

Blinded Veterans Association

Regional Group Manual



Founded March 28, 1945
Avon Old Farms, Connecticut

Chartered by U.S. Congress
August 27, 1958

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
1600 DUKE ST, SUITE 510
Alexandria, VA 22314

WEBSITE
BVA.org

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Section 1: History

The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) boasts a rich and inspiring history, filled with remarkable characters, hard-fought victories, and a dedication to improving the lives of blind and low vision (B/LV) veterans, their families, and caregivers. This section of the Regional Group (RG) Manual explores our origins.

A legacy of advocacy: Our story begins in 1945, shortly after World War II. Approximately 100 war blinded veterans, united by their experiences and a desire to build a brighter future, came together to establish BVA. This was not just a social club; it was a powerful force for advocacy. These early members recognized the challenges faced by blinded veterans and knew they needed a strong voice to secure the support and resources they deserved.

Colorful characters, hard-won battles: BVA's history is woven with the stories of these pioneering veterans. Each member brought their unique experiences, strengths, and personalities to the table. As you delve deeper, you will encounter tales of unwavering determination, ingenious solutions, and the collective spirit that overcame seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Beyond this document: This document captures the official timeline of BVA, but it's just a glimpse into a much richer tapestry. To fully appreciate the heart of BVA, we encourage you to connect with other members. Engage them in conversation, listen to their experiences, and gain a deeper understanding of the struggles and triumphs that shaped BVA into the organization it is today.

Further exploration: For those seeking further information, below you will find a selection of audio books available through the National Library Service (NLS) Braille and Audio Reading Download (BARD) program. If you do not have access to BARD, please contact your Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) Coordinator, or [visit this webpage](#).

- "Caution, Blind Priest Driving: The story of Father Thomas J. Carroll, Changing the Public's Perception of Blindness," DB107915.
- "Journey to Excellence: Development of the Military and VA Blind Rehabilitation Programs in the 20th Century," DB48780.
- "Learning to Cope with Sight Loss: Six Weeks at a VA Blind Rehabilitation Center," DB71922.
- "Russell C. Williams: A Journey Well-Traveled," DB109995.
- "Grandpa's White Cane," DBC06000.

As you explore BVA's history, reflect on ways your regional groups will contribute to our history.

History: BVA is the only national Veterans Service Organization (VSO) chartered by the United States Congress and exclusively dedicated to assisting America's B/LV veterans, their families, and caregivers. Approximately 100 war-blinded veterans from World War II founded BVA on March 28, 1945. The congressional charter designates the organization as the official advocate and representative for all B/LV veterans before the executive and legislative branches of government. Throughout its existence, BVA has successfully carried out this important function while at the same time contributing meaningfully to making life better for countless individuals from across the country.

Since the organization's early beginning, BVA has worked tirelessly with VA to assure top-quality, comprehensive medical and rehabilitative services/benefits for B/LV veterans. When the US Army

discontinued its blind rehabilitation services for the war blind at the end of World War II, BVA played an instrumental role in persuading VA to assume the responsibility for their care and rehabilitation.

As early as 1947, BVA adopted resolutions in convention assembled, calling for the establishment of a comprehensive residential Blind Rehabilitation Center (BRC). The facility would assist blinded veterans in their adjustment to vision loss and the acquisition of adaptive skills. Due in large measure to BVA's efforts, the first BRC opened its doors on July 4, 1948. As the numbers of war-blinded veterans increased with the onset of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, BVA recommended that VA expand the number of BRCs nationally. Today, there are 13 comprehensive residential BRCs across the VA health care system. As BRC programs grew and evolved, BVA persuaded Congress and VA to expand eligibility for blind rehabilitation services to veterans whose blindness was not the result of their military service. Countless B/LV veterans have received rehabilitation assistance as a result of this achievement.

BVA also played an instrumental role in the establishment of the VIST Program. Recognizing the isolating effects of blindness and the fact that B/LV veterans were not accessing all the benefits and services for which they were eligible, the Association participated in a pilot outreach program in 1967. The purpose of the program was to identify eligible veterans and encourage them to take full advantage of VA benefits and services. The key professional staff person on the VIST was the VIST Coordinator. In the early years, this position was only part-time. BVA quickly recognized that a part-time VIST Coordinator was not adequate to coordinate all of the services required by B/LV veterans and urged VA to make these positions full-time. VA responded by establishing six full-time VIST Coordinator positions in 1978. BVA persisted in advocating for additional full-time positions and convinced Congress to provide the funding for such.

