

Caucuses of Member States

POLICY

Date adopted: September 28, 2020

Signed by:  , Vice Chair

NASBLA Policy on Special Purpose Caucuses of Member States

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Rationale

The rationale for this policy is to provide a mechanism for NASBLA member states to establish special purpose caucuses. For the purpose of this policy, *a caucus means an informal group of states who meet in person or in virtual space to discuss particular issues or to work together toward a common goal.*

The development of this policy is precipitated by the desire of specific states or groups of states to establish and maintain informal, yet ongoing, collective dialogue and decision-making apparatuses around core issues or member interests (identified upon the creation of specific caucuses.) *The caucus structure will permit smaller groups of states to cluster around pre-determined topics or sets of topics that may not necessarily rise to the level of core policy questions or programs at the national level, or those that require sustained focus and attention by a small number of member states over a period of time.*

Background

As the needs of our member states continue to evolve, groups of member states have expressed a desire to form a caucus-type structure to allow groups of states with common, yet relatively narrow sets of shared interests, to collectively address those interests. *The caucus structure will allow groups of states, acting collectively, a means to advance policies and programs, and to address common concerns that are of heightened significance to the member states, but of potentially lesser significance nationwide.*

Since NASBLA's purpose and mission are national in scope and substance, and since a caucus's priorities are more parochial in nature (limited in range or scope) and of importance primarily to the few (self-identified) caucus members, this policy will allow NASBLA to foster and facilitate an additional means of member engagement without burdening the association with the added cost. At least two specific subgroups of states (representing as many as 20 states each) have indicated an interest in forming self-directed, informal type of caucuses, at no expense to NASBLA, if such a mechanism existed.

The primary purposes for forming these caucuses include but are not limited to:

- a) Providing a "small group setting" as a medium for the exchange of views and experiences;
- b) Fostering multi-state or regional cooperation and coordination in addressing boating agency challenges;
- c) Promoting greater uniformity and reciprocity in laws and regulations between specific states;
- d) Increasing efficiency in training and in administration and enforcement; and, to the extent feasible,
- e) Encouraging consensus of views on issues of interest to the group, including the effective dissemination of such views to, caucus member states, NASBLA and other stakeholders.

While this policy will help fill a void in member needs based on *traditional* regional interests (North, South, East and West), this model for special purpose caucuses is not just limited to issues of “classical regional” interest only. For example, this policy envisions the creation of multiple, potential caucuses around such diverse and collective perspectives and groupings as:

- fish and game agencies
- Great Lakes state agencies
- “coldwater” state agencies
- Colorado River state agencies
- CG District “X” state agencies
- island and/or territory agencies
- Gulf Coast state agencies
- coastal state agencies
- Missouri River state agencies
- parks and wildlife agencies
- public safety agencies
- “small” boating agencies
- Mississippi River state agencies

Authority and Jurisdiction

Unlike NASBLA policy committees, administrative committees, executive board committees, panels and advisory boards, the association holds no formal authority over special purpose caucuses. NASBLA merely provides a forum through which these special purpose groups may “caucus” or meet to share information and act on program or policy measures under the caucus’s purview.

Special purpose caucuses shall be self-forming, self-directing, self-identified and self-funded, with NASBLA playing a caretaker role only in the provision of meeting logistics (at previously scheduled meetings of the association), as well as certain specialized financial management functions, when applicable. *No funding for special purpose caucuses beyond those of the nominal costs associated with providing minimal meeting planning logistics shall be provided by NASBLA.* Provisions shall be made on a case-by-case, annual basis for recognizing special purpose caucuses including caucus membership and leadership.

Caucus Recognition

A special purpose caucus shall be established upon petition to the NASBLA Executive Board of no less than five member states acting collectively around a core issue or set of related core issues and interests. At a minimum, petitions to establish special purpose caucuses shall enumerate the following:

- a) name of the proposed caucus,
- b) core issues or interests to be addressed by the caucus,
- c) criteria or requirements (if any) to a member of the caucus,
- d) list of official member states acting collectively to form the caucus, and
- e) name of the majority-elected chairperson of the caucus (upon selection) authorized to act on its behalf.

Special purpose caucuses shall have jurisdiction over the charges, tasks or projects (hereafter referred to collectively as “charges”) assigned to them by their collective members, as well as any financial resources which may be voluntarily provided by their members to accomplish these charges. Beyond the provision of specified minimal meeting planning assistance, *NASBLA shall provide no staff or personnel support for direct caucus activities.* However, the provisions of this policy notwithstanding, NASBLA may enter into fiduciary agreements with special purpose caucuses for the purposes of providing financial management services, delivering targeted member services, or both.

Caucus Operation, Reporting and Recommendations

Special purpose caucuses shall operate under simple majority rules in accordance with *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, so far as practicable.

For the purpose of ensuring that special purpose caucuses remain consistent with NASBLA mission, goals and objectives, and as a condition of continuing to function as a special purpose caucus, the elected caucus chairperson shall provide to the NASBLA Executive Board an annual written report summarizing the outcomes of the caucus's deliberations and re-affirming the caucus name, purpose, criteria for membership, current members list and caucus chairperson.

It is anticipated that from time to time, caucus deliberations and outcomes regarding parochial policies, programs and best practices may have implications and applications nationwide. Special purpose caucuses are encouraged to share these outcomes and potential broader applications through recommendations in the annual report to the NASBLA Executive Board.

Annual Caucus Cycle

This policy envisions an annual caucus cycle to include:

- February/March, caucus meets in conjunction with the spring State RBS workshop, develops annual workplan;
- September/October, caucus meets at annual conference, elects new chair, reaffirms members, purpose and objectives. Annual process begins again in November.