

**Princeton USG Senate
Meeting 26
October 18, 2020
9:30PM (EST)**



**Undergraduate
Student
Government**

Introduction

1. Question and Answer Session (15 minutes)
2. President's Report (5 minutes)

New Business

1. Vote100 Presentation: Kauribel Javier and Morgan Smith (15 minutes)
2. Elections Working Group Constitutional Amendments: Kate Liu and Lehman Montgomery (20 minutes)



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Summer Referenda and Elections Handbook Working Group Report DRAFT

October 2020

About the Working Group

The Referenda and Elections Handbook Working Group was an informal group of past and current USG members (Chitra Parikh '21, Andres Larrieu '22, Lehman Montgomery '22, Kate Liu '23, Jonah Hyman '20, and Olivia Ott '20) that met over a dozen times during the summer and fall to recommend revisions to USG's Elections and Referenda Handbook. This revisions process was initiated for two reasons: (1) to procedurally adjust the content of the handbook to account for the new academic calendar, last year's switch to instant-runoff-voting, and possible COVID-19 complications with the elections process; and (2) to address questions surrounding the wording of the current referenda and elections handbook that have surfaced in recent years. A comprehensive review of the election and referenda rules has not been conducted for some time, and the Working Group hoped to develop recommendations containing suggested updates to the handbook that the Senate could vote to formally implement in the fall.

Summary of Key Recommendations

Over the course of the past four months, the Working Group met extensively to review and propose changes to the current Referenda and Elections Handbook. During this period of time, we discussed a wide range of topics, including how to finalize the implementation of instant-runoff-voting (IRV) through the Election Runner platform, aligning the elections handbook with the new academic calendar, streamlining and updating the elections process to conform with recent working campaign practices, improving the penalties and appeals processes, and clarifying the formal definitions of commonly used elections and referenda terms. The Working Group also spent a substantial amount of time refining the format and structure of the handbook to improve its readability and clarity for elections managers, candidates, and referenda sponsors participating in future campaigns; we also developed a comprehensive series of appendices and suggested practices contained in the new handbook that we believe will be useful in facilitating elections and distributing campaign information moving forward.



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In addition to this report, the primary result of the Working Group's efforts is a revised version of the current elections and referenda handbook ([linked here](#)) that we hope the USG Senate will choose to formally adopt in the coming weeks.

Next Steps for Senate and the Working Group

The goal is to consider, finalize, and vote on the changes proposed in this document by the beginning of the winter 2020 election cycle, which is tentatively scheduled for October 25th, 2020. In order to meet this deadline, the Working Group proposes the following timeline for the Senate's consideration:

1. Sunday, October 4th: Present this report and introduce the proposed changes to Senate
2. Sunday, October 18th: Address any questions or concerns, and present and vote on Constitutional amendments (1st out of 2 required votes)
3. Sunday, October 25th: Present and vote on Constitutional amendments (2nd out of 2 required votes), Rules on Standing/Appeals, and Elections Handbook revisions.

In advance of the upcoming meeting on October 4th to present and vote on the Constitutional amendments required to adopt the new elections handbook, we respectfully ask that the voting members of the USG Senate do two things: (1) read the revised version of the USG elections and referenda handbook ([linked here](#)) and (2) reach out to Kate Liu '23 (USG Parliamentarian) and Lehman Montgomery '22 (USG Chief Elections Manager) with any questions. Please also come to next week's Senate meeting prepared to vote on the corresponding Constitutional amendments that would be necessary to adopt the new handbook.

Required Voting Standards for Proposed Changes:

- Constitutional changes -- Need two $\frac{2}{3}$ majority votes
- Revising elections handbook -- Need $\frac{1}{2}$ majority vote
- Rules on Standing and Appeals -- Need $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GOVERNMENT OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY



THE SENATE

princeton university, princeton, new jersey

Senate Resolution 10-2020

Senate Constitution Amendment No. 9

Submitted by KATE LIU '23, USG SENATE PARLIAMENTARIAN AND LEHMAN MONTGOMERY '22, CHIEF ELECTIONS MANAGER

Resolution

Amending the Senate Constitution to clarify elections and referendum procedures.

