



Ask the Parliamentarian

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Introduction

- You want your meeting to run smoothly...
- You need to cover all the important items on your list...
- You have important information to share and questions to address...
- ♦ You want to allow for orderly input from members...
- ♦ You need to have an action plan to accomplish your goals...
- This booklet is just the help you need!

Presented in an easy to follow Question & Answer format, the most frequently asked questions about parliamentary procedure are addressed with the knowledge and experience only a Professional Registered Parliamentarian, NCCW Leadership Trainer, and long-time member of her local Council of Catholic Women could provide.

The National Council of Catholic Women extends our thanks and gratitude to Pat Reymann, St Paul-Minneapolis Archdiocese, for freely and graciously sharing her expertise in this publication.

By Jane Carter, NCCW Leadership Commission





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ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about the President

- Q. Our new President thinks that she gets to make all the decisions now. Is she correct?
- A. No, the role of the President is to be a **facilitator**, **not a dictator**. She is to appoint board members and committee chairs who will help make the decisions with the members of the organization. In committee meetings she may voice her opinions and even vote, but, during board or general meetings, she should be neutral to any idea that is surfaced. This is not always easy!
- Q. What are the responsibilities of the President?
- A. The responsibilities are:

A President:

- Should read again the bylaws and standing rules to be sure that organization is following them.
- Needs to be familiar with her job description; if there is not a written one, she should begin to assemble one by consulting with recent past presidents for their input.
- If she is authorized, she should appoint qualified members to serve on her board.
- Should monitor the activities of the board members to make sure that they are doing their respective jobs, but she needs to give them leeway to work.
- Should gather materials and take workshops that will help her operate efficiently and fairly.
- Since she is the presiding officer for all board and general meetings, she would find a Parliamentarian to be a great asset to her and the board to help with running an effective meeting.
- May also serve as the liaison to other organizations within the parish, deanery or diocese.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about the President (cont.)

Q. What should be the qualifications for President?

- A. In any ring of Council you want a woman who is spiritual, kind, hardworking and organized (in that order). The official list of qualifications should be in your bylaws; it is common that she be required to serve a specified length of time on the board, but it is not always necessary. For diocesan or deanery offices, there may be an additional qualification that she be endorsed or approved by the bishop or spiritual advisor.
- Q. Is it OK to have a brand new member become the President?

Usually you want to have a leader who knows the organization and the way it functions; this is especially true at the deanery or diocesan ring of Council. However, in my parish we have had excellent results with new members who served as presidents. They were enthusiastic and brought fresh ideas to our group, which was going a little stale. But be careful not to ambush a new person and make her bite off more than she can chew!





ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about the Agenda

Q. What goes on the Agenda?

A. A comprehensive agenda includes Call to Order; Opening Exercises (God before Country= Prayer before the Pledge); Reading and Approval of the Minutes; Reports of Officers and Boards; Reports of Standing Committees (those listed in the Bylaws, probably the Commissions); Reports of Special Committees; Special Orders (if you have any); Unfinished (not Old) Business and General Orders (if you have any); New Business; Good of the Order (aka Open Forum); Announcements; and Adjournment. Note the chronological progression from the last meeting (minutes) to what happened between meetings (reports) to what is happening now and into the future (new business).

Q. Who is responsible for making up the Agenda?

A. In theory, it is the Secretary; but in real life, it is the President who usually puts together the agenda. She may seek the assistance of the Secretary and she may ask the membership if they have any additions to the agenda. Not all the items listed in the previous question will need to appear on every agenda; but when they do, the order above is correct - unless your Standing Rules specify something different.

Q. How many copies of the agenda are needed for each meeting?

A. One for everybody in the room. Members have the sense that the meeting will be productive and orderly; they can follow along and notice when they have a report to give or other part to play in the meeting. An agenda helps to keep people on topic, especially when they see that there is a place to discuss their current concern.

Q. Does the Agenda need to be adopted at every meeting?

A. Not if you hold meetings at regular time intervals and have a customary format for them. Usually, the agenda needs to be adopted only when you hold a convention.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about the Scripting

Q. I'm the new President of my parish and now I need to run a meeting! Can you help?

A. Sure. If you can, appoint a Parliamentarian - experienced or a newbie to help you. Together you can compose the agenda for the upcoming meeting (see previous page) and then write a script from it-filling in every word you plan to say for the entire meeting within each category on the agenda. