

**THE ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY  
CENTER IN LOS ANGELES  
(E.C.L.A.)**

**DRAFT BY LAWS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

We Ethiopians and Ethio-Americans living in Los Angeles and the surrounding areas have willingly formed a renewed organization to withstand problems associated with our community in order to preserve our great cultural assets; to enhance gainful adaptations to the culture, laws and traditions of our new habitation; to create a strong community without any preference based on ethnicity, political opinion or religious beliefs; to coordinate, unite and expand the current services which are held by individuals or organized groups and enhance better results in delivery of service(s) to our community. As such, we have created this By-law and have resolved its passage on this day of .....

### **Chapter 1**

#### **(ESTABLISHMENT )**

**Section 1. Name: The name of the organization is** :ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY LOS ANGELES. (E . C. L. A)

**Section 2 . Jurisdiction of By-Laws:** This By-law applies to members who live in Los Angeles and the surrounding areas.

**Section 3. Working Language :** The working language of the E.C.L.A.is Amharic and English.

**Section 4 Address :** The headquarters of the E.C.L.A. will be located in the City of Los Angeles.

**Section 5. Translation:** In this By-law:

**5.1 Ethio- American:** Ethio-American means a person born in Ethiopia and is a citizen of the United States of America and a member of the E.C.L.A..

**5.2 Los Angeles and the Surrounding Area:** Los Angeles and the surrounding area means members of the E.C.L.A. living in cities located in Los Angeles , Orange, San Bernardino, Riverside, Ventura counties.

**5.3 Member :** Member means individuals that have fulfilled the obligations of membership requirements and includes those who are elected to hold office and perform duties of the E.C.L.A.

**5.4 Family:** Family means the member’s husband or wife , child(Ren) and the father and/or mother that live with him/her.

**5.5 Organization:** Organization means the E.C.L.A.

**5.6 E.C.L.A.:** E.C.L.A. means the Ethiopian Community Center in Los Angeles

**5.7 General Assembly:** General Assembly means the meeting of all individuals who meet the membership requirements and is the final ruling body of the E.C.L.A..

**5.8 Board :** Board means the eleven (11)elected members by the General Assembly

**5.9 Executive Committee:** Executive committee means members elected or assigned by the Board elected who execute the day to day work of the E.C.L.A.

**5.10 Director :** Director means a person elected or hired by the Board and is the authority for directing the work of the executive committee and represents the E.C.L.A.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **(OBJECTIVES)**

#### **Section 6**

##### **E.C.L.A.’s Objectives**

E.C.L.A. has the following objectives:

1. Enhance closeness among Ethiopians and Ethio-Americans and enable them to continuously develop their culture and enrich their history by creating a communal forum.

2. Create organizational strength without any preference based on ethnicity, political opinion, religious belief, age, etc. by all Ethiopians and Ethio-Americans who have accepted the by-laws and are working together to establish a strong community that defends our shared rights.
3. Devise ways and means to enable the sick, those affected by death and accidents, unemployed, handicap and the new Ethiopian arrivals to efficiently transition a life in their new environment.
4. Provide assistance to our community members in healthy living through education, training, physical education , recreation etc., and creating a community center
5. provide counseling and training to the youth of our community to avoid destructive cultures, criminal activities and addictions; provide assistance in rehabilitation.
6. Prepare and provide venue(s) where the elderly (fathers and mothers) relax and spend their day.
7. Provide defense by communally standing together when human rights abuse and lack of justice unfolds impacting members of our community.
8. Provide help and support to the youth in securing opportunities for free education and service (s).
9. Prepare programs to get educational assistance from health professionals in our community and doctor friends of our community.
10. Prepare and provide education to prevent/ cure our youth afflicted by autism , cancer and similar diseases

### **Chapter three**

#### **Source of Funds**

#### **Section 7 E.C.L.A. Source of Funds to meet its Objectives**

1. Fund sources will be from membership registration and annual membership fees
2. Preparation of different fund-raising events
3. Funds from government and donors for the E.C.L.A.'s project proposals.

