

Standing Rules of the Judicial Branch

2025-2026

Undergraduate Student Government (USG)

The Ohio State University

*For the purposes of establishing conduct and order within the USG Judicial Branch, these rules
are herein created.*

July 30, 2025

SUBMITTED BY Matthew Okocha, CHIEF JUSTICE PRESIDING

I: Acknowledgement of Superseding Documents

i. All rules contained herein are superseded by and shall not conflict with the USG Constitution and Bylaws.

II: Membership to the Judicial Panel

i. The process for membership to the Judicial Panel shall proceed as follows:

- a. There shall be a period of at least one (1) month, occurring between the commencement of classes and the last day of October, during which applications to the Judicial Panel will be open.
 - i. In the event of a vacancy on the Judicial Panel, a special application period shall be opened. This period must last no fewer than fourteen (14) days. The Chief Justice shall coordinate with the Executive Branch to initiate this process. This process will adhere to the Constitution, with Justices being appointed by the Executive Branch and confirmed by two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) of the General Assembly via the form of a resolution.
 1. A vacancy shall be defined as the impeachment, retirement, or any other circumstance in which a Justice is no longer able to carry out their duties on the Judicial Panel.
- b. Following the review of applications, a two-week (2) period will ensue during which the Chief Justice will collaborate with the President and Vice President of the Executive Branch to conduct in-person interviews for each applicant who passes the initial review.
- c. Applicants will be evaluated based on their demonstrated commitment to impartiality, leadership, and a willingness to uphold the values of the Judicial Panel as outlined in the USG Constitution.
- d. The selection of new members shall be finalized no later than two (2) weeks after the conclusion of interviews, with formal notification given to all applicants regarding the decision.
- e. All newly confirmed Justices and Clerks shall affirm their commitment to impartiality and procedural integrity through an Oath of Office administered by the President.
 - i. In accordance with the USG Constitution, the Oath of Office for Justices of the Undergraduate Student Government Judicial Panel shall be:
 1. *I promise to faithfully execute the office of the Undergraduate Student Government Judicial Panel Justice and to render fair, impartial decisions based on evidence presented.*
- f. New members of the Judicial Panel shall undergo a mandatory one (1) week orientation period where they will be briefed on procedures, decorum, the responsibilities of their roles, and the process of recusal in the event of conflicts of interest.
- g. As stipulated in the Constitution, while the responsibility of ensuring that the Judicial Panel is fully staffed lies with the Executive Branch, there shall be open communication between the Judicial and Executive Branches throughout the process to promote transparency.

ii. The Chief Justice is the presiding officer of the Judicial Panel and the Judicial Panel of Appeals.

- a. The Chief Justice is responsible for overseeing all Judicial Panel operations, including moderating hearings, coordinating application and interview processes, assigning Justices to cases, enforcing recusal and decorum rules, and issuing procedural rulings during hearings and appeals.
 - i. To moderate a hearing, in this context, means to preside over the proceeding by calling it to order, facilitating the orderly presentation of arguments and evidence, recognizing

speakers, managing time limits, enforcing rules of decorum, ruling on procedural matters, and adjourning the hearing upon its conclusion.

- b. The Chief Justice also serves as the official spokesperson for the Judicial Branch and retains final authority over procedural questions not explicitly addressed in these Standing Rules.
- c. The Chief Justice may write majority opinions for both the Judicial Panel and the Judicial Panel of Appeals, provided they participated in the hearing and are not otherwise conflicted.
- d. The Chief Justice, in addition to these duties, retains all rights and responsibilities held by any other Justice.

III: Clerks of Court

- i. Clerks of Court shall be selected following an application and interview process. The Chief Justice, in consultation with the Executive Branch, shall appoint Clerks to facilitate the Judicial Panel's operations, improve the quality of rulings, and act as liaisons between outside parties and the Judicial Panel. Final decisions regarding the appointment of Clerks shall rest with the Chief Justice, who shall present selected candidates to the General Assembly for final confirmation.
- ii. Clerks of Court may be removed by a majority vote of the Judicial Panel in cases of misconduct, failure to perform assigned duties, or other breaches of responsibility.
- iii. Clerks of Court shall have the following responsibilities:

Pre-Hearing Responsibilities:

- a. Act as liaisons between the Judicial Panel and all outside parties.
- b. Schedule a time and place for all hearings.
- c. Notify all parties, the Judicial Panel, the Judicial Panel of Appeals, and officers of the court of scheduled hearings.
- d. Receive and distribute all briefs submitted to the Judicial Panel and Judicial Panel of Appeals.

