



WHAT IS THE LITHUANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY?

A HANDBOOK FOR ENGLISH-SPEAKING MEMBERS
OF THE LITHUANIAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY



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Detroit, Michigan

Lithuanian American Community, Inc.



Like



World Lithuanian Youth Association president Vldas Oleinikovas (first row, fourth from right), US Association president Rima Žiūraitis (left, with dark glasses) and members of the World Lithuanian Youth Association met in Chicago, Fall 2019, with guests: LAC National Executive Committee president Arvydas Urbonavičius (first row, first from right), LAC Board of Directors member Artūras Žilys (first row, second from right), World Association officer Kovas Kulbis (first row, third from right), LAC VP for Youth Affairs Marija Čyvas (last row, first from left), and Lithuanian Foundation president Tauras Bublys (last row, second from left).



*Lithuanian American Community is very grateful to the
Lithuanian Foundation
for supporting the activities of our organization.*

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COMMUNITY WEBSITE AT
www.javlb.org

INTRODUCTION

Many young Lithuanians immigrated to the United States of America since the restoration of independence in Lithuania in 1990. After they assumed more reliable sources of income and established themselves more securely, the need arose to return to their roots and look for ways to preserve their her-



Janina Udrienė

itage in our multicultural society. Another group of young Lithuanians in our country consists of individuals who were born in the U.S.: some of parents who arrived here after WWII and some are the offspring of grandparents who arrived here at the turn of the 20th century. Some of them joined the Lithuanian American Community and their contribution is substantial. However, there are many who have distanced themselves because their Lithuanian language skills are limited. This group of Lithuanians treasures its heritage as well. The Lithuanian American Community is able to fulfill both groups' needs by offering activities fostering their heritage.



Arvydas Urbonavičius

To briefly introduce the Lithuanian American Community (LAC) to potential new members prompted writing this handbook, first in Lithuanian and now in English. Although basic information about the LAC is contained in the organization's bylaws, however, we hope that this short publication will help newcomers understand the mission of the Lithuanian American Community, its organizational structure, its policies, and practices. New members actively joining the organization is a priceless asset to its vitality.

We hope that this publication with its brief introduction to the Lithuanian American Community will serve as a springboard to visit the LAC website and learn more about its many activities. The effort in publishing this handbook will bear fruit only if it entices younger Lithuanians to join.

For the preparation of the original manuscript, we thank the past president of the LAC Executive Committee, Sigita Šimkuvienė, for her insight and practical advice and Loreta Timukienė for editing the final version. For this English edition, we thank the primary translator Živilė Symeonidis for her hard work and Arvydas Barzdukas for helping us to edit the final publication.

What is the Lithuanian American Community and what activities does it pursue?

The Lithuanian American Community, Inc. was established and incorporated in the State of Connecticut in 1951 for the purpose of uniting Lithuanians as well as their non-Lithuanian spouses and their offspring throughout the United States within a single, civic organized community. LAC has a well-established organizational structure and elected effective leadership capable of establishing and supporting Lithuanian language schools, organizing song, dance and theater festivals, athletic competitions, science and cultural symposiums. Through these and other activities, the LAC fosters the Lithuanian heritage and continues its legacy. Common Lithuanian roots help to unite LAC members for the preservation of the values and traditions of their ancestry. LAC members participate in the LAC governance, activities, and programs entirely on volunteer basis. The LAC is an active member of the Lithuanian World Community.



Lithuanian Dance Festival in Baltimore in 2016

Photo by Sandra Ščedrina

What is the Mission of the Lithuanian American Community?

The Lithuanian American Community unites Lithuanian Americans, members of their families and everyone for whom it is important to preserve their Lithuanian legacy, heritage and cultural endowment, support Lithuanian education, foster Lithuanian youth, sports, and civic organizations, and maintain close ties with Lithuania.

What are the guiding principles of the Lithuanian American Community?

In its activities, LAC adheres to the principles set forth in the Lithuanian Charter, drafted and adopted in exile in 1949.

The Lithuanian Charter

1. A national kinship brings individuals together into a Community. No one may be forcefully compelled to sever this bond against his or her will. Lithuanians dispersed throughout the world comprise a unified Lithuanian Community.
2. All individuals have the birthright to freely profess and foster their national heritage. Lithuanians are committed and remain bound to the vitality of this legacy. This Lithuanian heritage, preserved by foregoing generations, shall be handed to future generations in order to perpetuate and to sustain it.
3. A native language is the strongest bond of any Community. Lithuanians shall honor and take pride in learning, knowing and communicating in the Lithuanian language.
4. Family is the foundation of national continuity. Lithuanians shall strive to form Lithuanian families.