4. Financial support from the good will of individuals and members of the E.C.L.A

### **Section 8 : Membership Contributions/Dues**

- 1. Individuals who accept the by-laws of E.C.L.A. and want be members of the association will pay \$10.00 per person and \$15.00 per family for registration.**
2. Annual fee for registration for individuals is \$40.00 and for a family is \$60.00 and can be paid at once by those who can afford and have the desire to do so.
3. It can also be paid every quarter (three months) at \$10.00 per person or \$15 per family.

Enter (60) in the box, and then 45,30, 15, 5 give a custom amount in descending order

Payments schedule(s)

First quarter	January (1-10)
Second quarter	April (1-10)
Third quarter	July (1-10)
Fourth quarter	October (1-10)

4. United States (U.S.A) laws provide that retired members will have a 50% discount for registration and membership fees.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Organizational Structure, Powers and Duties**

**Section 9 . General Assembly :** The general assembly is a meeting held by members in good standing and who promote the goals of the E.C.L.A. with the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Is the final decision-making body of the E.C.L.A.

2. Elects the audit and control committee members and the board eleven (11) members.
3. Meets once a year to hear the execution of duties and financial reports from the executive , the Board, and the audit and control committee members and makes decisions and gives directives.
4. Holds an emergency meeting of the general assembly when the Board chairperson calls it.
5. Will fill vacant positions by elections.
6. Approves the yearly budget, ensures the budget approval is executed according to the by-laws of the E.C.L.A., approves the by-law and improves the existing one as needed.
7. If more than fifty percent (50 %) of the members are present, it meets the minimum requirement of a general assembly meeting (quorum). If a quorum requirement is not met, and three fourth(3/4) or 75% of the members present decide to continue with the agenda , the meeting will proceed. However, there has to be ten (10 %) of all members present on that day for the meeting to proceed.

## **Section 10 : The Board**

The E.C.L.A. Board has eleven (11)members elected by the general assembly meeting and is the higher body that ensures the activities of the E.C.L.A. follows the by-laws and the duties and responsibilities are:

1. Ensures that activities taken by the executive committee follows the by-laws.
2. Makes certain that the properties and finance of the E.C.L.A. are handled and applied appropriately.
3. Elects members of the executive committee
4. Makes sure the external communications by the executive committee don't contradict the goals of the E.C.L.A.
5. Reviews, examines and approves long and short term project proposals submitted by the executive committee.
6. Meets every three(3) months to hear the report of the executive committee activities; directs corrections and improvements to be made on the report, devises methods to strengthen the organization and follows up and studies ways to empower conscious participation of members

7. Examines and approves payments prepared by the executive committee for short and long term plans, budget , project proposals
8. Meets every three (3) months to hear work activity reports by the executive committee ; makes improvement on the report and provide directives ; study devises ways to strengthen the organization by increasing the conscious participation of the E.C.L.A.
9. Approves temporary and permanent employee hiring and pay presented by the executive committee. This will be implemented when the organization is financially able.
10. Prepares rules and regulations to govern itself in ways that does not contradict the by-laws of the E.C.L.A
11. Approves expenses that are greater than \$3000.
12. When its term ends, the exiting board will collaborate/participate for six (6) months with the new board to enable continuity .

**Section 11. The Board Chairperson:** The Board chairperson is elected by the general assembly and is accountable to the Board and the general assembly and the duties and responsibilities are:

1. Chairs and leads the board meetings.
2. Calls and chairs the regular and emergency meetings of the general assembly.
3. Ensures the board and the executive committee members perform their duties according to the by-laws.
4. Encourages the board and the executive committee members and the director perform their duties/responsibilities with competency and determination.
5. Assigns members in different committees by following the executive committee and director by-law requirements and implements them after approval by the board members.

**Section 12 Vice-Chairperson of the Board:** The Vice Chairperson of the Board is elected by the general assembly and is accountable to the Board and the general assembly and the duties and responsibilities are:

1. Acts and functions as the chairperson in the absence of the board chairperson on functions and duties that are similar as the chairperson
2. Performs the administrative and control functions given by the board chairperson.

