



SAFDE BYLAWS

August 1, 2023

Article I: Organization

The name of this organization shall be Southeastern Association of Forensic Document Examiners and hereafter shall be referred to as SAFDE or the Association.

Article II: Purposes

1. To exchange ideas and information within the field of forensic document examination and to foster friendship and cooperation.
2. To encourage a high level of competency among professionals in the field of forensic document examination.
3. To promote recognition of forensic document examination as an important part of the justice system.
4. To encourage continued research in the field of document examination, to develop new techniques and to improve those currently in use.
5. To support the goals of the American Board of Forensic Document Examiners.

Article III: Areas of Activity

1. Establish and enforce a Code of Ethics.
2. Assist in the formulation of training programs for members of this organization.
3. Review and act upon pending legislation which appears to be related to the field whenever and wherever possible.
4. Organize and/or sanction meetings, symposia and discussions to further the exchange of information.

Article IV: Geographic Boundaries

The states that comprise SAFDE are: Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. All meetings shall be situated therein.

Article V: Membership

1. Charter Member

- 1.1. A forensic document examiner who attended Atlanta meetings held April 20, 1988 and July 25, 1988, both prior to the adoption of the initial Bylaws on November 4, 1988.

2. Regular Member

- 2.1. A practicing forensic document examiner employed or residing in the geographical boundaries of the Association who can demonstrate completion of a full-time two year training program (or the equivalent) recognized by SAFDE in Forensic Document Examination.
- 2.2. To qualify for Regular Membership, the applicant must:
 - 2.2.1. Possess an earned baccalaureate degree from a recognized institution of higher learning.
 - 2.2.2. Have attended at least one annual SAFDE meeting.
 - 2.2.3. Make at least one presentation during an annual SAFDE meeting.

3. Corresponding Member

- 3.1. Meets the requirements for Regular Membership but does not reside or work within the geographic boundaries of the Association.

4. Trainee Member

- 4.1. A student pursuing a full-time training program in forensic document examination recognized by SAFDE.
- 4.2. Trainee Membership shall expire one year after the end of the member's training program, at which time, the trainee may apply for Regular or Corresponding Member status.

- 5. When considering membership applications, SAFDE recognizes the currently published standard for minimum training for Forensic Document Examiners (e.g.,

SWGDOC and ASB) as containing the basic requirements for its new members and trainee members in the field of document examination.

6. All candidates for membership shall be sponsored by two (2) Forensic Document Examiners, one of which shall be a Charter or Regular Member of SAFDE.
 - 6.1. The sponsorship requirement for Trainee Members who are candidates for promotion to Regular Member is in addition to the sponsorship requirement for acceptance as a Trainee Member.
 - 6.2. For promotion to Regular Member, the sponsorship of a Trainee Member must be explicitly renewed by the original sponsors or new sponsors must be obtained.
7. A membership application shall be submitted to the Membership Committee at least two (2) months prior to a regular scheduled meeting.
8. Election to all classes of membership shall be by Membership Committee approval and an affirmative three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the eligible members who vote at the annual meeting.
9. It is the duty of each member to observe the Bylaws and Code of Ethics and to serve the purposes of SAFDE.
10. A member is required to maintain their correct membership status and to notify the Secretary in writing or via electronic mail of any change.
11. Suspension/Termination of Membership
 - 11.1. Any member may resign their membership by written request directed to the Secretary.
 - 11.2. A member may be terminated for non-payment of dues.
 - 11.3. A member may be suspended or expelled from the Association for:
 - 11.3.1. Unethical conduct.
 - 11.3.2. Conduct detrimental to the profession of Forensic Document Examination.
 - 11.3.3. Conduct detrimental to the welfare of the Association.
 - 11.4. Any person may initiate proceedings to expel a member for cause by petitioning in writing to the President.
 - 11.4.1. The President will refer the matter to the Ethics Committee.

- 11.5. An affirmative three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the eligible members, either at the annual meeting or by electronic ballot is required for suspension or expulsion of any member.

