PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE
AND
MEETING PARTICIPATION

I. History of Parliamentary Procedure and its Application to Meetings.

"Parliamentary Procedure" is a misnomer, an incorrect title or term. When American unionists use this term, we are referring to the rules of conducting a formal meeting, not a governmental procedure. But we are stuck with this term, and we can thank our first Vice President Thomas Jefferson for it. When our country was formally institutionalized as the United States and Congress was convened, there was no "code" or method of conduct by which our elected representatives could base their actions. Jefferson, who presided over the U.S. Senate, sought to remedy this situation by writing a manual of conduct for the Senate based on procedures used by the British in their Parliament; hence "Parliamentary Procedure".

If, as citizens, we often have difficulty understanding the actions of Congress, then is no small wonder that we would likewise have difficulty understanding our nation's congressional procedures. Realizing this difficulty, U.S. Army officer General Henry Martyn Robert (May 2, 1837 – May 11, 1923) condensed and simplified the federal procedural rules so that group meetings and other forms of formal and informal gatherings could be conducted on both a rational and orderly basis. His simplification has become known as "Robert's Rules of Order". Parliamentary procedure, as refined by Robert, has become the framework by which we conduct union and other meetings because these meetings should be both democratic and efficient.

a. democratic in that it provides for the rule of the majority at the same time that it protects the rights of the minority and

b. efficient in that while it provides for full and free discussion of all matters, it limits group consideration to but one subject at a time and requires an orderly disposition of each item of business before taking up another.
Union and other meetings are not normally known to be exciting and action-packed; however, special meetings concerned with new contract discussions, elections, or other key issues draw vocal and often times overly zealous members. It is at meetings such as these that some form of order needs to prevail. “The main objectives of parliamentary rules are to guard against hasty, ill-conceived action, to give each member an equal right to be heard, to determine the will of the majority, and to protect the rights of the minority”.

Note below the following principles guiding the conduct of a meeting:

a. Only one question can be considered at a time ... only one amendment can be considered at a time.

b. No one can speak until they have risen, addressed the presiding officer or chair, and been “recognized.”

c. No one can speak a second time on the same question as long as another wants to speak for the first time.

d. When two or more members rise to speak, the chairperson should recognize the one who opposes the preceding speaker, and preferably one who has not spoken previously.

e. Noting previous points C&D, each proposal coming before the meeting shall be freely debated with meaningful discussion and that the will of the majority is sought, but a minority or minorities have the right to present a case.
CHAPTER 1.

Why Parliamentary Law?

It has been said many times that democracy begins in a formal or informal meeting. To the individual member the measurement of democracy in a formal meeting is often just that -- what goes on at a formal meeting. Do I know how to get up and say what I think? Is the meeting dominated by a small bunch of long-winded characters? Do we get things done at the meeting? Is it just a clique that’s running things? ... are often the yardsticks he/she uses to measure the chapter. To insure democracy and to prevent members from milling around in confusion when they come together for a meeting, a set of rules for meetings has been developed over the years.

Where the Rules Come From

Because these rules were originally based upon the experience of British Parliament, they are known as “Parliamentary Law” or “Parliamentary Procedure.” We will refer to them as rules for formal and informal meetings.

Thomas Jefferson wrote the first manual of procedure for Congress. But the book most often used today is one that adapts the rules of Congress for action by deliberative bodies. It is known as “Robert’s Rules of Order.”

Most organizations have modified Robert’s rules to suit their own purposes. Others have provided in their constitution or by-laws some particular rules for conducting meetings.

Jefferson said in his manual that it is not so important what the rule is, but that there is a rule to guide us.

Knowing the Rules

Rules for meetings enable the work of the organization to get done effectively and efficiently while, at the same time protecting the rights of all members. Just as learning to play a game properly requires knowledge of rules, so playing a proper role in the organization requires a working knowledge of the rules for the meetings.