Dating back to 1947, BVA has continuously petitioned VA to provide outpatient blind rehabilitation services. The organization was successful in convincing Congress to earmark \$5 million in the 1995 Fiscal Year VA Appropriation for Blind Rehabilitation Service (BRS). These dollars enabled BRS to establish 15 Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialists (BROS) positions. Today that number has grown to hundreds of full-time positions. In addition, BVA has influenced legislation that provided the means by which a student preparing to become a BROS would be included in a VA scholarship assistance program if qualified.

For many years, VA was the employer of choice for Blind Rehabilitation Specialists (Orientation and Mobility Professionals and Rehabilitation Teachers). When this dynamic changed, BVA stepped in to play a critical role in convincing VA to reclassify in Human Resources Title 38 the Blind Rehabilitation Specialist position. The result was a higher salary, improved recruitment, and greater retention for the position, thus restoring VA as the employer of choice and ensuring delivery of top-quality comprehensive services.

Additionally, VA BRS provided the necessary resources from the \$5 million to establish Computer Access Training Sections (CATS) at the five largest BRCs. Computer access training is now provided at all 13 BRCs. Eligible veterans also receive appropriate computer equipment to accomplish their stated goals.

BVA, along with other major VSOs, also convinced Congress to amend federal law expanding eligibility for VA health care. A significant highlight of this legislation was language that provided VA with the authority, for the first time, to provide guide dog benefits and adaptive vision technology to veterans whose blindness is not service connected.

As an active member and supporter of the Visual Impairment Advisory Board (VIAB), established by the Under Secretary for Health, then Executive Director Tom Miller recommended that VA implement a full continuum of vision rehabilitation services and care. The adoption of this recommendation was a major achievement. In January 2007, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs approved such a continuum and committed \$40 million over three years. VA subsequently established nine new Vision Impairment Services in Outpatient Rehabilitation (VISOR) clinics for low vision veterans across the Veterans Health Care System.

On the benefits side of VA, BVA has been instrumental in improving the Disability Rating Schedule as it relates to visual impairment and blindness. At one point, for example, VA did not accurately rate the severity of blindness when combined with hearing loss. BVA's efforts have brought about improvements in this rating. B/LV veterans are now rated more severely disabled if they have also experienced hearing loss.

In 2007, BVA was successful in advocating for change in the Paired Organ Section of Title 38 to more equitably compensate veterans who were service connected for vision loss in one eye and subsequently lost vision in their nonservice-connected eye. Prior to this achievement, war-blinded veterans who were service connected for loss of vision in one eye would need to have vision loss that reached 5/200 to obtain a rating for loss if their nonservice-connected eye became blind. The change allows 20/200 to be the standard for increasing the rating in the Paired Organ Section.

BVA also played a leading role in securing Dependency & Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits for surviving spouses and dependent children of 100-percent service-connected disabled veterans. Prior to 1978, DIC benefits were paid only when a veteran died of his/her service-connected condition. The change advocated for by BVA made it possible for surviving spouses and dependent children to be eligible for DIC benefits, regardless of the cause of the veteran's death. Still believing that DIC benefits were not equitable because they were based on a veteran's rank while in the service and not on the disability, BVA led the efforts for further reform. The Association succeeded once again as the quality of the DIC benefit was improved for surviving spouses and/or dependent children of disabled veterans.

BVA influenced the establishment of the Specially Adaptive Housing Grant, administered by the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), and the initiation of the Home Improvement and Structural Alteration (HISA) grant administered by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Both of the grants have assisted severely visually impaired and blinded veterans in the attainment of affordable housing.

In July 2012, BVA's advocacy made it possible for legally blinded service-connected veterans to be included in the Special Housing Adaptation (SHA) grant for home modifications, and in 2020, blinded veterans were included in the larger Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) grant.

Throughout its history, BVA has worked collaboratively with organizations of and for the blind to improve the quality of life for all blind Americans. BVA is represented on a wide variety of federal and state advisory committees within such agencies as the VA Central Office in Washington, DC, the Department of Labor, the Office of Personnel Management, the Small Business Administration, the VA Rehabilitation Research and Development Center, and the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University.

BVA takes advantage of every opportunity to present the special needs of America's B/LV veterans before policymakers at all levels of government. Therefore, the greater the number of members of the Association, the louder the voice. Please seriously consider joining the rich history behind the motto "Blinded Veterans Helping Blinded Veterans."