12. Reinstatement for Membership

- 12.1. Any member suspended or terminated may be readmitted only upon the filing of a new application which shall receive the same consideration as any other application.

- 12.1.1. The application must be submitted according to rules and regulations governing membership.

- 12.2. If terminated for nonpayment of dues, reapplication requires immediate payment of delinquent monies.

13. Member Responsibilities

- 13.1. Members shall attend an annual meeting at least once in any five (5) year period.

- 13.2. Members shall make a presentation, or act as Moderator, Workshop Chair, Program Chair or Site Chair, or serve SAFDE in some capacity acceptable by unanimous Executive Committee approval, at least once in any five (5) year period.

- 13.3. Charter members and members in retired status are exempt from these requirements.

- 13.4. The Executive Committee, by unanimous vote, may exempt members from this requirement on a case-by-case basis due to special circumstances.

14. A Charter, Regular, or Corresponding Member who has held membership for a minimum of 20 years, has reached the age of 60, and is no longer engaged in the active practice of forensic document examination on a salary or fee basis, may request retired status.

- 14.1. A written request providing justification for retired status must be made to the President at least thirty days prior to the annual meeting where the request will be considered.

- 14.2. The request for retired status must be approved by an affirmative three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the eligible members, either at the annual meeting or by electronic ballot.

14.3. The retired status of a member may be revoked by the Executive Committee if the member returns to the active practice of forensic document examination.

14.3.1. If retired status is revoked, the member will revert back to the membership status held prior to being given retired status.

Article VI: Dues

1. Members shall pay prescribed dues annually, except members in retired status who are exempt from the payment of dues.
2. Dues are payable by April 30th of each year, and if not paid by April 30th, shall be regarded in arrears.
3. A Member who is in arrears of their dues payment shall be assessed a \$10.00 late fee.
4. Following the April 30th due date, a Member in arrears will receive official notice by electronic means that their payment (including late fee) is past due.
5. Should the Member fail to fulfill their financial responsibility within ninety (90) days of the official notice being sent, the Executive Committee may, by a unanimous vote of the Committee, suspend the individual's membership.
 - 5.1. The Executive Committee will terminate the non-paying membership upon affirmation of a 3/4 majority vote of the eligible members, either at the next annual meeting or by electronic ballot.
6. The Treasurer shall issue one dues notice around October. A second reminder dues notice may be sent by March 31st to members who have not yet paid their dues.

Article VII: Officers

1. Officers of the Association shall consist of a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer.
 - 1.1. Officers shall be elected by majority vote of the voting members present at the annual business meeting or by electronic ballot.
 - 1.2. Officers shall hold office for two (2) years or until their successors have been elected and qualified.
 - 1.3. The elected President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer shall begin the two (2) year term starting July 1st after the election.

- 1.4. If the President is unable to complete the term for any reason, the Vice-President shall automatically be elevated to the office of President for the unexpired term.
- 1.5. If the Vice-President is unable to complete this term for any reason, the position will be held by the Secretary for the remainder of the term.
- 1.6. Only voting members may hold office.

2. President

- 2.1. The President shall preside at the business meetings and appoint necessary committees.
- 2.2. In the absence of the President, the Vice-President shall preside.
- 2.3. In the absence of both, the Secretary shall preside.
- 2.4. The President shall have, if necessary, power to sign checks.

3. Vice-President

- 3.1. The Vice-President shall have the authority to preside at business meetings in the absence of the President.
- 3.2. The Vice-President shall be designated as the Chairman of the Membership Committee.
- 3.3. The Vice-President shall be designated as the Chair of the Ethics Committee as needed.

4. Secretary

- 4.1. The Secretary, keeper of all appropriate records of SAFDE, shall record the minutes of the meetings and publish them in a report.
 - 4.1.1. The Secretary shall publish the minutes of the meeting within ninety (90) days after the meeting.
- 4.2. The Secretary shall be responsible for maintaining the SAFDE Bylaws and posting all changes.

5. Treasurer

- 5.1. The fiscal year shall be from the first day of January through the thirty-first (31st) day of December of each year.