When only the chair knows the rules, the work of the meeting suffers. When most of the body has a working knowledge of the rules, the “floor,” meaning the members, actually controls the meeting and the “chair” simply directs it. This doesn’t mean that a member must memorize the rules in order to participate in a meeting. No one can memorize everything about parliamentary procedure. Even the best parliamentarian has, at times, to rely upon good judgment and the common sense of the group. Remember these rules are not carved in stone. So start with the basic principles behind the rules and then when in doubt look it up or ask questions.
The basic principles behind the rules can be stated as follows:

1. Only one subject should come before the meeting at a time.
2. Each proposal coming before the meeting shall be freely debated with meaningful discussion.
3. The will of the majority is sought, but a minority or minorities have the right to present a case.
4. Each member has rights and responsibilities equal to those of every other member.
5. The desire of the membership should move along in such a way that the welfare of the organization, as a whole, is served.
6. Debate the issue, not the person who presents it.
7. Ask information when in doubt.
8. Enter the debate when a point should be made.
9. Address the chair and get recognition before talking.
10. Assume a shared responsibility for action decides upon by the group.
11. Keep informed about the organization.
12. Know something about the rules of the meeting.

CHAPTER 2.

What Makes A Good Chairperson?

A good chairperson is made, not born. But this does not mean that a good chairperson is necessarily the officer who has learned all rules of order. Such a “walking encyclopedia” is quite apt to get entangled in too many details to be completely effective.

What Does the Chairperson Have to Know?

A good chairperson does need to know enough about the rules to meet the problems of procedure which may come up in the organization meeting.

In addition the chair should be familiar with the organization’s constitution and by-laws. This includes not only the local organization, the regional and national organization that charted the chapter. This is important because the chair at times may have to rule on constitutional questions. Infringements of the chapter’s constitution or by-laws are serious matters. A chapter may find itself in real trouble if it violates the constitution, even inadvertently.

Finally, the chair must learn to be fair, impartial and courteous to everyone when chairing the meeting -- like a referee or an umpire.
What Does the Chair Do?

It is up to the chair to:

1. Keep the meeting moving along.
2. See that members understand what is going on -- which rules apply, and why.
3. See that there is full discussion so voting is informed.
4. Protect the minority.

It may look like a big job and it is. But much of the skill required of the chair comes with practice.

“A democratically minded chairperson, well versed in the rules of order, tolerant, patient, and impartial and, above all, possessing a liberal supply of good sense, is more of a safeguard for an orderly meeting than a library of parliamentary law ... It is more important for a chairperson and members of an organization to get the spirit of democratic procedure than to observe the letter of the law. The will for order may often obtain order and progress in a meeting even if errors are made in the use of rules. It is however, best to be conversant with the rules in order that meetings may be orderly.”

The Secretary

There are two parts to the secretary’s job: taking minutes of the meeting, and preparing them for presentation. The secretary also can be an important aid to the chair during the meeting by helping to follow the agenda and reading back accurately worded motions when needed.

The minutes should include all votes taken at a meeting and short summaries of all the reports submitted. They should be brief but exact in wording. The words must describe the action clearly, but should not include the discussion nor reflect the personal opinion of the secretary or any officer. They should be an impartial, accurate record of the action taken by the meeting.

No one expects a secretary to take shorthand or speedwriting. The experienced secretary takes rough notes of the action at a meeting and then rewords the notes for the record. Remember, there is no set way of keeping minutes.

CHAPTER 3.

Motions

The word motion refers to a formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the assembly take certain action.
Types of Motions

Main Motion – is a motion whose introduction brings business before the assembly; such a motion can be made only while no other motion is pending.

An Original Main Motion – is a main motion that introduces a substantive question as a new subject. This is a motion most often used, and is the basic device by which a matter is presented to the assembly for possible action, as “.... That the Club contributes $50 to the centennial celebration”; or “.... That the Society go on record as favoring the Popular Run route for the proposed new beltway”; or “... to adopt the following resolution: ‘Resolved, That the ABC Club oppose a National dues increase at this time.’”

An Incidental Main Motion – is a main motion that is incidental to or relates to the business of the assembly, or its past or future action. Such a motion is distinguished by the following characteristics:

1) It proposes an action specifically defined under parliamentary law and described by a particular parliamentary term. There are thus a definite number of incidental main motions (subsidiary, privileged, and incidental) and motions that bring a question again before the assembly.

