

RAIL PASSENGERS ASSOCIATION - NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS

COUNCIL OF REPRESENTATIVES HANDBOOK - 2017

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Introduction

The purpose of this Council Representative Handbook is to compile in one location information for a representative to perform his/her responsibilities. More detailed information can be found in the [RPA Bylaws](#).

A [directory of current members of the Council of Representatives](#) can be found on the RPA website Member pages (login required).

The National Association of Railroad Passengers (RPA) is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to improving and expanding passenger rail service in the U.S.A. It was founded by Anthony Haswell on May 18, 1967, to advocate for the continuation of passenger trains in the United States. RPA is incorporated in the state of Illinois. RPA has begun the process of using the less cumbersome name “Railroad Passenger Association.”

Vision Statement

National Association of Railroad Passengers, bringing together passengers and partners to create A Connected America

Our Mission Statement

Equipping individual citizen-advocates with the knowledge and data they need to educate the general public and elected and appointed officials about intercity passenger rail’s role in a 21st century multimodal transportation network

Our Core Values

Citizenship – Mobility – Opportunity – Nonpartisanship

Our Slogan

The Voice of the American Passenger

Our Motto

“Working every day to strengthen A Connected America”

Our Purpose

- 1) To provide, sustain and expand the organization to encourage and aid citizens of the United States, urban and rural, in realizing their power and influence to shape national transportation policy to improve transportation options in their communities, especially rail.
- 2) To empower those citizens by providing knowledge, tools, data, information, resources and organization they need in communities large and small to participate effectively in the political process as transportation citizen-advocates.

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3) To support like-minded partners in industry and the advocacy community to work toward common goals, while seeking specific opportunities to build wider coalitions with potentially dissimilar groups.

RPA Organization

RPA has over 20,000 dues-paying members across the United States.

RPA is governed by a Board of Directors, which formulates the program and policies of the organization, and also hires the President and CEO of the organization. The Board consists of Chair, Vice-Chairs, Treasurer, Secretary and Directors. Board members have normally served as Representatives prior to their election or appointment to the Board. The Board provides direction and oversight of RPA through monthly meetings.

The President and CEO manages the organization, assisted by a staff of employees. The office is located in Washington, DC. Monitoring the activities of Congress, as they relate to passenger rail, and representing RPA on Capitol Hill, are important functions of the staff.

The Council of Representatives constitutes the link between RPA members on the one hand, and the Board and RPA staff on the other. The State Representatives and At Large members elect the Board members. There are two kinds of representatives: Most (up to 112) are State Representatives, who are elected by the RPA members in each state. There are also a limited number (up to 10) of Elected Representatives at Large, who are elected by the State Representatives, in addition to the elected Board members and officers (up to 15) who are also Representatives at Large of the Council of Representatives.

Responsibilities of Council Representatives

A Representative provides the essential link that unites local and national efforts into effective advocacy for passenger trains and transit. A Representative represents local needs, issues and activities at the national level; helps formulate national policies through participation in Associations committees; and implements these policies by working at the grass roots level, including with local and regional groups that engage in advocacy for passenger rail.

RPA holds two regularly scheduled Membership and Council Meetings each year, during which a Business Meeting of the Council of Representatives is held. The Spring meeting is always held in the Washington, DC area; the Fall meeting is held at different locations each year, rotated around the country and chosen in part for their importance to U.S. passenger rail. These locations are always accessible by passenger rail (generally on Amtrak routes), and the cost of lodging and meeting space are also taken into account in selecting a location. The cost of attending is **borne by the individual Representatives**: transportation, lodging, and the registration fee, which includes some meals. Meetings are open to all RPA members. RPA members are cordially invited to attend the Council of Representatives business meeting, though only Representatives or their designated proxies may vote.

The Spring meeting typically takes place shortly after Congress returns from its Spring recess. It typically runs from Sunday evening to Wednesday afternoon, with a Board meeting on Sunday evening that is open to all

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members; sessions of interest to all RPA members on Monday morning and afternoon; Day on the Hill (see below) on Tuesday; and a Council of Representatives business meeting on Wednesday morning, followed by a working lunch prior to adjourning mid-afternoon.

