herein as if set forth verbatim. Further, the applicant must possess the civility, professionalism, ethical attributes and other accomplishments as one committed to the preservation of the Seventh Amendment and the promotion of the rule of law. Each successful applicant may become a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates upon nomination, election, and payment of initiation fees and dues.

### **Section 2.** Nomination of Candidates for Membership

Nomination of candidates for membership is by invitation only. A candidate for membership must be nominated and seconded by members in good standing of this Chapter using the nominating forms prescribed by ABOTA and within the time prescribed by this Chapter.

### **Section 3.** Election of Proposed Members

Once nominated, to become a member of ABOTA, a successful candidate for membership must receive:

- (1) An affirmative vote of 75% of the Executive Committee, actually present and voting, of this Chapter;
- (2) An affirmative vote of 75% of the general membership, actually present and voting, of this Chapter;
- (3) An affirmative vote of the majority of National Membership Committee duly voting on the application; and,
- (4) An affirmative vote of 75% of the votes cast by members of the National Board of Directors present and voting.

### **Section 4.** Confidentiality

All aspects of the membership selection process, including but not limited to nominations,

meetings, deliberations, evaluations, discussions, votes, and any related communications, shall be strictly confidential. No member shall disclose any information relating to the selection process to any non-member or to any candidate, whether selected or not. This duty of strict confidentiality is ongoing and survives the conclusion of the selection process. Any violation of this provision may result in disciplinary action by the Executive Committee, including suspension or expulsion from this Chapter and the organization.

**Section 5.** Limited Future Eligibility Disclosures

Subject to the Confidentiality provision above, upon request by the nominator of any unsuccessful candidate for membership, the Chapter President may inform the nominator only whether the candidate is (1) eligible for renomination, (2) not eligible for renomination, or (3) not eligible for renomination for no fewer than three years.

**Section 6.** Voting Procedures Generally; Voting for Proposed Honorary Diplomates

Voting by this Chapter for approval of membership and to nominate an individual for Honorary Diplomat shall be by secret written ballot, secret electronic means, or such other secret method, as members of the Chapter shall determine. All other votes by the Chapter shall be by the method designated by the Chapter, unless otherwise required to be secret.

**VI. INITIATION FEES AND DUES**

**Section 1.** The National Board of Directors will set Initiation Fees, Annual Dues and other assessments for ABOTA membership.

**Section 2.** In addition, Chapter assessments and fees may be imposed at any time by an affirmative vote of a majority of a quorum of the members present and voting at any meeting of the Chapter. This includes dues for membership in any Regional ABOTA organization if formed.

**Section 3.** Any member of the Chapter who fails to pay National Association dues or assessments within six months from the due date thereof may be suspended from membership.

**Section 4.** Any member of the Chapter who fails to pay Chapter assessments or fees shall be subject to suspension by the affirmative vote of a majority of a quorum of the Chapter Executive Committee.

**Section 5.** A suspended member may not hold any office or position in the Chapter, serve as a member of any committee, or attend any meeting of the Chapter, receive any of its publications, notices, or other communications, or otherwise have any of the privileges of membership.

**Section 6.** Upon failure of a member to pay National Association dues or assessments within 12 months of the due date thereof, his or her membership thereupon terminates as provided

in Article III, Section 4 (5) of the National Constitution and his or her name shall be removed forthwith from the roll of the members of the Chapter.

**Section 7.** The fiscal year of the Chapter is from the first day of January to the last day of December of the current year.

## **VII. TERMINATION FOR CAUSE**

**Section 1.** Upon receipt of reliable information, of the nature set forth in Article III, Section 4 (2) of the ABOTA Constitution, against any member of this Chapter, the National President, may choose to appoint a member of the Board of Directors, or a committee of members from the Board of Directors, to undertake an investigation of the information received. All members of this Chapter shall cooperate fully and honestly with such investigation. The investigator, or investigating committee, shall submit to the National President and National Board a written report of findings and recommendations. Such findings and recommendations shall be completed and submitted within 120 days of the appointment.

**Section 2.** (a) Upon receiving reliable information of the nature set forth in Article III, Section 4 (2), of the Constitution against a member of this Chapter, the President of this Chapter shall immediately notify the National President.

(b) The President of this Chapter may cause the matter to be investigated and he or she may conduct a hearing on the matter at a regular or special meeting of the Chapter. All Chapter members shall cooperate fully and honestly in such an investigation.

(c) If a hearing is conducted by the Chapter President, it shall be conducted fairly and promptly. The outcome of the hearing shall be reported promptly to the National President in writing.

**Section 3.** The National President and the President of this Chapter may coordinate their respective investigations.

**Section 4.** If the Board of Directors, after receiving the report of the investigating officer, investigating committee, or the Chapter President following a hearing under Section 2 (c), determines preliminarily that good cause for expulsion exists, the member being investigated may be granted a hearing before the National Board of Directors, if the member requests such a hearing. If such a hearing is requested and granted, it shall be conducted fairly and promptly.

**Section 5.** No hearing before the National Board will be necessary when:

- a. The member has been convicted of a felony or a misdemeanor involving dishonesty or moral turpitude;
- b. The member has been disbarred by a federal court or the highest court of a state.

In other cases, a hearing should ordinarily be granted, on request.

**Section 6.** The vote required for expulsion is set forth in Article III, Section 4 (3), of the Constitution.

## **VIII. AMENDMENTS**

These Bylaws may be amended, provided such amendments are not inconsistent with the ABOTA Constitution or National Bylaws, by affirmative vote of a majority of the members voting at any meeting of the Chapter, provided, also, that notice of such amendment or amendments and the nature thereof shall have been given to the members of the Chapter at least ten days prior to the date of the meeting at which the amendment or amendments are to be presented for consideration.