In-Hearing Responsibilities:

- e. Research relevant precedent prior to hearings and brief the Judicial Panel on facts, evidence, and relevant precedent.
- f. Ensure that all parties and witnesses remain accessible and informed during hearings.

Post-Hearing Responsibilities:

- g. Assist the Judicial Panel in writing opinions when requested.
- h. Compile written opinions and prepare official records of the Judicial Panel.
- i. Any other duties necessary for the facilitation of the Judicial Panel's operations.

- iv. Clerks of Court shall arrange designated meeting areas for parties and witnesses and provide them with contact information, including phone numbers and email addresses.
- v. Clerks of Court shall retain the same responsibilities for the Judicial Panel of Appeals.
- vi. The Chief Justice shall oversee all procedures followed by the Clerks of Court.
- vii. Clerks of Court shall not attend deliberations if they are parties in a hearing or have a conflict of interest.
- viii. All communication with the Clerk(s) of Court shall be made via the usgelections@osu.edu email.

IV: Hearing Bylaw Violations

i. All hearings for which the Judicial Panel has original jurisdiction shall be heard by the Chief Justice and four (4) Associate Justices. These Justices constitute the panel with original jurisdiction and shall participate in the hearing and adjudication processes for each case for which they are empaneled.

ii. This process shall apply only to alleged Type III, IV, and V bylaw violations, as defined by the USG Constitution and Bylaws. Alleged violations classified as Type I or II shall not be subject to a hearing by the Judicial Panel.

a. Any Justice, including the Chief Justice, who identifies a possible conflict of interest must recuse themselves from participation in the case. The Chief Justice reserves the authority to enforce a recusal if a conflict is evident. In such cases, the recused Justice shall be replaced by another Associate Justice selected at random.

i. A conflict of interest shall be defined as any personal, professional, or organizational relationship, bias, or prior involvement that could reasonably impair a Justice's ability to remain impartial in the case at hand.

b. The four (4) Associate Justices empaneled for each hearing shall be randomly selected through a process determined by the Chief Justice, following a review to ensure that all eligible Justices can participate without bias, conflict, or prior involvement in the matter at hand.

iii. Alleged violations of Type I or Type II bylaws, as defined by the USG Constitution and Election Bylaws, shall be reviewed by the full Judicial Panel, composed of the Chief Justice and no less than four (4) Associate Justices. Clerks may assist with administrative or procedural matters, per their outlined responsibilities, but shall not participate in deliberations or have a vote.

a. Upon receipt of a complaint, the Judicial Panel shall schedule a date for internal deliberation. Both the plaintiff and the defendant shall be notified of the deliberation date no later than seventy-two (72) hours in advance.

b. Each party shall be permitted to submit additional documentation, evidence, and/or written responses. All materials must be submitted no later than twenty-four (24) hours before the scheduled deliberation.

c. After reviewing all submitted materials, the Justices shall deliberate and render a decision by majority vote.

d. A written record of the panel's opinion, vote, and any issued sanctions shall be maintained for internal records.

e. Decisions made through internal deliberation shall be subject to appeal, consistent with the standard procedures for appealing Judicial Panel rulings.

f. In cases where a brief alleges both Type III, IV, or V violations (which are subject to a hearing) and Type I or II violations (which are not), the Justices who preside over the hearing shall also review and consider the Type I or II allegations as part of their deliberations. Evidence relevant to the Type I or II violations must be submitted alongside materials for the hearing and will be reviewed during the same timeline as the hearing proceedings. A separate internal deliberation will not be held.

iv. The Judicial Panel shall follow consistent and fair procedures within each category of bylaw violation, in accordance with the processes outlined in this section.

