

# PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

## INTRODUCTION

Parliamentary law is not intended to repress the work of an assembly. Rules are meant to provide orderly principles by which business may be expedited. Where there are no rules or principle of law and where every individual is allowed to act in his or her own way, confusion prevails.

Perhaps the most important principle of parliamentary law is that of rights: the right of the majority to ultimately rule, the right of the minority to be heard, and the right of the individual to participate in the decision-making process.

It is hoped that the information included on the following pages will be helpful in expediting the business of the General Council. The material has been adapted from several sources and, to the best of our knowledge, is in agreement with *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th edition)*, published by Da Capo Press. It has been reviewed by Richard Hammar, a registered parliamentarian.

The information included in this booklet is certainly not exhaustive. Delegates are encouraged to study *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*. A more thorough knowledge of the rules by which our business is conducted will make for smoother and more productive business meetings.

Adapted from *A Guide to Parliamentary Practices*, Dr. Lamar Vest. Used with Permission.

## DEFINITIONS

<i>Chair</i>	The presiding officer or the position from which that person presides. The general superintendent serves as the presiding officer and should be addressed as Mr. Chairman or Mr. Moderator.
<i>Parliamentarian</i>	The person designated to advise the chair on points of parliamentary law and also to give similar advice to the assembly when requested. The parliamentarian gives an opinion; the chair makes a ruling.
<i>Floor</i>	The position of persons other than the chairman and his associates. When a member "has the floor," he/she has the opportunity to exercise his/her speaking rights and should be given appropriate attention.
<i>Meeting</i>	A single official gathering of the body to conduct business.
<i>Session</i>	A series of connected meetings devoted to a single agenda.
<i>Member</i>	A person with the right to full participation.
<i>Motion</i>	A formal proposal by a member in a meeting that the assembly take certain action. <i>Question</i> is a synonym for <i>motion</i> .
<i>Pending</i>	Being processed by chair.
<i>Table</i>	To "lay on the table" means entrusting the case to the secretary. To lay on the table permits the assembly to set an issue aside temporarily in order to consider a more urgent issue.

## OBTAINING THE FLOOR

Before a member attempts to make a motion or to address a meeting, he/she should be recognized by the chair. With our present system of speaker recognition, a member is required to go to a tablet at a microphone and indicate how they'd like to address the floor. The members are recognized by the chair in the order in which they indicate on the various tablets. A member does not have the floor until recognized by the chair. When recognized, the member should do the following:

- ◆ State his/her name.
- ◆ State any other identification, e.g., church or city.
- ◆ Speak to the subject at hand. When finished, the delegate should yield the floor by turning the switch off and returning to his/her seat.

Thus, if the subject on the floor changes, a new order will be established to recognize those members wishing to speak to the current subject.

Each member has the right to speak on every question. However, he/she cannot make a second speech on the same question as long as any member who has not spoken on the question desires the floor. It is the prerogative of the moderator to recognize each speaker and to determine a balance of negative and affirmative speeches. All speeches are limited to ten minutes, unless the assembly by motion and a two-thirds vote designates a shorter or longer time.

## **ASSIGNING THE FLOOR**

A member does not obtain the floor by rising and addressing the chair, nor by proceeding to a speaker's microphone and turning on a light. The floor must be assigned by the chair before he/she is privileged to speak.

## **INTERRUPTING A SPEAKER**

A member who has been assigned the floor should not be interrupted after he/she has begun to speak, unless the immediate need is of such urgency to justify the interruption.

A member who has been assigned the floor should be interrupted only by one who wishes

- ◆ To make a motion to reconsider (and this only if made on the same day as the original motion, or the next succeeding day, by a member who voted on the prevailing side).
- ◆ To rise to a point of order.
- ◆ To voice an objection to the consideration of a question. (This must occur before there has been any debate or before any subsidiary motion has been stated by the chair.)
- ◆ To call for the orders of the day in case they are not being followed.
- ◆ To raise a question of privilege.
- ◆ To make a parliamentary inquiry.
- ◆ To request information that requires an immediate answer.