For a more extensive overview of BVA's historic legislative accomplishments, including recent testimonies and upcoming priorities, visit the organization's Veterans & Disability Advocacy page associated with <https://bva.org/>.

Section 2-1: Forming a Regional Group

BVA is a national organization comprised of regional groups (RGs) that offer local support and activities for members. If you are interested in starting a new RG, this guide will walk you through the process.

Do you have the support to create a new RG? Please consider the following:

- Gauge interest from other BVA members in your area.
- Ensure that these members are not already part of an existing RG.
- Define a clear geographic boundary for your proposed RG.

Contact your District Director: Your District Director (DD) is a valuable resource for starting a new RG. They can provide guidance and support throughout the process. Here is how to find your DD:

- Visit the BVA website: <https://bva.org/>.
- Explore the website to familiarize yourself with BVA's structure and programs.
- Once you know your district, find your DD's contact information on the website.

Gather information and schedule an initial meeting:

- Collaborate with your DD to create a list of potential RG members within your proposed geographic area.
- Use this list to contact members and invite them to a virtual or in-person meeting to discuss forming a new RG.

Conduct an initial meeting:

- During the initial meeting, elect officers for your RG Board of Directors (BoD). These typically include President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Your DD can guide you through the election process.
- Take minutes of the meeting to establish an official record of the RG's activities.
- Set a date and time for your next meeting.

Draft and approve bylaws:

- Utilize the RG bylaws template provided by your DD to draft your own bylaws.
- Share the draft bylaws with your DD and proposed RG members for review and feedback.
- Once finalized, submit the bylaws to your DD for review and forward to the National BoD for approval.

Finalize your RG:

- After receiving National BoD approval for your bylaws, your RG will be officially chartered as a BVA affiliate.
- Discuss and determine officer roles and responsibilities within your RG.
- Open a bank account for the RG with at least two signatories.
- File Articles of Incorporation with your state's Secretary of State.

Maintaining good standing:

- To maintain good standing with BVA and receive annual apportionment funds, your RG must:
 - Hold at least two business meetings per year.
 - Participate in a community event.
 - Submit annual financial reports.

Additional resources:

- BVA Regional Group Manual, Section 5: Maintaining a Good Standing Status (for details on receiving annual funds).
- BVA National Bylaws (for information on officer roles and responsibilities).

By following these steps and utilizing the provided resources, you can successfully establish a new RG and connect with fellow B/LV veterans in your area.

Section 2-2: Forming a Regional Group Chapter

The first thing to fully understand about creating a chapter is exactly what a chapter is and is not. Essentially, a chapter is to an RG what an RG is to the national organization. A chapter is a group within a specific RG who must abide by the RG and national bylaws. A chapter is subordinate to its parent RG. What it is not is a separate entity or corporation. All financial governance must be routed and handled by the RG. That is not to say a chapter cannot fundraise. Any funds raised or donated must be submitted to the parent RG for depositing in the RG bank account. The RG and chapter should work together to decide if and how funds should be earmarked.

Secondly, an RG can have many chapters. Members of an RG can petition their parent RG to form a chapter and must abide by the RG and national bylaws. In this case, only the RG leadership needs to approve the chapter bylaws. A Board of Officers must be elected and hold meetings in accordance with the bylaws. They must fully understand and accept that the RG can present to the RG membership at any time for the dissolution of a chapter. The RG bylaws will be the primary governing documents for the chapter so RGs should look closely at their bylaws and revise as necessary to assist in having a successful chapter presence.

Under no circumstance can a chapter maintain a bank account, receive Articles of Incorporation, or file for a 501c status. If members of a chapter wish to fundraise, they must use their parent RG Employer Identification Number (EIN). If you are unsure of what is allowed, ask your RG leadership.

A chapter does afford the opportunity for greater fellowship and camaraderie at a smaller level. With coordination between the RG and chapter, funds may be earmarked for their use in accordance with the

RG and national bylaws. Expenditure of funds, however, must be voted on by the RG, or if earmarked, by the chapter. Only under extreme circumstances, which should be outlined in the bylaws, can funds be used without a vote of the membership.

Section 3: Regional Group Consolidation

Have you ever considered joining forces with another RG, or bringing in at-large members to create a larger, more vibrant group? This section will guide you through the consolidation process, designed to strengthen fellowship and camaraderie among BVA members.