- v. The Chief Justice shall retain the authority to moderate all hearings and ensure proper decorum.
- vi. In the event of a conflict of interest, any Justice involved shall recuse themselves, and another Justice may be assigned to ensure the case is heard by a full panel.

V: Judicial Panel of Appeals

- i. The Judicial Branch of the Undergraduate Student Government shall consist of a single Judicial Panel composed of the same Justices, which shall exercise original jurisdiction for hearings and appellate jurisdiction when an appeal is submitted.
- ii. The Judicial Panel of Appeals shall consist of the Chief Justice, who shall not vote on the appeal, and three (3) Associate Justices, selected at random from those who did not participate in the original hearing and have no conflict of interest with the case.
 - a. The procedures outlined in Section IV(ii)(a) and IV(ii)(b) regarding recusals and the random selection of Associate Justices shall also apply to the empaneling of Justices for appellate hearings.
- iii. The faculty advisor of the Undergraduate Student Government who does not have a conflict of interest, may be present to hear appeals with full speaking privileges but without voting privileges.
 - a. In the event that the faculty advisor cannot attend, they reserve the right to delegate a representative from the Office of Student Life to attend in their place and in the same capacity. The Judicial Branch shall ensure this.
- iv. The Chief Justice shall moderate the appeals hearing.

VI: Decorum

- i. The hearings before this panel shall be respectful and orderly at all times.
 - a. Parties are expected to address the Chief Justice as “Chief Justice [last name]” and Associate Justices as “Justice [last name].”
 - b. Parties are expected to be punctual for all hearings. In the event of tardiness or absence, parties must notify the Clerk(s) of Court as soon as possible. Failure to do so may result in the hearings continuing without them, at the discretion of the Chief Justice.
 - c. All parties must follow instructions from the Chief Justice during hearings and refrain from any disruptive behavior, including but not limited to:
 - i. Interrupting speakers
 - ii. Using disrespectful or inflammatory language
 - iii. Demonstrating aggression or physical disruption
- ii. A breach of decorum may result in immediate removal from the hearing. The panel may continue to deliberate and render a decision even in the absence of the removed party.
 - a. In the event a party is removed, additional consequences may include:
 - i. Suspension from future Judicial Panel hearings.
 - ii. Disqualification from involvement in specific matters, depending on the severity of the breach.
 - b. Removal from the hearing due to a violation of decorum shall not be grounds for appeal.

iii. All hearings shall be open to the public and the press. While in-person attendance may be limited by room capacity, the Judicial Panel shall make every effort to provide a live stream of the hearing. The Chief Justice may grant exceptions to public access if it is determined that public access would be prejudicial to the integrity of the judicial process.

- a. All hearings that are open to the public must have a virtual option for the public, listed under the Judicial Panel Opinions page on the Undergraduate Student Government Website.

iv. If hearings are held virtually, all parties are expected to maintain the same level of decorum as in-person hearings. This includes dressing appropriately, participating from a quiet and professional environment, and following the same rules for addressing the Justices.

VII: Standards of the Courts and Rights of Parties

i. Standards of the Court:

- a. Beyond a Reasonable Doubt Standard – The Judicial Panel will evaluate claims based on whether it believes, beyond a reasonable doubt, that a violation occurred. This is the standard of proof that will be used for all claims and appeals.

- i. *Simplified Language*: "The panel will decide based on what it deems is true, beyond a reasonable doubt."

- b. Reasonable Person Standard – When there's a dispute over the facts, the Judicial Panel will use the reasonable person standard. This means they will consider how a typical person would act or think in a similar situation.

- i. *Simplified Language*: "The panel will decide how a reasonable person would act or think in the same situation when there's a disagreement over the facts."

ii. Rights of All Parties:

- a. Presumption of Innocence – The defendant (person accused) is presumed not in violation until proven otherwise by the Judicial Panel.
- b. Burden of Proof – The plaintiff (the person bringing the accusation) bears the burden of proving their case. In appeals, the appellant (the party challenging the decision) must demonstrate that the original ruling was flawed, either due to a procedural error, the emergence of previously unavailable evidence, or a disproportionate sanction.

