

**Visually Impaired Peer Support Group  
Constitution  
Approved July 29, 2024**

**ARTICLE I - Name**

This organization shall be known as the Visually Impaired Peer Support Group, hereafter referred to as VIPSG.

**Section 1: Affiliation.**

VIPSG is a group serving individuals nationally. However, VIPSG is affiliated with the Tennessee Council of the Blind (TCB), which is an affiliate of the American Council of the Blind, (ACB).

**ARTICLE II - Purpose**

The purpose of VIPSG shall be:

- a. To expand the social, economic, and cultural opportunities for blind and visually impaired person across the nation, and to encourage and assist such persons in becoming more active, productive, and responsible members of the community, state, and nation.
- b. To enhance the awareness of education and rehabilitative services available to blind and low vision persons.
- c. To inform such persons of available opportunities and services in education, employment, recreation, and other areas of common concern.
- d. To inform the public of the capabilities and accomplishments of blind and low vision persons and of the necessity of providing specialized education to enable such persons to meet their full responsibilities as citizens of the State and Nation..

**ARTICLE III - Membership**

VIPSG members must be at least eighteen years of age to vote and hold office. The majority of the total membership shall be low vision or legally blind. Membership period shall be January 1 through December 31 of each year. Members who join VIPSG after April 1 of any year must have all dues paid no later than thirty days prior to the beginning of the TCB state conference and convention.

**Section 1: There shall be the following classes of memberships.**

- a. **Annual Members**

Any person having an interest in the purposes of VIPSG, TCB or ACB may become an annual dues paying member. Dues shall be submitted to the VIPSG treasurer along with a completed membership form. Annual dues may be collected anytime during the year, however any dues collected for new memberships after August 1st and before December 31st shall extend to the following membership period.

**b. Life Members**

A person may become a life member by the payment of an amount set by the membership or the Board of Directors. A life member shall be entitled to all rights and privileges given to annual members. The VIPSG Board may bestow a life membership to any member providing services or support in an amount equal to or greater than that amount set for life membership.

**c. Junior Membership**

An individual under the age of eighteen expressing an interest in VIPSG may become a junior member by paying a minimal amount of dues to be determined by the membership. Junior members shall be entitled to all rights and privileges of the membership except those of voting and holding office.

**ARTICLE IV – Dues**

All members who have not paid for a life membership shall pay annual dues to the VIPSG treasurer between January 1 and March 1 of each year. Dues collected shall include that amount required by TCB annually for membership. Any member who has paid that amount established for life member shall not be required to pay dues.

**ARTICLE V - Chapters**

**Section 1: Affiliation**

Any organized group of five or more person, a majority of whom are legally blind, desiring to be affiliated with VIPSG and its affiliated organizations shall submit a list of its officers and members to the VIPSG Secretary. When VIPSG Board approves the application, its secretary shall issue a certificate of acceptance to the chapter.

**Section 2: Annual Dues**

The chapter secretary and/or treasurer shall submit annually the per capita dues required and a current list of members that includes all requested information to the secretary and treasurer of VIPSG. Required information shall be:

- A. First and last name of each member,
- B. Complete mailing address, including city and state and zip code.
- C. Email address
- D. Phone number
- E. Vision status
- F. Preferred format for documents

### **Section 3: Chapter Constitution**

When a chapter is certified, a copy of its constitution and bylaws must be filed with the VIPSG secretary.

### **Section 4: Rights of Chapters**

Each chapter shall retain possession of its real and personal property. Chapters may collect additional dues above those required to be affiliated with VIPSG.

## **ARTICLE VI - Officers and Their Duties**

### **Section 1: Officers**

The officers of VIPSG shall be president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and Immediate past president. The president and vice-president shall be legally blind. An individual may be elected or appointed to hold more than one office. However, the president may not hold the office of vice-president at the same time serving as president.

### **Section 2: Duties of the President**

It shall be the duty of the president to preside at all meetings of VIPSG, to appoint committees, and to perform other customary duties of the office. Additional duties may be outlined in the Bylaws.

### **Section 3: Duties of the Vice-President**

It shall be the duty of the vice president to perform the duties of the president in his/her absence. Additional duties may be outlined in the Bylaws.

### **Section 4: Duties of the Secretary**

It shall be the duty of the secretary to record all proceedings of VIPSG, to keep a current roll of the members, to attend to all correspondence necessary in discharging the business of VIPSG, and to perform other duties as may be required or outlined in the bylaws.

### **Section 5: Duties of the Treasurer**

It shall be the duty of the treasurer to collect all funds, to pay all outstanding bills, to keep a record of expenditures of VIPSG, and to report annually.

## **ARTICLE VII - Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors shall consist of the five constitutional officers and from three to nine directors elected from the membership.

### **Section 1: General Supervision**

The Board shall have general supervision over the affairs of VIPSG between annual business meetings. It shall study, formulate, and recommend policies and carry out the actions directed to it by the membership at any VIPSG annual business meeting and perform other functions as required.

### **Section 2: Budget**

The Board shall present a proposed budget to the membership at the annual VIPSG business meeting. However, in case of a reasonable or unexpected expense, the board, by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting, a quorum having been established, may exceed the approved budget.

## **ARTICLE VIII - Elections and Terms of Office.**

Officers shall be elected in even numbered years to hold a two-year term. Directors shall be elected in odd numbered years to hold a two-year term. Terms of officers and directors shall begin at the close of the annual business meeting at which they were elected. Persons being nominated shall be present at the election meeting.