- 5.2. The Treasurer shall receive all monies due SAFDE, keep accurate records of all transactions and present a statement to the membership.
- 5.3. All monies shall be deposited in a bank authorized by the Association as soon as possible.
- 5.4. The Treasurer is empowered to sign checks.
- 7. The files, books and records of the Association shall, at all reasonable times, be open to inspection and examination by any voting member.
 - 7.1. After an election, the past office holder must turn over all files, books, and records to the successor in office by June 30th.
 - 7.2. Upon vacating office for any other reason, the past office holder must immediately turn over all files, books and records to the successor in office.

Article VIII: Committees

1. Executive Committee

- 1.1. The Executive Committee shall consist of the President, Vice-President, Secretary and the Treasurer.
- 1.2. Any and all expenses chargeable to the Association must be approved through the Executive Committee.
- 1.3. No members of the Executive Committee or any appointed committee shall receive, directly or indirectly, any salary or compensation for their services.
- 1.4. The immediate past-President may attend as a non-voting member.

2. Membership Committee

- 2.1. The Membership Committee shall consist of a Chairman, who will be the Vice-President of the Association, and two (2) other voting members who will be appointed by the President.
 - 2.1.1. The Chairman shall produce, when needed, membership certificates for new members.
- 2.2. The Membership Committee shall fulfill all requirements concerning the membership of the Association as stated in these Bylaws.

3. Ethics Committee

3.1 The Ethics Committee, consisting of the Vice-President as chair, as well as three (3) voting members appointed by the President, shall be activated when action against a member is initiated.

- 3.1.1 If the Vice-President cannot participate, then the President will appoint a Chairman from amongst the voting membership.
- 3.1.2 Burden of proof is clear and convincing as defined in the most current version of Black's Law Dictionary.
- 3.1.3 The Ethics Committee must reach a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote in favor of a recommendation of action against the accused.

3.2. The Ethics Committee shall:

- 3.2.1. Investigate all written complaints of unprofessional conduct.
- 3.2.2 Allow the accused 45 days after the date of receipt of the written accusation to provide a formal written response, if they so choose.
- 3.2.3 Submit a written report and recommendation to the membership at the next business meeting of the Association.

4. Audit Committee

- 4.1. The Audit Committee shall be composed of the President, Conference Site Chairman, Program Chairman and one (1) member-at-large, who shall be appointed by the President.
 - 4.1.1. If the Treasurer is either the Conference Site Chairman or Program Chairman, the President will appoint a member-at-large to fill this committee.
- 4.2. At least one hundred and eighty days (180) prior to the annual meeting, the Treasurer will provide this committee with a current Treasurer's Report for Review.
- 4.3. The committee's findings will be reported to the Association at the Annual Business Meeting.

5. Nominations Committee

- 5.1. This Committee will be chaired by either the immediate past-president or a voting member designated by the current President.
- 5.2. At least two additional voting members will be designated by the current President.

- 5.3. These three or more members cannot be from the current Executive Committee.
- 5.4. This committee is responsible for preparing a slate of nominees willing to serve as President, Vice-President, Secretary or Treasurer.
- 5.5. The Nomination Committee will provide their slate of nominees at the business meeting where voting will occur.
- 5.6. Nominations from the floor at the meeting may be proposed and added to the slate of nominees.

Article IX: Meetings

1. Annual meetings will normally be held in the spring and consist of a business meeting and scientific sessions which may include workshops.
 - 1.1. The place and date of the meetings shall be selected in advance and shall be ratified by a majority vote of the membership at a regular business meeting or by electronic ballot.
 - 1.2. Attendance at annual business meetings may be restricted to the membership.
 - 1.3. Attendance at scientific sessions may be restricted to members and invited guests.
 - 1.4. Invitations to non-members to attend scientific sessions shall be extended by the Secretary only, at the request of a member via hard copy or electronic mail.
 - 1.4.1. Such invitations shall be subject to the approval of the Executive Committee.
2. Executive Committee meetings shall be held prior to each annual meeting unless extenuating circumstances dictate otherwise.
3. Unless otherwise ordered by a majority of the voting members present, the order of business at the annual meetings shall be as follows:
 - 3.1. Reading and Approval of Minutes.
 - 3.2. Reports of Officers, Boards and Standing Committees.
 - 3.3. Reports of Special (Select and Ad Hoc) Committees.
 - 3.4. Special Orders.
 - 3.5. Unfinished Business and General Orders.
 - 3.6. New Business.