Consolidation isn't about absorbing one group into another. It's about creating a brand new, united entity. The driving force behind this should always be the desire to build a stronger BVA community for everyone involved.

Here are the steps to consolidate two (2) or more RG's:

- Initiating the process: The "host" RG starts by contacting their DD. If members from different districts are involved, both DD's need to be included.
- Developing a plan: The plan must involve contacting all affected members and outlining the proposed consolidation. Here are ways to connect:
 - Existing RGs: Offer to have elected officers from one RG attend meetings of the other. This allows members to ask questions and get comfortable with the idea.
 - At-Large members: Invite them to attend meetings of the host RG but hold off on voting rights until consolidation is approved. They can still offer their individual input.
- Seeking approval: Once everyone agrees and votes in favor, a petition is submitted to the DD. They review it and forward it to the National BoD for final approval. This step is similar to Regional Group Manual Section 2A: Creating a Regional Group's description of drafting the bylaws of a new RG.
- Upon approval, it is time for a fresh start! A new set of bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, bank account, and records need to be established.
- Preserve historical records of impacted RGs: Electronic documents can be copied and sent to the DD for archiving at National Headquarters.
- Physical items of historical significance, like gavel awards and banners, should be maintained by the new RG.

By consolidating your resources and building a stronger community, you can create a more vibrant and impactful organization.

Section 4: Good Standing Requirements

Maintaining a "good standing" status within the Association allows your RG to:

- Keep your charter active.
- Receive annual apportionment funds from National Headquarters.

Here are the requirements to be considered an RG in "good standing":

- Each RG is required to hold at least two (2) business meetings annually.

- Business meetings are defined as any officially announced meeting of the membership where a minimum of five (5) members, including two (2) officers are present, and at least one (1) motion is made, seconded, and voted upon (meeting minutes must be recorded and approved at a subsequent meeting).
- RGs are encouraged to hold more meetings to provide for greater involvement by all members.
- RGs must have all meetings available via a virtual and/or hybrid (virtual and in-person) conferencing platform to provide the greatest opportunity for all members to attend.
- RGs must submit minutes of at least two (2) business meetings to their respective DD to be:
 - Archived by National Headquarters and available to RGs and the national BoD.
- RGs must submit annual financial reports using the online forms provided on the BVA website. Their respective DD will:
 - Review the report for completeness and accuracy (incomplete or inaccurate information will not be accepted and may result in a request for an independent audit).
- RGs must provide copies of their bylaws, EIN, and Articles of Incorporation to their respective DD, as well as conform to all relevant BVA policies and procedures.
 - RGs are required to revise their bylaws to conform to national bylaw revisions within ninety (90) days of said revisions. Their respective DD will review and submit to the National BoD newly proposed bylaws for approval.
 - RGs are required to submit new Articles of Incorporation to their respective DD within sixty (60) days of receiving them from their state of record.
 - RGs are required to submit an annual officer report using the online forms provided on the BVA website no later than 31 July. This report must be updated within thirty (30) days of new officer elections or appointments.

Submit all required documentation, requests for information, or inquiries through your DD. Requesting confirmation of receipt is acceptable to maintain good records.

The national BoD continually develops easy-to-use documents for meeting agendas, meeting minutes, financial reports, and other relevant templates. DDs have current member rosters available for transmission to RG officers on demand. RGs should take time to review their membership rosters and assist the national organization in updating outdated or missing member data.

Section 5: Hosting Efficient and Engaging Meetings

Meetings are vital for the operation of an RG. Organizing a meeting should be straightforward and engaging. While the national bylaws mandate at least two (2) annual business meetings for RGs, more frequent meetings (monthly) are beneficial toward keeping members informed and active.

The national bylaws offer flexibility for conducting meetings, but it's always good practice to follow Robert's Rules of Order. The following guidelines should assist your RG in establishing best practices.

Legal meeting requirements:

- Business meeting quorum: Minimum of five (5) members, including two (2) officers.
- Executive committee meeting quorum: Minimum of three (3) officers.

- Business meeting essentials: At least one (1) motion is made, seconded, and voted upon (meeting minutes must be recorded and approved at a subsequent meeting).

Virtual and/or hybrid (virtual and in-person) meetings:

- Accessibility: Business meetings must be virtual and can have an in-person (hybrid) component, allowing for inclusivity.
- Notice period: At least ten (10) days prior notice to all members.
- Record keeping: Update member contact information regularly for accuracy and share details with your DD for national database updating.