**Section 13 The Board Secretary** :The Board secretary is elected by the general assembly and is accountable to the Board and the general assembly and the duties and responsibilities are:

1. Communicates calls for regular and emergency meetings following the directive of the board chairperson.
2. Takes minutes of the board and general assembly meetings.
3. Reads and gets approval of past meetings at every meeting of the board and ensures approval of the past meeting minutes.
4. Performs the duties of the board secretary, and hold all records, documents and reports.
5. Keeps records of every member of the E.C.L.A.
6. Prepares inbound and outbound letters and when signed by the chairperson sends them to the intended parties.
7. Performs all duties as assigned by the board chairperson

**Section 14. The Public Relations Officer:** The Public Relations Officer is elected by the general assembly and is accountable to the Board and the general assembly and the duties and responsibilities are:

1. Prepares current information on the organization activities and disseminate through people, flyers, radio , internet, media outlets and administers the E.C.L.A. website
2. Prepares video recordings of the general assembly, the board and executive committee and files them
3. Prepares videos of the main work of committees for dissemination to the community
4. Every six (6) months prepares a magazine for distribution to members
5. Prepares detail budget requirements for materials needed to perform the work and when approved implements them
6. Interviews responsible parties/individuals on current and timely topics/ information to distribute to members
7. Utilize volunteers in the committee willing to provide service and approval by the committee
8. Ensures approval of the director prior to dissemination of written or electronics interview(s), perform the duties asked by the director

**Section 15. The Treasurer** : The treasurer is elected by the general assembly and is accountable to the Board and the general assembly and the duties and responsibilities are:

1. The treasurer dutifully controls revenues and expense of the E.C.L.A.
2. Ensures and follows up that the membership registration and annual fees are paid
3. Ensures the director or the board has approved and signed prior to expenses (invoice) are paid
4. Ensures that revenues or money coming to the organization is recorded and receipt(s) that have numerical sequence and emblem of the organization are provided to the sender.
5. Ensures that any and all revenue (money) received by the organization is deposited within twenty-four (24) hours the E.C.L.A. bank.

**Section 16. The Audit Committee** The audit committee is a three (3) member group selected by the general assembly and consists of an accountant, a professional property manager and an administrator and the duties and responsibilities are:

1. Prepares the finances, accounts and property rules for the board's approval after which it allots the work to the responsible parties.
2. Provides reports every six (6) months or as necessary that the executive expenditures (finance and accounts) follow the by-laws.
3. Prepares a detailed report to the board, the executive and the general assembly once a year.
4. Conducts audits on accounts and completed work as necessary and notifies the board or the general assembly.
5. Prepares a report that will be signed by both the in-coming (new) and departing officials two months prior to the end of the board and the executive terms of service.
6. Ensures that all functions of the E.C.L.A. are performed according to the by-laws and within budget and time set for planned projects.

**Section 17 The Executive Committee:** The Executive Committee is elected by the board and performs the day-to-day work of the E.C.L.A. and is answerable to the board. The duties and responsibilities are:

1. Retains the registration list of all members

2. Enrolls members of the organization
3. Is the legal representative of the E.C.L.A and performs negotiation and public relations on behalf of the E.C.L.A.
4. Drafts plans to strengthen the E.C.L.A and implements it after approval by the board
5. Prepares reports every three months on its activities and presents it to the board
6. Ensures members of the organization are provided services according to the by-laws
7. Prepares the organizations yearly budget and work plans and presents it to the board for approval and implementation
8. Hires the temporary and permanent employees and supervise them as approved by the board
9. Devises ways and means to raise funds and material to meet the financial needs and implementation of goals of the E.C.L.A. and execute them when approved by the board
10. Performs audits on financial and work performance as necessary and notifies the board or the general assembly.
11. Prepares an audit report two months prior to the end to board and executive committee terms, ensures the document of transference is signed by the new incoming and exiting officers
12. Ensures all work performed follows the by-law , including timely completion of plans and projects
13. Ensures members of the organization get service and meet their obligations adhering to the by-laws
14. Prepares the annual budget and work plans and presents it to the board and implement them after board approval
15. Hires temporary and permanent workers and administer them
16. Design ways for fund raising and material acquisition to implement the E.C.L.A. goals and implement them after board approval
17. Forms temporary committees as necessary for urgent work and proceed to implement after board approval
18. Ensures keeping finance and property records of the organization securely.
19. Reviews the activities of committees and gives directives at the executive committee meeting conducted at least once a month
20. Ensures the presence of committee coordinators, the secretary and director are present at the executive meetings and when necessary invite other committee members involved in the matter

