

## Parliamentary Rules of Order

Briefly, meetings are based on certain principles of organization, laid out in **Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised**. These principles allow the right of the majority ultimately to rule, the right of the minority to be heard, and the right of the individual to participate in the decision-making process. Business is conducted by acting on motions.

### A member obtains the floor and introduces a main motion

A. The motion is seconded by another member, and then restated by the presiding officer. At that time the issue is opened for discussion. When there is no further discussion or some one has "called for the question", the motion is put to a voice vote, show of hands, or general consent, and the decision is determined.

B. Action on any motion may be affected by the following parliamentary procedures:

**amending a motion** - this is utilized to change the original motion (called a main motion) or to change wording in an amendment to the main motion. When amendments have been voted upon, the revised main motion is voted upon.

**referring a motion** - this is used to refer a motion to a specific committee if more information is needed. The committee must report back as instructed by the body referring to motion to them. If a motion is referred to another body, no further action is taken on the motion until the information required is provided.

**postponing a motion** - this is used to delay action on a motion to sometime in the future, or until other decisions have been determined or additional information has been gathered.

**tabling a motion** - this is used to stop action on a specific motion and to prevent further action from occurring on an issue. If a member asks that the issue be "laid on the table" or "tabled" all discussion is stopped, and no second is required. Further discussion on the motion cannot be considered until a member asks that the issue be "taken from the table." This motion (to remove from the table) must be seconded prior to reconsideration of the motion.

**calling for the question** - if a member states, "call for the question" all debate, and discussion ends, and the chair must ask for a second. If the motion to call the question is seconded, a vote must be taken. If a yea vote is received on the request to call for the question, the pending motion must be voted upon without further discussion.

**reconsidering a motion** - this is used to reconsider a vote that has taken place either on the day of the meeting or that just previous. The request to reconsider must be made by a member who voted on the prevailing side of the action. A motion can be considered only one time.

No new motions may be introduced until a pending motion has been determined, in one of the preceding ways.

Other parliamentary rules of order are:

**Point of order** - this is used to call attention to a breach in the rules. The chair recognizes the member calling for the point of order, and decides if the issue is subject to appeal. A member dissatisfied with the ruling of the chair can appeal to the meeting for a final decision. A majority of "no" votes is needed to reverse the chair's ruling, and the chair may vote.

**Questions and inquiries** - at any time during the meeting, members may request clarification of procedures (parliamentary inquiry), additional facts (point of information), or changes for convenience. If the chair cannot respond, the matter may be referred to another of the Board.

**Adjournment** - the chair can adjourn the meeting without waiting for a formal motion. However, motions under consideration must have been determined, and formally concluded prior to adjournment.

The parliamentary rules are not meant to hinder discussions or consume meeting time. They are meant to “restrain the individual” in order to accommodate the whole, and should be viewed as a method of working toward consensus, in the fairest and most efficient avenue.

### **Giving Reports**

When asked to provide a report of committee or individual actions, the individual should do the following:

- X provide a brief statement of the background of the issue, including the findings, activities, or proposal
- X list finding, without editorializing
- X explain what is significant about the findings to the organization
- X provide an example to make your point concrete
- X request questions
- X if the report calls for action, propose the action
- X explain to the group what would be changed (or improved) if the proposal were accepted
- X explain to the group the parameters of the proposal. Who would need to be involved, time and dollar costs
- X summarize
- X if appropriate, provide a resolution for action (draft this ahead of time)

### **Executive Session**

The purpose of executive session is to allow frank discussion among board members of sensitive or confidential issue affecting the organization. It is **NOT** a means to avoid public discussion of controversial issues, or hiding conflicts among members. The rules for executive session are as follows:

- X no member may be excluded
- X the only issues that may be discussed are those for which the session was called for
- X the board may invite guests (i.e., executive director, past presidents)
- X the minutes for executive session are **confidential** and not distributed to any person outside of the Committee
- X discussion addressing topic(s) within the executive session with any non-committee member, outside of the meeting is strictly forbidden