Meeting notice details:

- Platforms: Include links for platforms like Zoom, Teams, WebEx, and dial-in options.
- Preparation: Attach the agenda and previous meeting minutes for review and voting.

Meeting agenda structure:

- Standard items: Regular agenda includes “unfinished/old” and “new” business.
- Flexibility: New business items can be tabled for future discussions.

Meeting minutes:

- Content: Record the subject of discussions, motions, and voting results (detailed narratives are unnecessary).
- Voting procedure: Non-presiding members initiate motions, followed by seconding, discussion, and voting (record only the vote outcome).

Open discussions and record keeping:

- Informal sessions: Permit unrecorded, open discussions when the meeting is temporarily adjourned.
- Meeting resumption: Once resumed, continue with formal minute recording.
- Simplicity in minutes: Use standard templates, ensuring key points are covered as per Robert's Rules of Order.

Formalizing minutes:

- Approval process: Present typed minutes at the next meeting for approval through voting.
- Official record: Post-approval, designate the minutes as official and submit them to your DD.

Meeting flexibility and community events:

- Combining events: Enhance engagement by pairing meetings with community activities (VIST support group meetings are not community events).
- Good standing: Holding meetings with votes ensures that RGs remain in a good standing status.

In summary, the key to effective meetings lies in clarity, structure, and member engagement. By adhering to these guidelines, RGs can conduct meetings that are both legally compliant and conducive to active participation.

Section 6: Maintaining Financial Records

RGs are required to submit to National Headquarters (HQ) their annual financial report using the online forms provided on the BVA website. You can use the form throughout the year to assist you in your duties. This annual report is a requirement. Failing to submit an accurate annual financial report will result in a charter revocation. The following list of terms will assist you in maintaining accurate RG financials:

- **Accounts:** RGs must maintain a bank account. In order to have a bank account, federal law requires that banks maintain RG Articles of Incorporation, EIN, and a copy of election results for the officers. An EIN can be obtained from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) free of charge. No RG is authorized to have accounts in any name other than what is on the Articles of Incorporation. RGs must have a minimum of two signatories on all accounts, and it is recommended that three (3) officers serve as signatories. RGs receive annually an apportionment check based on their membership numbers and maintaining a “good standing” status with the national organization.
- **Income:** Donations are exactly that, donated. Any RG can receive a donation from any entity. Donations can be earmarked (restricted) for chapters, events, or programs. If not earmarked, they should be used for the growth and membership (good of the order) of the RG. External entities, either outside BVA or within, donate money to an RG for use by the RG members. Donations should not be earmarked or collected to support outside organizations. Fundraising is entirely different and requires documentation from the IRS and your state. RGs can apply to the IRS for a 501c status, if qualified. Be aware, a 501c status only relieves you from paying income tax; it does not relieve you from paying state sales tax. There are several types of 501c types available. Visit the IRS website to determine which best fits your RG, then consult with your DD. If you have a relationship with a financial advisor, accounting firm, or Certified Public Accountant (CPA), do not be afraid to ask them for advice.
- **Expenses:** RG funds can only be used for approved activities. Approval can only be granted by a vote of the membership during a business meeting. RG bylaws may contain a clause that allows for emergency spending by RG officers for clearly defined events, such as assisting RG members dealing with hardship from a natural disaster or the like. Bylaws should include a clearly defined amount to be authorized and it must be brought forth to the membership for approval at the next business meeting. If in doubt, do not authorize it but hold a meeting for approval.
- **Legal Requirements:** RGs must conform to both governmental and organizational annual requirements. Governmental requirements have two components, federal and state. RGs are required to ensure that they comply with all federal and state regulations. Organizational requirements include filing an annual financial report and maintaining accurate documentation.
- **No fundraising endeavor involving an appeal for funds to the general public shall be undertaken without the written approval and authorization of the National Executive Director.**

Performing the duties of Treasurer is not difficult as long as you remember that you report to the membership of your RG. It would be morally questionable to give away RG funds to outside organizations and then turn around and ask for donations to support activities for the RG. Consider if you had donated funds to an organization and found out that they in turn donated to a different organization that you may not choose to support. Would you donate to that organization in the future?

Section 7: Elections

RG officer election frequency is determined by the bylaws, but the process of holding an election is sometimes established by regulation to ensure legitimacy. Terms of office are also addressed within the bylaws and must have certain protections stipulated.