- i. *Simplified Language*: "The person accusing must prove their case. If the decision is appealed, the person appealing must prove why the original decision was flawed."

- c. Both the plaintiff and the defendant must receive notice of the violations alleged and the hearing's time and location in advance.
- d. Both parties have the right to advisory counsel, but this counsel must be a current Ohio State undergraduate student. Each party can have only one (1) advisory counsel per hearing.
- e. All parties retain the rights guaranteed to them as students of Ohio State University.

iii. Rights of Defendants:

- a. The right to question the person accusing them and any witnesses.
- b. The right to refuse to answer questions without being presumed guilty.
- c. The right not to face a second hearing for the same accusation (no double jeopardy).

- i. Double jeopardy shall be defined as being subject to a new, separate hearing for an accusation that has already been fully adjudicated with a final decision. A remand of a case for procedural review, clarification, or reconsideration shall not constitute double jeopardy, as it is a continuation—not a duplication—of the original hearing. The numerical order or occurrence of a second hearing alone shall not be used to claim a violation of this right.
- d. The right to see all evidence and witness lists before the hearing. Plaintiffs must make all evidence and/or witnesses available to the Clerks of Court no later than twenty-four (24) hours prior to the hearing. All evidence and/or witnesses will be made available to the defendant(s) by the Clerks of Court no later than twenty-four (24) hours prior to the hearing.
 - i. The defendant may make no attempt to sway, intimidate, or pressure any witnesses. Any such actions shall be assessed against the defendant in their case and shall be referred to Student Conduct as well.
- e. If there are multiple people being accused in the same complaint, they have the right to separate hearings.

VIII: Notification

- i. Once a brief is filed, the Clerks of Court shall provide a copy of the brief to the accused (Defendant(s)) and the Chief Justice within twenty-four (24) hours of the filing.
- ii. The Defendant shall be given at least seventy-two (72) hours notice of the hearing date, time, and location.
 - a. If the offense occurs during the campaign window, then the defendant will be given at least a twenty-four (24) hour notice.
- iii. The hearing must be held within fourteen (14) business days of the brief being filed.
- iv. The Judicial Panel or Judicial Panel of Appeals shall issue a decision within one (1) academic week of the hearing.
- v. If the Defendant chooses to appeal the decision, they must do so within forty-eight (48) hours of receiving the decision from the Panel.
 - a. For appeals based on the discovery of substantial new evidence that was unavailable at the time of the hearing, the appeal must be filed within five (5) days of receiving the decision.

IX: Briefs

- i. Plaintiffs must submit briefs to the Clerks of Court when filing claims or appeals.
 - a. Each brief must include the following:
 - i. A cover page.
 - ii. The specific bylaw(s) alleged to have been violated. For appeals, the specific procedural error committed by the Judicial Panel.
 - iii. A short summary of the Plaintiff's case.
 - iv. A list of evidence and witnesses the Plaintiff intends to introduce.

- v. The relevance of all evidence and/or witnesses the Plaintiff intends to question during direct examination.
- vi. Any discussion of precedent that the Plaintiff wishes the Panel to examine prior to the hearing.
 - 1. Precedent shall be limited to cases decided within the three (3) academic years preceding the current hearing.
- vii. A conclusion summarizing the desired outcome.
- b. Briefs may be submitted in electronic format using the template provided on the USG website, however this format is not required.
- ii. Defendants may also submit briefs to the Clerks of Court.
 - a. Briefs submitted by the Defendant must follow the same format and guidelines as those submitted by the Plaintiff.
- iii. The submission of new evidence and updates to Plaintiff and Defendant briefs is permitted; however, all materials must be submitted to the Clerks of Court no later than twenty-four (24) hours prior to the scheduled hearing date.