Summary:

During the summer of 2020, a Senate working group undertook a comprehensive review of elections and referendum procedures. This review identified certain ambiguities, inconsistencies, and vague provisions relating to elections and referenda, including some constitutional provisions. This amendment, together with amendments to the election rules, is intended to simplify and clarify Senate rules related to elections and referenda.

Digest:

- **Section 1** amends Section 302 to allow the Senate to specify rules for overturning an action of the Chief Elections Manager or an Elections Manager in the election rules. This eliminates a potential ambiguity in the current election rules, in which it is unclear whether the Senate Constitution allows the Senate to set a two-thirds voting threshold for election appeals.
- **Section 2** amends Section 804 to eliminate runoffs for all elections.
- **Section 3** amends Section 806 to reflect the current working practice in which the Senate reimburses candidates for both Senate and Class Government office.
- **Section 4** amends Section 1001 to clarify the procedures for putting referenda on the ballot, including when the referendum amends the Honor Constitution. It also changes the signature threshold and time limit for a petition following a Senate determination that the referendum is frivolous, from 1/3 of undergraduates in 14 days to 1/4 of undergraduates in 5 days. This allows for a shorter and more uniform schedule for all referenda, without sacrificing the necessary time to enforce election rules and ensure meaningful undergraduate debate.
- **Section 5** amends Section 1002 to reflect the current working practice in which all referendum sponsors must consult with the Chief Elections Manager and the Senate on the proper style, usage, grammar, and organization of an intended referendum question.
- **Section 6** amends Section 1003 to create a uniform voter turnout threshold for all referenda to 1/3 of undergraduates. (The legislative history of Section 1003 does not produce a compelling reason for a different voter turnout threshold for Senate Constitution and Projects Board Charter amendments. It is unclear whether an Honor Constitution amendment adopted with a voter turnout of less than 1/3 of undergraduates would be considered legitimate by Honor System stakeholders outside the Senate.) It also clarifies the authority of the Senate to establish election rules under which referenda can be disqualified, and under which disputes between conflicting referenda can be settled.
- **Section 7** repeals Section 1004, which created ambiguity about the procedure for Honor Constitution amendments. The amended Sections 1002 and 1003 clarify the referendum procedure for Honor Constitution amendments.

Resolved by the Senate of the Undergraduate Student Government (two-thirds of the Senate concurring),

SECTION 1.

Section 302 of the Senate Constitution is amended to read as follows:

§ 302. Review of Information and Actions

(a)IN GENERAL.—In accordance with ~~in~~ this section, the Senate may call any Senate member, committee, or subcommittee to present to the Senate any information or action that the Senate wishes to review.

(b)INITIATION OF REVIEW.—The following Senate members may initiate a review:

- (1)The President.
- (2)The Vice President.
- (3)3 voting Senate members.

(c)VICE PRESIDENT SHALL NOTIFY.—When a review is initiated, the Vice President shall notify the Senate member, committee, or subcommittee in question at least 7 days before the meeting when the Senate shall conduct the review.

(d)SENATE MAY OVERTURN ACTION.—Except as otherwise provided in this Constitution, the Senate may overturn an action of a Senate member, committee, or subcommittee by a majority vote.

(e)OVERTURNING ACTIONS OF ELECTIONS MANAGERS.—In a standing rule established under section 406, the Senate may specify procedures and voting thresholds for overturning an action of the Chief Elections Manager or an Elections Manager.

SECTION 2.

Section 804 of the Senate Constitution is amended to read as follows:

§ 804. Voting; Runoffs

(a)IN GENERAL.—

(1)EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND CLASS OFFICER.—

(A)VOTING.—

(i)SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE.—The election for an Executive Officer or a Class Officer shall be by the system of the single transferable vote (instant runoff voting).

(ii)RANKED VOTES.—For the election of an Executive Officer or a Class officer, each eligible undergraduate may rank the candidates for the corresponding office in order of preference.

(B)ELECTION.—Except as otherwise provided in subparagraph (C)—

(i)WHEN ONE CANDIDATE OBTAINS MAJORITY.—If a candidate for an Executive Officer office or a Class Officer office is ranked as the most preferred candidate on a majority of votes cast in the election for that office, that candidate shall be elected.