Elections must take place for President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Chaplains, Sergeant-at-Arms, and other positions can be elected or appointed as directed by the bylaws. As a chartered RG, all elected positions must be filled. If vacated, bylaws have tools in place to fill those vacancies. At no time can all the officer positions be vacated and the RG remain legal. Articles of Incorporation, federal laws, and state laws mandate that these positions be filled. Consider all officers resigning as a group, who would be there to record meetings, control financials, or appoint replacements? At no time can there be less than three (3) officers. Officer positions can be combined between each other with the exception of the President and Vice President.

RG elections are not only the duty of the RG but are wholly controlled by the RG's presiding officer. Basically, the President will call for nominations for each position. Each nomination must be seconded by a member, and after all nominations have been made nominees may accept or refuse the nomination. Next, the presiding officer will call for a vote. A roll call vote is not necessary unless a clear winner cannot be determined. This election process will occur for all positions and a swearing-in should now take place. The presiding officers should swear in the new officers. Should the presiding officer be replaced, they should swear in their replacement and then allow the new president to swear in the remaining officers. At the time of taking the oath, the newly elected officer assumes office. Transfer of duties should be non-confrontational and all respective records for those positions should be delegated to the new officers. New banking signature cards, updates to addresses, Articles of Incorporation, and notification to HQ should take place immediately thereafter.

Witnesses can attend election meetings but cannot vote. At no time can a member who is not in that RG take control or manage an election, regardless of position within BVA. Witnesses who hold an elected position at the National, District, or RG level can be asked for advice and clarification if desired, but the presiding officer is the final decision maker as long as the decision is legal.

Appendix A: Sample Meeting Agenda

RG Name

Date and Time

Meeting Links and/or Location

Call to Order

Roll Call of Attendees

Opening Prayer

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Agenda

Approval of Previous Meetings Minutes

Treasurer Report

Unfinished Business

New Business

Open Discussion

Benediction

Adjournment

Appendix B: Sample Meeting Minutes

RG Name

Date and Time

Meeting Links and/or Location

Call to Order

Roll Call of Attendees

Opening Prayer

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Agenda

Motion:

Second:

Vote Results:

Approval of Previous Meetings Minutes

Motion:

Second:

Vote Results:

Treasurer Report

Motion:

Second:

Vote Results:

Unfinished Business

1.

Motion:

Second:

Vote Results:

2.

Motion:

Second:

Vote Results:

3.

Motion:

Second:

Vote Results:

New Business

1.

Motion:

Second:

Vote Results:

2.

Motion:

Second:

Vote Results:

3.

Motion:

Second:

Vote Results:

Open Discussion

Benediction

Motion to Adjourn

Motion:

Second:

Vote Results:

Meeting End Time

Approved:

Submitted By:

Appendix C: Sample Good Standing Checklist

	Action	Date	Details
1.	Submit Virtual Meeting Link		Copy Link
2.	Submit Meeting Minutes		First Meeting
3.	Submit Meeting Minutes		Second Meeting
5.	Submit Articles of Incorporation		Send to DD
6.	Submit / Review Bylaws		Annually
7.	Submit Officer Report / Election Results		Annually
8.	Submit Financial Report (See Section 6)		NLT August 30
9.	Receive Charter		See Sections 5, 6, and 7
10.	Receive Annual Apportionment		Good Standing Status

Appendix D: Sample Finance Worksheet

Regional Group Name:

Date (Fiscal Year July 1 – June 30):

Bank Name:

Account Number:

Routing Number:

EIN:

Date Annual IRS Report Filed:

Beginning Balance \$

Annual Apportionment Revenue \$

Donation Revenue \$

Fund Raising Revenue \$

Other Revenue (Describe Separately) \$

Total Revenue \$

Convention Expenses \$

Programs / Banquets / Events Expenses \$

Fund Raising Expenses \$

Administrative Expenses \$

Other Expenses (Describe Separately) \$

Total Expenses \$

Ending Balance \$

Appendix E: Sample Bylaws

ARTICLE 1

NAME

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be [INSERT RG NAME]

ARTICLE 2

PURPOSE

The purpose of the organization shall be:

- a. To promote the welfare of blind and low vision veterans so that, notwithstanding their disabilities, they may take their rightful place in the community and work with their fellow citizens toward the creation of a peaceful world.
- b. To preserve and strengthen a spirit of fellowship among blind and low vision veterans so that they may give mutual aid and assistance to one another.
- c. To maintain and extend the institutions of American freedom and to encourage loyalty to the Constitution and laws of the United States and of the states in which they reside.
- d. To be organized and operated as a corporation not-for-profit, no part of the income or assets of which shall inure to the benefit of any of its members or officers, nor be distributable thereto otherwise than upon dissolution or final liquidation; and such corporation is organized and shall be operated exclusively for charitable, educational, patriotic, and civic improvement purposes.