### **Section 1: Term limits:**

Officers and Directors shall have no term limits.

### **Section 2: Resignations.**

Any resignation from the Board of Directors shall be submitted in writing to the secretary.

### **Section 3: Vacancies**

Any vacancy occurring between annual business meetings shall be filled on an interim basis by the Board of Directors, except for the office of president to which the vice president shall succeed. Election shall be held at the annual business meeting to fill the unexpired term.

## **ARTICLE IX - Disbursements of Funds**

All VIPSG funds shall be deposited in a bank or other financial institution recommended by the treasurer and approved by the Board of Directors. All disbursements shall be made in a timely manner. The president or his/her designated representative shall be a cosignatory on all VIPSG banking accounts and shall receive copies of all financial statements.

## **ARTICLE X - Meetings**

### **Section 1: Annual Business Meeting**

VIPSG shall hold an annual business meeting to conduct elections and other business. The annual business meeting may be combined with that of TCB's annual convention. The membership shall receive all pertinent information concerning the annual business meeting thirty days prior to the start of the annual business meeting.

### **Section 2: Board Meetings**

The VIPSG Board of Directors shall meet no less than quarterly.

### **Section 3: Special Meetings**

The president, two-thirds of the Board of Directors, and/or two-thirds of the membership may call for a special meeting of VIPSG at any time such a meeting is advantageous or deemed necessary, provided members are notified at least fifteen days prior to the special meeting.

### **Section 4: Quorum**

Fifteen members shall constitute a quorum for conducting business at the annual VISPG business meeting. Quorum for Board of Director Meetings shall be a simple majority. Quorum for Special Meetings of the Membership shall be fifteen members. Quorum for special and standing committees of VIPSG shall be a simple majority of that committee.

## **ARTICLE XI - Committees and Their Duties**

### **Section 1: The Credentials Committee**

This committee shall consist of the treasurer and secretary. the president shall appoint one additional member to this committee. Its duty shall be to determine those members who are eligible to vote. A list of eligible voting members shall be given to the VIPSG Secretary prior to roll call.

### **Section 2: The Nominating Committee**

This committee shall consist of no less than three members appointed by the president. Its duty shall be to recommend qualified candidates for the positions available at that year's election.

### **Section 3: The Constitution, Bylaws and Resolutions Committee**

This committee shall consist of no less than three members appointed by the president. Its duties shall be:

- a. To consider current issues affecting blind and visually impaired persons.
- b. To receive and present resolutions from the membership, and any changes to the constitution or bylaws.

### **Section 4: Membership Committee**

This committee shall consist of three or more members appointed by the president. The Membership Committee shall be responsible for developing and recommending activities to increase membership for consideration by the Board.

### **Section 5: Legislative Committee**

This committee shall consist of three to five members appointed by the president. The legislative committee shall be responsible for reporting to the membership on legislation affecting blind and visually impaired persons. It shall also recommend to the Board of Directors specific actions to be taken by VIPSG.

### **Section 6: Fundraising Committee**

This committee shall consist of three or more members appointed by the president. The Fundraising Committee shall be responsible for developing and recommending fundraising projects to the Board of Directors. It shall also recommend to the Board of Directors specific actions to be taken by VIPSG to raise specialized funding.

## **Section 7: Other Committees**

The president may appoint other committees deemed necessary to carry out the purposes of VIPSG with Board approval.

## **ARTICLE XII - Bylaws**

Bylaws, which may be deemed necessary for the interpretation and/or implementation of this constitution, may be adopted at the annual business meeting by a simple majority of the members present and voting.

## **ARTICLE XIII - Amendments**

This constitution may be amended at any annual business meeting by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of members present and voting. The proposed amendment shall have been presented to the entire membership no less than fifteen days prior to the start of the annual business meeting. It must be read to the membership one day prior to the day on which the final action is taken. Any proposed amendment may be considered immediately if unanimous consent is given.

## **ARTICLE XIV - Dissolution**

After two readings, this organization may be dissolved only at the annual business meeting by a four-fifths vote of the members present and voting. Upon the dissolution of the Visually Impaired Peer Support Group, all assets shall be distributed to an organization with similar purposes related to blindness that has received a Section 501(c)(3) Certification by the Internal Revenue Service.

## **ARTICLE XV - Parliamentary Reference**

ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER NEWLY REVISED shall govern the proceedings of VIPSG, provided that they do not conflict with this constitution.

## **ARTICLE XVI – Organization**

### **Registered Agent / incorporator**

Linda Allison  
6010 Lilywood Lane  
Knoxville, TN 37921

### **Initial Officers and Directors**

the following have been elected to serve as officers and directors for an initial period of four years.

**President**

Robert Spangler  
1505 W 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Vinton, IA 52349

**Vice President**

Stacy Douglas  
26 Calumet Court  
Uxbridge, MA 01569

**Secretary**

Ann Harrison  
P.O. Box 877  
Rochelle, GA 31079

**Treasurer**

Linda Allison  
6010 Lilywood Lane  
Knoxville, TN 37921

**DIRECTORS**

Kimberly Hurlburt - 569 Aris Ave. Metairie, LA 70005-2905

John Amato - 111 Moreau St. Morrisville, PA 19067-1236

Kathy Kent - 4923 N Sherman Blvd. Milwaukee, WI 53209-5244

Rhonda Lang - 3734 N 85th St. Milwaukee, WI 53222-2824

**Approved 07/29/2024**