## **MAKING A MOTION**

In making a motion (this includes any substitute motion), a member first obtains the floor and prefaces the statement of the proposed action by the words "I move that . . ." The motion should be written on the *Motion/Amendment Form* available in the business session. These forms are in triplicate. Copies 1 and 2 are to be given to an usher who will give copy 1 to the chairman and copy 2 to the secretary.

## **SECONDING A MOTION**

In general, every motion must be seconded before it is discussed or voted upon. A member wishing to second a motion simply says, "I second the motion." Recognition by the chair is not necessary in order to second a motion, and a second may be made without the member rising. Motions that come from a committee are considered already offered and seconded.

## **DEBATE OR DISCUSSION OF THE QUESTION**

In all debate and discussion, the following principles should prevail:

1. Speakers should avoid all references to specific personalities.
2. The motives of those whose views are opposed should not be questioned.
3. Discussion should be aimed at clarifying the facts rather than at challenging the views of those on the opposite side of the question.

## **VOTING ON THE QUESTION**

In calling for the vote, the affirmative vote is called for first. If the chair is in doubt after calling for a vote by voice, he will ask for a show of hands. If a member questions the vote, he/she has a right to call for "a division of the house," which requires a rising vote. Division of the house does not demand a counting of the votes. If a member wishes to have the votes counted, he/she must make a motion (which must be seconded, and requires a majority vote) to that effect.

## **KINDS OF MOTIONS**

### *Main Motions*

Main motions are those which bring some main question before the group. A main motion yields to all subsidiary, privileged, and incidental motions.

### *Subsidiary Motions*

A subsidiary motion is applied to a pending motion as a means of disposing of the pending one. All subsidiary motions take precedence over the main motion. By means of subsidiary motions, the main motion may be amended, or referred to a committee, or action postponed or hastened.

The subsidiary motions in order of precedence are

1. To lay on the table
2. To call for the previous question
3. To limit or extend the time of debate
4. To postpone to a certain time
5. To commit or refer
6. To amend (can be applied to 5, 4, and 3)
7. To postpone indefinitely (cannot be amended)

### *To Lay on the Table*

The effect of this motion is to postpone action temporarily on the question to which it applies. This motion should be used primarily to enable the groups to consider more urgent business, and should not be used as a means of suppressing a question without debate.

### *To Call for the Previous Question*

The object of this motion is to bring to an end the debate on the question or questions included in the call, and to secure a vote on the question(s). The previous question requires a two-thirds vote. If the motion does not specify otherwise, it applies only to the immediately pending question. The call for previous question should come from a member who has turned on a light and been recognized by the chair. Shouts of "question" from members of the audience are not appropriate.

### *To Limit or Extend Time of Debate*

Since certain rights are being taken away from the members, adoption of these motions requires a two-thirds vote. Motions to limit or extend time of debate are not debatable but may be amended (see note above).

### *To Postpone to a Certain Time*

The motion is similar to "Lay on the table." It differs in that it postpones action to an established time and is debatable.

### *To Commit or Refer*

A motion to commit or refer is debatable, can be amended, and requires a majority vote.

### *To Amend*

The motion to amend—that is, to change the words of a pending motion—requires a second and is debatable if the motion to be amended is debatable. Amendments of the first degree and the second degree are permitted. Amendments of the third degree are not. An amendment must be

germane (that is, closely related) to the motion to be amended. If not, it will be ruled out of order by the chair. A substitute motion is an amendment of the first degree.

### *To Postpone Indefinitely*

The real object of this motion is to reject the motion to which it is applied. It is debatable and opens the main question to debate. It requires a majority vote for adoption.

## **INCIDENTAL MOTIONS**

Incidental motions arise out of the process of business (a pending question), and as a result they must be decided before a decision can be made on the question to which they are incidental.