21. Presents expenses that exceed \$3000.00 to the board for approval ; implements expenditure after approval by the board
22. The director calls and leads the executive committee meeting and half (1/2) of the committee members need to be present to meet the minimum requirement (quorum).

**Section 18. The Director** The director of the E.C.L.A. is elected by the general assembly or hired by the board and is answerable to the board; the director's duties and responsibilities are:

1. Administers and leads the activities of the executive committee.
2. Chairs the executive committee meetings.
3. Participates on the board meetings but cannot cast votes.
4. Represents the E.C.L.A. in public relations and negotiates on behalf of the E.C.L.A.
5. Makes sure members of the executive committee perform their duty and carry their responsibilities according to the by-laws.
6. Confirms plans and projects timeliness completion.
7. Encourages committee members to consult with each other and work with understanding and harmony.
8. Makes sure the finance and property of the E.C.L.A. is handled properly and when mishandling of work and waste is noticed, take corrective action(s).
9. Sends operating expense instruction letters to the coordinator of the finance and audit committee(s); signs on the bank check(s).
10. Prepares internal directive (s) on steps to discipline committee members
11. A majority (50%) of committee members must reach agreement on the directive and approved by the board, to implement it.
12. Will perform other board assigned duties.

**Section 19. The Secretary** The secretary is elected by the general assembly or hired by the board ; directs and administers the secretarial work of the executive committee and is answerable to the director. The Secretary's Duties and Responsibilities are:

1. Receives expense and revenue letters and distributes them to the concerned bodies, files them in an orderly and sequential manner.
2. Retains and safeguards records of members.
3. Will call meetings of the executive committee when the director permits them; will take minutes of the meetings and files the meeting documents chronologically.

4. Will plan the schedule of the E.C.L.A.'s secretary office hours and when approved by the committee will implement and confirm their execution.
5. Will identify the material needs of the office in detail and request a budget for it.
6. Will follow-up and report to the director that the planned projects are performed within budget and in the time allocated.
7. Will perform other duties as assigned by the director.
8. In the absence of the director, will perform his/her duties as acting director.

**Section 20. On Establishing Different Committees** The E.C.L.A. Board or the Executive committee can get work performed by establishing permanent or temporary committees that provide free service (s).

1. Any committee, task force or sub-committee established to perform any work is answerable to the body that forms it
2. Committees for issues regarding legal and social matters, health, sports, education, training, women and children , youth, elderly can be formed and when necessary volunteers that have the skill set to form these committees can be done by invitation.
3. The board can dissolve/disband any of the committees, sub committees or task force(s) when it finds it unnecessary.

**Section 21. Planning and Project Study Committee**

The **Planning and Project Study Committee** is established by the Board and assembles professionals to study plans and work out budgets for projects ; designs the organization's long and short term plans and projects and is answerable to the director.

The duties and responsibilities are:

1. Prepares the E.C.L.A.'s annual budget by organizing the needs identified by every committee.
2. Prepares long term plans cognizant with the need and development of the E.C.L.A.
3. Comes up with project ideas and when approved by the executive committee and the board , prepares detailed studies and follows up and confirms the studies are sent to donors.

4. Follows up on the completion of approved projects and that the report on the completion of the project(s) are sent to the donors based of the agreement(s) and in a timely manner.
5. Studies in detail the government and non-government organizations that can support the E.C.L.A. and send these proposed projects to them after approval.
6. Performs other duties assigned by the director.

