

UNITED STATES BOARD ON GEOGRAPHIC NAMES BYLAWS

Adopted by the Board on May 25, 1948; revised July 21, 1953; July 21, 1959; October 15, 1963; March 22, 1975; December 17, 1979; July 30, 1982; July 17, 1984; October 15, 1985; July 17, 2001; September 28, 2015.

Article I – Name, Objective and Authority

Sec. 1

The name of the organization is the United States Board on Geographic Names (the “Board”).

Sec. 2

The objective of the Board is to provide for uniformity in geographic nomenclature and orthography throughout the Federal Government.

Sec. 3

The Board functions conjointly with the Secretary of the Interior (“the Secretary”) as provided in the Act of July 25, 1947, P.L. 80-242, 61 Stat. 456 (codified at 43 U.S.C. 364) (“the Act”).

Article II – Members

Sec. 1

The membership of the Board must conform to the provisions of Section 2 of the Act. It is based on the need, interest, and expertise of departments and agencies in the use and development of standard geographic names. At the time of the latest version of the bylaws, the following departments and agencies were represented on the Board:

Department of Agriculture
Department of Commerce
Department of Defense
Department of Homeland Security
Department of the Interior
Department of State
Central Intelligence Agency
Government Publishing Office
Library of Congress
Postal Service

Sec. 2

The Board is comprised of principal members and deputy members. The head of each department and agency represented on the Board shall appoint one principal member and also may designate one or more deputy members. A deputy member may attend and participate in meetings of the Board (see Article V section 2 concerning voting privileges).

Sec. 3

A department or agency represented on the Board, in the absence of its principal member or deputy members, may have an observer at a meeting of the Board or of a committee except the Executive Committee. On specific request of the department or agency concerned, the Board or committee may give such observer the status of deputy member for that meeting.

Sec. 4

Only a principal Board member is eligible for election as Chair or Vice Chair of the Board. A principal or deputy member is eligible to serve as any other officer of a standing committee.

Sec. 5

Principal members and deputy members are appointed for two-year terms and may be reappointed to successive terms. The term of office expires on September 30 of the odd-numbered year. All appointments run concurrently. Appointment to a vacancy is for the remainder of the term. In the event a department or agency has not appointed its members by the September 30 deadline, the former members continue to represent the agency until they are appointed or replaced by new representatives.

Article III – Officers

Sec. 1

The officers of the Board are the Chair, Vice Chair, Executive Secretary for Foreign Names, and Executive Secretary for Domestic Names.

The Chair is elected from the membership of the Board and subsequently appointed by the Secretary as provided by the Act. The Vice Chair is elected from the membership of the Board. They are chosen by vote at the regular meeting of the Board in October of each odd-numbered year. They serve for two years or until their successors are chosen and enter on duty.

The Chair and Vice Chair are chosen from the membership of the Domestic Names Committee and the Foreign Names Committee. The Chair and Vice Chair rotate between these two standing committees but may not be from the same Committee.

The Executive Secretary for Foreign Names is appointed by the Director, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. The Executive Secretary for Domestic Names is appointed by the Director, United States Geological Survey.

Sec. 2

The Chair:

Presides at meetings of the Board.

Performs the usual duties of a Chair and other duties that may be assigned by the Board.

Serves ex officio as a member, without a vote, of all committees of which he or she is not a regular member.

Assigns duties and provides direction to the Executive Secretariat as appropriate.

Serves as principal representative of the Board at any national or international session, meeting, or conference.

Sec. 3

The Vice Chair:

Acts as Chair in the absence of that officer.

Serves as Chair of the Executive Committee and presents reports thereof at meetings of the Board.

May attend ex officio, without a vote, meetings of any committee of which he or she is not a member.

Sec. 4

The Executive Secretary for Foreign Names:

Maintains non-archived records of the Foreign Names Committee, including the correspondence files that pertain to foreign names, excluding names in the United States and its current dependencies, and Antarctica.

Provides a meeting place for the Committee and advises the members as to time and place of meetings.