Incidental questions that will be briefly discussed are

- ◆ To rise to a point of order
- ◆ To appeal from the decision of the chair
- ◆ To suspend the rules
- ◆ To object to the consideration of a question
- ◆ To divide a question
- ◆ To call for a division of the assembly
- ◆ To make a request growing out of pending business
  1. To make a parliamentary inquiry
  2. To request information
  3. To ask permission to withdraw a motion

### *To Rise to a Point of Order*

While it is the duty of the chair to enforce the rules of the assembly, any member has the right to call to the attention of the chair any violation which occurs.

### *To Appeal from the Decision of the Chair*

An appeal may be made from the decision of the chair only at the time the ruling is made. A majority vote is necessary before a decision of the chair can be reversed.

### *To Suspend the Rules*

The rule or rules which interfere with the action which the assembly wishes to take may be suspended, provided they do not conflict with the basic parliamentary law or with the General Council Constitution and Bylaws. The Constitution and Bylaws cannot be suspended.

### *To Object to the Consideration of a Question*

The purpose of this motion is to prevent consideration of certain questions which the assembly may feel are not worthy of consideration. It requires no second, cannot be debated, cannot be amended, and requires a two-thirds vote. It must be proposed before debate and/or before the chair has stated any subsidiary motion.

### *To Divide a Question*

This motion can be applied only to main motions and amendments. Parts of a question that are intimately related should not be divided.

### *To Call for a Division of the Assembly*

The purpose for calling for the division of the assembly is to secure an accurate count of the vote, especially when the vote has been taken viva voce. This motion does not provide for a count. It provides for a standing vote. A counting of the vote must be called for by a motion to that effect.

### *To Make a Request Growing Out of the Business of the Assembly*

This can occur during a business session when a member rises to the floor in order to

- ◆ Make a parliamentary inquiry. This privilege should not be abused and will be prevented by the chair when such requests are made for any reason other than an honest attempt to secure information that is immediately needed.
- ◆ Request information. This request has the same privileges as a request for parliamentary inquiry. The primary difference is that the member may be seeking information from another member of the assembly rather than from the chair.
- ◆ Ask permission to withdraw a motion. After a question has been stated by the chair, it is in the possession of the group and cannot be withdrawn or modified without the approval of the assembly. However, until a motion has been stated by the chair, the proposer of the motion can withdraw or modify it in any way he/she desires.

## SUMMARY OF FACTS RELATED TO MOTIONS

Kind of Motion	Object	Effect
To lay on the table	Clear the floor for more urgent business	Delays action temporarily
To call for the previous question	Secure immediate vote on pending question	Ends debate
To limit or extend time of debate	Provides more or less time for discussion	Shortens or lengthens discussion period
To postpone definitely to a certain time	Often gives more time for informal discussion and for securing supporters	Delays action
To commit or refer	To enable more careful consideration to be given	Delays action
To amend	To improve the motion	Changes the original motion
To postpone indefinitely	To prevent a vote on the question	Suppresses the question
To raise a point of order of rules	To call attention to violation according to established rules	Keeps the assembly functioning
To appeal from the decision of the chair	To determine the attitude of the assembly on the ruling made by the chair	Secures ruling of the assembly rather than by the chair
To suspend the rules	To permit action not possible under the rules	Secures action which otherwise could not be presented by the rules
To object to the consideration of a question	Prevent wasting time on unimportant business	Suppresses the motion
To divide the question	Secure more careful consideration of parts	Secures action by parts
To call for a division of the assembly	(a) To determine the accuracy of a viva voce vote (b) To secure expression of individual member's vote	Secures an accurate check on vote

To raise a question of privilege	To correct undesirable conditions	Corrects undesirable conditions
To take from the table	Continue the consideration of the question	Continues consideration of the question
To reconsider	To reconsider the question and another vote on the question	Secures further consideration
To rescind	Repeal action previously taken	Same

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