5. Cultural accomplishments provide the path toward recognition and synergy among nations. Cultural achievements contribute to the advancement and improvement of all the people of the world. Every Lithuanian ought to foster an environment within which the Lithuanian cultural aspirations may thrive.
6. A Nation State is the ultimate expression of a human community. National Independence is a primary condition for the preservation and development of a native national culture. By their industry, education, treasure and dedication Lithuanians everywhere shall endeavor to preserve and defend an Independent Lithuanian state.
7. School is the hearth for nurturing the national spirit. Support for Lithuanian education is the noble duty of every Lithuanian.
8. Associations and societies are the operative supporters of ethnic culture. A Lithuanian establishes and supports religious, cultural, youth, mutual aid, professional and other civic organizations.
9. The struggle and sacrifice of our ancestors for the survival of the Lithuanian language in print is a testimonial of their will to obligate future generations to foster, maintain and support the Lithuanian language in written and printed form.
10. The history of a nation is its greatest teacher. A Lithuanian treasures his or her nation's past and national customs. A Lithuanian strives to be worthy of his or her ancestors, seeking to leave a respectful pride to subsequent generations.
11. National solidarity is the ultimate national virtue. All Lithuanians shall promote national harmony as brothers and sisters, and as members of one nation. As an expression of this solidarity, all Lithuanians shall contribute regularly for the financial well-being of their Community.
12. Lithuanian national colors are yellow, green and red and the National Holiday is February 16th, Lithuanian Independence Day. The motto of every Lithuanian shall be "Lithuanians we were born, Lithuanians we must remain!"
13. All Lithuanians shall be loyal to their country of residence. Every Lithuanian's relationship with others shall be based on brotherly love and respect for every individual's freedom, dignity, life, health and property.

What is the geographical structure of the Lithuanian American Community?

The Lithuanian American Community comprises ten geographical districts throughout the United States. Some fifty local chapters, consisting of LAC members residing in those localities, are distributed within those districts. (For a comprehensive list of the districts and their respective chapters, please see p. 10.)

What is the main governing body of the LAC?

The National Board of Directors is the highest governing body of the LAC. Currently the Board of Directors has 70 members: 60 elected from respective districts and 10 district presidents serving *ex-officio*. (See p. 9 as well as LAC Bylaws at www.javlb.org for more information.)



LAC XXII National Board of Directors second session participants in Chicago, IL.

How to establish an LAC Chapter?

An LAC chapter may be established within a geographic area where currently there is no active chapter and where Lithuanian Americans interested in joining the LAC reside. The chapter is established by a majority vote at the initial meeting of Lithuanian Americans within that locality. The minutes of such meeting have to be submitted to the president of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of LAC, advising of the founding of the chapter. The president of the NEC may also be invited to such meeting to accept the new chapter into the LAC. The new chapter with its selected name, usually based on its location, will be entered into the LAC database and the NEC will advise and assist with the activities of the chapter. The NEC will also inform the District president about the formation of a new chapter within its boundaries and will request to render the new chapter all needed help and support. The establishment of a chapter may also be initiated by the district president.



A chapter can be established in each area where there are Lithuanians, who want to foster the Lithuanian heritage. In the picture: a reestablished St. Petersburg (FL) Lithuanian chapter, 2017.

The primary purpose of establishing a local LAC chapter is to unite people of Lithuanian descent living in the area, thereby making organized LAC activities available to more participants, and making them more attractive and interesting. There are other advantages for establishing chapters, one of them being the ability to obtain financial support for hosting cultural or educational activities. For special occasions, the LAC Cultural Council will assist with inviting noteworthy performers. If there are at least 15 school-age children, the LAC Educational Council will help to establish a Lithuanian language school or provide a virtual program for adults interested in learning Lithuanian. Once a chapter is established, it should elect an executive committee to manage the chapter's activities. Local chapters are the bedrock of the LAC where all of the participatory pursuits of the organization take place.

In order to open a bank account in its name, the chapter executive committee must request the vice president for financial affairs (fnansai@jablb.org) of the LAC Executive Committee to provide to the chapter the LAC Articles of Incorporation, the State Filing Receipt and the IRS Tax ID number. Those documents, as well as the minutes in English of the initial chapter meeting need to be submitted to the bank where the chapter will have its account. The bylaws require the account to be accessible to the chapter treasurer and to one other member of the chapter executive committee.

How to elect an executive committee of a chapter?

The chapter executive committee is elected at the chapter annual meeting with a term of office of one or two years, as decided at the meeting. The number of members in the executive committee depends on the size of the chapter. The executive committees of smaller chapters may consist of a president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. Larger chapters with more extensive activities usually need more committee members who would be responsible for education, sports, cultural events and other activities. The annual meeting shall also elect a three-

member audit commission for the conduct of the annual review of chapter files, minutes of the meetings (annual or committee), significant correspondence, and the financial records including an annual report prepared by the treasurer. The audit commission report is presented for review and discussion at the chapter annual meeting and has to be submitted to the National Executive Committee, as stated in the bylaws.

What are the duties of the chapter president and its executive committee?

A person assuming the duties of the president of the chapter should demonstrate responsible leadership and organizational skills, the ability to timely perform assigned duties and have some experience and knowledge of LAC activities. The president should promptly share all information received from the District and the National Executive Committee with members of the chapter executive committee and, as much as possible, maintain contacts and share experiences about chapter activities with the nearby LAC chapter presidents.

The annual meeting is the highest governing body of the chapter and it is the executive committee's duty to implement the decisions made at such a meeting.

The president of the chapter should call regular meetings of the executive committee to discuss ways of executing various projects and to assign specific duties to various members. As needed, the president, with the support of the executive committee, may invite other chapter members to assist.

Addressing the chapter's ethnic, cultural and educational needs, the executive committee should undertake the following activities:

- Organize and support local Lithuanian language schools, cultural, youth and sports groups, and other activities.
- Locally raise the visibility of Lithuanian issues and activities, and where appropriate, represent the LAC chapter in the local civic and ethnic organizations.
- Assist Lithuanians in need of support or other help.
- Collect the annual LAC solidarity donation (\$20/member);
- Register members and keep an updated local chapter membership list.



Waukegan Chapter Executive committee has members from several generations. Their motto: "Working together we can move mountains!"