The Fall meeting takes place on a weekend, with a welcome reception on Friday evening; sessions of interest to all RPA members throughout the day on Saturday; and a Council of Representatives business meeting on Sunday morning, followed by a working lunch prior to adjourning mid-afternoon. In addition, during the day on Friday there is usually an optional tour of some rail-related facility for those RPA and Council members who wish to take part in it. The optional tour typically fills up quickly, and may involve additional cost.

State Representatives and At Large Representatives are expected to attend these national meetings (other than the optional tour). If a representative is not able to attend either the Fall or Spring national meeting of RPA, that Representative may name an alternate (who must be a RPA member in good standing) who will attend the meeting in his/her place. The proxy must be written, signed, and presented to the Secretary at the meeting prior to any voting. Any Council of Representatives member who has failed to attend, or to provide a proxy for, at least half of the national meetings during his/her previous term, is ineligible to run for re-election to the Council.

Because Representatives are chosen in accordance with RPA's procedures in order to attend Council meetings as a required task, their non-reimbursed reasonable travel expenses (such as transportation, food, and lodging) may qualify as tax-deductible charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. RPA does not provide tax advice; Representatives should consult with a tax adviser and/or the IRS.

The primary method of communication between the RPA staff and Representatives is through e-mail and the RPA website. Representatives should have a working e-mail address and access to the internet.

Responsibilities of State Representatives are found on the RPA website:

<https://www.narprail.org/about/leadership/council-of-representatives/state-representatives/>

Responsibilities of Elected Representatives at Large are found on the RPA website:

<https://www.narprail.org/about/leadership/council-of-representatives/representatives-at-large/>

Day on the Hill

RPA's Day on the Hill, held each year during the Spring Meeting, is its single biggest day of advocacy of the year. Council Representatives, Board members and members meet with elected officials and/or their staffs to advocate for RPA's agenda as well as any passenger rail-related issues in the Council Representative's home state. As such, all Council Representatives are strongly encouraged to participate. RPA members are also encouraged to join their Council Representative(s) for these meetings but are encouraged to let the Council Rep know of their wish to join the meeting. We have found that most Congressional offices want information by electronically not paper.

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Prior to the Spring Meetings, the RPA office typically holds one or more conference calls to help prepare Council Representatives for their Day on the Hill meetings, and provides a list of elected officials and their office locations. Much of the Monday session of the Spring Meeting will also be devoted to bringing Council Representatives up to speed on RPA's agenda. RPA provides information, both in printed form and on-line, for Representatives to distribute to their Congressional Delegation. Representatives who have never participated in Day on the Hill meetings are encouraged to consult with fellow Representatives who have for advice and guidance.

Roughly six weeks to two months prior to the Day on the Hill event, Council Representatives should contact the DC offices of their Congressional delegations to request meetings on that date. This usually starts with a phone call to the DC office to request contact information for the Member's scheduler, who coordinates Member's calendar. Council Representatives should identify themselves as elected (or, if appropriate, appointed) Representatives of the National Association of Railroad Passengers (and, when appropriate, constituents of the elected official whose office they're calling), briefly explain RPA's Day on the Hill, and request to meet with the Member and/or the Member's staffer in charge of transportation issues. Council Representatives should typically plan on at least three meetings: One with the office of their House Representative and one with the office of each of their Senators.

For states with multiple Council Representatives, it is important for them to coordinate with one another to ensure that there is no duplication of effort, and that RPA presents a united face to the state's elected officials. In this situation, Council Representatives might choose to operate as a team, divide the meeting load, or some combination of this approach. Representatives interested in this sort of teamwork should consult the Council directory or contact their Division Leader (see below) to get in touch with other Representatives from their state.

Council Representatives from smaller states may also choose to team up with one another, each joining in the other's meetings, though this is entirely optional. Once again, Representatives should consult the Council directory or contact their Division Leader for guidance.