(ii)WHEN NO CANDIDATE OBTAINS MAJORITY.—In the election rules established under section 802, the Senate shall prescribe the methods for determining which candidate for an Executive Officer office or a Class Government office will be elected if no candidate is ranked as the most preferred candidate on a majority of votes cast in the corresponding election.

(C)FRESHMAN CLASS GOVERNMENT.—The 5 candidates for Freshman Class Government who obtain the most approval votes cast shall be elected.

(2)SENATOR, U-COUNCILOR, AND FRESHMAN CLASS GOVERNMENT.—

(A)APPROVAL VOTING.—The election for a Senator, a U-Councilor, and the Freshman Class Government shall be by approval voting.

(B)ELECTION OF SENATOR.—The 2 candidates for Senator who obtain the most approval votes cast shall be elected.

(C)ELECTION OF U-COUNCILOR.—The 10 candidates for U-Councilor who obtain the most approval votes cast shall be elected.

(3)ELIGIBILITY TO VOTE.—

(A)EXECUTIVE OFFICER; U-COUNCILOR.—Each undergraduate may vote in the election of an Executive Officer or a U-Councilor.

(B)SENATOR; CLASS OFFICER.—Each undergraduate in the corresponding class may vote in the election of a Senator or a Class Officer.

(b)***No*** RUNOFFS.—***Runoff elections shall not be held.***

~~(1)EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND CLASS OFFICER.—For the election of an Executive Officer or a Class Officer, no runoff elections shall be held.~~

~~(2)SENATOR, U-COUNCILOR, AND FRESHMAN CLASS OFFICER.—If there is a tie for the final office of Senator, U-Councilor, or Freshman Class Officer, the tied candidates shall enter a runoff election.~~

SECTION 3.

Section 806 of the Senate Constitution is amended to read as follows:

§ 806. Election Expenses Reimbursement

Subject to any limit prescribed in the election rules established under section 802—, ***the Senate shall defray the direct election expenses of each candidate for a Senate or Class Government office.***

~~(1)the Senate shall defray the direct election expenses of each candidate for a Senate office; and~~

~~(2)the corresponding Class Government shall defray the direct election expenses of each candidate running for an office of that Class Government.~~

SECTION 4.

Section 1001 of the Senate Constitution is amended to read as follows:

§ 1001. Calling for Referendum Generally

(a)SENATE-INITIATED REFERENDUM.—The Chief Elections Manager shall organize a referendum concurrent with a regular election for Senate office if—

(1)the Senate, by a 1/3 vote of the entire voting Senate membership, calls for the referendum concurrent with the election; and

(2)the referendum does not amend the Constitution of the Honor System.

(b)REFERENDUM BY PETITION.—The Chief Elections Manager shall organize a referendum concurrent with a regular election for Senate office after receiving a duly completed petition that calls for the referendum concurrent with the election and is signed by—

(1)10% of the undergraduates, if the referendum does not amend the Constitution of the Honor System; or

(2)200 undergraduates, if the referendum amends the Constitution of the Honor System.¹²

~~(a) REFERENDUM CONCURRENT WITH USG ELECTION.—The Chief Elections Manager shall organize a referendum concurrent with a USG election after—~~

~~(1) a 1/3 vote of the entire voting Senate membership that calls for the referendum concurrent with the USG election; or~~

~~(2) receiving a duly completed petition that is signed by 10% of the undergraduates and calls for the referendum concurrent with the USG election.~~

(c) FRIVOLOUS REFERENDA.—

*(1) SENATE DETERMINATION.—By a 5/6 vote at a regular meeting, the Senate may determine a referendum called under ~~subsection (a)(2)~~ **subsection (b)** to be frivolous and thereby prevent that referendum from occurring.*

(2) REFERENDUM NOTWITHSTANDING SENATE DETERMINATION.—

*(A)IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding paragraph (1), the Chief Elections Manager shall organize a referendum that the Senate has determined to be frivolous under paragraph (1) if, within ~~14 days~~ **5 days** after that determination, the Chief Elections Manager receives a new duly*

¹² *This signature requirement is in accordance with Honor Sys. Const. art. VI.*

completed petition that calls for the referendum and is signed by ~~1/3~~ 1/4 of the undergraduates.