First row from left to right: Elena Skališienė, Palmira Janušonienė - Westholm, Violeta Rutkauskienė, Ramutė Kazlauskienė. Second row: Gediminas Damašius, Jolita Vilimienė, Žaneta Steponavičienė, Gintautas Steponavičius - president, Vesta Steponavičiūtė.

Photo by Vidas Kazlauskas

What to include in a chapter's annual meeting agenda?

The typical meeting agenda should include the following:

1. Opening remarks.
2. Approval of the agenda.
3. Election or appointment of an Election Committee, if an election is to be held at the meeting.
4. Reading and approval of the previous meeting's minutes. (Minutes may be sent to members prior to the meeting by email.)
5. The executive committee report including the implementation of resolutions made at the previous meeting.
6. The treasurer's report.
7. The audit commission report.
8. Questions regarding the reports and their approval.
9. Election (if any).
10. New business, discussion and approval of new resolutions and special items.
11. Adjournment.



LAC Atlanta Chapter Executive Committee members who plan the activities of the chapter: From left to right: "Saulės" Lithuanian School Principal Margarita Austin, Dana Runimas-Plazyk, Treasurer Virginija Šileikaitė-Thoresen, Renata Kazlauskienė, Raimonda Verbliugevičienė, President Juozas Kazlauskas, Vice President Juras Palukaitis, Vice President Šarūnė Stankevičienė.

Depending on the size of the chapter and its activities, other items may be included in the agenda as needed. There may be an introduction of guests or a guest may be invited to present a topic of interest to the assembled. In the latter case, the speaker and topic should be arranged in advance and included in the agenda.

The scope of the chapter activities and its traditions may dictate how closely the meeting has to adhere to formal rules in conducting the proceedings. In some chapters, because of the large number attending, it may be necessary to conduct the meeting according to more formal rules of parliamentary procedure as described in *Robert's Rules of Order*. In smaller chapters it may be sufficient to meet informally in a small group. Regardless of the meeting size, it is always desirable after the meeting to have some refreshments to provide an opportunity for members to get better acquainted or to continue their discussions.

What activities should a chapter promote?

Chapter activities should include projects or events which foster Lithuanian heritage, promote cultural, educational, public affairs as well as civic matters.

Events Which Foster the Lithuanian Heritage

One of the chapter tasks is to organize the local commemoration of the February 16th and March 11th anniversaries of the declaration and the restoration of Lithuania's Independence, with the singing of the Lithuanian and United States national anthems, reading and adopting resolutions prepared for the occasion by the National Executive Committee, having invited speakers, and suitable artistic performances. After the formal proceedings it is desirable to have an opportunity to socialize and have some refreshments. In some communities, instead of a more ceremonial meeting and formal proceedings, these occasions have been commemorated by a musical performance and an informal social gathering. For example, the New York City chapter once had a jazz concert and a catered reception. Attendance at that event spanned all generations and the event received a very positive response.

Chapters may also commemorate the Lithuanian Statehood Day of July 6th, the Day of Mourning and Hope in June remembering the massive deportations to Siberia, the Black Ribbon Day on the anniversary of the infamous Molotov – Ribbentrop pact relegating Lithuania to the Soviet Union, the anniversary of the Baltic Way and other historic occasions.

Cultural Activities

Chapters are encouraged to stage performances by Lithuanian musical groups, individual artists, dance groups, poetry readings, book presentations and signings, and town-hall type discussions and debates. Also, commemorations of the anniversaries of distinguished Lithuanian writers, poets, composers and statesmen may be included in chapter activities, as well as the celebration of the traditional St.

John's Night in June. A local ethnic festival provides an opportunity for showcasing Lithuanian art and a performance by a folk dance group or a musical ensemble.

Educational Concerns

Supporting the local Lithuanian language school is one of the most important tasks of the chapter. Where there are families with school-age children, the chapter should make every effort to establish a Lithuanian school for the local community. The National Executive Committee's Educational Council is available to assist in establishing such a school. Students should be encouraged to take part in the Educational Council's national competitions. It is essential to participate in the fund-raising for the support of Lithuanian education conducted by the LAC Educational Council.

Public Affairs

Representatives of the U.S. National and local government should be invited to attend and speak at the Lithuanian Independence commemoration events. Other speakers may be invited as well. Wherever possible, arrangements should be made to have the Lithuanian flag raised in a public location such as at a government building. Also, it is very important to effectively appeal to the attendees of the event to donate generously for the support of the LAC National Executive Committee. During an election year, it is essential for the chapter to register as many local Lithuanians as possible for voting in the LAC National Board of Directors election. Every effort should be made to have the members of the chapter contribute their voluntary annual LAC solidarity fee and to engage them to actively participate in the chapter activities. This handbook should be made available to everyone in the chapter. Those members who are eligible should be urged to register and vote in the elections in Lithuania as well as in the national and local elections in the United States. It is important to follow the local media and thoughtfully respond to erroneous information about Lithuania. Where available, contact should be maintained with the Republic of Lithuania consulate and the consul and staff should be invited to attend Lithuanian events. It is important to inform the new members of the community about LAC publications, *LAC Newsletter* (online), *Bridges*, and about the oldest Lithuanian American newspaper *Draugas* with its English monthly edition, *Draugas News*. Every LAC chapter should have its website, a dedicated Facebook page and an internet mailing list for communication with its membership regarding information about chapter events.

What should be kept in the chapter files?

