

Judicial Committee Opinion Request on Amendments Affecting Local Autonomy With a New Constitution

The following resolution was passed by the Triennial Delegate Assembly (TDA) for General Council consideration at the Triennial Meeting of the General Council (TMGC) on September 14th.

First Society Resolution E E) “Autonomy” Resolution

Whereas, the model of representative governance is rife throughout The Urantia Book and though not upheld as “perfect” or “ideal” it is still noted as a predominant standard throughout the universes.

Whereas, the current Constitution includes the following statement in Section 15:2 regarding local autonomy:

“Section 15.2. Amendments Affecting Local Autonomy: Whenever it is proposed to adopt an amendment to this Constitution limiting in any way the local autonomy of the Local Societies, such amendment shall not become effective until it shall have been ratified by the affirmative vote in favor thereof, by a secret ballot, of at least three-fourths (3/4ths) of the members of the Triennial Delegate Assembly...”

Whereas, while the “letter of the law” definitions of “autonomy” speak primarily to the “right or condition of self-governance” and “independence,” the “spirit of the law” in the current Constitution does certainly identify “Amendments Affecting Local Autonomy,” amendments that require involvement of the TDA, to include the complete loss of participation as Societies in the governance of The Urantia Book Fellowship.

Whereas, the sequence of necessary Amendment-process steps stipulated in Section 15.2 of the current Constitution must be adhered to at this time, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the General Council postpone voting on the SCICR-proposed document distributed electronically on July 13, 2024, and any subsequent versions of said document as modified or proposed on or before September 14, 2024; to thereby retain control of the Urantia Book Fellowship under the current Constitution, and until such time as properly-timed TDA and Society involvement has been attained for making “**Amendments Affecting Local Autonomy.**”

This resolution brings up the rare need for the Judicial Committee to submit our opinion about this issue.

I am asking each of you on the Judicial Committee to consider these differently worded questions about the same issue:

1. Would the ratification of a new constitution by the General Council supersede or nullify certain requirements in the old constitution?
2. Must a newly ratified constitution necessarily be beholden to certain requirements from the old constitution?
3. Must a new constitution that has been proposed and ratified through the current constitutional amendment process, necessarily adhere to constitutional requirements in the former constitution?
4. In the new proposed constitution, the TDA will no longer elect General Councilors. Does this “in any way” restrict Local Society autonomy over their local affairs?
5. If a new proposed constitution is ratified and “in any way” limits Local Society autonomy, would the old constitutional requirement prevail?

The revised proposed constitution presently has no requirements for existing Societies. The proposed constitution has eliminated all current constitutional requirements.

This is written in the current constitution Section 8.9 (d) *“The General Council shall not enact any By-law limiting or restricting the autonomy of the Local Societies over the conduct of their local affairs.”* and

*“Section 15.2. Amendments Affecting Local Autonomy: Whenever it is proposed to adopt an amendment to this Constitution limiting **in any way** the local autonomy of the Local Societies, such amendment shall...”*

Autonomy Definitions from several sources:

- the right or condition of self-government
- independence or freedom, as of the will or one's actions
- the condition of being autonomous; self-government or the right of self-government
- a self-governing community
- the right of an organization, country, or region to be independent and govern itself

Look critically at the language, meaning and interpretations to express what you believe about whether the proposed constitution, if ratified, does or does not restrict autonomy in any way for Local Societies in their local affairs. If the proposed constitution is ratified, should or should not Section 15.2. in the current constitution be adhered to as a requirement?

I need an opinion from each of you before September 14th. Please give me a call or a text if you have any questions.

Respectfully,

Tom Allen, Chair
Judicial Committee.
405-570-6862

Background

This is the TDA resolution:

First Society Resolution E

E) “Autonomy” Resolution

Whereas, the model of representative governance is rife throughout The Urantia Book and though not upheld as “perfect” or “ideal” it is still noted as a predominant standard throughout the universes.

Whereas, the current Constitution includes the following statement in Section 15:2 regarding local autonomy:

“Section 15.2. Amendments Affecting Local Autonomy: Whenever it is proposed to adopt an amendment to this Constitution limiting in any way the local autonomy of the Local Societies, such amendment shall not become effective until it shall have been ratified by the affirmative vote in favor thereof, by a secret ballot, of at least three-fourths (3/4ths) of the members of the Triennial Delegate Assembly...”

Whereas, while the “letter of the law” definitions of “autonomy” speak primarily to the “right or condition of self-governance” and “independence,” the “spirit of the law” in the current Constitution does certainly identify “Amendments Affecting Local Autonomy,” amendments that require involvement of the TDA, to include the complete loss of participation as Societies in the governance of The Urantia Book Fellowship.

Whereas, the sequence of necessary Amendment-process steps stipulated in Section 15.2 of the current Constitution must be adhered to at this time, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the General Council postpone voting on the SCICR-proposed document distributed electronically on July 13, 2024, and any subsequent versions of said document as modified or proposed on or before September 14, 2024; to thereby retain control of the Urantia Book Fellowship under the current Constitution, and until such time as properly-timed TDA and Society involvement has been attained for making “Amendments Affecting Local Autonomy.”

These Articles and Sections are References to Local Society Autonomy in our Current Constitution

ARTICLE III

COMPOSITION

UBF shall be composed of members associated together for the purposes expressed in this Constitution into **local societies** hereinafter referred to as "Local Societies," autonomous in conduct of their local affairs, but subservient to this Constitution,...