When scheduling meetings, Council Representatives should be mindful of the office locations of the Members and staff members they'll be meeting with, as there are a total of six buildings on Capitol Hill where these meetings may take place. In particular, the Senate side of Capitol Hill is at least a 20 minute walk from the House side, not including the time required to pass through security upon entering a new building. On the House side, there are basement tunnels connecting the buildings that allow travel among these buildings without having to exit and re-clear security, but they can be difficult for first-time visitors to find; Council Representatives shouldn't be afraid to politely ask for directions. There is a similar arrangement connecting the buildings on the Senate side, but the tunnel that connects the House side of Capitol Hill to the Senate side is for the use of Senators and Congressional Representatives *only*; RPA Council Representatives should not use it. With all this in mind, it is critical to allow enough time to get from one meeting to the next without being late.

RPA Council Representatives are expected to dress professionally, in "business formal" attire, for their Day on the Hill meetings. The meetings themselves should be kept relatively brief and to the point, as elected officials and their staffers are quite busy. Different Council Representatives have different approaches to these meetings,

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but they should always be kept *honest, professional and cordial*. This is especially true when meeting with officials and staffers who are not friendly to RPA's agenda. Some Council Representatives find it useful to indicate that they are volunteer citizen advocates, who have come to DC at their own expense and *not* paid lobbyists. Where appropriate, the official should be thanked for past support of RPA's agenda. The Council Representative should have one or two specific "asks": RPA's national ask (detailed at the Monday session of the Spring Meeting) and perhaps an additional local ask.

It is important to end the meeting by thanking the official and/or staffers for their time, leaving contact information behind and inviting them to follow up with any additional questions or requests. Council Representatives should close by inviting elected officials and their staffs to RPA's Hill Reception that evening. RPA will provide printed invitations to for distribution.

NOTE: It is important to remember that RPA is a non-partisan organization, and Council Representatives are **not** allowed to engage in any partisan politicking in their role as Council Representative, either during the meetings or elsewhere. RPA advocates for *issues*, not political parties or candidates.

Once the meetings have been completed, Council Representatives should report back to the RPA leadership, noting with whom they met, their sense of how the meeting went and whether the official or staffer requested any additional action or information. It's important for Council Representatives to follow up with thank-you notes, written or via email, to everyone with whom they met.

Finally, Council Representatives should view this not as a one-day encounter, but as an opportunity to build ongoing relationships with elected officials and policymakers. When relevant issues arise, either locally or nationally, RPA counts on its Representatives to engage their elected officials both at home and in DC. Day on the Hill is just one step in this process, albeit a critical one.

Divisions

The states are divided into nine divisions. The divisions are:

Northeast	CT, MA, ME, NH, NY, RI, VT
Mid-Atlantic	DC, DE, MD, NJ, PA, VA, WV
Southeast	FL, GA, NC, SC
Southern	AL, LA, MS, TN
Midwest	IA, IL, IN, KY, MI, MN, MO, ND, OH, SD, WI
South Central	AR, OK, TX
Mountains and Plains	CO, KS, NE, NM, UT, WY
Northwest	AK, ID, MT, OR, WA
Southwest	AZ, CA, HI, NV

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Each division is headed by a division leader, whose duties are found on the RPA website:

<https://www.narprail.org/about/leadership/council-of-representatives/division-leader/>

In many divisions, an annual meeting is held once a year, typically shortly before the Spring meeting of the Council, at a city located within the division. It is also common for the Council members within a division to meet by conference call on a regular basis.

Committees

Council members are encouraged to serve on at least one RPA committee. They may submit their name to the Chair of a committee in which they are interested in serving as a member of the committee.

Board Committee

-ByLaws Committee-Chaired by a Member of the Board.

The purpose of the Bylaws Committee is to ensure that the National Association of Railroad Passengers governing documents are in compliance with the Associations' Article of Incorporation, the laws of the State of Illinois and federal laws.