Chapter files should contain minutes of the chapter annual meetings and the meetings of the executive committee, official correspondence, audit commission report, treasurer's reports, chapter president's annual report and other pertinent documents. Customarily chapter files are kept by the secretary of the executive committee. Because every LAC chapter may use the LAC not-for-profit organization's tax exemption number, it is very important to have all income and expenditures supported by receipts and other pertinent verifications. The audit commission should examine not only the bank statements, but also all supporting documentation. It is important to keep everything in good order and up to date, in case it becomes necessary to submit this material for an IRS review. Treasurer's books may be kept in English.

How to write the minutes?

Minutes of a meeting should contain decisions which were made, who is responsible for implementing the decisions and the timeline for when the various tasks have to be completed. There is no need to include detailed recitation of all discussion.

- The minutes should include the date, time and location of the meeting, who was in attendance and who was chairing the meeting.
- Minutes have to be objective and consistent in using a verbal tense; only the names of who made and seconded the motions need to be included; the minutes are a record of actions, not a summary of various opinions.
- Minutes should avoid impertinent and subjective conclusions, needless adjectives and adverbs, and should be written in clear, accurate and concise language;
- Minutes should list and briefly describe any reports and other documents referred to or discussed at the meeting. Supporting material should be included with the minutes as attachments.
- Minutes should be signed by the chair of the meeting and the secretary.

The minutes should be submitted to the president, or the person who chaired the meeting, for review of its accuracy. The minutes, once signed by the secretary and the president, should be sent to the participants not later than a week after the meeting, with a copy retained in the chapter files. Minutes should be reviewed, corrected as needed, and approved at the next meeting of the body.

Writing accurate minutes insures that decisions and actions taken at the meeting are not forgotten or ignored. Properly written minutes remind us that the time spent at the meeting was not wasted.

What is the role of a district and what is its purpose?

The entire LAC is divided into ten districts on geographical basis (see the flowchart on p. 9). The highest governing body of a district is its yearly convention. During the election year of the Board of Directors, the district convention also elects the district's executive committee, consisting of a president, secretary, treasurer, and others as needed. In addition to the executive committee, the convention also elects an audit commission consisting of three members. The term of office of the district executive committee and the audit commission coincide with the term of office of the National Board of Directors, which is three years. The following may participate with a right to vote in a district convention: members of that district's executive committee, members of the LAC Board of Directors who were elected from that district, members of the executive committees of LAC chapters belonging to that district, and representatives of LAC chapters elected at a meeting of each LAC chapter – one representative for every fifty chapter members who voted in the most recent Board of Directors election. Guests are welcome to participate in discussions.

The main tasks of the district executive committee are as follows:

- To assist chapters in planning their annual activities: commemorations of significant Lithuanian historic anniversaries, cultural events, and in matters concerning Lithuanian educational and public affairs.
- To assist chapters in their district in forming election commissions during an election year of the Board of Directors. The district also assists its chapters in the nomination and election process. All necessary instructions for the election of the Board are provided by the National Election Commission. Management of the election of the LAC National Board of Directors is one of the most important tasks of a district.
- To call the annual district convention for the proposal and discussion of new ideas and resolutions as well as for the review and approval of the district and its chapters' activities, financial and the audit commission reports. In those districts where the distances between chapters are several hundred miles (such as between Los Angeles and Seattle in the Western district) the annual convention should be called virtually and all reports should be submitted by email. Such conventions provide an opportunity for attendees to share their successes and concerns in their effort to maintain active and innovative LAC chapters and district.
- To submit the minutes of the district convention as well as the district financial and audit reports to the National Executive Committee.
- To create and maintain a district website including pertinent information for the district and its chapters.