**Section 22. Legal and Social Affairs Committee** :The legal and social affairs committee is established by the board and recruits volunteers from legal professions that can provide an extensive service to the E.C.L.A. members on problems associated with family issues , immigration and legal matters. The legal and social affairs committee is answerable to the director and the duties and responsibilities are:

1. Provides appropriate support and advice to members who are victims of unemployment, health issues , old age or gender problems. Contacts government and non-government organizations to provide appropriate support to members who have problems and difficulties. Accustom newly arriving Ethiopians to their new surroundings by providing moral support; introducing to other Ethiopians, direct and advise them on how to seek employment and when necessary , study on how to provide financial and material support and when approved, implements the support measures.
2. Provides advice and service to members and their families with immigration problems.
3. Prepares and leads Ethiopian holiday events.
4. Performs other duties assigned by the director.

**Section 23. Health and Sport Committee** : The health and sport committee is elected by the board and organizes volunteer doctors and nurses and sport professionals to provide service to members of the E.C.L.A. and is answerable to the director. The duties and responsibilities are:

1. Prepares educational materials and notices on problems of health; educate members by disseminating the information through different media outlets.

2. Studies health problems associated with our community and provides appropriate materials/documents to control and shield members from these health problems.
3. Prepares ways for free health services to members, who for different reasons are unable to get health service(s). Studies and prepares brochures on group insurance(s) at low cost and give the information to members

**Section 24 Education and Training Committee** :The coordinator of the education and health committee is elected by the board and constitutes volunteers who provide computer training and language improvements (English, Amharic) to the youth. It is answerable to the director and the duties and responsibilities are:

1. Trains new members to improve their English.
2. Provides training in computer usage for members who seek them.
3. Provides the youth and children in reading and Ethiopian languages.
4. Educates the youth about the unique culture and history of Ethiopia.
5. Prepares material and budget needs to do the work.
6. Performs other duties assigned by the director.

**Section 25. Women and Children Committee** The coordinator of the women and children committee is elected by the board and elects two volunteers to work under his/her supervision ; focuses on working on women and children issues and is answerable to the director. The duties and responsibilities are:

1. Identifies , studies and find ways to provide assistance to female members on problems associated with their gender.
2. Encourage women to organize .
3. Advise and if necessary assist in getting legal service to women who experience harassment and unfair treatment on their job or in their community.
4. Help women organize and prepare cultural and other work to create awareness to the community around them.
5. Prepares plans to help working or incapacitated parents for daycare and after- school - hour center(s) for their children; when approved and budget allocated implements the plan.
6. Performs other duties assigned by the director.

## **Section 26. The Youth Affair Committee**

The youth affair coordinator is established by the board and supervises two youngsters under it to perform duties focused on the youth and is answerable to the director. The duties and responsibilities are:

1. Creates awareness and mobilizes the youth to be members of the E.C.L.A.
2. Introduces and creates awareness in the youth to the Ethiopian culture and encourage their participation.
3. Provides information and create awareness to the youth to discourage them from detrimental cultures. Also invite accomplished students and sport figures who can be role models to the youth; organize youth events and notify the community through the media.
4. Coordinates art and cultural events to encourage the youth to become respectful to their culture, family and their countrymen.
5. Coordinates youth volunteer work (in their spare time) to tutor children that have difficulties in their studies.

**Section 27. Elders Affair Coordinating Committee : The coordinator of the **elders affair coordinating committee is elected by the board and is answerable to the director and has the following duties and responsibilities:****

1. Creates a center for the care of the elderly; prepares plans and requirements necessary to create the center.
2. Provides educational and uplifting advice and encouragement for the elderly's physical and spiritual strength.
3. When elders are sick or have other difficulties, the coordinator follows-up by paying visit to uplift them spiritually and strengthen them.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **( MEMBERSHIP )**

**Section 28 Membership Requirements:** To become a member of the E.C.L.A. the following requirements must be met:

1. Must be Ethiopian , Ethiopian-American or married to one of them.
2. Must understand the by-laws of the E.C.L.A. and has completed the registration form.
3. Must have paid the annual dues.
4. Must be 18 years of age or over.