2) It does not mark the beginning of a particular involvement of the assembly in a substantive matter, as an original main motion does. (Like all main motions, however, it can be made only when nothing is pending, and it brings business before the assembly.) Action that can proposed by the incidental main motion may relate: (a) to further steps in dealing with a substantive matter in which the assembly’s involvement has begun earlier; or (b) to procedure, without direct reference to a particular substantive item of business.

An example of an incidental main motion relates to procedure without reference to an item of business would be a motion to take a recess, made when no business is pending, or a motion to place a special limit on the length of speeches throughout a meeting. An incidental main motion is usually made orally.

Chapter 4.

Basic Rules of Order – How Motions Get Action

The motion is the basis of all action at a membership meeting. A membership decision to take action on a problem comes with a motion. It is the keystone of all rules of order. Without a motion no report can be dealt with, no new business can be introduced, no discussion closed, no meeting adjourned. Yet, in spite of its importance, a motion is simple thing. Complications arise from the way in which discussions are handled, the kind of motion offered and the possibility of amendments and amendments to amendments.
How Motions Are Made

A member desiring to present a motion rises and addresses the chair as “Mr. Chairperson,” or “Madam Chair.” Anyone in the meeting can rise to talk, but no one has the right to talk until recognized by the chair, and has been “given the floor.”

Ordinarily the chair recognizes the first member to arise, but when two or more arise at the same time the chair must exercise judgment in making a choice. When a member has been given the floor, the rest of the group should sit and listen. The chair recognizes a member by nodding or pointing to the member, or by calling out the name: “Sister Smith” or “the brother in the fourth row center.” When Sister Smith is recognized by the chair she rises and offers a motion: “Mr. Chairman, I move that Chapter or Lodge .....” She sits down. Another member rises to be recognized and seconds the motion. He/she does this by simply saying: “I second the motion, Mr./Madam Chairperson.”

No motion can be considered until it receives a second and the Chair has stated the motion back to the assembly.

Presumably, any proposal that cannot get a second is not worthy of discussion. In some instances a member desiring to make a motion will ask the privilege of explaining the purpose of his/her motion before making it. If there is no objection from the body the Chair may allow the member to do this. In most meetings all that is required for motion to be seconded is for a member to call out “Second” in a loud voice, while remaining seated.

Stating the Question

When the motion has been made and seconded the chair should repeat it loudly and clearly, so that all members will know what action has been proposed. If the motion is poorly worded or confusing, the chair should reword the motion, politely, so that its meaning will be clear. If the chair believes the motion is out of order, this should be pointed out as soon as it is made. In repeating the motion for the membership, the chair may ask the secretary to read it. However, the motion is not before the assembly until the Chair states the motion to the assembly.

Discussing the Motion

When the chair has restated the motion, or has it read, discussion is in order: “A motion has been made and seconded that ..... Is there any discussion?”

The person proposing the motion is usually given the first opportunity to speak on the motion, since it is expected that the best arguments to support the motion will be made by the person who makes the motion. After this opening statement, members speak for or against the motion as they are recognized by the chair.
It is a good practice for the chair to alternate speakers for and against a motion. No one should speak twice on a motion so long as there are others desiring to speak. A member who seldom participates should be given preference over the one who speaks frequently.

The chairperson may speak on a motion provided he or she leaves the “chair.” No speech should be made from the chair. The chair should not dominate the meeting so that members hesitate to state their opinions. It is best that the chair speak only when the full meaning of the motion has not been brought out by discussion, or when the matter is so very important to the well being of the organization that everyone should know where the chair stands.

In such a situation, the chair should step down to talk to a motion, and another officer should take the gravel. The chair’s remarks will be better received from the floor than from the chair.

Amendments or a Substitute Motion?

If debate becomes extensive, or the debate indicates the motion is unclear, the members would probably like to change the motion a little. That’s the time when an amendment is used or a substitute motion is in order. Either may be offered at any time after a motion has been seconded and before the vote is taken.