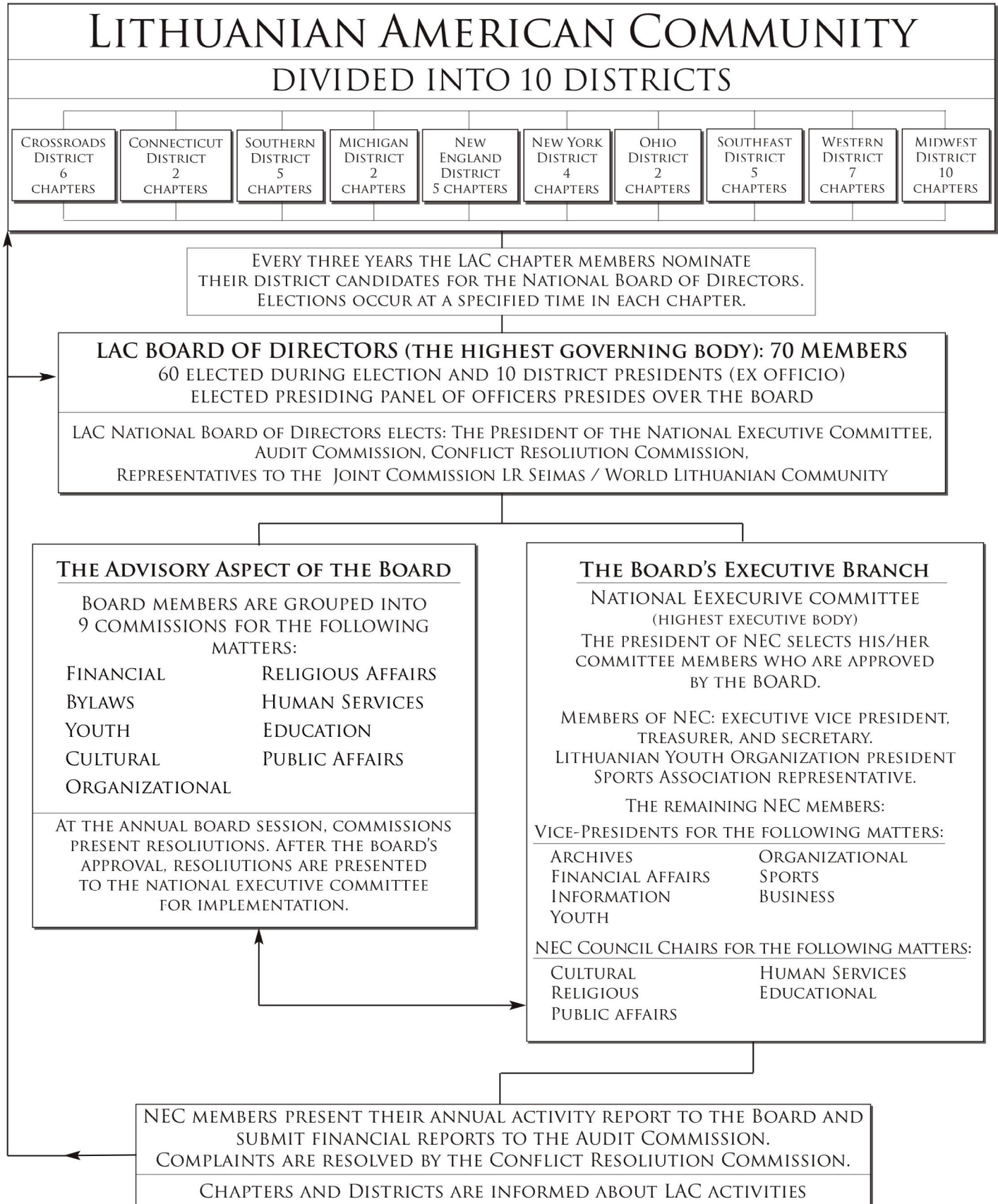
The districts need to maintain their files and keep their meeting minutes as described in the section for chapters.



Participants of the Michigan District Convention in 2018: (from left to right) Algis Petrulis, Algis Zaparackas, Kazys Kazlauskas, Liolė Kazlauskienė, Broderick Norkus, Danguolė Jurgutienė, Rigonda Savickienė, Virga Šimaitytė, Irena Orentienė, Liūda Rugienienė, Juozas Orentas, Narimantas Udrys, Rasa Karvelienė, Dalia Stonienė. In the front row: district's executive committee: Janina Udrienė – president, Valdas Piestys – treasurer, Laura Garnytė – secretary.

What is the functional structure of LAC?

The flowchart below illustrates the LAC's functional structure: how the Board of Directors is elected; how it functions; its accountability and information sharing process is shown as well.



What benchmark dates are important for chapter and district accountability?

January through March	Calling annual chapter meetings and collecting members' solidarity contributions; Electing chapter executive committees.
By March 31	Submitting chapter and district financial reports for the previous year to the NEC vice president for finances: finasai@javlb.org .
February 16	Raising funds for the support of the National Executive Committee during the chapters commemoration of the Establishment of Lithuanian Independence day.
By April 30	Submitting the funds raised by the chapter for NEC activities to the vice president of financial affairs of NEC: finasai@javlb.org .
June through August	Calling annual district conventions.
By June 30	Submitting the designated portion of the annual solidarity contributions collected by the chapter to the vice president of financial affairs of NEC: finasai@javlb.org .
Month of September	Annual fundraising for the support of the LAC Education Council; chapters and districts encourage their members to be generous donors. This fundraising is managed by the Education Council.
By December 15	LAC Education Council's deadline for LAC members to submit their donations to the Education Council.

What chapters are included in the ten districts?

- Crossroads District** includes Lithuanians who live in the following states: Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas
Four of these states have the following active chapters:
Colorado: Colorado Chapter
Texas: Houston Chapter, San Antonio Chapter, and Dallas Chapter
Kansas: Kansas City Chapter
Nebraska: Omaha Chapter
- Connecticut District** includes Lithuanians who live in Connecticut.
Active chapters:
Connecticut: Hartford Chapter, Waterbury Chapter
- Southern District** includes Lithuanians who live in the following states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and US territories of Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.
Active chapters:
Georgia: Atlanta Chapter
Florida: Florida's Southwest Chapter, West Palm Beach Chapter, St Petersburg Chapter
North Carolina: Charlotte Chapter
- Michigan District** includes Lithuanians who live in Michigan.
Active chapters:
Michigan: Detroit Chapter and Grand Rapids Chapter
- New England (Boston) District** includes Lithuanians who live in the following states: Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
Two states have the following active chapters:
Massachusetts: Boston Chapter, Cape Cod Chapter, Nantucket Chapter, Worchester Chapter
Maine: Atlantas Chapter

6. **New York District** includes Lithuanians who live in New York state.
New York: New York Chapter, Long Island Chapter, Eastern Long Island Chapter, Rochester Chapter
7. **Ohio District** includes Lithuanians who live in Kentucky, Ohio, and the western part of Pennsylvania.
Active chapters:
Ohio: Cincinnati Chapter, Cleveland Chapter
8. **Southeast District** includes Lithuanians who live in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington DC.
Active chapters:
Maryland: Baltimore Chapter
New Jersey: Central New Jersey Chapter, Northern New Jersey Chapter
Pennsylvania: Philadelphia Chapter
Washington D.C.: Washington D.C. Chapter
9. **Western District** includes Lithuanians who live in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.
Five states have the following chapters:
Arizona: Arizona Chapter
California: Los Angeles Chapter, San Diego Chapter, San Francisco Chapter
Nevada: Reno Chapter
Oregon: Portland Chapter
Washington: Washington State Chapter
10. **Midwest District** includes Lithuanians who live in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.
Illinois: Brighton Park Chapter, Cicero Chapter, Lemont Chapter, Marquette Park Chapter, Chicago Lithuanian Chapter, Waukegan Chapter
Indiana: East Chicago Chapter, Indianapolis Chapter
Missouri: Greater St. Louis Chapter (assigned to Illinois)
Minnesota: Minnesota Chapter

How is the LAC National Board of Directors elected?