ARTICLE 3

MEMBERSHIP

Any person eligible for membership in the Blinded Veterans Association is eligible for membership.

ARTICLE 4

OFFICERS

Section 1. Elected Officers

The elected officers of the organization shall be a president, a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer.

Section 2. Duration of Positions

- a. Election for a two (2)-year term of office shall be conducted at the respective business meeting.
- b. Election shall be by a majority vote of the members present or represented by proxy. Failure to fulfill any term of office will result in a four (4)-year bar from office.

Section 3. Election Procedures

Nominations for the elected officers of the organization shall be conducted on the respective meeting floor as follows:

a. New Business Session:

(1) At the appropriate time during the new business session the presiding officer will open the meeting floor for nominations.

(a) Candidates must be members of the organization.

(b) Candidates may nominate themselves.

(c) Candidates may present a short biographical speech.

(d) Nominations may be made by any member and seconded by no more than two (2) other members.

(e) Nominees need not be present on the meeting floor to be nominated for office. However, a letter of acceptance signed by the nominee must be read at the time of their nomination.

(f) After the presiding officer has determined that there are no further nominations, they shall close the nominations until the election.

b. Election Session:

(1) Nominations may be reopened at the commencement of the election portion of the agenda, or by a simple majority vote at any time up to the time of elections.

(2) When all additional nominations, if any, have been made, the presiding officer shall close the nominations, at which time the election shall be conducted.

Section 4. Appointed Officers

The organization may appoint a judge advocate, a sergeant-at-arms, a chaplain, and an ombudsman from among duly qualified members and may reappoint said positions accordingly.

Section 5. Oath of Office

All representatives of the organization, before assuming the office to which they have been elected or appointed, shall subscribe to the following oath of office:

"I, [STATE YOUR NAME] do solemnly affirm that I will faithfully execute the duties of [STATE YOUR POSITION] of the [INSERT RG NAME] and that I will support, maintain, and abide by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America and the charter and bylaws of the Blinded Veterans Association and [INSERT RG NAME] to the best of my ability."

Section 6. Officer Vacancies

a. A vacancy in the office of president shall be filled by the vice president.

b. Vacancies occurring among the other offices shall be filled by the members of the organization by a majority vote of a quorum of the members present at a meeting called for that purpose.

ARTICLE 5

DUTIES OF OFFICERS

Section 1. President

- a. The president shall be the executive head of the organization with full power to enforce the provisions of the charter, bylaws, resolutions, and policies adopted by the organization.
- b. The president shall be the presiding officer and serve as an ex-officio on all committees.
- c. The president shall have and exercise all the functions entrusted by the organization and perform all executive officer duties.
- d. The president shall appoint such committees as may be necessary for the successful operation of the organization and may, in a proper case, and for failure to perform their duties, remove such appointed person from such committee and appoint a successor.

Section 2. Vice President

The vice president shall, during the absence or disability of the president, have all of the authority and perform all of the duties of the president until the absence or disability of the president ceases to exist, and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the organization.

Section 3. Secretary

- a. The secretary shall keep written minutes of all meetings of the organization and shall furnish a copy of all such written minutes to the District Director within two months of such meetings. They shall notify all members and the District Director of scheduled meetings, and perform all additional duties assigned by the organization.

Section 4. Treasurer

- a. The treasurer shall maintain true and complete financials reflecting all of the income and expenditures of the organization. They shall report regularly to the membership on the finances of the organization and shall file budgets and financial reports with HQ as requested and/or as required by the current edition of the BVA National Bylaws, as amended, and perform all additional duties assigned by the organization.

Section 5. Judge Advocate

The judge advocate shall be responsible, under the direction of the president, for providing legal and/or parliamentary guidance to the organization and shall perform other assigned duties.

Section 6. Sergeant-at-Arms

The sergeant-at-arms shall be responsible, under the direction of the president, for maintaining peace, harmony, and order at all meetings of the organization, and shall perform other assigned duties.

Section 7. Chaplain

The chaplain shall be responsible, under the direction of the president, for conducting devotional exercises of the organization, and shall perform other assigned duties.