Attends meetings of the Committee, prepares and distributes the minutes of the meetings, and conducts related correspondence of the Board and the Committee in accordance with procedures formulated by the Board and approved by the Secretary.

Serves as consultant to the Board in matters pertaining to foreign names.

May participate with a vote in Executive Committee meetings. May participate without a vote in all other meetings of the Board.

Serves as the principal Board point of contact in any matter concerning foreign geographic names.

Sec. 5

The Executive Secretary for Domestic Names:

Maintains non-archived records of the Domestic Names Committee, including the correspondence files that pertain to names in the United States and its current dependencies.

Provides a meeting place for the Committee and advises the members as to the place of the meetings.

Attends meetings of the Committee, prepares and distributes the minutes of the meetings, and conducts related correspondence of the Board and the Committee in accordance with procedures formulated by the Board and approved by the Secretary.

Serves as consultant to the Board in matters pertaining to domestic names.

May participate with a vote in Executive Committee meetings. May participate without a vote in all other meetings of the Board.

Serves as the principal Board point of contact in any matter concerning domestic (U.S.) geographic names.

Sec. 6

The Executive Secretariat of the Board

The two Executive Secretaries jointly comprise the Executive Secretariat of the Board. The Executive Secretariat and the Board Chair collaborate to organize the Board's work program and agenda, to arrange meetings of the full Board and Executive Committee, and to maintain the Board's records and to provide organized representation at national and international sessions, meetings, or conferences.

Article IV – Committees

Sec. 1

The standing committees are: (1) the Executive Committee, (2) the Domestic Names Committee, and (3) the Foreign Names Committee. Additional standing committees may be established and discharged by the Board. There must be at least three members on each standing committee.

Sec. 2

The Executive Committee consists of the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Board, the Chair (or in their absence, the Vice Chair) of the Domestic Names Committee, the Chair (or in their absence, the Vice Chair) of the Foreign Names Committee, the Executive Secretary for Foreign Names and the Executive Secretary for Domestic Names. It may act for the Board on urgent matters normally referable to the Board when time is not available to follow the procedure outlined in Article V, Section 3. The Chair of the Board decides which procedure to follow. Action by the Executive Committee in such instances must be communicated in writing to all Board members as soon as possible. The Committee also acts on matters brought to its attention by the Chair of the Board.

Sec. 3

At the time of the latest version of the bylaws, the following departments and agencies were represented on the Board:

(a) The Domestic Names Committee:

Department of Agriculture
Department of Commerce
Department of Defense
Department of Homeland Security
Department of the Interior
Government Publishing Office
Library of Congress
Postal Service

(b) The Foreign Names Committee:

Department of Commerce
Department of Defense
Department of State
Central Intelligence Agency
Library of Congress

Sec. 4

The Domestic Names Committee operates in accordance with principles, policies, and procedures approved by the Board and the Secretary. The Committee utilizes staff services provided by the United States Geological Survey and renders decisions on domestic geographic names. The Committee performs such other duties as may be assigned by the Board. The Committee keeps the Board informed concerning the current and anticipated programs of their department or agencies that have a bearing on domestic geographic names.

Sec. 5

The Foreign Names Committee operates in accordance with principles, policies, and procedures approved by the Board and the Secretary. The Committee utilizes staff services provided by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency and renders decisions on foreign geographic names. The Committee performs such other duties as may be assigned by the Board. The committee keeps the Board informed concerning the current and anticipated programs of their department or agencies that have a bearing on foreign geographic names.

Sec. 6

Special committees, with membership not necessarily restricted to Board members or deputies, may be created by the Board or by one of the standing committees. Each committee may be discharged by the body that created it.