The person wishing to move for an amendment to a motion must get the floor in the same manner as one speaking on the motion. And the amendment must be stated clearly and defined as to what section of the motion it applies. For example, someone may move that the “Executive Committee investigate the possibility of the organization sponsoring a Little League ball team.” Another member may want to change this by saying “I propose and amendment changing the words “the Executive Committee” to “a special committee.” Ordinarily, amendments are made to change a motion or include more specific information.

No amendment can be offered which is directly contrary to the motion. For example, an amendment not to investigate the possibility of sponsoring the team would be out of order. It must also be closely related to subject of the motion. It cannot be used to introduce a new subject.

Once an amendment has been moved and seconded, discussion then follows on the amendment. In voting, the vote is taken first on the amendment and then the main motion. The chair says: “All those in favor of the amendment which strikes out the words ... and substitutes the words ... please indicate by the usual sign.” If the amendment is defeated another amendment is in order.

A substitute motion can replace the original motion and include changes or suggestions brought out in discussion or offered by amendments. It keeps the action simple and
straightforward. Discussion and voting take place on the substitute motion. However, it
too can be amended just as if it were an original motion.

Amendments to an Amendments or Substitute Motion?

Just as it is possible to change a motion, so it is also possible to change an amendment. A
member may not be satisfied with the amendment and so will attempt to improve it by
moving an “amendment to the amendment.” In the example above, some members may
feel that the committee should be elected, and so would move “an amendment to the
amendment providing that the committee be elected.”

That is as far as the situation can go, for there can be no amendment to amendment to the
amendment. In fact, it would probably help all around in most situations if a substitute
motion if offered when you have reached the point where an amendment is being offered
to an amendment.

An amendment to an amendment is made in the same way as an amendment or a motion.
It requires a second. When it is made, the discussion then must take place on the
amendment to the amendment. The chairperson can sometimes ask the maker of the
motion and his/her second whether they would be willing to accept the amendment as
part of the original motion. If they agree and no other member objects this can be done,
saving time and energy.

Otherwise, the amendment to the amendment, the amendment and the motion must be
debated and voted upon step by step in that order. And the chairperson must carry
through each step until the main motion has been voted on. A favorable vote on an
amendment or an amendment to the amendment does not carry the main motion with it.
Members may favor an amendment as the least objectionable choice and still oppose the
idea embodied in the main motion.

It is important to note that while there can be an amendment to an amendment, there
cannot be separate amendments to a motion before the meeting at the same time.

Voting

When it appears that no one else wants to discuss the motion or propose amendments, the
chair asks: “Are you ready for the question?” and if no one desires to speak, the vote is
taken. But the chair must use care not to cut off debate.

When the membership is ready to vote the chair (or secretary) reads the motion again.
For a simple voice vote the chair then says: “All those in favor of this motion say ‘Aye.’
.... those opposed, ‘No.’ If the response is favorable, the chair then says: “The ayes have
it and it is so ordered.”
The chair should always be sure to call for the “Nays” as well as the “Ayes” even though there seems to be a unanimous vote in favor.

Show of Hands

When there is any doubt on the part of the chairperson or the membership as to which side has won, a vote by show of hands or a standing vote is in order. The chair may ask for such action. In fact, it is strongly suggested that a show of hands be used as the common measure, since this will give a clear-cut division of the membership on all issues.

A member may call for a vote by a show hands by simply calling out the word “division” form his/her seat. The chair must grant this request at all times. If the group is a large one the chair may appoint, or have available, a committee of tellers who will count hands for or against the move. Otherwise, the secretary and the chair do the counting. The actual count should be made unless the result is so obvious as to be without question.

Vote by Ballot

On very important questions, such as elections, or purchasing property, etc., voting should be by ballot. This makes each vote a matter of record and it preserves secrecy. Various by-laws may require that certain votes be secret ballot. In other instances, a vote by ballot may be agreed to the general consent, or by a motion from the floor. Such a motion is not debatable and requires a simple majority.

CHAPTER 5.

Motions to Help Keep Order

Simple as we try to keep rules in an organization meeting, not every member is likely to know all of the fine points. It is duty of the chairperson to see that the rules are abided by and, equally important, that explanations of the rules are made at difficult points.