Section 8. Ombudsman

The ombudsman shall be responsible, under the direction of the president, for investigating, reporting on, and settling complaints arising within the organization, and shall perform other assigned duties.

ARTICLE 6

CHAPTERS

Section 1. Chapter Recognition

a. The organization shall have the power to organize affiliate groups to be known as chapters, to issue, revoke, and amend their charters; to discipline their officers and members; to regulate their elections; and, generally, to regulate their activities and the conduct of their affairs.

b. It shall be the policy of the organization that chapters will be afforded the greatest amount of freedom of action and liberty consistent with these bylaws.

Section 2. Chapter Charter

Charters of new chapters may be issued on the accepted application of at least five (5) members in any area where a chapter does not exist. The charter issued to any chapter must contain the name of the city (or geographic area) in which the chapter is organized.

Section 3. Chapter Consolidation

a. When, in the opinion of the organization, it would be in the best interest of members located within the jurisdiction of two (2) existing chapters to consolidate said chapters into one (1) new chapter, the organization may take such action with the consent of the chapters concerned and designate the area of jurisdiction of the new chapter.

b. If one (1) or more chapters become inactive, this action may be taken with the consent of two-thirds (2/3) of the active chapter members voting in favor.

c. In the event of such consolidation, all funds and records of the consolidated chapters shall be delivered to the chapter formed by the consolidation.

Section 4. Chapter Investigation

a. The organization may cause any chapter to be investigated and, if such investigation establishes the fact or facts tending to prove the chapter willfully violated any of the provisions of these bylaws or is otherwise disqualified to continue as an affiliate body of the organization, the organization may revoke a charter.

b. Such an investigation can be conducted only after reasonable notice and after proceedings have been made known to the members of the organization.

c. Any decision of the organization adverse to a chapter may be appealed to the National BoD.

Section 5. Chapter Charter Revocation Procedures

- a. In the event of the revocation of the chapter charter, all property, books, records, equipment, and funds shall be delivered to the organization and held in trust for a period of two (2) years.
- b. If, within such two (2)-year period, a new chapter shall be organized in the region formerly occupied by the chapter whose charter has been revoked, then all such property, books, records, equipment, and funds shall be delivered to, and become the property of, the new chapter so organized.
- c. If, after such two (2)-year period has elapsed following the original charter revocation the chapter has not been reorganized, nor has a new chapter been formed, the following administrative actions shall be implemented by the organization with respect to the property, books, records, equipment, and funds of the chapter:
 - (1) All books and records shall be relegated to the archives of the organization.
 - (2) All property and equipment shall be disposed of as determined by the organization.
 - (3) All funds and other monies of the chapter shall permanently revert to the general fund of the organization.

Section 6. Chapter Charter Revocation

Inherent in the revocation of any chapter charter is the loss of permission to use the name "[INSERT RG NAME]."

Section 7. Chapter Rules and Regulations

The organization will establish a manual detailing all laws, rules, regulations, and policies governing chapters, and otherwise have supervision and authority over all chapters.

ARTICLE 7

DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS

The discipline of officers and members of the organization shall be in accordance with the provisions of Article 15 (Discipline of Members) and Article 16 (Trial Procedure) of the current edition of the BVA National Bylaws, as amended.

ARTICLE 8

AMENDMENTS / REVISIONS TO BYLAWS

Amendments / Revisions

- a. These bylaws may be amended or revised by an affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the votes cast at an annual business meeting.
- b. Proposed amendments or revisions must be received by members no later than ten (10) days before an annual business meeting.
 - (1) Amendments or revisions of an emergency nature may be submitted on the floor of an annual business meeting with unanimous consent of the members present.

c. No such amendment or revisions may change the basic charitable purpose of the organization as set forth in the charter and bylaws.

d. All amendments and revisions must be approved, in writing, by the national board of directors annually.

ARTICLE 9

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

“Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised” shall govern the organization in all cases to which they are applicable and not inconsistent.

ARTICLE 10

ASSETS UPON DISSOLUTION OR LIQUIDATION

Upon final dissolution or liquidation of the organization, and after discharge or satisfaction of all outstanding obligations and liabilities, the remaining assets shall be transferred to the Blinded Veterans Association’s National Headquarters to be applied to the care and comfort of blind and low vision veterans, their families, and caregivers.

These bylaws are hereby adopted on this [date].

Signature: _____ (President)

Signature: _____ (Secretary)

RG Manual Revision 1: September 6, 2024