



GUIDANCE FOR NEW COMMITTEE CHAIRS

October 2014

Congratulations on your appointment to chair a committee of the American Branch of the International Law Association (ABILA)! The Branch is grateful for your commitment to helping make us more useful to our members and the international law community.

The Director(s) of Studies is your direct contact with the administration of ABILA. The Director has authority over the supervision and coordination of all committee work at ABILA. The Director is also here to assist you in making your committee productive and effective, and acts as a liaison between the committees and the ABILA Executive Committee. Any questions or concerns relating to committee matters should be referred directly to the Director.

The following guidance will help you understand your responsibilities and opportunities as a new committee chair.

Building Your Committee

A small committee of dedicated members can accomplish a great deal, but larger committees get more ABILA members involved with what you do. A committee chair is not required to grow his committee, but he may find growth beneficial. The best way to grow a committee is to contact academics, practitioners, and government officials with interest or expertise in the committee's subject matter and invite them to join ABILA and your committee. This is time intensive work, but it may pay off by increasing your committee's expertise and influence, and growing ABILA membership as a bonus!

Drafting and Following Through on an Agenda

Committees are required to draft and submit an Annual Report and Agenda ("ARA") with a three-year action plan to the Director of Studies promptly after appointment. The ARA is your proposed program of work and should set out what you hope and plan to accomplish as a committee during the next three years. This is meant to be a tool for you, to help you plan a productive leadership period. It is also a way for the Director of Studies to monitor your success as a committee and to help you accomplish your goals. Finally, your ARA will be posted on the ABILA Web site to help attract new members to your committee.

An ABILA committee can do many things. For example, it can:

- keep its members informed of new developments in the field by electronic newsletter;
- submit *amicus* briefs or other information to municipal courts and international tribunals;

- participate in the activities of intergovernmental organizations;
- propose panels and roundtables for ABILA events such as the national and regional International Law Weekends;
- contribute its energy and expertise to helping organize and run the Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court or a subject-specific student moot court;
- organize its own colloquia, conferences, symposia, and lectures;
- organize an edited volume on a timely topic to be arranged with a publisher;
- submit position papers and white papers to municipal and international agencies.¹

Encouraging Committee Member Participation

Every committee has its own energy, but the most successful committees have an active leader and a core of at least a few dedicated members. The more members are active, the more fulfilling your experience as a committee chair will be. We recommend keeping committee members informed of progress on your ARA, repeatedly soliciting participation in committee projects (often it takes more than a single email inviting members to participate), and encouraging members to contribute ideas for future projects. Meeting with members in person at ABILA events (see below) is also an excellent way to identify potentially active members. The best leaders make their team members feel valued and special, so keep that in mind when recruiting and dealing with members involved in a project.

Participating in ABILA Events

As noted above, committee chairs may submit panel proposals to the Organizing Committee of any ABILA event, most prominently International Law Weekend (ILW), ILW Midwest, and ILW West. The chair does not have to submit the proposal; he may assist in organizing a panel and sponsor its submission. In fact, a proposal sponsored by an ABILA committee typically benefits from some preference (due to the limited program space, however, no proposal is guaranteed approval).

You can also arrange to meet with your committee members in person at International Law Weekend. Usually, a room is reserved specifically for that purpose. This is a great way to get to know your committee members and encourage their active participation.

Organizing Your Own Events

As also noted above, committee chairs are free to organize events such as colloquia and conferences outside of official ABILA events. For example, a committee could organize a conference on a specific recent development within the scope of the committee's subject matter. Chairs should consult the Director of Studies to ensure that events sponsored by an ABILA committee comply with ABILA rules (which are not burdensome).

As you see, chairing a committee offers exciting opportunities to connect with other ABILA members and contribute to the development and dissemination of international law. Good luck! If you have any questions, the Director of Studies is there to help you.

¹ However, be sure your methods and work product comply with the *Procedures Governing the Adoption of Committee Positions and Related Matters* supplied to you by the Director of Studies. If you do not have a copy of the Procedures, please ask for them. They are also available on the ABILA Web site (<http://www.ila-americanbranch.org>).