

2.1 Constitutional Amendments

Items under this heading have not yet received first passage and will become part of the constitution only if passed at Loncon 3 and ratified at Loncon 3. The Preliminary Business Meeting may amend items under this heading, set debate time limits, refer them to committee, and take other action as permitted under the Standing Rules.

2.1.1 Short Title: Popular Ratification

Moved, to modify the existing constitutional amendment process so that proposed amendments passed by a WSFS Business Meeting must be ratified by a vote of the members of the following Worldcon, rather than by the following year's WSFS Business Meeting; to provide for special handling of the ratification of this proposal; and to provide for the transition between ratification systems, by ~~striking out~~ and adding words as follows:

1. Amend existing Sections 6.6 and 6.7 of the WSFS Constitution by consolidating them and by adding new provisions to modify the amendment process to a form of popular ratification:

Section 6.6: Amendment.

6.6.1. The WSFS Constitution may be amended by a motion passed by a simple majority at any Business Meeting but only to the extent that such motion is ratified by a simple majority at the Business Meeting of the subsequent Worldcon and ratified by a vote of the members of the subsequent Worldcon.

6.6.2. Any member eligible to cast a Site Selection ballot may vote on the ratification of pending constitutional amendments in the same manner as Section 4.1; however, no fee beyond membership in the administering convention shall be required to vote on the ratification.

6.6.3. Ratification voting at the Worldcon should be available at least during the same times as Site Selection, and ratification ballots should be distributed at the same time as Site Selection ballots; however, a breach of this clause shall not render an otherwise legal ratification invalid.

6.6.4. The Business Meeting may provide by Standing Rule procedures for including arguments for and against the ratification of any Constitutional amendment.

6.6.5. Any amendment that receives more yes votes than no votes shall be ratified.

6.6.6. The results of the ratification votes shall be announced at the same session of the Business Meeting at which the results of Site Selection are announced, and may also be announced at any time after the votes have been counted at the discretion of the Worldcon administering the

ratification vote. Failure to announce the results at the required time shall not affect the validity of the results.

Section 6.7: Commencement.

6.6.7. Any ~~Unless otherwise provided, any~~ change to the Constitution of WSFS shall take effect at the end of the Worldcon at which such change is ratified, ~~except that no~~

6.6.8. No change imposing additional costs or financial obligations upon Worldcon Committees shall be binding upon any Committee already selected at the time when it takes effect.

2. *Amend Section 6.3 of the WSFS Constitution to include references to ratification elections for pending Constitutional Amendments:*

Section 6.3: Electronic Voting. Nothing in this Constitution shall be interpreted to prohibit conducting Hugo Awards nominating and voting, ratification elections for pending Constitutional amendments, and Site Selection voting by electronic means, except that conducting Site Selection by electronic means shall require the unanimous agreement of the current Worldcon committee and all bidding committees who have filed before the ballot deadline. Valid paper ballots delivered by any means shall always be acceptable. This section shall not be interpreted to require that such elections be conducted electronically, nor shall it be interpreted to allow remote participation or proxy voting at the Business Meeting.

3. *Amend Standing Rule 1.3 to remove references to the Business Meeting ratifying Constitutional Amendments and to administer the provisions of Section 6.6:*

Rule 1.3: Main Business Meeting(s). The Main Business Meeting may reject, ~~pass, or ratify or pass~~ amendments to the Constitution. One Main Meeting shall also be designated as the Site-Selection Meeting, where Site-Selection business shall be the special order of business. The results of any votes to ratify pending constitutional amendments shall be announced at the Site Selection Meeting following Site Selection Business.

Provided that,

1. This proposal shall not take effect unless passed by the 2014 WSFS Business Meeting, ratified by the 2015 WSFS Business Meeting, and re-ratified by the members of the 2016 Worldcon, voting by the mechanism described in this proposal.
2. If re-ratified by the members of the 2016 Worldcon, this amendment shall first affect any constitutional amendments that receive first passage at the 2017 WSFS Business Meeting.

