

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

WHAT IS PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE?

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules of conduct at meetings allowing everyone an opportunity to be heard and to make decisions with minimum confusion. Parliamentary procedure means democratic rule, flexibility, protection of rights and a fair hearing for everyone. So, it is important that everyone knows the basic rules. *Robert's Rules of Order (latest edition)*, the parliamentary authority for local and state associations, governs the proceedings of all association meetings when it does not conflict with state or corporate law. The bylaws take precedence over *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.

QUORUM

The quorum, as specified in the bylaws, is the minimum number of eligible individuals who must be present at properly noticed meetings for business to be legally transacted. The only action that may be taken in the absence of a quorum is to fix the time for which to adjourn, recess or take measures to obtain a quorum. The quorum for a meeting should never be a percentage or a majority of the membership because it is rarely possible to obtain that attendance to conduct a legal meeting. Instead, the quorum should be as large a number of members as can reasonably be depended on to be present at any meeting.

FOUR TYPES OF MOTIONS GENERALLY MADE DURING A MEETING

Main Motion — It introduces subjects to the assembly for consideration. This motion cannot be made when another motion is before the assembly and it yields to privileged, subsidiary and incidental motions. Example: "I move that we purchase. . ."

Subsidiary Motion — It serves two possible functions, (1) may change or modify the main motion, and/or (2) may dispose of the main motion temporarily (postpone, table) or permanently. It changes or affects how a main motion is handled and is voted on before the main motion. Example:

"I move that we amend Jane Jones' motion by striking out. . ." or "I move that. . .be referred to the finance committee." However, subsidiary motions must relate to the subject as presented in the main motion.

Privileged Motion — This motion is an urgent one because it is about a special or important matter that does not relate to pending business. Example: A motion to recess the meeting to secure information or to allow informal consultation.

Incidental Motion — An incidental motion is used when a question of procedure arises and must be considered. Example: When a member thinks that the rules of the assembly are being violated, they can make a "Point of Order," thereby calling upon the chair for a ruling and an enforcement of the rules or bylaws.

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Presented by

RUTH STEVENS

New York City District

New York Conference | North Eastern Episcopal District

Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society

Leadership Training Institute

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Joyce A. Reid, Institute Dean

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STEPS NECESSARY TO TAKE ACTION ON A

MAIN MOTION

Obtaining the Floor. A member rises and addresses the presiding officer saying, "Madame/Mr. President or Chairman," giving their name; district; conference.

Assigning the Floor. The presiding officer recognizes the member and gives the floor to them.

Making the Motion. Stating the motion in the affirmative, the member introduces or proposes the motion by saying, "I move that we buy a flag. . ." instead of "I move that we do not. . ."

Seconding the Motion. Another recognized member says, "I second the motion." NOTE: When a member seconds a motion, it does not necessarily imply approval or agreement. It means simply that the member seconding thinks it is worthwhile for the matter to come before the assembly for discussion. If there is no second, the motion is lost.

Stating the Motion. The presiding officer states, "It has been moved and seconded that we buy a mission flag." The motion then becomes the property of the assembly and it cannot be changed without the consent of the members.

Opening Discussion. The presiding officer opens discussion by saying, "Are there any unreadiness?" or "Is there any discussion?" The member making the motion has the right to speak first. When discussion of the motion has been completed and all who wish to speak have had an opportunity to do so, the chair may ask, "Is there any further discussion? If not, are you ready for the question?"

Subsidiary Motion to Amend. This can be applied only to the main motion; must be seconded; and adopted by majority vote prior to voting on the main motion. i.e. "I move we insert the word purple between the words 'a' and 'flag'." (Seconded) Its adoption does not adopt the original main motion. That motion is now pending in its modified form.

Putting the Question. The presiding officer then puts the question on the subsidiary motion to amend: "The question is on the motion to insert the word purple between the words "a" and "flag." It has been moved and seconded. Is there any discussion? If not, all those in favor say aye, opposed say no." The chair should pause after each vote to evaluate it.

Announcing the Vote. A majority vote on the subsidiary motion is required for adoption. A motion is lost on a tie vote. The chair announces the result of the vote, saying, "The ayes have it, the amendment is carried. . ." (here the chair repeats the content of the amendment passed)." Or, "The no's have it, the amendment is lost and . . ." (here repeats the amendment in the negative)."

Voting on the main motion. The presiding officer then puts either the main motion or the amended (if approved) main motion before the assembly using the same procedure: "The question is on the motion to purchase a blue flag. It has been moved and seconded. Is there any discussion? If not, all those in favor say aye, (pause) opposed say no." The presiding officer announces the vote as stated in previously. "The ayes have it, the motion is carried."

METHODS OF VOTING ON MOTIONS

General Consent. When a motion isn't likely to be opposed, the chair says, "If there is no objection. . ." Members show their agreement by their silence. However, if someone objects, the matter must be put to a vote.

Voice Vote. The chair asks those in favor to say "aye" and those opposed to say "no."

Show of Hands. Members raise their hands to indicate their vote. (This can be used to verify a voice vote in very small assemblies.)

Rising Vote. Members stand to indicate their vote. This kind of voting method is used where the vote must be counted. (It is also used in cases where a member has requested a "Division [of the Assembly]" which means that the member wishes to have a rising vote to verify a voice vote or a show of hands vote).

Ballot Vote. A ballot vote is taken when secrecy is desired or when the bylaws or law require a ballot vote to be taken.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE Q&As

What is a majority vote?

A simple majority vote is more than half of the votes cast by persons legally entitled to vote, excluding blanks or abstentions, at a regularly or properly called meeting at which a quorum is present. For example, if 19 votes are cast, a majority (more than 9 1/2) is 10.

What is a plurality vote?

A plurality vote is the largest number of votes cast for a given candidate. In such a case, the candidate that receives the most votes (even though less than a majority) is elected by a plurality vote. For example, if there are 4 candidates for President and one receives 10 votes, one receives 8 votes, one receives 7 votes and one receives 6 votes, the candidate receiving 10 votes is declared the winner even though they did not receive a majority of the 31 votes cast.

When are decisions made by majority vote and when are they made by plurality vote?

According to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, the basic requirement for approval of an action or choice by a deliberative assembly, except where a rule provides otherwise, is a majority vote.

If a member believes that the meeting is not being conducted properly, what should be done?

The member should voice their opinion/objection by raising a point of order at the time the infraction occurs, because many times it is too late to do so after a convention adjourns.

Can the presiding officer vote?

The presiding officer, if a member of the assembly, can vote as any other member but is not required to do so. However, the presiding officer is supposed to maintain impartiality at all times, and customarily votes only when the vote affects the outcome; i.e., to break or cause a tie vote. When a vote is by a show of hands or a standing vote, the presiding officer can vote if they have not already done so to either break or cause a tie vote. These two methods of voting are not "secret," so they are revealing their vote just like all the others who voted. The presiding officer can only vote once, as a member or as the presiding officer.