

# Keep Your Bylaws Up-to-Date

When is the last time that your association's bylaws were reviewed?

That doesn't mean looked at by the members when they were distributed during the annual meeting.

It means when was the last time that someone actually analyzed what's in the document to see if the rules and policies are still what is needed to serve the membership of your group in the most efficient manner.

According to attorney Don Collins, who also serves as the head of the San Francisco section of the California Interscholastic Federation, there are several things you should do in reviewing your bylaws.

"The very first thing an association should do is look to see if the bylaws match the actual practices," Collins said.

One example of that is bylaws that were written many years ago probably make reference to meeting notices and game assignments being sent by mail. Today, with automated assignment

software and the prevalent use of the Internet, most communication is done electronically.

"The leaders need to make sure that what they are doing matches what's in the bylaws in order to prevent problems," Collins said. "Reviewing to match practices with what's written will catch the outdated bylaws from many years ago."

Second, Collins said is to review to see if your association has had problems that weren't adequately covered by your current bylaws.

"If there is a reasonable possibility that something similar could resurface," Collins said, "then you might need to make an adjustment."

Another thing Collins mentioned is having someone in or familiar with your association who is an attorney or insurance specialist give the document a thorough review.

"That person can make sure you don't have any glaring omissions that

expose the association unnecessarily," he said. "Among those things are making sure that people are given a hearing when things go wrong. They can make sure the association is protected."

Additionally, that person could also make sure the association is governed in conjunction and within the requirements of the state association or other governing body.

Finally, Collins recommended to review your association itself.

"Is the nature of your association the same as it was 10-15 years ago?" Collins asked, noting that a lot of associations were started by one or two people who may no longer be active and that a lot of the day-to-day operations have shifted to a board of directors.

"The old bylaws may still have all the power going to that one person. The bylaws need to be redefined to meet that ever-changing structure." □

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