The National Board of Directors is elected every three years by the entire membership of the LAC. The election is conducted by the National Election Commission appointed by the LAC National Executive Committee. To insure smooth and orderly conduct of the election, the Commission coordinates the election process with the presidents of the district executive committees and the local chapters.

The election of the directors takes place in the ten LAC districts. Three of the largest districts are further divided into electoral regions. Ten LAC members may nominate a candidate for the Board in their chapter and all candidates are included in a single consolidated list for that district or electoral region. There is no limit to the number of candidates that may be nominated within a district or electoral region, however the number to be elected is based on the number of votes cast in that district or electoral region.

The election is held between specified dates in the month of May of the electoral year and is administered by the local chapter election commissions in accordance with the instructions provided by the National Election Commission. Lithuanians living in the United States, as well as their non-Lithuanian spouses and their offspring, who are 18 years of age, may vote for the candidates in their district or electoral region by mail or by internet, or, if a voting location for the chapter is available, such as a Lithuanian parish or Lithuanian center, may vote in person. Additional voter registration is not required for LAC members who are included in the chapter membership list. Anyone who is not a member of any chapter may request to be included on the voter lists and, if possible, also pay the annual solidarity contribution. Such registration may be made at the voting location prior to voting. Those voting by internet may also register prior to casting their vote. Internet voting is con-



Members of National Election Commission for the XX Board: (from left) Valdas Piestys, Rasa Karveliė, Laima Maziliauskienė, Janina Udrienė, and Kastytis Giedraitis.

Photo: by Narimantas Udrys

ducted for the entire membership by the National Election Commission. Those members, who live where there is no LAC chapter may request to receive their ballot from the president of their district.

The National Election Commission assembles the voting data from all the districts and electoral regions, and determines the election results in accordance with the election rules provided in the bylaws. In the 2018 election, 3110 votes were cast for 71 candidates, competing for 60 director positions. Election procedures are more thoroughly explained in the LAC bylaws, which are available on the www.javlb.org website.

What is the role of the National Board of Directors?

The National Board of Directors is the highest LAC governing body, which, in addition to attending to the organizational duties assigned to it in the bylaws, also determines the goals, policies, and activities of the LAC and the means of implementing them. The Board is overseen by a Panel of Presiding Officers consisting of a chairperson, secretary and others – up to a total of five members. Currently 60 elected candidates and 10 district presidents serving *ex officio* comprise the Board.

The Board:

- Elects the president of the National Executive Committee. This person need not be a member of the Board.
- Confirms the slate of officers of the National Executive Committee selected by the president of NEC.
- Elects the Conflict Resolution Commission as well as the Audit Commission. The persons serving on these Commissions need not be members of the Board.
- Elects the LAC representatives to the Joint Commission of the Republic of Lithuania Seimas (Parliament) and the World Lithuanian Community. This Commission fosters cooperation between Lithuania and Lithuanians in the diaspora, encouraging mutual assistance, sharing of scientific, cultural and other information, making recommendations to the Seimas of Lithuania and other state agencies and institutions concerning strengthening Lithuania's statehood and fostering the values of democratic governance. The goal of the commission is also to encourage Lithuanians living abroad to return to Lithuanian and provide recommendations for appropriate conditions for such returns.
- Assigns Board members to the 9 standing commissions. The nine standing commissions oversee LAC finances, bylaws, youth activities, cultural activities, organizational matters, religious and ecumenical matters, human services, education and public affairs. Every member of the Board must serve on at least one of the commissions. These commissions monitor the work of the National Executive Committee, especially in their respective responsibilities, and annually review, deliberate and adopt proposals and resolutions for implementation by the National Executive Committee.

The Board meets at an annual session, generally held in the month of October, at a location decided at the previous session of the Board. The local LAC chapter of the selected city is responsible for the administrative arrangements and the Board's Presiding Panel of Officers is responsible for the agenda of such a session. All members of the Board serve on volunteer basis and pay their own expenses for attending the Board sessions.



Presiding Panel of Officers of the LAC XXII Board of Directors. From left to right: Rima Girnius, Nerija Orentas – chairperson, Ingrida Misevičius – secretary, Sigita Šimkuvienė-Rosen, Artūras Žilys.

What is the role of the LAC National Executive Committee?

The highest executive body of LAC is the LAC National Executive Committee headed by the president, elected by the Board of Directors, and assisted by his chosen Committee members, approved by the Board. The Executive Committee's term of office coincides with that of the Board. Offices held by the Committee members are those of the president, executive vice president, secretary, treasurer, vice presidents for archives, financial affairs, information, information technology, youth matters, business development, organizational affairs and special projects; in addition, the chairpersons of the LAC councils for religious and ecumenical affairs, human services, education, cultural affairs, and public affairs are also members of the Executive Committee. The president of the Lithuanian Youth Association and a representative of the Lithuanian Sports Association are *ex officio* members of the Executive Committee. In addition to the officers, the NEC has a technical staff. The Executive Committee officially represents the LAC.

