

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

One of the biggest challenges facing district officers is conducting meetings according to parliamentary procedure and also being able to assist club members and club presidents with basic parliamentary procedure. Today, we are going to discuss What Would Robert Do. Don't be afraid of parliamentary procedure because it gives you a set of rules for conducting a meeting. It allows everyone to be heard and make decisions without conflict. When you leave council of leaders today, I hope you will have a better understanding of parliamentary procedure.

We use Robert's for six basic reasons:

- 1. It makes it easier for people to work together to accomplish their purpose.**
- 2. All members have equal rights and privileges.**
- 3. A majority vote decides an issue.**
- 4. The right of the minority is protected because all members have the right to be heard and oppose.**
- 5. All matters presented for a decision should be discussed.**

The most effective meetings are those conducted by a presiding officer who knows Robert's Rules of Order, prepare a word for word written script, and is prepared. This is my big tip for Governors and Governors-Elect, make sure you don't appoint your best friend as your parliamentarian. Instead, appoint someone who can actually help you when a situation arises in your district and at district convention. When I was ECR I went to a district and there was an immediate problem with the delegate count. I turned to the parliamentarian and said you will need to address this. She turned to me and said "I don't know anything about this stuff. I just took this position because my friend wanted me next to her."

At international and district conventions, there will be motions regarding the business of the organization and motions regarding changes to By-Laws or the District Standing Rules because prior notice has been given to the clubs. First there must be a motion. A delegate should rise and state “Madam President or Mister President, I move that we (accept the report of the registration committee.” Think of motions as ideas in your brain that you have to move from your brain to the floor, so when you make a motion, you say “I move that.” The next step is for another member to Second the motion. A second means that the motion has merit and should be discussed and voted on. If someone makes a crazy motion that absolutely no one supports, then there would be no second and the business meeting would continue. Once there is a motion and second, the presiding officer restates the motion so that everyone understands what is to be considered. The members then debate the motion. Once debate is finished, the presiding officer asks for the affirmative vote, then the negative vote, then announces the results.

Robert’s also provides rules for debate. (1) A member can speak no more than twice on the same question (2) each speech must be limited to the approved time (3) the maker of the motion has the right to speak first (4) remarks must be limited to the merits of the motion and all personal remarks should be avoided; (5) a member may not speak against his own motion but he may vote against it. I think the last point is important to repeat. A member may not speak against their motion but they may vote against it. The primary reason is that the maker of the motion may have thought the motion made sense and was good for the district, but may learn something in the discussion that would make them realize this was not a good idea.

While we are at convention, there are some basic terms you should be familiar with. If you have a parliamentary question about what is happening, you can go to the microphone and asked to be recognized. The proper wording would be I rise to a parliamentary inquiry and then you state your question. The President will respond to your request. There is no need for a second to do this because you merely have a question. If you rise to a question of privilege, this is when you address the chair about a condition such as microphones not working and unable to hear. If the debate is going on too long, you may go to the microphone and be recognized and state “I move the previous question or I call the question.” When this is done the Chair will call for a vote of the delegates to see whether everyone is ready for the debate to stop. In order to prevail, there must be a 2/3 vote in favor. For most votes, you need a majority which is 50% + 1. To amend the ByLaws, it requires a 2/3 vote.

Now let’s talk about a few misunderstood motions:

- 1. Lay it on the table – the purpose of laying a motion on the table is to set it aside temporarily. According to Robert’s and I will read directly from there: “This motion is commonly misused in ordinary assemblies—in place of the Motion to Postpone Indefinitely or to Postpone to a Certain Time. In ordinary assemblies, the motion to lay on the table is out of order if the evident intent is to kill or avoid dealing with a measure.**
- 2. Motion to Postpone Indefinitely – disposes of a motion**
- 3. Postpone to a Certain Time – when you postpone consideration to the same or another meeting**
- 4. Refer to Committee – this is used when a motion on the floor needs to be studied or redrafted before further consideration.**

Now to explain some of the basics a little better, I have some distinguished Pilots who will do a skit for you.