Specific responsibilities include:

1. Review requests for amendments or repeals to the bylaws as brought forth by the leadership, committees, staff and membership to check for clarity, proper wording, and consistency with existing articles and sections and check for compliance with Illinois and federal laws.
2. Initiate amendments or repeal for consideration as needed.
3. Evaluate the proposed changes to make recommendation to Board and Council for approving or not approving the proposed amendments or repeals and the rationale for the Committee's recommendation.
4. Provide Council members a copy of the proposed amendments or repeals along with any rationale at least 30 days in advance of the business session of the Council of Representatives meeting at which such amendment or repeal is to be voted upon.

Committees Required in the ByLaws

-Special Projects Committee, Chair Jim Mathews, jmathews@narprail.org – This committee recommends to the Board funding for special projects and monitors these projects.

-Investment Committee, Chair Ken Clifford, ken_clifford_cpa@earthlink.net – This committee recommends to the Board investment actions and monitors investment performance.

-Candidate Certification Committee - This committee is appointed at the Fall meeting in odd-numbered years to certify qualifications of candidates for representative, officer and director positions for elections.

-Finance Committee, Chair Rich Vavra-Musser, rvavramusser@gmail.com – This committee reviews monthly financial statements, budgets and recommends to the Board financial policies and procedures.

-Program Committees-Established on as needed basis by the Board.

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Term of Office (See Bylaws for exact details)

A State Representative, if elected, has a 2 year term from March 1st of an even-numbered year to the end of February of the next even-numbered year.

A State Representative, if appointed by the Board to fill a vacancy, has a term less than 2 years from the date of appointment to the end of February of the next even-numbered year.

An Elected Representative at Large is elected at the Spring Council Business Meeting has a term beginning upon election and ending with the next election of Representatives at Large in the next even-numbered year.

Officers and Directors are Representatives at Large during the term of their office as an officer or director which begins at the end of the Spring Council Business Meeting.

Reelection as Council Representative (See Bylaws for exact details)

A State Representative or a Representative at Large, who wishes to run for reelection as a State Representative submits an online self-nomination (a link on the RPA website) by October 1st of an odd-numbered year, which is prior to the expiration of the term at the end of February in an even-numbered year. An email reminder will be sent to Council Representatives before September 15th which will also give the number of State Representatives to be elected from each state.

Upon notice of the election results, an unsuccessful candidate for State Representative can submit an online self-nomination for an Elected Representative at Large.

RPA members who wish to run for one of 10 Elected Representatives at Large positions submit an online self-nomination (a link on the RPA website) by March 31st in an even-numbered year. Elections for these positions occur at the Spring Council Business Meeting that year.

Elections (See Bylaws for exact details)

Elections of Board officers, Board Directors, and Representatives at Large occur at the Spring Meeting in the Washington DC area at the Council of Representatives Business Meeting, usually on Wednesday morning.

Elections in odd-numbered years are only for those Directors whose terms are expiring. All Council Representatives (including current Officers and current Directors) may vote in these elections. Newly elected Directors take their positions at the conclusion of the Annual Meeting and must vacate any State or At Large Representative seat they hold.

Three elections are done in even-numbered years:

Election of 10 Elected Representatives at Large. Only State Representatives may vote in this election. (Current Elected Representative at Large, current Officers and current Directors may not vote in this election). State Representatives can vote for no more than 10 candidates. Successful candidates are in the top 10 votes and in addition must have received a vote from 50% or more of the voting state representatives.

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Elections of Officers. All Council Representatives (State Representatives, newly Elected Representatives at Large, current Officers and current Directors) may vote in these 4 elections, which are in order of Chair, Four (4) Vice-Chairs, Secretary, and Treasurer. Newly elected Officers take their positions at the conclusion of the business meeting and must vacate any State or Representative at Large seat they hold.

Election of Directors whose terms are expiring. All Council Representatives (State Representatives, newly Elected Representatives at Large, current Officers and current Directors) may vote in this election. Newly elected Directors take their positions at the conclusion of the Council business meeting and must vacate any State or Representative at Large seat they hold.