Point of Order

But, even the best chairperson may miss a violation of the rules or make a ruling, which is felt to be wrong. A member may call for a “point of order” if situations like these develop:

1. When discussion seems to be wandering away from the point of the motion or its amendments, a member may rise to a point of order to force the chairperson to bring the discussion back to the subject.

2. When the by-laws of the organization or national are being broken, a member may rise to call the chair’s attention to this violation.
3. When the chair permits a member to discuss a “privileged” motion, the discussion should be halted since such a motion is undebateable.

The member wishing to call the chair’s attention to an oversight or misrule simply stands and calls out “Mr/Madam Chair, I rise to a point of order.” The member may do this even though another person who has the floor is being interrupted. The chair must recognize this request. The Chair asks: “Brother/Sister, what is your point of order?” The member states his/her “point of order” and the chair then rules on it. The chair may say that this point of order is well taken; or that it is not well taken.

A point of order should not be used as:
- An excuse to slow down a meeting.
- A convenient way to interrupt a speaker.
- An excuse to make a speech.
- An excuse to criticize the chair.

Appeal from the Decision of the Chair

When a member has been ruled out of order or when the chair does not accept the point of order, the usual thing is to proceed with the business at hand. If, however, a member feels that a grave injustice has been done, that a ruling of the chair is a violation of procedure, the member may make an “appeal from the decision of the chair.” This requires a “second.” It then will give the meeting (membership) the opportunity to decide. Such an appeal can be made immediately after the ruling by the chair has been made. Any member present at the meeting may make it.

The member announces: “I appeal the decision of the chair.’ If there is a second, the chair may turn the meeting over to a vice chair to step down. The person making the appeal takes the floor and gives a reason for appealing, and then the chair states the reasons for the ruling. This is usually the extent of the discussion. No member may speak more than once except the chairperson, who has the right to conclude such debate. The question is put to a vote in this manner: “All those in favor of ....” or, “Shall the ruling of the chair be sustained?” Immediately upon the decision on the appeal, the order of business is resumed. The chair resumes control of the meeting regardless of the decision -- sustained or overruled.

Point of Information

When a member feels that more information is needed about the meaning of a motion or its effect on the organization, the member may direct an inquiry to the chair by simply saying: “Point of information.” The chair should recognize the questioner even though another person on the floor is interrupted. Needless to say, there is always the possibility that members will ask frivolous questions or questions which convey opinions. The chair must be on guard against abuses of this sort. Courtesy and common sense should rule.
Sometimes the questioner desires information from another member. When this happens the chair should ask the person holding the floor whether that person will yield for the purpose. The speaker cannot be forced to yield. Moreover, even if the speaker yields, the questioner must address the point of information through the chair and answer must made to chair. Members may not address one another during the meeting.

Parliamentary Inquiry

When the specific information that a member is seeking has reference to parliamentary rules, this is a “parliamentary inquiry.” A member may want to know if a certain motion is in order. The chair’s answer to such a question is not a decision that can be appealed. Only a decision that the chair made after the motion has been brought up would be subject to appeal.

Question of Privilege

A member to call the attention of the chairperson to something that affects the well being of the membership in the meeting may use a question of privilege. The questioner may ask to have the windows raised or lowered. The speaker may be asked to speaker louder. The chair, subject to appeal, decides questions of privilege.

If the question concerns the welfare of one person in the group it is a question of personal privilege. These special privileges are rights of all members but they should not be used as a pretext to disrupt a meeting. Again, common sense and decency must rule.

The form for such a motion is “Madam Chair, I rise to question of privilege.” The chair says: “State your question.” “Can we open the windows to clear the smoke?” The chair can answer: “Your privilege is granted. Will the sergeant-at-arms open the windows?”

CHAPTER 6.

Motions for Unusual Action

These are motions intended to help in the handling of action motions. They cannot be debated. Some require more than a majority vote to carry support.

