Dear Members of the Society for Military History,

Our professional society is a vibrant community of scholars, academics, educators, military officers, national security professionals, writers, students, professors, archivists, museum professionals, government historians, and citizens interested in the study of military history. The Society, established in 1933, has a long and distinguished history.

The Articles of Incorporation and the Constitution govern the Society and its operations. From time to time, these documents are amended to reflect the Society’s and its membership’s changing needs and processes and to enable it to accomplish its mission to “stimulate and advance the study of military history, especially that of the United States, and to diffuse knowledge thereof by publications, displays, and otherwise” (SMH Articles of Incorporation). The Constitution for the Society for Military History was last amended in 2007.

Discussions about potential amendments to the Constitution have been taking place for years, with conversations culminating in 2018-2019. The Constitutional Committee, composed of Dr. Jacqueline Whitt (chair), Dr. Holly Mayer, and Dr. Bill Allison worked with the Society Council on a number of topics and led a discussion at the 2019 Council meeting, which resulted in final recommendations to the Council in early 2020.

Now, in 2020, per the procedures outlined in the Constitution, the Society Council (having consulted with the Constitutional Committee, and then having voted unanimously for the amended constitution) is placing before the full Society Membership a vote on the amended constitution. The changes are significant; as such, the Council has determined that the Amendment is to the full constitution. That is, the vote is an up-or-down vote on the proposed revision.

The most significant changes are outlined below, and documents have been made available online for your detailed review and consideration. Most significantly, this revision is designed to give the Society Council, and particularly the Society President, Vice President, and Trustees, maximum flexibility in administering the Society and advancing its interests, and the interests of its members while ensuring transparency and accountability. Many of the revisions seek to align the Constitution with the Society’s current practice and to allow for modification, when necessary, in the future without requiring a vote of the full membership. In particular, changes to the Constitution are required to bring the Society into the 21st century by allowing for digital meetings and voting, an issue that has become even more crucial given the coronavirus pandemic now afflicting the world.

**Articles of Incorporation**

- Revision to include the Graduate Student Representative as a member of the Society Council.

**Article I – Membership**
• Membership classes, dues, procedures, and rights and privileges are determined by the Society Council.
• Clarifies voting rights and member access to the Journal of Military History.
• Clarifies rules for institutional membership.

**Article II – Administration**
• Adds Graduate Student Representative to the Society Council.
• Specifies Council’s role in determining standards for member conduct and punishment in the case of misconduct.
• Clarifies participation in and purpose of Executive Session.
• Removes the ex-officio status of the Society’s Immediate Past President as a member of the Society Council.
• Alters composition of “Executive Committee” to match current practice re: routine management of the Society’s affairs.
• Clarifies that meetings of the Executive Committee may be virtual or in person.

**Article III – Officers and Trustees**
• Revises eligibility and terms for elected Trustees. Trustee terms remain four years and trustees may serve for two terms, but terms may not be served consecutively.
• Clarifies procedures for filling vacancies among the Board of Trustees.
• Adds new section on procedures for electing the Graduate Student Representative.
• Clarifies succession procedures in case the Presidency or Vice Presidency is vacated during a term.
• Aligns procedures for appointing and contracting the Executive Director and the Editor of the Journal of Military History with current practice.
• Outlines annual reporting requirements for the Society President, Executive Director, Editor of the Journal of Military History.
• Simplifies and clarifies roles and responsibilities of Society officers, for example, requiring the Executive Director to maintain job descriptions and complete annual performance reviews for all employees of the Society.

**Article IV – Meetings**
• Removes quorum requirement for annual membership meeting.
• Removes provision for “special membership meeting.”
• Allows for virtual/electronic meeting and voting.
• Establishes new quorum for the Council and Board of Trustees to conduct Society business.

**Article V – Elections**
• Changes procedures for the biennial elections to match current practice and advances in technology.
• Clarifies requirements for candidates to be added to the ballot.
• Moves responsibility for election oversight, vote counting, and announcing election results to the Executive Director.

**Article VI – Committees**
• Requires all Society committees to prepare, maintain, and present for Council approval a document outlining its responsibilities and standard operating procedures.
Changes composition and selection of Nominating Committee.

Creates new Procedures Committee, responsible for preparing, maintaining, and presenting for Council approval the Society’s bylaws and to advise committees and working groups on procedural matters. The Procedures Committee will be responsible for recommending amendments to the Society Constitution.

Clarifies role of Editorial Board of the *Journal of Military History* in relation to the Editor and the Society Council.

Reduces size of *JMH* Editorial Board from 18 to 15.

Eliminates the Finance Committee, Awards Committees, the Long-Range Planning Committee, the Membership Committee, the George C. Marshall Lecture Committee as standing committees of the Society.

Grants broad power to the Society Council, at the request/recommendation of the President, to create ad hoc committees as needed to conduct the Society’s business.

Requires all committees to keep minutes of their work and to submit an annual report to the Society’s membership.

Article VII – Amendments

Clarifies and revises procedures for putting amendments to the Society Constitution for a vote of the full membership.

As you can see, the proposed Constitutional revision is significant, and we urge you to consider it carefully. We believe it will set the Society on a sound footing moving into the third decade of the twenty-first century and beyond by offering the Society Council, and the Society’s membership more flexibility to respond to emerging needs as the field changes and grows.

The current Articles of Incorporation, and Constitution, as well as the proposed revisions, will be available for review on the SMH web site at https://smh-hq.org/governance/constitution.html. To ensure that all of our members receive this notification, this letter is also being sent through the mail. We will provide two ways through which you may cast your vote. Event Rebels, the company that manages our membership database, will send out an email with a link to an electronic ballot for members to approve or disapprove the revised articles and constitution in their entirety. For members using the e-ballot process, please cast your vote no later than May 15. For members who do not have an email address in our database, we are including a paper ballot with this letter that must be postmarked no later than May 24, 2020.

**Note: We have extended the deadline for both email and paper balloting to May 31, 2020**

Sincerely,

Jacqueline E. Whitt
Chair, Constitutional Committee, Society for Military History
United States Army War College

John W. Hall
President, Society for Military History
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Craig C. Felker
Executive Director, Society for Military History