X: Procedures for Hearings

- i. Commencement of Hearings – Hearings shall begin when the Clerk(s) of Court permits both parties to enter the courtroom. The hearing will officially begin when the Chief Justice calls it to order.
 - a. The Chief Justice shall serve as the chief spokesperson for the Judicial Panel and retain all powers necessary to ensure a fair and impartial judicial process, as granted by the USG Constitution and these Standing Rules.
- ii. Opening Statements – After the hearing is called to order, each party shall present their opening statements, beginning with the Plaintiff and followed by the Defendant.
 - a. Each party's statement shall be limited to seven (7) minutes.
- iii. Introduction of Evidence by the Plaintiff – After opening statements, the Plaintiff shall introduce their evidence, including witness testimony if applicable. All witness testimony shall be considered evidence.
 - a. The Plaintiff's presentation of evidence shall be limited to twenty (20) minutes. If additional time is needed, the Plaintiff may request an extension from the Chief Justice, who may allot additional time at their discretion.
- iv. Cross-Examination by the Defendant – The Defendant shall then cross-examine the evidence introduced by the Plaintiff, including witness testimony, where appropriate.
 - a. The Defendant's cross-examination shall be limited to twenty (20) minutes. If additional time is needed, the Defendant may request an extension from the Chief Justice, who may allot additional time at their discretion.
- v. Introduction of Evidence by the Defendant – After cross-examination, the Defendant shall introduce their own evidence, including witness testimony where applicable.
 - a. The Defendant's presentation of evidence shall be limited to twenty (20) minutes. If additional time is needed, the Defendant may request an extension from the Chief Justice, who may allot additional time at their discretion.

vi. Cross-Examination by the Plaintiff – The Plaintiff shall have the opportunity to cross-examine the evidence presented by the Defendant, including witness testimony.

- a.** The Plaintiff’s cross-examination shall be limited to twenty (20) minutes. If additional time is needed, the Plaintiff may request an extension from the Chief Justice, who may allot additional time at their discretion.

vii. Panel Inquiry and Investigation – After both parties have presented and cross-examined evidence, the Judicial Panel shall conduct an investigation phase. In this phase, both parties may request that the Panel inquire further into specific points of clarification based on the evidence presented.

viii. Closing Statements – After the investigation phase, each party shall make a closing statement, starting with the Plaintiff and followed by the Defendant.

- a.** Each closing statement shall be limited to seven (7) minutes.

ix. Adjournment – The hearing shall conclude when the Chief Justice adjourns the court.

x. Deliberation – After the hearing concludes, the Judicial Panel shall meet in private to deliberate and discuss the case. The Chief Justice shall determine the procedure for these deliberations, ensuring that all justices have an opportunity to share their perspectives.

xi. Members of the Judicial Panel or Judicial Panel of Appeals may ask questions of either party at any point during the hearing to clarify evidence or testimony.

xii. The Chief Justice retains sole authority to deem any question asked by either party as irrelevant or inadmissible.

- a.** The Chief Justice may instruct the Judicial Panel or Judicial Panel of Appeals to disregard irrelevant questions or evidence.

xiii. The Judicial Panel, or Judicial Panel of Appeals, shall issue a written majority opinion after each ruling.

- a.** This opinion must be circulated to both parties and all justices on the Judicial Panel within 72 hours of the ruling.
- b.** The written opinion shall include the vote margin, any dissenting opinions, and a clear explanation of the reasoning behind the ruling.

XI: Procedures for Appeals

i. Authority of the Chief Justice:

- a.** The Chief Justice shall have the final ruling on all procedural matters considered by the Judicial Panel of Appeals.
- b.** The Chief Justice shall serve as the spokesperson for the Judicial Panel of Appeals.
- c.** The Chief Justice shall retain all constitutionally and statutorily granted powers necessary to ensure a fair and impartial appellate process, in addition to any powers not explicitly granted by these Standing Rules.

ii. Appeals may only be filed on the following grounds:

- a. Procedural Errors** – If the Judicial Panel has made a significant error in following its procedures that resulted in an unfair process.

