



## **DRAFT CONSTITUTION OF THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS' ASSOCIATION (SOUTH AFRICA) – PROJOURN**

---

This Constitution was drafted by Michael Schmidt, the training director of frayintermedia, after discussions in 2004-2007 with former South African Union of Journalists shop-stewards. In 2008, he presented the concept to Mzi Memeza, general secretary, Southern African Journalists' Association on 5 February 2008, to the Council of the South African National Editors' Forum, which applauded the initiative, to Jane Duncan of the Freedom of Expression Institute, and to the Print Media SA board. This draft is being widely distributed to journalists, media trainers, media unionists, media academics, media monitors, and other bodies interested in a dynamic, independent and professional media for comment and input.

---

**Contact: Michael Schmidt 011-341-0767 / 082-334-6665 / [mschmidt@frayintermedia.com](mailto:mschmidt@frayintermedia.com)**

Professional Journalists' Association: draft  
Constitution

## **1. NAME**

The name of the association is the Professional Journalists' Association (South Africa) – or ProJourn for short.

## **2. LEGAL STATUS**

ProJourn is constituted under the laws of the Republic of South Africa as a voluntary, membership-based not-for-profit organisation.

## **3. SYMBOL**

The ProJourn symbol is a negative image of the letters PJA outlined in navy blue in three columns with the name ProJourn, which is spelled out in full beneath that as Professional Journalists' Association.

## **4. AIMS**

The Professional Journalists' Association promotes ethical, balanced and responsible reporting and analysis in South Africa in support of diversity and democracy, defends the rights of working journalists in their professional work and in their reflection of the voices of the South African people whom they serve, and argues for sound governmental and corporate policy relating to the gathering and dissemination of information. ProJourn is:

- a) a club for working journalists to debate the issues of the day;
- b) a lobby that advocates freedom in the gathering and dissemination of information, and for free speech generally;
- c) a hub of training and skills transference, especially to the disadvantaged, that will uphold the highest journalistic standards; and
- d) a defensive body that will protect journalists in danger, whether in the field, in the courts or in conditions of poverty.

Professional Journalists' Association: draft  
Constitution

## 5. MEMBERSHIP

Membership of ProJourn is open to all “working journalists,” who are defined broadly as newsroom staff. This includes journalists, columnists, editors, photographers, sub-editors, news editors, picture editors, supplement/section editors, camera operators, sound technicians, presenters, researchers, news cartoonists, news and analytical bloggers, independent writers, graphic artists and layout designers, whether full-time or freelance, whether they work in the mainstream or community media, and whether they work in print, broadcasting, online or other new media. The only conditions are that their work must have been aired or published within the past year – and they must agree with ProJourn’s Aims as set out in point 4 of this Constitution. Excluded from membership are non-editorial media staff such as printers, archivists, secretaries, cleaners, drivers, management personnel, and marketers. Also excluded are public relations officers and writers for in-house commercial or trade journals that lack editorial autonomy. However, regarding this exclusion, fair consideration shall be given to community and disadvantaged journalists who, while lacking editorial independence, seek to become fully fledged journalists. They will be encouraged by ProJourn to strive for editorial independence through training, mentoring and skills-transference programmes and may later be considered for membership. ProJourn reserves the right to determine who qualifies for membership. Applications for membership can be granted by the Secretariat, but if refused, the applicant may appeal to Congress for a final decision. There are three categories of membership:

- a) Individual membership: individuals may apply for membership on the basis of their being defined as a working journalist. Individual members are encouraged to retain their membership in media trade unions and may hold membership in other professional bodies so long as those bodies’ aims are not drastically at odds with those of ProJourn. Individual members pay dues and vote on an equal footing at Congress;

- b) Group membership: existing journalists' associations dedicated to specific fields of specialist coverage, or working under specific conditions such as those experienced by freelancers, or interest groups based on race, gender, ability or other concerns, may apply to ProJourn to affiliate en masse and form departments of ProJourn. Group members undertake to bring their internal policies into line with the policy decisions taken at ProJourn Congress. Group members pay dues as a group, but voting at Congress remains on an individual basis. Individual members who are members of associations not affiliated with ProJourn may only represent such groups within ProJourn if such status is accepted by Congress; and
- c) Associate membership: foreign correspondents based in South Africa, press clubs, media trade unions and other interested, journalism-related parties may apply for associate membership. Associate members have no voting rights and pay no dues yet are entitled to sit in on ProJourn Congresses as observers.

