

MLA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

General Information for Forum Delegates

Function. In 1971, the Delegate Assembly replaced the MLA annual business meeting and since then has met once a year, during the convention. The assembly elects two members of the Executive Council and five members of the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee; elects the Nominating and Elections Committees; elects honorary members and fellows; determines the dues structure of the association, subject to confirmation by the Executive Council; receives reports from committees and commissions; recommends actions to the Executive Council regarding the conduct of association business and the association's direction, goals, and structure; approves amendments to the MLA constitution; and supervises its own organization and operation.

Composition. As of 11 January 2021, there will be 299 members of the assembly, as follows: (a) 158 forum delegates; (b) 56 regional delegates, distributed among seven geographic electoral regions (see below); (c) 57 professional-issues delegates, who ensure representation responsive to the professional concerns of the MLA's membership; and (d) 28 ex officio delegates, including voting members of the MLA Executive Council and of the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee and official representatives of each of the six regional MLAs.

Elections. Regional, professional-issues, and forum delegates are elected for terms of three convention years. Regional delegates are elected by MLA members in the respective regions (New England and Eastern Canada, New Jersey and New York, Middle Atlantic, Great Lakes, South, Central and Rocky Mountain, Western US and Western Canada). Professional-issues delegates are elected by the general membership. In both instances, the Elections Committee identifies the nominees, who run in matched pairs. Forum delegates are elected by the MLA members who have a primary affiliation with the relevant forums; the forum executive committees are responsible for carrying out the nomination process specified in MLA policies.

General Responsibilities of Delegates. Delegates are expected to represent the professional interests and concerns of their colleagues, particularly those whom they represent. As representatives of the organization, delegates will also serve as MLA advocates on their campuses, to their constituencies, within their various professional communities, and throughout the profession. Delegates shall circulate information about MLA policies and statements to faculty colleagues, graduate students, and administrators on their campuses, in their regions, and throughout the profession; they will also be a means by which constituents' concerns, questions, and successes can be shared with the organization.

Their term of office is approximately three years (in this instance, 9 January 2023 through the close of the January 2026 convention), and delegates are expected to participate in the meetings of the assembly held during their term of office (at the annual conventions of January 2024 [to be held in Philadelphia], January 2025 [to be held in New Orleans], and January 2026 [to be held in Toronto]).

The participation of all elected delegates is essential to the success of the assembly. Financing of the costs of travel or attendance is generally **not** available from the MLA. The MLA is willing to send a letter to whatever officer a delegate may designate at his or her institution, urging local support. (**Note:**

Delegates who are graduate students, non-tenure-track faculty members, unemployed members, or regular or life members residing outside the United States and Canada may be eligible for a grant to help defray the cost of travel to the convention. The MLA website has [information about these grants.](#))

Delegates in their second year of service in the assembly are eligible for nomination to the Executive Council (if one of the assembly's seats on the council needs to be filled that year). Delegates in their third year of service in the assembly are eligible for nomination to the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee.

Delegates receive several mailings throughout the year (normally in April, July, September, and early December) to keep them informed of assembly and association business. The coordinator of governance should be informed of changes of address so that mailings will be sent to the proper location.

The assembly's electronic discussion list, ASSEMBLY-L, and the assembly's private group on *MLA Commons* are venues for the discussion of assembly and association business. The list and the *Commons* group are open only to elected delegates; all delegates are strongly encouraged to participate. Access to the list is by a subscription that the coordinator of governance provides. To gain access to the *Commons* group, each delegate must activate an account on the *Commons*.

All delegates should note that the MLA constitution (article 9.B) prohibits representation by proxy at assembly meetings. Forum delegates who cannot fulfill their obligations in a particular year should so inform **both** the coordinator of governance and the chair of the relevant forum executive committee. It should be noted that the delegate who cannot attend an assembly meeting can still participate in the assembly's business by sending written comments on any of the assembly's agenda items to the assembly's discussion list, to the chair of the Delegate Assembly Organizing Committee, or to the coordinator of governance at the MLA office in New York.

The [MLA constitution](#) is available at the MLA website; sections relevant to the Delegate Assembly are articles 9, 10, 11.B, and 11.C. The [Delegate Assembly's bylaws](#) are also available at the website. In addition, reports of the Delegate Assembly's annual meetings are posted to the [Delegate Assembly's page](#) at the MLA website.