3. If rejected by the members of the 2016 Worldcon, this proposal shall be null and the constitutional amendment process in force before this proposal was introduced shall remain in force.
4. Section 3 of this proposal shall not become a part of the Standing Rules unless the constitutional amendment is ratified.
5. Any constitutional amendments that receive first passage through the end of the 2016 WSFS Business Meeting shall be subject to ratification by the subsequent year's WSFS Business Meeting, including any amendments passed at the 2016 WSFS Business Meeting, which shall be subject to ratification by the 2017 WSFS Business Meeting.

Commentary: The WSFS Business Meeting has been the sole location for the amendment of the WSFS Constitution since the creation of the current Constitution. All amendments must originate in, be debated at, and be both approved and ratified at the WSFS Business Meeting, with only those members present in person eligible to vote. This proposal would continue to have constitutional amendments originate within the Business Meeting, and only those persons present in person at the Business Meeting could vote upon the initial passage of constitutional amendments. However, instead of submitting proposals to the following year's Business Meeting for ratification, it would instead submit the proposals to a vote of the entire membership of the following Worldcon. Any members of the Worldcon who would otherwise be eligible to cast a site selection ballot, including attending and supporting members, could vote. (Obviously, they would not have to pay the Site Selection Advance Supporting Membership fee to vote on the ratification of constitutional amendments.)

This proposal allows greater participation in the governance of the Society by the members who are unable to attend the Business Meeting, while retaining the virtues of debate and refinement of proposals in person during the original debate of those proposals. It also parallels the evolution of Worldcon Site Selection. At one time, Worldcon sites were selected by the Business Meeting, with only those members attending the meeting in person eligible to vote. This system later evolved to allow the non-attending members to participate in the selection of sites, with the Business Meeting retaining its jurisdiction in the case of a deadlocked or disputed election, or one in which None of the Above wins. The evolution of Site Selection voting has substantially increased participation in the Site Selection process.

Currently, there are many members of WSFS who have an active and abiding interest in the governance of the Society who cannot, for various reasons, attend the Business Meeting. This includes both supporting members and attending members who are not able to attend the Meeting. A common and growing criticism of our current governance structure is that a significant number of members pay membership dues in the Society but have no meaningful stake in the organization's governance. The proponents of this proposal think that allowing the non-attending members to participate in the ratification stage would improve the legitimacy of the Society's governance by allowing a greater

proportion of the Society's members to have a voice in the organization's rule-making process.

In addition to issues of perceived legitimacy, there is the matter of agenda congestion. Following a particularly active year for the WSFS Business Meeting, the agenda at the next Worldcon becomes laden with a number of items of Business Passed On. If these issues pending ratification are sufficiently contentious, they can crowd out all further new proposals, for the prevailing current attitude of the Business Meeting tends toward avoiding the need for an additional session after the three hours provided for the Main Business Meeting, including any substantive debate following the announcement of Site Selection results. These factors encourage the broad – some say overly broad – use of Objection to Consideration, along with a tendency toward approving woefully short debate times for serious motions. A Business Meeting freed from its need to rehash Business Passed On could both spend an appropriate amount of time debating serious motions and be relieved of its anxiety of running over to an extra session. Furthermore, persons who are regular Worldcon members but who rarely manage to have the resources to attend could be confident both in their ability to submit business to the meeting and the chance to vote up or down on it before its final passage or defeat. We would both improve upon our current process by allowing more serious consideration of new business and expand the franchise to the WSFS membership at large.

This proposal is similar to the mechanism that many US states use for the amendment of their state constitutions, in that the legislature passes constitutional amendments, but the citizens must ratify any changes by popular vote.

About the Individual Provisions

6.6.1: Amendments would no longer be subjected to scope-reduction at the ratification stage. They would be subjected to a straight up/down vote by the membership of the following Worldcon. Each constitutional amendment given first passage at a Worldcon would be voted upon separately by the members of the following Worldcon. (That is, if there were proposals 1, 2, 3, and 4, you could vote against 1, for 2 and 3, and against 4. You would not be required to accept or reject the entire slate of pending amendments as a group.)