(B)TIME OF REFERENDUM.—The Chief Elections Manager shall organize that referendum within 21 days after receiving the new duly completed petition under subparagraph (A).

SECTION 5.

Section 1002 of the Senate Constitution is amended to read as follows:

§ 1002. Procedure for Referendum Petition

(a)UNDERGRADUATE SHALL NOTIFY VICE PRESIDENT.—Except as otherwise provided in subsection (c), an undergraduate who intends to submit a petition that calls for a referendum shall communicate that intention to—

- (1)the Vice President; or
- (2)the designee of the Vice President.

(b)FORM OF PETITION.—In the election rules established under section 802, the Senate shall prescribe the proper form and style of a petition.

(c)REFERENDUM ~~QUESTION AFFECTING CONSTITUTION OR USG DOCUMENT~~ **LANGUAGE CONSULTATION**.—

(1)IN GENERAL.—In the election rules established under section 802, the Senate may require that an undergraduate consult with the ~~Executive Secretary~~ **Senate** or the designee of the ~~Executive Secretary~~ **Senate** regarding the proper style, usage, grammar, and organization of an intended referendum question ~~if that referendum would affect this Constitution, a charter, or any other USG document.~~

(2)CONSULTATION BEFORE COLLECTION OF SIGNATURES.—If the Senate creates a requirement under paragraph (1), the Senate shall require that the consultation occur before the undergraduate begins collecting signatures on the petition.

(d)DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION.—The Senate shall have the power to outline specific guidelines and regulations regarding the deadline for submission as established under section 802.

SECTION 6.

Section 1003 of the Senate Constitution is amended to read as follows

§ 1003. Referendum Result

~~(a)RESULT BINDING ON SENATE.—A referendum result shall be binding on the Senate if—~~

- ~~(1)at least 1/3 of the undergraduates vote in the referendum; and~~
- ~~(2)a majority of votes cast in the referendum are in the affirmative.~~

~~(b)RESULT FOR CONSTITUTION OR PROJECTS BOARD CHARTER.—A referendum result shall amend this Constitution or the Projects Board Charter if—~~

- ~~(1)at least 1/6 of the undergraduates vote in the referendum; and~~

~~(2) 3/5 of the votes cast in the referendum are in the affirmative.~~

(a) *IN GENERAL.*—A referendum shall be binding on the Senate if—

(1) at least 1/3 of the undergraduates vote in the referendum;

(2) a majority of the votes cast in the referendum are in the affirmative; and

(3) the referendum has not been disqualified by an election rule established under section 802.

(b) *RESULT FOR CONSTITUTION OR PROJECTS BOARD CHARTER.*—Notwithstanding subsection (a), a referendum that amends the Constitution or the Projects Board Charter shall be binding on the Senate if—

(1) at least 1/3 of the undergraduates vote in the referendum;

(2) 3/5 of the votes cast in the referendum are in the affirmative; and

(3) the referendum has not been disqualified by an election rule established under section 802.

(c) *RESULT FOR HONOR CONSTITUTION.*—Notwithstanding subsections (a) and (b), a referendum that amends the Constitution of the Honor System shall be binding if—

(1) at least 1/3 of the undergraduates vote in the referendum;

(2) 3/4 of the votes cast in the referendum are in the affirmative, in accordance with Article VI of the Constitution of the Honor System¹³; and

(3) the referendum has not been disqualified by an election rule established under section 802.

(d) *RESULT FOR CONFLICTING REFERENDA.*—In the election rules established under section 802, the Senate shall prescribe methods for determining which of multiple conflicting referenda adopted during the same election are binding.

SECTION 6.

Section 1004 of the Senate Constitution is repealed.

Approved October XX, 2020.

ASHWIN MAHADEVAN '22,
*Vice President of the Undergraduate Student Government and
Presiding Officer of the Senate.*

Attest:

JOSEPHINE KIM '23,
Executive Secretary of the Senate.

¹³ *Honor Sys. Const. art. VI.*