- i.** The Judicial Panel of Appeals may only find that a procedural error occurred under the following circumstances:
 - 1.** The Judicial Panel improperly allowed or excluded critical evidence.
 - 2.** The Judicial Panel's ruling conflicts with the USG Constitution or bylaws.
 - 3.** The Judicial Panel's ruling is inconsistent with other Judicial Panel rulings.
 - 4.** Demonstrated bias by the Judicial Panel toward a party.
 - 5.** Any other serious procedural error that led to the loss of a fair and impartial process.
- ii.** Appeals filed on procedural grounds must be submitted within forty-eight (48) hours of the initial ruling.
- b.** Substantial New Evidence – If new evidence has been discovered that was unavailable at the time of the initial hearing and could have significantly impacted the outcome.
 - i.** If substantial new evidence has become available that was not accessible at the time of the hearing, an appeal can be filed. The Judicial Panel of Appeals will review whether this evidence could significantly alter the outcome of the case.
 - ii.** Appeals on these grounds must be filed within five (5) days of the initial ruling.
 - iii.** Plaintiffs may not appeal on the basis of new evidence.
- c.** Disproportionate Sanctions – If the sanctions imposed by the Judicial Panel are clearly excessive in relation to the nature and severity of the violation.
 - i.** The Judicial Panel of Appeals may consider whether the penalty is unjustly harsh when compared to similar past rulings or exceeds what is reasonable given the facts of the case.
 - ii.** Appeals on these grounds must be filed within forty-eight (48) hours of the initial ruling.
- iii.** The Judicial Panel of Appeals may only review procedural matters and shall not reconsider the facts of the case or the interpretation of those facts, except in appeals where new evidence is presented or where the sanctions imposed are alleged to be clearly disproportionate to the nature and severity of the violation.
 - a.** When no procedural error is found, the newly submitted evidence is not found to be substantial, and the sanctions are not deemed clearly disproportionate to the nature and severity of the violation, the Judicial Panel of Appeals shall uphold the original decision.
 - b.** If a procedural error is found, newly submitted evidence is deemed substantial, or the sanctions are determined to be clearly disproportionate to the nature and severity of the violation, the Judicial Panel of Appeals may remand the case to the original hearing body for further review or clarification.
 - i.** If a procedural error is found, the case shall be reheard in full, with the identified procedural error corrected.
 - ii.** If a case is remanded on the basis of newly submitted evidence, the remanded hearing shall be limited to addressing the specific issue identified by the Judicial Panel of Appeals and shall not constitute a full rehearing of the case.
 - iii.** If a case is remanded on the basis of disproportionate sanctions, no new hearing shall take place. Instead, the Judicial Panel shall only reconvene for deliberations to reconsider the sanctions imposed. The original findings of responsibility shall remain intact, and the ruling from this remand may still be subject to appeal.

1. The Judicial Panel must reconvene and issue a revised ruling, if any, within five (5) academic days of receiving the remand.
- c. Remanded cases shall be heard by the same justices who heard the original claim.
 - i. If a justice is indisposed, another Justice, chosen by the Chief Justice, may serve in their place.
 - ii. If a case is reheard by the original body, the sanction imposed can be greater than that imposed at the original hearing.
- d. Remanded cases may be appealed again following their resolution, should further issues arise.
- iv. All decisions made by the Judicial Panel of Appeals shall be published and made available to the parties involved within forty-eight (48) hours of the ruling.
 - a. The reasoning behind the decision, whether to uphold or remand, must be clearly explained to ensure transparency.
- v. Once an appeal has been submitted, the party initiating the appeal, whether originally the Plaintiff or the Defendant, shall be referred to as the *Appellant* for the duration of the appellate process.
 - a. Only the Appellant and the Judicial Panel of Appeals shall be considered parties to the appeal. The non-appealing party shall not participate in the appellate review unless called upon by the Judicial Panel of Appeals for clarification or further documentation related to the original case record.
- vi. Upon the filing of an appeal, the non-appealing party shall be notified of the appeal and its stated grounds within twenty-four (24) hours.
 - a. The Judicial Panel of Appeals may, at its discretion, invite the non-appealing party to submit a written response if it determines that additional context is necessary to resolve the procedural or evidentiary questions raised on appeal.
 - b. The non-appealing party shall not otherwise participate in the appellate process. They shall be informed of the final ruling within forty-eight (48) hours of its issuance.