6.6.2: This means that if you could vote on Site Selection (after paying an Advance Supporting Membership), you can vote on Pending Constitutional Amendments without paying such a fee. This proposal does not attempt to otherwise legislate what voting rights a member has; it only makes them parallel with those of Site Selection.

6.6.3. The intent of this provision is that the Worldcon administering the election shall make a ballot available to all members in the same way that they currently administer Site Selection. Voting would be available by mail and at the convention. Members could deliver ballots cast by other members, just as they currently deliver Site Selection ballots for other members. Administrative details not explicitly addressed here, including electronic voting, would be the responsibility of the individual Worldcon.

6.6.4. It is reasonable to require that written arguments for and against ratification of pending amendments be submitted for inclusion with other voter material. Rather than

further encumber the Constitution with detailed provisions, this proposal would authorize the Business Meeting to manage the process through the Standing Rules, as such rules are primarily administrative in nature.

6.6.5. Only Yes and No votes count. Blank and illegible ballots shall not count. There is no minimum vote requirement. If two people vote yes, one votes no, 80 people cast blank ballots, and 150 cast ballots with “Who cares?” written on them, the proposal is ratified 2-1, with none of the other ballots counting toward the total.

6.6.6. The intent is that Ratification Voting shall be open at least the same times as Site Selection. While the results of the election shall be presented to the Business Meeting, there is no reason they can’t be announced as soon as they have been counted, nor should a procedural irregularity such as neglecting to present the results to the Meeting affect the actual result. The Business Meeting cannot overturn the results of a ratification election; however, it can pass new Constitutional amendments that themselves would be subject to ratification the following year.

6.6.7 and 6.6.8. These clauses, currently part of Section 6.7, are combined with the rest of Section 6.6 in this proposal so that all rules regarding Constitutional amendments are in the same section of the Constitution. This renumbering makes no substantive change to the provisions currently in Section 6.7.

6.3: This explicitly includes ratification elections within the same scope as other elections conducted by the Worldcon. Worldcons could conduct ratification elections electronically, just as most recent Worldcons have conducted Hugo Awards voting electronically; however, they would not be compelled to do so.

Rule 1.3. This is an administrative provision dealing with the scheduling of the announcement of ratification vote results, as well as a housekeeping change removing references to ratification from the rule. Normally, standing rule amendments take effect after only a single vote; however, inasmuch as this rule would be meaningless without the constitutional amendment authorizing it, the rule includes additional provisions requiring that it “go along for the ride” with the Constitutional amendment and not apply should the amendment fail of ratification.

About the Ratification Process and Transition Provisions

Any change to the amendment process of a governing document is by its nature complex. This proposal would not only require that it be ratified by the existing system (passed by the 2014 WSFS Business Meeting and ratified by the 2015 WSFS Business Meeting), but that it also be submitted to a popular vote of the members of the 2016 Worldcon. Should the proposal be ratified by the 2015 WSFS Business Meeting, its provisions would, in effect, be stayed until after the proposal is ratified by a popular vote under its own mechanism.

Until this proposal passes all three hurdles (two Business Meetings and a popular vote), it would not be in effect, and the existing constitutional amendment process would remain in effect. If it passes all three hurdles, it would take effect at the end of the 2016 Worldcon. Anything first passed by the 2016 Business Meeting would still be subject

to a ratification vote by the 2017 Business Meeting under the older rules, but anything passed by the 2017 Business Meeting (other than ratification votes of business from the previous year) would be subject to popular ratification.

Although this proposal includes the authorization of Standing Rules to administer written arguments for and against pending Constitutional amendments, the proponents of this proposal think it better to defer discussion of such administrative rules until after the initial ratification of the proposal, for adoption at the Business Meeting held at the Worldcon whose members vote on the ratification of the proposal.

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