

Sample Chapter Constitution

Constitution of the Valley H.S. Chapter of the Junior State Valley High in Little Falls, NJ

PREAMBLE

We, the citizens of the Valley High School Chapter of the Junior State, in order to achieve high standards of citizenship, improve our understanding of democratic processes, develop responsibility in the individual, and promote involvement in community affairs, do establish this organization.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this organization shall be "The Valley High School Chapter of the Junior State".

ARTICLE II: MEMBERSHIP

Membership will be granted to all students who have paid their annual membership tax and are attending Valley High School.

ARTICLE III: OFFICERS

Section A

Any student may run for office provided that the person is a chapter member in good standing.

Section B

The officers shall be elected by secret ballot at the second to last meeting of the elected term. All members must be given adequate notice of the time, date and location of the elections. The candidate receiving a majority of votes cast shall be declared the winner. If no candidate receives a majority on the first ballot, the candidate receiving the fewest votes shall be dropped from the ballot and a new election shall commence. The process shall continue until a candidate receives a majority of the votes cast.

Section C

The term of the officers shall start June 1 and end the following May 31. In the case of a vacant position, the President may appoint a replacement with the approval of a majority of the chapter. If the President resigns or is impeached, the Vice President shall become President.

Section D

There shall be four (4) elected officers:

1. The President is the chief executive officer of the chapter and is responsible for representing the chapter at all events. The President will preside over all meetings and be a

member of all committees. (S)he is responsible for running the chapter's educational program. The President may appoint other officers as the need arises.

2. The Vice President assists the President and becomes President if there is a vacancy in that position.

3. The Secretary will keep minutes of all the meetings. The Secretary will record and maintain all chapter records.

4. The Treasurer will be in charge of all financial matters of the chapter. The Treasurer will collect monies and keep records of members attending state and regional Junior State events. The Treasurer will prepare a financial report ready at all chapter meetings.

Section E

Any officer may be removed by a two-thirds vote of chapter members present and voting, provided that all members have been given adequate notice that this motion will be considered.

Section F

The chapter will have a Teacher/Advisor in accordance with the rules and regulations of Valley High School. The Teacher/Advisor will provide educational guidance, supervision and serve as a liaison to the Valley High School administration and faculty.

ARTICLE IV: ACTIVITIES

Section A

The chapter shall meet a minimum of twice a month during the school year. Meetings may be called by either the President or the Teacher/Advisor.

Section B

All meetings shall be run according to Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised

ARTICLE V: AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the chapter members.

ARTICLE VI: RATIFICATION

This constitution shall take effect upon ratification by a two-thirds vote of the members of the chapter and upon the approval of the Junior State Governor.

Constitution ratified on March 23, 1999

Writing a Chapter Constitution

Writing your chapter constitution can seem at first like an overwhelmingly large and complicated task. A good piece of advice is to not get hung up on this task at first. The sample constitution can be slightly altered and used very easily as your chapter constitution for a while. Once you have established chapter leadership and structure, you may want to hold a series of meetings in which you rewrite your constitution in a more specific and final form.

When writing your constitution, you should remember that you are free to structure your chapter however you feel is best as long as you adhere to the basic principles of democratic government. The traditional four elected officers and a handful of appointed cabinet members should work well. Structuring your chapter and writing your constitution is a real first-hand experience working with politics and government in the Junior State. Through careful planning of your chapter's structure and drafting of your chapter constitution, you can gain a real appreciation for the founders of groups, organizations and nations throughout history.

All chapter constitutions must follow the Fundamental Principles listed in the beginning of the Chapter Binder and Junior State Handbook. They also must follow all school regulations and guidelines. All chapter constitutions must include the following:

Preamble:

State the purposes and goals of your chapter.

Name:

State the name of your chapter.

Membership:

Indicate how you become a member (be sure that your chapter is open to everyone).

Officers:

Decide what officers your chapter will need. Some chapters use traditional titles of president, secretary, etc., and others pattern their titles after local government. List your officers, specify their duties, and state how they will be selected.

Activities:

Specify how often the chapter will meet, how meetings are called, and who shall preside.

Amendments and Ratification:

Describe how the Constitution can be adopted and amended.

You should include a lot of people from a lot of different backgrounds in the writing of your chapter constitution. Including a diverse group of people with different points of view will make your constitution much stronger. The United States Constitution was built on a series of compromises, and it is often said that it is these compromises that have made it survive over two-hundred years. A chapter constitution that incorporates the opinions and ideas of many different people will be all the more lasting because of it.

You should not be too rigid in describing your chapter structure in your constitution. While you want certain things to be very clear and precise, you must realize that in order for a constitution to last a long time, it must be flexible enough to withstand changes in people and surroundings. Each new Chapter President may want to change the structure of the chapter

slightly and should not need to rewrite the constitution in order to do so. Make your constitution lenient enough that it will endure many different obstacles and other situations.

One might say that the best constitutions are those whose writers not only see the current problems but also foresee future problems with the chapter. Think very clearly about how you want things to work, which things should be left up to each year's leaders, and which things you want to remain constant. What problems is your chapter likely to face in the future, and how can your constitution minimize the toll they take on your chapter? Your chapter constitution is one of the only things that will stay with your chapter longer than you will. A really good constitution may stay around for decades, if its authors are insightful enough to see what problems the chapter might face in the future.

Before writing your constitution, you should check with your school leadership and administration on their guidelines for clubs. Some schools have certain rules that all clubs must adhere to. You should make sure to follow any guidelines your school may have. They frequently may also require a copy of your club's constitution to keep on record before considering your club an official school club and giving you such privileges as access to school publicity and meeting rooms. In general it is a good idea to inform your school leadership and administration that you are founding this club, what you are doing and why to demonstrate that you are a real club that takes itself seriously and wants to succeed. Initiating good relations with your school leadership and administration is essential as you never know when you are going to need them for something or when you will be able to do something to help them.