## **IX. ROSTER OF MEMBERS**

**Section 1.** The names of the Chapters Officers and National Board Representative(s) elected shall be furnished to the National Executive Director sixty (60) days in advance of the Annual Meeting of the Association or promptly at any time requested by the National Executive Director or his or her nominee.

**Section 2.** At least once a year, following the election of officers of the Chapter, the Chapter Secretary or their designee-Executive Director shall provide to each member of the Chapter a roster of Chapter Officers, Executive Committee members, standing committee members, and members at large of the Chapter. Such roster shall contain the name, business address, and telephone number of the listed members.

## **X. CHAPTER REQUIREMENTS**

**Section 1.** The ABOTA National Board of Directors shall have the right to suspend or revoke the charter of the Houston Chapter for good cause as set forth in Article VII, §1 of the National Constitution. Good cause shall include, but not be limited to the following:

- a. Failure to timely file an annual accounting related to the depository and use of chapter funds.
- b. Failure to conduct an *annual* meeting.
- c. Failure to timely elect officers and to name a National Board representative of the chapter.
- d. Failure to timely report to the National Board the names of the elected officers and the National Board representative(s) of the chapter.
- e. Failure to timely submit to an audit under Section 2, if requested.
- f. Failure to adopt and adhere to Bylaws pursuant to Section 2 and failure to timely provide those adopted Bylaws to the National Board.

- g. Failure of the chapter to have a National Board Representative attend one National Board Meeting during the year without excuse.

**Section 2.** The Bylaws of this Chapter may not be inconsistent with the National Constitution or National Bylaws. If there is a conflict between the Chapter Bylaws and the National Constitution or Bylaws, the provisions of the National Constitution and Bylaws will supersede the Chapter Bylaws.

**Section 3.** The Houston Chapter shall promptly submit to an audit of the Chapter funds and of its adopted Chapter Bylaws by the National Board or its designee when requested by the Executive Committee of the National Board.

**Section 4.** In the event of a revocation or suspension of the Charter of the Houston Chapter, this revocation or suspension shall not have any effect upon an individual member's standing in this Association. Members under the circumstances of a charter suspension or revocation are free to apply to an appropriate chapter for membership and shall be given credit for the balance of the year for dues paid or may themselves apply to form a new chapter in accordance with the National Constitution and Bylaws.

**Section 5.** In the event this Chapter's charter is suspended, the National Executive Committee, with the approval of the Board of Directors, shall have the authority to appoint a new National Board Representative from this Chapter and new officers as needed until such time as either the suspension is lifted, or the Chapter has been re-formed and officers and permanent representative have been elected by the members.

**Section 6.** If the Charter of this Chapter has been suspended or revoked, all funds held by or in the name of this Chapter shall be remitted by the National Board promptly upon request. The National Board shall retain these funds thereafter for up to 10 days in trust for the Chapter until such time as a new Chapter is formed, in which the funds will be remitted to the new Chapter. If no new Chapter is formed within 180 days, the funds will be retained by the National Board, at its discretion, except those funds remitted to any Chapter on behalf of a member who chooses to transfer to another chapter, in which case funds retained on behalf of any member who transfers will be remitted by the National Board to the member's new Chapter.

## **XI.. REVOCATION OF PREVIOUS BYLAWS**

By adopting these Bylaws, the Houston Chapter revokes all previously adopted Bylaws of the Chapter.

**ADOPTED** by vote of the Houston Chapter and **RATIFIED** by the Executive Committee of the Houston Chapter on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2025.

  
Chapter President

September 11, 2025  
Date

Hon. Elizabeth "Peach" Ray



Chapter President-Elect  
Dwaine Massey

9/11/2025

Date

Chapter Vice President - Foundation  
Cindy Diggs

Date



Chapter Secretary/Treasurer Elect  
Paul Smith

9/11/25

Date



Chapter Immediate Past President  
Hon. Caroline Baker

Sept. 11, 2025

Date



Chapter National Board Representative  
R. Bruce Hurley

9/11/25

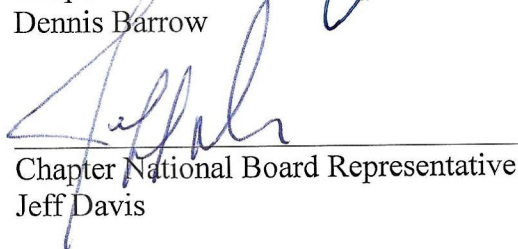
Date



Chapter National Board Representative  
Dennis Barrow

9-11-2025

Date



Chapter National Board Representative  
Jeff Davis

9/11/2025

Date

Chapter National Board Representative  
Alistair Dawson

Date



9/11/2025

Chapter National Board Representative  
Stacy Garcia

Date



9/11/2025

Chapter National Board Representative  
Don Kidd

Date



9/11/2025

Chapter National Board Representative  
Pete Patterson

Date



9/11/25  
Date

Chapter National Board Representative  
Kanchan Bhalerao



CHARLIE HENKE

Presidential Appointee National Board Representative 9/11/2025



Megan Callier

Presidential Nat'l Board Rep. 9/11/25



Christy Amunoy

PRESIDENTIAL NATIONAL BOARD REP 9/11/25

Michele Smita  
Michele Yennie Smita

Presidential National Board Rep. 9/11/25