

# VOICE OF THE POOR COMMITTEE

## Definition and Job Descriptions for National and Council Committees

No work of charity is foreign to the Society. Vincentian help can include any person-to-person assistance that promotes human dignity and integrity. The Society is concerned not only with relieving need but also with redressing the situations that cause it.

Part I of the Rule, Charter I

Vincentians seek through prayer, meditation on the scriptures, the teaching of the Church, through their daily lives and in their relationship with those in need, to bear witness to the love of Christ.

Part II of the Rule, Charter II

### **Definition:**

In the spirit of Christian love and justice, the Voice of the Poor Committee upholds Catholic values by researching, validating, documenting, advocating, and promulgating issues related to the condition of the poor and disenfranchised for the purpose of helping Vincentians to live their faith by acting knowledgeably and credibly as a unified body speaking with one voice for the purpose of building up the Kingdom of God.

### **Responsibilities of the National Committee:**

1. **Support the Society's Mission and Vincentian Charism** by helping Vincentians to better understand the social teachings and values of the Catholic Church.
2. **Make Recommendations.** Investigate and recommend social justice/advocacy issues. (1) Draft National position papers on key issues to educate and encourage Vincentian action.
3. **Act as a Resource.** Provide reliable and valid background information that the National Council may use as the basis for advocacy. (2)
4. **Educate Vincentians.** Assist and support the National President and National Council in educating Vincentians on subjects with national, regional and local implications so that Vincentians are better equipped to effectively respond to issues that affect the poor.

### **Duties of the National Committee:**

1. Provide resource information on the social teachings of the Church such as papal encyclicals, councilor documents, and episcopal statements that explore, express and confirm the responsibility of every Vincentian in the work of love, justice and the care of the poor.
2. Provide resource information based on the writings of Frederic Ozanam, St. Vincent de Paul, and Louise de Marillac.
3. Keep up-to-date on relevant legislation.
4. Guide the National Council in selecting advocacy issues for the Society by making recommendations to the National President. Assist the National President in developing an approval process.
5. Work with the National President to help local Councils develop action steps related to advocacy issues that are approved by the National Trustees.
6. Inform the National President on matters affecting advocacy for the poor and disenfranchised.
7. Gather information from regions and report to the National President on social justice issues experienced in their Vincentian work.
8. Investigate cooperative advocacy opportunities between the Society and other organizations whose issues and goals are complementary to the work of the Society, and make recommendations to the National President.
9. Other duties as required.

### **Footnotes:**

1. The Society's advocacy focus is on issues related to the condition of the poor. **The Society does not support individual political campaigns. Doing so may jeopardize the Society's tax status.**
2. **The National President, alone, is the official National spokesperson for the Society.**

## **Qualifications for National Committee Membership:**

1. Willing to share time, talent and love.
2. Acknowledge that God's plan should supersede personal aspirations and hopes.
3. Recognize the importance of intelligently speaking out on behalf of the poor.
4. Desire to seek the truth and to carefully document information to validate conditions of need.
5. Ability to use communications tools (such as e-mail, fax, internet) to facilitate committee work.
6. Exhibit flexibility and willingness to analyze, discuss and communicate facets of social concerns by working in the spirit of Vincentian friendship. Exhibit openness to others and their opinions.
7. Understand the duty of the Voice of the Poor Committee in upholding the Rule and mission of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.
8. Catholic, who upholds gospel values, with a desire to serve Jesus by the examples of St. Vincent de Paul and Frederic Ozanam.
9. Familiarity with the structure and purpose of the National Council of the Society.

## **Experience:**

1. Active membership in a Conference and/or Council of the Society and/or thorough knowledge of the Society and Conferences as foundation of the Society.
2. **Members also serve on their Council's Voice of the Poor Committee.**
3. Vibrant and practical Vincentian spirit.
4. Service to God through service to the poor.

## **National Voice of the Poor Committee Membership**

### **Types of Members:**

#### Elected Regional Representatives

One Trustee from each region (Also serves as the Chairperson for his/her region's VOP Committee)

#### Appointed Representatives (one from each region)

(Or may be a Vincentian or an Executive Director. (National President approved.)  
(Also serves as the Secretary for respective region's VOP Committee)

#### National Presidential Appointees

Youth representative

**Note: Pre-approval by the local council (i.e., Council President) to serve on this committee is needed as the local Council is required to pick up meeting/travel expenses for elected/appointed individuals that serve on this committee.**

### **Responsibilities of the Council VOP Chair and Committee:**

1. **Support the Society's Mission and Vincentian Charism** by helping Vincentians to better understand the social teachings and values of the Catholic Church.
2. **Make Recommendations:** Investigate and recommend **local** social justice/advocacy issues. Educate Council Board members on **local** key issues and encourage Vincentian action through communication with Conferences.
3. **Act as a Resource.** Share with the Council Board and Conferences reliable and valid background information which the National Council may distribute from time to time and use it as the basis for advocacy.
4. **Educate Vincentians:** Assist and support the Council President and Council Board in educating Vincentians on subjects with national, regional and local implications so that Vincentians are better equipped to effectively respond to issues that affect the poor. The National Committee will from time to time distribute recommendations on issues and circulate position statements on behalf of the Society and which will serve as a basis to educate the Council Board and Conference members.
5. **Position Statements.** Councils do not speak on behalf of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul except on local issues. The National President is the only spokesperson on behalf of the Society on national and regional issues. Council Presidents may speak on local issues after approval by the Council Board.
6. **Grassroots Effort:** Communicate and encourage Conference members to write as individuals to their respective legislators at the federal, state and local levels on issues affecting the poor. Coordinate federal and state issues with your regional VOP chairperson.

### **Duties of the Council VOP Committee:**

1. The National Committee provides resource information on the social teachings of the Church such as papal encyclicals, councilor documents, and episcopal statements that explore, express and confirm the responsibility of every Vincentian in the work of love, justice and the care of the poor. The Council VOP chair and committee will share this information with the Council Board and Conferences.
2. Keep up-to-date on relevant local legislation.
3. The National Committee will recommend to local Councils action steps related to advocacy issues that are approved by the National Trustees. Council VOP chairs are to disseminate the information to the Conferences for follow up action.
4. Educate the Council President on matters affecting advocacy for the poor and disenfranchised.
5. Investigate cooperative advocacy opportunities between the Society and other organizations whose issues and goals are complementary to the work of the Society, and make recommendations to the Council President.
6. Other duties as required.

**Reminder:** The Society's advocacy focus is on issues related to the condition of the poor. **The Society does not support individual political campaigns. Doing so may jeopardize the Society's tax status.**

### **Qualifications desired:**

(Refer to qualification statement for National VOP Committee members on page 2)

### **Experience:**

1. Active membership in a Conference and/or Council of the Society and/or thorough knowledge of the Society and Conferences as foundation of the Society.
2. Vibrant and practical Vincentian spirit.
3. Service to God through service to the poor.

### **Appointment of Council Voice of the Poor Committee:**

**Chair:** Appointed by Council President

**Members :** District Council Presidents, and/or any active member of the Society