ARTICLE V

LOCAL SOCIETIES

Section 5.4. Local Government:Each Local Society shall be autonomous in all matters of its government and activities, including the determination of its membership, except as limited by this Constitution or delegated to the General Council, the Executive Committee, or one or more of the Departmental Committees.

Section 5.8. requires the following items that constitutionally restrict the complete autonomy of Local Societies. None of these restrictions are in the proposed constitution. If these requirements are not in the proposed constitution, is the autonomy of local Societies limited in any way by not including them?

Section 5.8. Inactive Status:UBF Constitution and By- laws require a Local Society to do the following:

- (a) To hold elections every one (1), two (2), or three (3) years, according to the Local Society's constitution. (Section 5.4)
- (b) To have a minimum of four (4) officers including a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. (Section 5.4)

- (c) To notify UBF of the names of the officers within thirty (30) days subsequent to their election. (Section 5.4 and By-laws Paragraph 1.5)
- (d) To provide UBF with a copy of its current constitution and by-laws and within thirty (30) days subsequent to any modification of change. (Section 5.4)
- (e) To remit to UBF a tithe (ten (10) percent) of its gross receipts on or before the thirty first (31st) day of January. (Section 5.5 and By-laws paragraph 3.3)
- (f) To maintain a list of society members and provide such list to UBF when requested. (By-laws paragraph 1.1)
- (g) To provide UBF not later than the tenth (10) day of January of each year, the number of members in that society on the last day of the preceding calendar year and such other information as the Executive Committee shall from time to time require. (By-laws paragraph 3.2)
- (h) To record transfers of membership. (By-laws paragraph 1.4)
- (i) To notify UBF of Expulsions from the Local Society. (By- laws paragraph 1.6)
- (j) To notify UBF within fifteen (15) days of the election of the Delegate and Alternate Delegate, the name of the Delegate and Alternate Delegate, and such notification shall be certified by the President of such Local Society. Each Delegate and Alternate shall certify that each has read The Urantia Book in its entirety. (By-laws Paragraph 7.3)

ARTICLE XV

AMENDMENTS

Section 15.2. [Amendments Affecting Local Autonomy](#): Whenever it is proposed to adopt an amendment to this Constitution limiting in any way the local autonomy of the Local Societies, such amendment shall not become effective until it shall have been ratified by the affirmative vote in favor thereof, by a secret ballot, of at least three-fourths (3/4ths) of the members of the Triennial Delegate Assembly: Provided, however, that not less than one (1) year nor more than five (5) years shall elapse between the adoption of such amendment and the submission thereof to the Triennial Delegate Assembly for ratification; and provided further that a copy of such

amendment as adopted by the General Council shall be sent to all Local Societies within six (6) months after the date of the adoption by the General Council and shall be set out in full in the notice of the call of the Triennial Delegate Assembly at which said ratification of the amendment is to be voted upon.

Section 8.9. Powers: The General Council shall have the following powers:

(d) The General Council shall not enact any [By-law](#) limiting or restricting the autonomy of the Local Societies over the conduct of their local affairs.

(e) The General Council shall not enact any [By-laws](#) discriminating against any Local Society or group of Local Societies.

[\(There are no references to Society autonomy in the UBF By-laws\)](#)



**[Here are references to Societies
in the proposed revised constitution as of August 26, 2024:](#)**

Section 1.2. Registration: The Secretary shall maintain a list of Members consisting of those persons who meet the qualifications for membership and who have registered as Members and/or are recognized as Members by virtue of their membership in [a Local Society](#).

ARTICLE III

SOCIETIES

Section 3.1. Local Societies Transition: All current Local Societies affiliated with UBF shall be granted [Affiliated Partner and Society status](#) and all certified Local Society members shall be recognized as UBF Members.

Section 3.2. Societies: Affiliated Partners that also have a minimum of ten (10) members who have each read *The Urantia Book* in its entirety, may apply for additional designation as a Society. Societies shall be called upon to advise the Governing Board on matters of policy and strategy.

Section 3.3. Society Advisory Council: Beginning in 2025, the Governing Board shall call an annual Society Advisory Council meeting.

Section 4.6. Powers:

- b. To define in the Operations Manual procedures for:
 - 1. Member input and participation in the Annual Meeting.
 - 2. [Society Advisory Council](#) formation and interaction with the Governing Board.
 - 3. Determining eligibility for Voting Members, [Affiliated Partners](#), and Society participation.
 - 4. Petitions by Voting Members and [Affiliated Partners](#).

Section 4.17. Nominations: Nominations of candidates in Scheduled Elections shall be solicited and reviewed by a Nominations Commission, approved by the Governing Board, and maintained in the Operations Manual, beginning August 2025.

Governing Board nominations may be submitted to the Secretary no later than sixty (60) days prior to Scheduled Elections.

Section 12.7: Nominations Transition: At the inaugural meeting of the Governing Board, the Chair shall appoint [a delegate from a Society](#) as a Nominations Transition Chair, who shall select additional members to form a Nominations Transition Commission. Within 180 days, the Nominations Transition Commission shall develop a recommendation for the Nominations Commission process to be included in the Operations Manual or amended into Section 4.17. The recommendation shall include:

- a. Opportunity for all eligible UBF Members to run for the Governing Board,
- b. Composition of Nominations Commission membership,
- c. Requirements of Governing Board nominees,

- d. A method to prescreen candidates to verify that they have adequate skill sets and track record of accomplishments to be a productive member of the Governing Board, and
- e. Additional process components as recommended by the Nominations Commission.