



THE ASSOCIATION OF JUNIOR LEAGUES INTERNATIONAL INC.®

Women building better communities

Parliamentary Procedure

What is Parliamentary Procedure?

Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules which, if used correctly, helps a group run meetings without confusion and without waste of time and/or effort. There are three basic ideas behind these rules:

1. All persons in the group are equal: the rights of one are the rights of all.
2. The minority must be heard.
3. The will of the majority will be carried out.
4. Common sense and courtesy are the expected norm.

The adopted parliamentary authority (which should be clearly identified in the bylaws) is one of the four basic authorities of an organization. The four authorities, ranked from highest to lowest, are:

1. Articles of Incorporation
2. Bylaws
3. Bylaws policies and procedures
4. Parliamentary authority

How Much Do I Need To Know? How Do I Learn?

If you are able to make a motion, to make an amendment to a motion, to make a vote, and know how to use the special procedures designed to protect an individual member's rights, you will know almost everything necessary to run an organizational meeting or to participate as a member. Once you have learned the basics, you can learn the rest as you go along. An excellent resource, Parliamentary Procedure At A Glance, written by O. Garfield Jones and published by Hawthorn/Dutton, is readily available and has a split page-finder index system that allows one to locate all the specific rules at a glance. Most books on parliamentary procedure state that it would be foolish to memorize all of the rules. To have a familiarity with them and a system for locating them is sufficient for the average individual.

In addition to good procedural resources, the Association's Parliamentarian Dr. M. Eugene Bierbaum has written a book, which demystifies the actual job of presiding. The title is Presiding...You Can Do It! It is written specifically for newly elected Presidents and includes valuable information on working with the membership at a voting meeting as well as working with a parliamentarian and a League's Board. Information on purchasing this resource is at the AJLI Resource Table and on the AJLI web site.

Parliamentary Procedure Basics

How Do I Make A Motion?

There are six steps in completing any motion. These steps are the very heart of parliamentary procedure and take care of most business in the usual meeting. The six steps are:

1. A member makes the motion. In making the motion, the following three sub-steps should be followed:
 - a. The member asks to be recognized: "Madame Chairman."
 - b. The chair recognizes the member: "Ms. Jones."
 - c. The member states her motion: "I move that this book club have a Labor Day picnic."
2. Another member (without waiting to be recognized) seconds the motion: "I second the motion."
3. The Chair states the question, i.e., repeats the exact words of the motion and calls for discussion: "It has been moved and seconded that the book club have a Labor Day picnic. Is there any discussion?"
4. The members debate the motion. Each member must be recognized before discussing the motion, and debate is strictly limited to the motion on the floor.
5. The Chair puts the question to a vote: "Are you ready for the question? (pause) "All those in favor of the motion say 'aye.'" (pause) "Those opposed say 'no.'" (pause)
6. The Chair announces the result of the vote: "The motion is adopted and this book club will have a Labor Day picnic."

Basic Rules of Debate/Discussion

1. Each member is able to speak once to a question. The mover of the motion has the privilege of speaking first in debate.
2. Members should avoid making personal judgements/statements.
3. All inquiries should be made through the chair.
4. The chair must remain neutral.

How Do I Make An Amendment To A Motion?

An amendment must be made before the final vote is taken. An amendment to a motion is made by following the same six steps listed for making a motion. Once a member is recognized by the chair, she states her amending motion by saying how she wants to change the first, or main motion.

Amendments may be made in any of three ways:

1. By inserting (or adding) words
2. By striking (or deleting) words
3. By substituting new words for some of the original words

What About Amending An Amendment?

In a meeting where parliamentary procedure is being followed, only two amendments may be offered as motions before one of them must be voted upon. Only one motion at a time may be discussed, and they are voted upon in order, beginning with the last motion made.

Main Motion: "I move that we have a picnic in June."
1st Amendment: "I move to amend the motion by adding 'on the first Saturday.'"
2nd Amendment: "I move to amend the amendment by substituting 'second Saturday' for the 'first Saturday.'"

The second amendment, which must modify and relate directly to the first amendment, is discussed and voted upon first. If it is adopted, then the first amendment will be changed to read: "I move that we amend the motion by adding 'on the second Saturday.'" If the second amendment is not adopted, then the first amendment is ready to be discussed and voted on in its original form. "I move that we amend the motion by adding 'on the first Saturday.'"

The first amendment is then discussed and voted upon. If it is adopted, then the main motion will read: "I move that we have a picnic on the first Saturday in June." If neither of the amendments is adopted, then the main motion is ready to be voted on in its original form.

After both amendments have been voted upon, the chair states the main motion (as amended if either amendment was adopted) and asks for discussion. "The motion now before us is that we have a picnic on the first Saturday in June. Is there any discussion?" The motion may be further amended at this time if members so wish.