The NEC is responsible for the implementation of the objectives stated in the LAC Bylaws and the resolutions adopted at the annual Board of Directors session.

It is important to emphasize that the LAC Educational Council fosters and supports the Lithuanian schools throughout the United States by providing educational materials, textbooks and financial aid. The Cultural Council provides opportunities for local chapters to host visiting performers and artistic events, conducts various cultural award competitions and is involved in gathering and preserving important materials for the Lithuanian archives.

During selected years, the NEC hosts a very popular Folk Dance Festival as well as a Folk Song Festival, both attended by thousands of people. For these special events, NEC appoints a committee of capable individuals to plan and make all the arrangements for a successful event.

For Lithuanian American college students, the NEC has been instrumental in running an annual internship LISS (Lithuanian International Student Services) program in Lithuania.



The LISS program participants with the LAC Executive Committee president, - Arvydas Urbonavičius, program director - Romena Čiutienė, and the president's wife - Raminta Urbonavičienė.

The NEC seeks to establish LAC chapters wherever there are Lithuanian Americans, works with chapters and districts and convenes special seminars for their presidents or their representatives to share best practices and innovative ideas. The NEC maintains liaison with other U.S. ethnic organizations, interacts with U.S. government agencies and representatives, stays in contacts with the Presiding Panel of Officers of the LAC Board of Directors and submits the annual required financial and activities reports to the Board. It also cooperates and interacts with the World Lithuanian Community.

As the reader can see, the scope of the Executive Committee's activities and responsibilities is very broad. Consequently, it is imperative for Committee members who volunteer to serve to be responsible, energetic and resourceful in performing their duties

LAC NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

2018~2021

TEL. 402-203-1119

president@javlb.org

Arvydas Urbonavičius, *President*
Austėja Sruoga, *Executive Vice President*
Sigita Barysienė, *Secretary*
Estera Sunelaitė, *Treasurer*

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Council Chairs

Rev. Jaunius Kelpšas, *Religious Affairs Council Chair*
Juozas Polikaitis, *Social Services Council Chair*
Auksė Motto, *Educational Council Chair*
Giedrė Knieža, *Cultural Council Chair*
Krista Bard, *Public Affairs Council Chair*

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Other Members

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Vice Presidents

Marija Čyvaitė, *VP for Youth Affairs*
Algis Mikuckis, *VP for Financial Affairs*
Inga Klimašauskienė, *VP for Business Affairs*
Svajūnas Masiulionis, *VP for Athletics*
Janina Udrienė, *VP for Organizational Affairs*
Raminta Urbonavičienė, *VP for Spec. Projects*

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spec.projektai@javlb.org

Advisers (without a voting right)

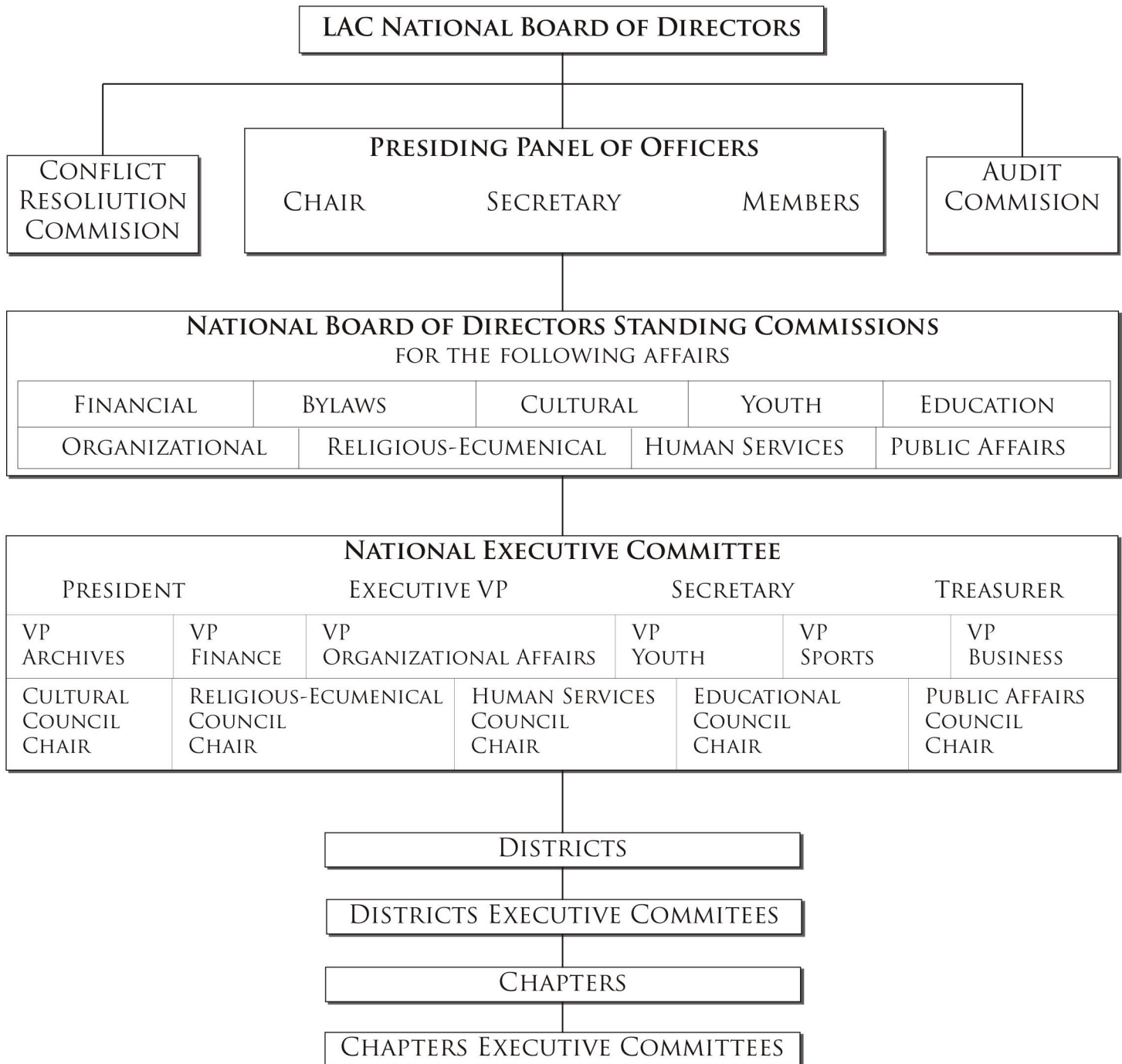
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The LAC National Executive Committee at the LAC XXII Board of Directors second session next to the Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival poster. From left to right: Valdas Buožys - VP for Archives, Loreta Timukienė - VP for Information, Giedrė Knieža - Cultural Council Chair, Sigita Barysienė -Secretary, Skirmantė Philippone - VP for Special Projects, Auksė Motto - Educational Council Chair, Daiva Kazlauskas - Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival treasurer, Austėja Sruoga - Executive Vice President, Janina Udrys - VP for Organizational Affairs, Arvydas Urbonavičius - President, Rasa Dooling - VP for Finances, Estera Sunelaitė - Treasurer, Juozas Polikaitis - Human Services Council Chair. (Some changes have occurred since the Board session.)