Sec. 7

Advisory committees may be established by the Board to deal with special problems concerning geographic names. Members of advisory committees are appointed by the Secretary on the recommendation of the Board and serve until they resign or until the committees are abolished by the Board. Members normally are not members of the Board, and are to be selected for their individual qualifications to serve in the specified capacity. Staff support for a committee is provided by the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency or the United States Geological Survey, depending on whether the subject matter is considered foreign or domestic in nature, or both. The Chair will appoint one of the two Executive Secretaries as the Executive Secretary of an advisory committee, as appropriate to the subject, to attend and participate in meetings of that advisory committee and to coordinate its work with other national or international bodies, as required.

Sec. 8

Each standing, special, or advisory committee appoints its own officers, except as otherwise provided by action of the Board.

Sec. 9

The principles, policies, procedures and actions of any committee are subject to review and approval by the Board as follows:

Standing committees must submit quarterly reports to the Board at its meetings.

Advisory committees must submit quarterly reports, recommendations for decision, or both for Board approval.

Article V – Meetings

Sec. 1

Parliamentary procedures at meetings of the Board and its committees must conform to Robert's Rules of Order, revised, unless otherwise provided.

Sec. 2

At meetings of the Board, each participating member department and agency shall have a single vote on any decision. The vote may be cast by the principal member or authorized deputy member.

In any meeting of the Board or of its standing committees other than the Executive Committee, a majority of the member departments and agencies constitutes a quorum. Except as otherwise specified, a majority vote of the members present is sufficient for any action.

The Chair of the Board or of a standing committee has the choice of voting or not voting on any matter that comes before the Board or of a standing committee. If not voting, the Chair of the Board or standing committee may break a tie vote even though another representative of the Chair's organization has voted, unless a member of a department or agency, other than that of the Chair, requests the question be deferred or referred to the Executive Committee or to the full Board for resolution.

The Domestic Names Committee and the Foreign Names Committee, at their discretion, may extend voting privileges to deputy members, and the specific procedure must be a matter of written record. The nature and procedure for such privileges for deputy members representing the same agency is at the discretion of the Standing Committee.

Deputy members, serving as committee chairs on the Domestic Names Committee or the Foreign Names Committee, have voting privileges when participating in Executive Committee meetings.

Sec. 3

Meetings of the Board are held on the third Tuesday of January, April, July, and October of each year, or at such time as the Board may determine. Special meetings may be called by the Chair.

Sec. 4

Between meetings, urgent Board matters may be decided by by electronic mail, facsimile, telephone, or written vote, on the initiative of the Chair of the Board or his or her representative. A quorum is the majority of the member departments and agencies. A majority vote of the responding quorum is required for a decision. Pertinent written material applicable to the urgent matter must be in the hands of the Board members before such action is taken. Such action must be recorded in the minutes of the next Board meeting.

Article VI – Principles, Policies and Procedures

Sec. 1

Statements of principles and basic policies governing geographic nomenclature to be followed by the Board, by its committees and staffs, and by departments and agencies of the Government, must be formulated by the Board and approved by the Secretary in accordance with statutory requirements. These statements may be revised or amplified as often as necessary.

Sec. 2

The Board and its committees and staffs must in their working procedures implement the provisions of the Act that “the principles, policies, and procedures formulated hereunder shall be designed to serve the interest of the Federal Government and the general public, to enlist the effective cooperation of the Federal departments and agencies most concerned, and to give full consideration to the specific interest of particular Federal and State agencies.”

Article VII – Communications

Sec. 1

Formal actions or resolutions of the Board that require validation by the Secretary must be submitted to the Secretary in writing by the Chair of the Board or another officer designated by the Chair.

Sec. 2

Communications to and from the Board are to be conducted in accordance with procedures formulated by the Board and approved by the Secretary.

Article VIII – Amendments

Sec. 1

Amendments to these bylaws proposed by a standing committee or by any member of the Board or by its Chair are to be submitted to the Executive Committee for review. The Executive Committee will present its recommendations to the Board for action.

Sec. 2

Amendments to these bylaws may be adopted in any duly called meeting of the Board by a two-thirds vote of the members present (notice of such proposed amendments having been communicated to the members of the Board 30 days in advance of the meeting) and are to take effect upon approval by the Secretary.