**Section 29. Membership Rights:** A member has the right to get service by the E.C.L.A. according to the by-laws and has the right to participate in meetings with freedom of expression. It also:

1. Has the right to elect his/her leaders and be elected according to the by-laws.
2. Has the right to become a member if the individual cannot pay membership dues as a result of sickness, accident, unemployment etc.,

### **Section 30. Membership Responsibilities**

**A member must:**

1. Be present and attend meetings.
2. Respect the by-laws of the E.C.L.A.
3. Pay annual dues following the by-law requirement(s).
4. Properly use the E.C.L.A. service and property .
5. Provide unpaid service in committee(s).

### **Section 31 Actions that result in Expulsion from the Organization**

If a member without adequate reason(s) fails to meet the requirements detailed in Section 28 of this by-law on three consecutive occasions, he/she will be expelled from the organization.

1. Prior to expulsion, a member will receive a notice to improve the deficiency in a letter from the executive committee with time limit twice. If the member fails to meet the notice requirements in the time allocated , he/she will receive a letter of dismissal from the E.C.L.A..

2. Once is expelled, none of the fees paid to the organization by the member will be reimbursed.
3. Once a member is expelled and applies for a membership for the second time, a \$30.00 penalty fee will be charged and a second and final chance will be given to him/her for membership registration.
4. If a member imposes his/her personal political, religious , ethnic...etc., views and there is evidence to show that, he/she will be expelled from the organization.
5. The E.C.L.A. is not obligated to provide service to individuals not registered as members or who have the means but fail to meet their membership requirements.

## **Chapter 6**

### **(Miscellaneous Provisions )**

**Section 32. Election and Voting Procedures:** Prior to any elections, it is important to ensure that membership requirements of candidates have been fulfilled and that the candidates are fit to elect and be elected.

1. Members cast their vote in writing by secret ballot prepared for the election(s).
2. **The board will give the necessary cooperation to the election committee in order for the election to be held correctly/acceptably.**

### **Section 33**

**The Election Committee:** A month prior to the elections, the board will organize a five (5) member election committee and the election committee has the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Will receive nominations of individuals for the election committee from members. Nominees should have the desire, ability and competency to become members election board.
2. After the election committee completes the willingness and competency on the nominees, it will announce the nominee names and the positions they are competing for to the members of the E.C.L.A.

3. The election committee will encourage the candidates to introduce themselves using the media and prepares debates between the competing candidates.
4. Will call a general assembly and openly conduct the elections; candidates who have the majority votes will be the winners and the results will be announced to the members at the meeting of the general assembly.
5. The election committee verifies that the elections are held fairly and appropriately and announces to the membership the verification, counting and results of the votes; the election committee prepares the elected officials to get ready for the goals set by the E.C.L.A..

**Section 34 The Board Members Election** :The Board, Executive and the Finance and Audit committees are elected every three (3) years and will be conducted on ----- month on the first Saturday.

**Section 35 The duration of Service** : Duration of service for those elected by the general assembly of the E. C.L.A. (the board, Audit & control, )is three (3) years. Leaders who want or are nominated to compete for a second term can do so. A member of a committee cannot compete for election more than two (2) consecutive times.

**Section 36 Improvements on this By-Law**: This by-law can be changed or improved as necessary. Also:

1. This by-law can be changed or improved when 2/3 of the board members request it and requires the presence and agreement of 2/3 of members present at the general assembly meeting.

**Section 37.The E.C.L.A. Dissolution**: To dissolve or shut down the E.C.L.A. the following conditions must be met:

1. Three-fourth ( $\frac{3}{4}$ ) of the members in the general assembly agree and vote to dissolve the organization
2. If dissolution is decided the identified E.C.L.A. debt must be paid and the legal obligations met. The remaining finance and property of the organization must be divided among similar donor or good will organizations in California.

### **Section 38. The Date when the By-Law Becomes Enforceable**

1. This by-law becomes enforceable starting on -----

**Section 39. Translation:** When this English version of the by-law is not in congruence and does not meet the correct interpretation with the Amharic version, the Amharic version will be enforceable.