XII: Procedures for Elections

- i. The Judicial Panel must hold at least four (4) mandatory meetings for candidates intending to run in an election, which must take place before the election period.
 - a. These meetings will cover all pertinent information regarding election procedures, submission of required materials, campaign rules, and expectations for conduct as outlined in the Election Bylaws.
 - b. At least one (1) of the mandatory meetings must be held during the semester preceding the start of the election period.
 - c. Attendance at these meetings is a prerequisite for candidate eligibility in the elections.
- ii. The Clerks of Court are responsible for verifying the legitimacy and accuracy of all petitions, candidacy declarations, and other documents submitted by candidates, in accordance with the Election Bylaws.
 - a. Any discrepancies or issues must be reported to the Judicial Panel within forty-eight (48) hours of submission.

iii. The elections shall be conducted in accordance with the approved timeline and procedures outlined in Title 1 of the Election Bylaws.

- a. Any changes to the timeline must be approved by the Judicial Panel and communicated to all candidates and involved parties at least five (5) days in advance.

iv. Per the Constitution, the Judicial Panel retains any additional powers not explicitly listed in this section with respect to elections. The Judicial Panel is the sole authority overseeing the operation of elections, ensuring compliance with the Election Bylaws, and addressing any disputes or irregularities that arise.

v. The Judicial Panel is responsible for ensuring the integrity and fairness of the elections, including the transparent counting of votes, timely reporting of results, and resolution of disputes in accordance with established rules and regulations.

XIII: Records of Initial and Appellate Hearings

i. Audio recordings or transcripts of initial and appellate hearings shall be made available upon request to undergraduate students. Requests must be submitted in writing to the Clerks of Court, and access will be granted within twenty-four (24) hours of the request being received if approved.

- a. These records shall be provided through a secure and confidential platform to ensure proper distribution and monitoring.
- b. Neither audio recordings nor transcripts shall be altered in any way that makes those records misleading.
- c. In cases involving sensitive personal information, necessary redactions may be made to protect the privacy of the parties involved while maintaining the integrity of the hearing.

ii. No transcripts or recordings of the deliberations of the Judicial Panel or the Judicial Panel of Appeals shall be made available at any time, to preserve the confidentiality of the panel's decision-making process.

iii. Audio recordings and transcripts shall be retained for a period of at least one (1) academic year and will remain accessible upon request during this time. After this period, records may be archived or deleted unless required for ongoing appeals or legal purposes.

XIV: Opinions

i. Majority Opinions of the Judicial Panel shall include an overview of the facts of the case, arguments, and evidence presented by both parties, as well as the Judicial Panel's ruling and the reasoning behind it. Written opinions may include previous precedent(s) when relevant. Written opinions are required for all alleged bylaw violations and must be issued within one (1) academic week of the hearing/deliberation.

ii. Majority Opinions of the Judicial Panel of Appeals shall include a discussion of the Judicial Panel's initial ruling, any alleged procedural errors, relevant precedents, and the Judicial Panel of Appeals' ruling and reasoning. This opinion must be issued within one (1) academic week of the hearing.

- a. The Judicial Panel of Appeals may not issue any opinion on the correctness, soundness, or practicality of the Judicial Panel's initial ruling on the facts of the case.

iii. All Majority Opinions shall include the vote margin by which the case was decided and shall disclose which justices dissented, if applicable.

iv. Justices who disagree with the Majority Opinion must write a Dissenting Opinion, explaining the reasons for their disagreement.

- v. Justices who agree with the outcome of the Majority Opinion but for different reasons may write a Concurring Opinion, explaining their reasoning.
- vi. All written opinions, including majority, dissenting, and concurring opinions, shall be made publicly available on the Undergraduate Student Government (USG) website within seventy-two (72) hours of the ruling, to ensure transparency.
 - a. Confidentiality may be maintained to protect the involved parties in cases where it is necessary.

XV: Autonomy

- i. The Judicial Panel recognizes that the bodies listed within the Undergraduate Student Government's superseding documents hold all authority over the Undergraduate Student Government.
- ii. If any ruling by the Judicial Panel or Judicial Panel of Appeals is overturned or appealed by any body at The Ohio State University that is not one of the bodies in the superseding documents, such as the Board of Trustees, the Judicial Panel reserves the right to maintain its decision and disregard any conflicting opinions as non-binding.