Who is accountable to whom?

The Lithuanian American Community uses the following terms: chapter, district, Board, standing commissions, Executive Committee, Audit Commission, Conflict Resolution Commission, etc. The diagram below shows the official LAC organizational structure. Although all LAC entities work according to LAC Bylaws, as well as fairness and mutual cooperation, it is nevertheless important to know who is accountable to whom in order to assure effective results.



Where can one find more information about LAC activities?

Many LAC chapters have websites to share news and post announcements. The National Executive Committee publishes online the *LAC Newsletter* in English and Lithuanian. It is a comprehensive source of information about the most current LAC activities. LAC also publishes an attractive monthly magazine, *Bridges*, which covers topics of interest for people seeking greater understanding of the history and culture of Lithuania. For English speaking Lithuanians, the newspaper *Draugas* initiated a monthly edition of *Draugas News*, accompanied by the magazine, *Lithuanian Heritage*, which has an abundance of historical and human interest articles. Finally, the LAC website, www.javlb.org, has the most pertinent information about the origins of the LAC, current contact information for the National Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, as well as the districts and chapters. It contains news about events, sample publications and some condensed information about Lithuania and Lithuanian history. On this website one can also find the LAC Bylaws and this handbook.

If you are interested about the life of Lithuanians in the United States, as well as around the world, please visit the LAC Facebook page. This internet medium is intended for all Lithuanians to interact and engage in meaningful dialogue sharing innovative ideas and pertinent commentaries as well as commenting on important issues appearing in the Republic of Lithuania media. On this site you will also find information about ongoing events and notifications from the Republic of Lithuania Embassy in Washington, D.C., and RL Consulates in the United States in the cities of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Visit <http://www.facebook.com/JAVLietuviuBendruomene/>
or enter the page title JAV Lietuvių Bendruomenė in Facebook's search field.

The LAC Cultural Affairs Council also has its own Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/JAVLBKULTUROSTARYBA/>

Other important websites:

For education: www.svietimotaryba.org

For children's activities: www.laikaivaikams.org

Closing Remarks

It is important for every Lithuanian in the United States to actively participate in the Lithuanian American Community, because only such a large, unifying Lithuanian family, whose members nurture common values, can provide a conducive environment for preserving their cultural heritage, thus enriching themselves as well as their immediate community. We especially look forward for young people to join because their energy and creativity coupled with the knowledge and experience of the older generation will be the impetus for the Lithuanian American Community to prevail as a unifying force in implementing its mission. Let us work together to see that this organization flourishes.



Opening night of the musical "The Legend of Barbora Radvilaite and Žygimantas Augustas" at Auditorium Theater, Chicago – LAC Cultural Council project in 2019. Picture from Cultural Council archives.



LAC Education Council professional development seminar participants at Camp Dainava in Manchester, MI, summer of 2019.

Picture from Education Council archives

LAC Educational Council
(www.svietimotaryba.org)

**Supports Lithuanian education in the United States of America,
helping US Lithuanian schools, teachers, and youth.**

LAC Educational Council:

- Allocates funds provided by the Lithuanian Foundation to the U.S. Lithuanian schools.
- Organizes professional development seminars for Lithuanian school teachers.
- Provides Lithuanian schools in the U.S. with textbooks, lesson plans, and other teaching materials.
- Grants awards to distinguished and dedicated Lithuanian school teachers in the U.S.



The President Dalia Grybauskaitė with students from Washington D.C. Lithuanian school.



**“LITHUANIANS WE WERE BORN,
LITHUANIANS WE MUST REMAIN!”**