Basic Rules of Voting

Methods:

1. voice vote (viva voce)
2. show of hands
3. simple rising vote
4. counted rising vote
5. roll call vote
6. ballot vote (may be required in bylaws)
7. mail ballot
8. proxy ballot
9. general consent ("If there is no objection, we will adopt the motion by general consent.")
10. unanimous vote (used to honor someone – the chair only calls for the 'yes' vote)

Types of Votes:

1. majority (over ½)
2. plurality (the highest vote getter)
3. two-thirds vote (when the vote pertains to members' rights or when bylaws are amended).
4. tie votes

A tie vote – when both sides have an equal number of votes – is counted as a 'no' vote and the motion is defeated.

The chair may vote only to 'make or break a tie.' If a vote is exactly even, the vote is lost unless the chair chooses to vote 'yes' and adopt the motion. There is no sense in the chair casting a 'no' vote because the motion is already defeated.

The chair is never required to vote unless she so wishes.

When Must I Have a Two-Thirds Vote?

The rule of thumb is that a majority is required for almost all ordinary business. A two-thirds vote is required when the members' rights are to be suspended or affected. An example is a motion to end debate or when decisions that have already been made are to be reversed. Additionally, a two-thirds vote is required to change an organization's bylaws.

Incidental Motions

There are several special emergency procedures, six of which are discussed here. They are special because they are not used in the ordinary handling of business, and deemed emergency because they are used to take care of something that cannot wait. They are termed procedures because they are not ordinary motions; they do not require a second, they may interrupt other speakers, and usually they must be taken care of immediately. Roberts calls them 'Incidental Motions.' They should not be used to interfere with the rights of others or to frustrate business. If they are used properly, they can be very helpful in insuring the rights of each member to participate fully in the business taking place and to make decisions.

Selected Special Emergency Procedures (Incidental Motions):

1. point of order
2. appeal, general case (decision of the chair)
3. parliamentary inquiry
4. request for information
5. point of privilege
6. objection to consideration

1. Point of Order is used when you believe that a member or the meeting is not proceeding properly and want to call this to the attention of the chair. Member: "Madame President, I have a point of order." President: "What is your point of order?" or "What is your question?" Member: "The motion at hand concerns the date of a picnic and the member is addressing the subject of obtaining publicity. I think the discussion is out of order at this time." President: "Your point is correct. The member will address her remarks to the date of the picnic. The speaker may continue."
2. Appeal, general case is used when you feel that the chair has made a wrong decision. In the example above, if the chair had answered, "Your point is not correct" and if you thought the chair's opinion was not correct, your reply should be: "I appeal from the decision of the chair."

When a member appeals from the decision of the chair, the chair is required to ask the meeting participants for a decision. The chair may present her position first, followed by the member who made the appeal, and ending with a statement by the chair. President: "The chair's ruling has been appealed. All of those in favor of the chair's ruling say 'yes.'" The vote is taken. Assuming the majority vote yes, "The majority has voted yes. The chair's decision is sustained." In the event the majority votes no, the chair's decision is overruled.

3. Parliamentary inquiry is used when you need parliamentary information. "Madame President, I have a parliamentary question." Chair: "State your question." Member: "May I now move to amend the motion?" Chair: "The chair believes such a motion would be proper at this time. You may make your motion."
4. Request for information is used when it is necessary to have certain information before continuing with the business of the meeting. Member: "I have a question of information," or "I have a point of information in the form of a question." Then the member states the question at hand.
5. Point of privilege is used when, for some reason, you are not able to participate comfortably or completely in the proceedings of the meeting. Member: "I have a question of privilege." Chair: "What is your question?" Member: "Those of us in the rear of the room cannot hear the speaker." Chair: "Your privilege is granted. Will the technician please adjust the public address system."

6. Objection to consideration is used when some ill-advised, embarrassing, time-wasting or simply foolish question is raised. Member: "I object the consideration of this question." Chair: "Objection has been made to considering the question. Those opposed to considering the question, raise your hands. This requires a two-thirds vote to approve the objection." Chair: "We have a two-thirds vote and the question cannot be considered and is dropped."

Objection to consideration should be used only when usual motions (such as to refer the question to a committee, to postpone consideration, to close debate, etc.) would not be sufficient. This procedure can only be used before debate has begun or before any subsidiary motion has been made. It should not be used when a question should be defeated but only when the question should not have been raised at all.

What Are Those Division Motions?

1. Division of a Question is used to allow the assembly, when there are two or more parts to a main motion which can stand as separate questions, to vote to treat each part accordingly in succession. A member would say, "I move to divide the resolution so as to consider separately...." The motion must be seconded.
2. Division of the Assembly is used when a member doubts the accuracy of the chair's announcement of voice vote results. The member may simply call out, "Division," or "I call for a division," and the chair will call for an uncounted rising vote. No second is needed. If the member is still not satisfied she may say, "I move that the vote on this motion be counted." This motion requires a second.

The Bylaws Committee hopes that this resource will enable a member to participate more efficiently and productively in her League's meetings.