[SKIT]

The parliamentarian cannot temporarily relinquish the position to exercise any rights. Parliamentarians should never stand and vote in an international or district meeting because then you have lost impartiality.

Let's take a look at protocol. There is protocol for the presiding officer.

Protocol is defined as the customs and regulations with diplomatic formality, precedence and etiquette. It is showing respect. We honor the office, not the person.

There is protocol for the presiding officer whether you are in an international meeting, a district meeting or in your local club meeting.

- 1. Presiding officers must always be courteous and diplomatic and remain totally impersonal in attitude and remarks. In other words, make no comments about any person.**
- 2. Presiding officers preside impartially, speaking slowly and clearly.**
- 3. Presiding officers use the gavel prudently. They rap the gavel once to call the meeting to order and once to adjourn the meeting.**
- 4. Presiding officers never say "you are out of order" but instead say "the motion is out of order."**
- 5. Begin and end the meeting on time and follow the agenda. If you begin meetings late to wait on**

people, members will start coming later to meetings because they expect you to start late.

6. **Keep your opinions to yourself; the Chair presides. The Chair expresses no opinion.**

There is also general meeting protocol. The person that opens the convention, closes it.

I have served many times as district parliamentarian and as international parliamentarian. I have received lots of calls asking for help because of a situation. Today, I am going to assign the tables a situation. These are all real situations that I have been asked so they could happen to you at your convention. You will have five minutes to discuss it at your table, Select a spokes person that will explain how the situation should be handled when I call on your table.

No. 1

You are at District Convention and the registration report has been given and accepted by the convention delegates. There are 109 delegates in attendance. When the first motion is brought to the floor, a vote is taken and there are 58 votes in favor of the motion and 53 votes opposed or a total of 111 votes. What do you do to correct this problem?

No. 2

You are the Chair and a Motion has just been voted on. A Delegate goes to the microphone and states “I move for a division of the assembly.” What does this mean and what do you do?

This is a motion to have a rising or stand-up vote because the prior vote was too close to determine a majority by a voice vote. This is not debatable and requires no second.

No. 3

A member properly seeks the floor to speak regarding a pending motion. However, the parliamentarian rules that the comments are not germane to the discussion. What does this mean and can the speaker correct this?

No. 4

There is an election of officers and a decision must be made if a run-off is required.

The election chair reads the result as follows:

Delegates Present: 110

Number of votes cast: 106

Mary Smith has received 54 votes

Janet Johnson has received 52 votes.

Will it be necessary to have a run-off? If so, why? If not, why not?

No run-off is necessary because candidates must have a majority of votes cast to win. There were only 106 votes cast so a majority would be 54 votes or half plus one.

No. 5

A motion passed during the business session of the convention. However, that same day new information is learned that would change the situation and if presented, it is believed that a different result might reflect the true will of the assembly. What can be done after a motion has passed?

If, it is the same business session or no later than the next day, a member who voted with the prevailing side can, by moving to

Reconsider the vote propose that the question come before the assembly again as if it had not previously been voted on.

No. 6

In the debate on a Question, one member fails to keep remarks on the merits of the motion but instead discusses an irrelevant matter and even talks about the maker of the motion. How does the Chair handle this situation?

The Chair should first warn the member but can state that “the member is out of Order”. The Chair will state the offense, such as the discussion is not relevant to the motion or state that the discussion should be limited to the merits of the motion and should not include any discussion of the maker of the motion. If the person remains unruly, the Chair can put the matter to the assembly by stating “Shall the member be allowed to continue speaking? This question is not debatable.

Question No. 7

The Executive Committee Representative (ECR) is assigned to your district. The PI President is a member of this district and will be in attendance at convention. Does the PI President sit at the head table? If so, will the PI President sit next to the Governor? Where will the ECR sit?

The PI President always sits at the head table. The ECR is attending the convention in an official capacity and should be seated next to the Governor.

Thank you, I hope you learned something new today.