

Committee Report on Structuring of the Maryland Chapter
of the National Lawyers Guild

The ad-hoc “Structure Committee” (SC) was asked to look at the questions of meeting facilitation, leadership structure, and decision-making within the Maryland NLG chapter. We met on January 30th to discuss these issues. After a productive meeting, we offer the suggestions below.

We hope that the Chapter can discuss and vote on our proposals at our next monthly meeting on February 21, 2017. By agreement of the SC, UB law student and SC member Jing Marcos will facilitate this meeting. Please feel free to comment on our proposal via e-mail to the Chapter List-serve in advance of the meeting.

Suggestion #1

Our Chapter should designate two “co-coordinators” to serve as chapter leadership. One co-coordinator should be an experienced member and the other a less experienced member. The idea here is to help build new and future leadership.

The experienced co-coordinator would continue to serve in that role for as long as he or she is willing. (Curtis Cooper has agreed to continue in that role). The less experienced co-coordinator would serve for one year (with the turnover taking place in February of each year). The purpose of the annual change in the second co-coordinator position is to get as many people as possible trained to assume leadership roles.

Suggestion #2

The Chapter should create standing “working groups” to advance the work of the Chapter in between monthly meetings. Chapter members should be encouraged to participate in at least one working group.

Potential working groups suggested by the SC include: 1) programs & events; 2) mass defense/LO training; 3) social media/publicity/web site management (Colin Starger has agreed to serve on this working group); 4) political action; and, 5) fund-raising/membership development. The working groups would be encouraged to meet and coordinate apart from the Chapter monthly meetings.

The Chapter coordinators would be responsible for facilitating working groups (i.e., making sure that no tasks fall between the working group cracks).

Suggestion #3

Each monthly Chapter meeting should have a designated facilitator. The co-coordinators will be responsible ensuring someone is designated. In order to develop leadership and build skills, we should encourage a different person to facilitate each month.

The co-coordinators should make the arrangements for the date, time, and location of the monthly meeting. The facilitator should prepare the agenda – with assistance from the co-coordinators. Each meeting should include brief reports by each of the working groups, a financial report by the co-coordinators (who will handle the Chapter's finances), and any other agenda items submitted to the facilitator.

Suggestion #4

All substantive decisions of the Chapter should be made by consensus. If consensus is not possible and there is sufficient time, the item of contention should be re-visited in detail – with study and education at the following Chapter meeting.

Suggestion #5

If emergent issues arise that require immediate action by the Chapter before the next scheduled meeting – such as signing onto statements or endorsing calls to action, demonstrations, etc. – the co-coordinators should email the Chapter members with their recommended position and a note that they will adopt this position barring strong opposition.

If no strong opposition is heard, the co-coordinators should send a follow-up announcement to the Chapter members confirming that the position was taken. If strong opposition is heard, then the position should not be adopted and should instead be put on the agenda for the next Chapter meeting.

Submitted by: Lauren Fleming; Jing Marcos; Marisa Menezes; Natalie Rees; and, Colin Starger.