6. *Robert's Rules of Order* shall determine the Parliamentary procedure of the meetings, insofar as they do not conflict with these Bylaws.
7. The contents of these Bylaws take precedent over Robert's Rules of Order.
8. These Bylaws shall become effective immediately upon adoption by the voting members, and the previous Bylaws are hereby replaced.

Article X: Voting

1. Eligible voters are defined as Charter, Regular, and Corresponding Members. Members in retired status retain voting eligibility.
2. A quorum to conduct business at any business meeting shall consist of at least thirty percent (30%) of voting members, whether present or by proxy.
3. An affirmative three-fourths (3/4) vote is needed to carry a motion.
4. Voting may be conducted by secret ballot if it is included in the motion.
5. Voting by proxy is permitted.
 - 5.1. Proxy vote will be accepted on the official SAFDE proxy form only.

Article XI: Code of Ethics

1. Members shall conduct themselves in a manner to reflect credit upon this profession. To that end each member shall pledge to conform to the Code of Ethics of the Southeastern Association of Forensic Document Examiners.
2. The Southeastern Association of Forensic Document Examiners has for its purpose the promotion of justice through the discovery and proof of the facts relating to questioned documents, and to maintain and advance the technical and ethical standards of the profession of document examination.
3. In furtherance of these aims and ideals each member of this organization pledges to abide by the following rules of conduct:
 - 3.1. To apply the principles of science and logic in the solution of all document problems and to follow the truth courageously wherever it may lead.
 - 3.2. To keep informed on all new developments and processes in document examination by constant study and research, with a full realization that accuracy is possible only through competence.
 - 3.3. To treat information received from a client as confidential; and when a matter has already been undertaken, to refuse to perform any services for any person whose interests are opposed to those of the original client, except by express consent of all concerned, or where required by established

administrative procedure or by law.

- 3.4. To render an opinion or conclusion strictly in accordance with the physical evidence in the document, and only to the extent justified by the facts. To admit frankly that certain questions cannot be answered because of the nature of the problem, the lack of material, or insufficient opportunity for examination.
- 3.5. To act at all times both in and out of court in an absolutely impartial manner and to do nothing that would imply partisanship or any interest in the case except the proof of the facts and their correct interpretation.
- 3.6. To give the best possible service in all cases, irrespective of the importance of the matter, and to decline to act in any case in which surrounding circumstances seriously restrict adequate examination.
- 3.7. To charge for services, when serving as a consultant, on a basis which considers the extent and character of services rendered, the importance of the matter, and the relationship of the problem submitted to the controversy as a whole. Remuneration shall be fair and equitable considering all the elements in the case. No engagement shall be undertaken on a contingent fee basis. Members employed by public agencies under an annual salary or contract shall be controlled in respect to monetary matters by policies within their organizations.
- 3.8. To make technically correct and conservative statements in all written or oral reports, testimony, public address, or publications, and to avoid any misleading or inaccurate claims.
- 3.9. To maintain a constant spirit of fairness, combined with high ethical, educational and technical standards, thereby promoting justice and creating increased confidence in the profession of document examination; and by exemplary conduct and scientific thoroughness carry out the aims and ideals of this organization.

Article XII: Amendments to the Bylaws

1. Any part of these Bylaws may be amended by an affirmative three-fourths (3/4) majority vote of the eligible members who vote at the annual meeting, provided a quorum is present and that all copies of each proposed amendment shall have been distributed to all voting members at least thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting at which action is to be taken.
2. Amendments may also be made in electronic form by an affirmative three fourths (3/4) majority vote of the eligible members who vote in between meetings, subject to approval by the executive committee.
3. Any changes balloted in this manner shall be given a forty five (45) day posting period to allow for comments and discussion.