To Object to the Consideration of a Question

When a motion is made which will lead to discussion of a matter that will cause hard feelings or friction, a member may rise immediately to prevent discussion. Any member rises and says, “Mr. Chairperson, I object to consideration of this question.” The chair will reply: “There has been an objection to the consideration of the question. Those in favor of considering the question say, “Aye.” Those opposed, “No.” There is no discussion. It is put to a vote immediately. If two-thirds (2/3) of the members vote
against considering the question then it cannot be brought up again during that meeting. This motion should be used only in exceptional cases.

**Withdrawing a Motion**

The maker of a motion may decide to withdraw the motion and ask permission of the chair to withdraw the motion. If there is an objection, the question of withdrawal must be put to a vote. It requires no second. It **cannot be debated.** It then takes a **simple majority** to be withdrawn.

**To Table a Motion**

A motion to table postpones or delays action by a body. A **membership** may seem unable to reach a conclusion, or perhaps it appears more study should be given to a motion before debate continues. In such cases a member makes a motion to “table the motion.” Such a motion **cannot be debated** and requires only a **majority vote.**

**Limit or Extend Debate**

The membership may limit debate by setting a time limit for each speaker on the same motion, by setting a time for calling the question to a vote, by prescribing the number of speeches pro and con, or by allotting a specific amount of time each side of side question. Motion to limit discussion is made in the usual manner and requires a second. They can be amended if the purpose of a motion to limit discussion is to establish general rules limiting talk on all questions before the organization. Such a motion is debatable. If they apply only to a motion being discussed on the floor they are not debatable. **Strict rules of parliamentary law** prescribe a two-thirds (2/3) majority.

**Move the Previous Question**

A motion to call for “the previous question” is a method of stopping all discussion on a motion and forcing a vote. In many organization persons who want a vote call out “Call for the question” from their seats. This should have no effect in stopping someone who wants to speak on a motion. As long as someone wants to talk the chairperson should recognize him or her.

The motion requires a second, and is not debatable. A person cannot make such a motion while speaking on the question or if the person has spoken and there are still others who want the floor.
CHAPTER 7.

I. “A Motion to Reconsider”

A move to reconsider can be made only on the same day that the vote on the motion to be reconsidered was taken or at the next meeting. The motion to reconsider must be made by a person who voted with the majority in the first vote. Any member may second this motion. If the vote was by secret ballot any member may move to reconsider.

Because the motion to reconsider has as its purpose the correction of a mistake made by the group, it is a privileged motion and the maker of it may interrupt a speaker and make the motion while there is other business on the floor. However, debate on the motion to reconsider does not start until the work that was on the floor has been completed.

The move to reconsider is debatable and requires only a majority vote to pass. No question can be reconsidered twice.

“A Motion to Rescind”

A motion to “rescind” nullifies a previous decision of the group. Such a motion is made in the normal fashion and can be made by any member. It requires a two-thirds (2/3) vote. A motion to reconsider simply reopens the matter for further discussion and decision by the group. Please note that a motion to rescind may be made by any member at any meeting, while a motion to reconsider must be made by a member who voted with the majority at the same meeting at which the original motion was passed, or the next succeeding meeting.

II. Change the Agenda

“To Suspend the Rules”

Occasionally something may come up which requires a change in the order of business. There may be a deadline on an important question. There may be question that requires more time for debate, or a visiting speaker may want to come and go as early as possible. For these or other occasions, the chair can request a motion to “suspend the rules.” This motion requires a second. It cannot be debated. It needs two-thirds (2/3) vote to pass.

III. End of the Meeting

“Move to Adjourn”

A motion to adjourn is required to end a meeting. It is particularly “in order” when there is no further business to come before the meeting. The chair can indicate when it is best
to entertain such a motion. However, the motion to adjourn the meeting can be made at any time except during a vote or when someone has the floor.

If the motion to adjourn is accepted any question stopped by such action may be brought up at the next meeting as old business. If the motion is defeated it cannot be renewed until the group has acted upon some other motion or report.

CHAPTER 8.

Motions with Peculiar Characteristics

Things You May Do when another member has the Floor

1. Rise to a point of order, point of information, or question of privilege.
2. Object to the consideration of the question.
3. Move to reconsider.
4. Appeal.