XVI: Transparency

- i. These Standing Rules shall be made available to all undergraduates and shall be circulated to all parties involved in hearings or appeals.
- ii. The Standing Rules shall be accessible on the Undergraduate Student Government website and updated versions shall be posted within twenty-four (24) hours of any approved amendments.

XVII: Amendments to the Election Bylaws

- i. The Chief Justice and Associate Justices may propose amendments to the Election Bylaws for approval by the Oversight Committee who will then refer the amendment to the General Assembly or an iteration of the General Assembly.
- ii. Amendments to the Election Bylaws proposed by the Judicial Panel shall be approved by a majority vote of all Justices before being submitted for the Oversight Committee approval.

XVIII: Amendments to the Standing Rules of the Judicial Branch

- i. The Chief Justice and Associate Justices may propose amendments to the Judicial Panel Standing Rules for approval by the Oversight Committee who will then refer the amendment to the General Assembly or an iteration of the General Assembly.
- ii. Amendments to the Standing Rules proposed by the Judicial Panel shall be approved by a majority vote of all Justices before being submitted for Oversight Committee approval.

Glossary of Terms

Appellant – The party who files an appeal, regardless of whether they were originally the plaintiff or defendant in the initial hearing.

Appeal – A formal request to have a case reviewed by the Judicial Panel of Appeals based on alleged procedural error or the discovery of new, substantial evidence.

Associate Justice – A voting member of the Judicial Panel who is selected to participate in hearings and appeals.

Burden of Proof – The responsibility of a party (typically the plaintiff) to provide sufficient evidence to prove their claim.

Chief Justice – The head of the Judicial Panel, responsible for moderating hearings, managing the panel, and serving as the final authority on procedural matters.

Clerk(s) of Court – An appointed official who assists with the administrative functions of the Judicial Panel, including scheduling hearings, managing documents, and serving as liaison to involved parties.

Conflict of Interest – Any personal, professional, or organizational relationship, bias, or prior involvement that could reasonably impair a Justice's ability to remain impartial in the case at hand.

Deliberation – The private discussion among Justices following a hearing or appeal in which they weigh the facts and arguments before rendering a decision.

Defendant – The party accused of violating the USG Constitution or Bylaws.

Double Jeopardy – Being subjected to a second hearing for the same accusation after a final decision has already been made. Does not include remands, which are considered a continuation of the original proceeding.

Evidence – Any documents, witness testimony, or physical/material items presented to support or dispute a claim.

Hearing – A formal meeting during which both parties present evidence and arguments related to a bylaw violation.

Justice – A generic term referring to both Chief and Associate Justices.

Majority Opinion – The written explanation of the Judicial Panel's decision, representing the view of the majority of Justices involved in the ruling.

Plaintiff – The party who files a complaint alleging a bylaw violation.

Precedent – A prior decision by the Judicial Panel that may be used to inform or guide the outcome of future cases.

Procedural Error – A significant mistake made in following the proper steps or rules during a hearing that impacts fairness.

Reasonable Person Standard – A legal standard used to determine how an average, rational person would act or think in a similar situation. The Judicial Panel uses this standard to evaluate facts when there is a dispute about what occurred, especially in cases involving interpretation of behavior, intent, or judgment.

Recusal – The act of a Justice removing themselves from participation in a case due to a conflict of interest or bias.

Remand – A case sent back to the original Judicial Panel by the Judicial Panel of Appeals for further review, clarification, or reconsideration based on procedural or evidentiary issues.

Respondent (Non-Appealing Party) – The party in an appeal who did not file the appeal and is responding to the Appellant's claims. This is usually the Judicial Panel that issued the original decision, represented through its written opinion and record.

Standard of Proof (Beyond a Reasonable Doubt) – The level of certainty required to find a party responsible for a violation. It means the panel must believe, with absolute certainty, that a violation was committed by the defendant.

Standing Rules – The formal procedures and guidelines adopted by the Judicial Panel to govern how hearings, appeals, and internal operations are conducted.