## **6. STRUCTURE & PROCEDURES**

ProJourn shall be structured so as best to serve its membership:

- a) ProJourn Secretariat: the secretariat's duties are the day-to-day management of ProJourn's affairs including its relations between members and affiliates. The Secretariat is an "executive" in the narrow sense of the word: in that while it is expected to exercise tactical flexibility in facing day-to-day issues, it has no long-term strategic policy-making powers. The Secretariat must consult jointly at least once a month. The Secretariat, all of whom must file written annual reports to Congress, consists of the following 11 members:
  - i) The General Secretary, whose duties are to act as the spokesperson of ProJourn, to promote goodwill between the Association and the public and to advance the cause of professional journalism and free speech at home and abroad;
  - ii) The Administrative Secretary, whose duties are the handling of all correspondence both internal

Professional Journalists' Association: draft  
Constitution

- and external, and the management of all administrative work as mandated by Congress;
- iii) The Treasurer, whose duties are the management of dues collection, the proper control of the ProJourn bank account, and the disbursement of monies as mandated by Congress;
  - iv) The Newspaper Delegate, whose duties are to represent the interests of newspaper journalists in the Association;
  - v) The Magazine Delegate, whose duties are to represent the interests of magazine and journal journalists in the Association;
  - vi) The Radio Delegate, whose duties are to represent the interests of radio journalists in the Association;
  - vii) The Television Delegate, whose duties are to represent the interests of television journalists in the Association;
  - viii) The Wire Service Delegate, whose duties are to represent the interests of wire service journalists in the Association.
  - ix) The New Media Delegate, whose duties are to represent the interests of online and mobile journalists in the Association;
  - x) The Freelance Delegate, whose duties are to represent the interests of freelance journalists in the Association; and
  - xi) The Community Media Delegate, whose duties are to represent the interests of community journalists in the Association.

All Secretariat members have equal voting powers. The Secretariat shall have the power to appoint non-voting Associate Member Delegates to sit in on Secretariat meetings and at Congress, whose duties are to represent the interests of non-voting Associate Members. The Secretariat shall be paid nominal stipends for its work to cover reasonable expenses such as travel for ProJourn purposes

at a rate to be determined by Congress, monies to be paid out of membership dues.

- b) ProJourn Congress: the Association's sole and supreme policy-making body is its annual Congress of all members in good standing. Congress shall meet at least once a year at a suitable venue, rotated through the provinces, and set ProJourn's strategic policy agenda for the following year.

The rules of Congress are as follows:

- i) The quorum is 51% of all paid-up members;
- ii) Congress shall elect a chair to facilitate a smooth flow of discussion and a minute-taker to keep accurate records of debates and decisions;
- iii) Congress shall be held in English as the most common language of media communication, with translation provided for non-English-speakers when necessary;
- iv) Congress shall hear and decide whether to accept, amend or reject the written reports prepared by the Secretariat;
- v) Congress shall establish the strategic line of the Association for the following year and is empowered to create publications whether hard-copy or electronic to publicise its Aims as envisaged in point 4 of this constitution;
- vi) All votes are by secret ballot, on an individual basis and have equal weight;
- vii) Absent members in good standing may authorise other members in attendance in writing prior to a vote to exercise a proxy vote so long as such proxy can be authenticated by Congress;
- viii) As far as possible, decisions should be reached by consensus, but failing that, a 51% majority is required to reach a decision;
- ix) All decisions of Congress are binding on all members, though minority factions may abstain from, but not actively block, carrying out majority decisions;

- x) Minority factions have the right to lobby for their positions in any internal ProJourn publications;
- xi) Congress shall determine membership dues on an equitable scale according to membership status: whether individual or group; whether full-time or freelance.
- xii) An Emergency Congress can be convened by the Secretariat between Congresses if so mandated by a poll of 51% of the membership, but no Emergency Congress has the power to amend this Constitution;
- xiii) Amendments to this Constitution or any motions to expel a group or individual member for breach of ProJourn's Aims in point 4 of this Constitution can only be made by a 2/3 majority of Congress;
- xiv) A member can, however, be suspended from membership by the Secretariat for alleged breach of ProJourn's Aims – and will be allowed to make their case openly before the membership in the official publications of the Association for reinstatement;
- xv) At the end of each Congress, members shall elect a new Secretariat – plus any other voluntary office-bearers, working groups or committees it deems necessary;
- xvi) Elected working groups or committees will submit written reports to Congress and may, like the Secretariat, draft proposed policy documents for submission to Congress, but may not alter Congress-mandated policy; and
- xvii) The full minutes of Congress shall be distributed to all members within one month of Congress.

## **7. DUES**

As a membership-based voluntary association that exists solely for the benefit of its members, and whose policies are set only by that

Professional Journalists' Association: draft  
Constitution

membership, ProJourn needs a nominal financial commitment by members to meet its mandates. So, Congress shall decide on a fair and equitable dues scale. Individual members in full-time employ shall pay more than freelance members. Temporarily unemployed members shall not pay dues until they are gainfully employed again. The collected dues shall be honestly and faithfully administered by the Secretariat in the person of the Treasurer. All monies belonging to ProJourn belong to its members and shall be used for the exclusive purpose of maintaining its activities in order to attain its aims.

## **8. AFFILIATION**

Under guarantee of the South African Constitution's right to freedom of association, ProJourn reserves the right to affiliate and associate with whatever local, regional or international bodies its Congress decides best serves its aims – and to disaffiliate or dissociate from those it decides do not.

---