

Why Do We Use Parliamentary Procedure?

A brief introduction to
meeting conduct



According to General Henry M. Robert:

- “Parliamentary law is the best method yet devised to enable assemblies of any size, with due regard for every member's opinion, to arrive at the general will on the maximum number of questions of varying complexity in a minimum time and under all kinds of internal climate ranging from total harmony to hardened or impassioned division of opinion.”

-Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised (1990)



Why use it?

- In a nutshell, Parliamentary Procedure **guards members' rights**: for the majority, for the minority, for individuals, for absentees and for the group as a whole.
 - The will of the majority must be carried out
 - The rights of the minority must be protected
- How well Parliamentary Procedure is actually practiced often determines how orderly the meeting will be.



When to use it?

- In general, the more participants a meeting has, the more important Parliamentary Procedure becomes
- In general, the more potentially contentious the issues in a meeting, the more important the practice of Parliamentary Procedure becomes
- Don't use more than is appropriate to the group



Parliamentary Law Application

- Like a hammer, Parliamentary Procedure is intended to be used as a helpful tool, not a club.
- Poorly used Parliamentary Procedure can be frustrating to all concerned
- Parliamentary Procedure is mostly common sense and courtesy



What is a Motion?

- A motion is a proposal for action by the group
- There are several classes of motions:
 - Main (to do something)
 - Subsidiary (to modify a main motion, e.g., amend)
 - Privileged (unrelated to the main motion but very important, e.g., to take a recess or adjourn)
 - Incidental (unrelated, e.g., to rise to a point of order)



How to Make a Motion

- (A main motion may be made only when no other business is pending)
- Indicate to the chair a desire to speak (e.g., a raised hand)
 - Only a very few motions may interrupt a speaker who has the floor
- When recognized, make the proposal:
 - “Madam/Mister President, I move...”
 - Do not argue the merits of the proposal at this time



How to Make a Motion, 2

- To insure that there is sufficient interest in the issue, a motion must be ‘seconded’
 - Many times , after the second has been obtained, the chair restates the motion: “It has been moved that...”
- The floor is then open for debate, if the issue is debatable (there are some issues that are not debatable)
- The originator of the motion is allowed to speak first to the issue



Debating the issue

- Once debate is open
 - No speaker may speak a second time until all who have an interest have spoken once
 - It is good practice that, if someone has already presented your view, there is generally no need to present it again.
 - The chair is the ‘referee’ of the discussion, attempting to see that all points of view are fairly represented
 - The chair should not be afraid to ‘bang the gavel’



Debating the issue, 2

- When it is clear that no one else wishes to speak, or that nothing further will be gained by additional discussion, the chair may call for a vote.
 - The decision of the chair may be appealed (but that's for another session).

