Introduction

This document sets forth the Guidelines for use and moderation of the House of Delegates listserv. The purpose of the Guidelines is to help facilitate communication among House members through efficient and focused discussions on the listserv.

The House of Delegates listserv is moderated by two members of the House of Delegates Technology and Communications Committee, who are selected based upon interest and geography. Currently the moderators are: Michelle Philo of California and Margaret Plane of Utah.

The goal in moderating the listserv is to balance competing and important interests regarding its use. The listserv provides an efficient and cost-effective way to provide members of the House with information regarding the House's activities in a timely manner. In order to maximize its benefits, as many House members as possible should be using the listserv. At the same time, members have varying levels of interest in receiving emails regarding House business and tolerance of email traffic. The moderators attempt to strike a balance between these potentially competing demands.

The moderators review each email posted to the listserv before it is distributed to its members. The moderators strive to minimize the delay between a member sending the email and it being distributed to the listserv.

The Committee periodically provides these Guidelines to members of the House for their reference in using the listserv and understanding the principles that are applied by those moderating the listserv.
Guidelines for Listserv Use

1) Include a specific and concise subject line for each email, including the Resolution number (if available). This will allow others to quickly scan emails and select what is of greatest personal interest. New topics should be given a new subject line and not introduced within an existing discussion thread.

2) Do not post commercial messages.

3) Please assure that your message uses language that is polite, professional, and collegial.

4) Do not post jokes, humorous stories, or “pass-around” emails.

5) Do not post anything to the lists that you would not want everyone to see.

6) Do not post irrelevant or off-topic information to the list.

7) Be sure your name, ABA and/or bar affiliation, and location are listed on emails that you send.

8) If appropriate, please make sure that any disclosures required by the ABA’s Conflict of Interest policy are made in the email.

9) When replying, make sure your response is listed at the top of the previous email.

10) Please take the time to consider whether your message should be sent only to the original sender rather than to everyone on the listserv.

   a. Personal messages should be sent directly to an individual sender if the email will only relate to the original sender.

   b. This guideline applies to such messages as “thanks”, “I agree”, or “send the information to me too.”

11) Avoid repetitive emails that merely re-state previously made points.

12) Concerns, questions and comments should be expressed in a friendly manner. Please do not be overly contentious.

13) Messages relating directly to the functioning of the list should be sent only to the list administrator, Leticia Spencer at leticia.spencer@americanbar.org. This includes messages such as "remove me from the listserv" or "change my email address."

14) Try to keep the length of the email to the minimum needed. This increases the chances that your message will be read. Moderators may require senders to warn recipients in the subject line that the body of a message will be long, such as by beginning the email with the words “Long Message.”

15) Members who determine it would be beneficial to use the listserv to provide House members with materials prepared by non-House members, whether it be material of ABA members, published articles, academic papers or otherwise, that relate to the business of the House, are reminded that they are deemed the sponsor of such materials, and accordingly are responsible to assure that the materials, like their emails, meet these Guidelines.

16) Please be judicious in the use of attachments. While they may be helpful or necessary in some instances, attachments may be caught in spam filters, slow down users’ systems, or be incompatible with users’ software.
Guidelines for Moderators

1. Moderators will apply the Guidelines for Listserv Use in a reasonable manner. Any decision by a moderator regarding the application of the Guidelines to a particular message is final.

2. Moderators will promptly review messages intended for posting, usually within 24 hours. During meetings of the House, the moderators will attempt to review the messages for posting within eight hours. However, moderators are volunteers, and it is possible and understandable that a delay may exist. This is particularly true during the Midyear and Annual Meetings, since the moderators may be in business meetings or have other volunteer or personal commitments.

3. If a moderator is unsure whether an email complies with the Guidelines, the moderator may consult with other moderators for their input.

4. If a moderator believes that an email does not comply with the Guidelines, the moderator will return the email to the sender with a brief explanation. The sender may choose to modify the email to meet the Guidelines or choose not to send the email.

5. The Committee moderates the listserv for inappropriate emails, and moderators will take action with respect to emails that appear to be defamatory, abusive, threatening, profane, offensive, or illegal.

If any member of the listserv believes that an email has been sent that is defamatory, abusive, threatening, profane, offensive, or illegal, the member should contact the listserv administrator, Leticia Spencer (leticia.spencer@americanbar.org) immediately. The ABA reserves the right to take appropriate action to stop inappropriate emails upon such notification or as determined by the Committee. This includes the right to temporarily suspend, or terminate, the posting privileges of any user who posts emails that are defamatory, abusive, threatening, profane, offensive, or illegal, or that violate the Guidelines on a consistent basis.

The ABA House of Delegates listserv is provided as a benefit to members of the House of Delegates to allow them to discuss, informally, the issues before the House. The listserv does not supplant the need for vibrant debate within the House, and all senders should consider that multiple postings on the same subject may shorten the tolerance of the House for such debate.

The ABA is not responsible for the opinions and information posted to the listserv. The ABA does not guarantee the accuracy or adequacy of any opinion expressed on the listserv. Statements made on the ABA House of Delegates listserv do not constitute ABA policy or serve as a legislative history for any Resolution eventually adopted by the House of Delegates as ABA policy.

Your attention to these Guidelines is appreciated.

House of Delegates Technology and Communications Committee

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