Motions that Cannot Be Amended

1. To adjourn (if motion is to adjourn at a particular time it can be amended).
2. To table, or to take from the table.
3. To reconsider.
4. To call for the previous question.
5. To suspend the rules.
6. To object to the consideration of the question.
7. To postpone indefinitely.

Motions That Cannot Be Debated

1. To fix a time to adjourn, or to adjourn.
2. To object to the consideration of a question.
3. To table, or to take from the table.
4. To call for the previous question.
5. To limit or extend debate.
6. To withdraw a motion.
7. To suspend the rules.
Motions That Do Not Require a Second

1. To object to the consideration of a question.
2. To withdraw a motion.
3. To call for a division of the house.
4. Point of order.

Motions That Require a Two-Thirds (2/3) Vote

1. To suspend the rules.
2. To sustain an objection to the consideration of a question.
3. To rescind (except as noted in the text).
4. To limit or close debate (in some organizations or unions).
5. To close nominations.

Motions Used to Delay Action on the Original Motion

1. To postpone indefinitely.
2. To postpone definitely.
3. To refer to committee.
4. To lay on the table.
§43. RULES GOVERNING DEBATE

*Debate*, rightly understood, is an essential element in making of rational decisions of consequence by intelligent people. In a deliberative assembly, this term applies to discussion on the merits of a pending questions — that is, whether the proposal under consideration should, or should not, be agreed to. That right of debate is inherent in such an assembly is implied by the word deliberative.

Summary of Procedures Incident to Debate

- Until a matter has been brought before the assembly in the form of motion proposing a specific action, it cannot be debated.

- The maker of the motions should be recognized first to speak on their motion. Afterwards all members rising to speak should be recognized.

- While debate is in progress, amendments or other secondary (subsidiary, privileged, or incidental) motions can be introduced and disposed of — and can be debated and conclude by offering a secondary motion, which is a particular application of the principle that a member having been recognized for any legitimate purpose has the floor for all legitimate purposes.

- When debate appears to have concluded, the chair may again ask, "Are you ready for the question?" or if, after a reasonable pause, no one rises to claim the floor, the chair may assume that no member wishes to speak and, standing, may proceed to put the question.
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<th>Motion</th>
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<th>Amendable</th>
<th>Requires a Second</th>
<th>Vote Required</th>
<th>In Order When Another Is Speaking</th>
<th>Can Be Reconsidered</th>
<th>Motions to Which It Applies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Question of Privilege (treat as Main Motion)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orders of the Day</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Any special order</td>
<td>None; except to Postpone orders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Any Decision of the Chair</td>
<td>Lay on table Close debate Reconsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Point of Order</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Any motion or act</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objection to Consideration of Question</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Main questions and questions of privilege</td>
<td>Reconsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Papers</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Any motion</td>
<td>Reconsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal of Motion</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Any motion</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension of Rules</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Any motion where needed</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay on Table</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Main questions, appeals, questions of privilege, reconsider</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Question</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Any debatable motion</td>
<td>Reconsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit or Extend Limits of debate</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Any debatable motion</td>
<td>Reconsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postpone to a Definite time</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Main motion, question of privilege</td>
<td>Amend reconsider Limit or Close debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refer or Commit</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Main motion, question of privilege</td>
<td>Amend Reconsider close debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amend</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Main motion, limit debate, refer, postpone, fix time of next meeting</td>
<td>Amend Reconsider close debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postpone Indefinitely</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Main motion, question of privilege</td>
<td>Limit or close debate Reconsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Motion</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconsideration</td>
<td>Yes, if motion to which it applies is debatable</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Main motion, appeals, questions of privilege</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Majority means a simple majority. Two-thirds (2/3) means a two-thirds majority.
How Action Takes Place at a Meeting

1. Recognition
   Mr/Madam Chair

2. Making A Motion
   I Move That –

3. Seconding
   I Second It!

4. Stating A Motion
   It Has Been Moved and Seconded!

5. Discussion
   ?

6. Restating The Motion
   The Motion Before Us Is

7. Voting
   All in Favor Say “YEA”
   All Opposed “NAY”

8. Announcing The Result
   The Motion is Carried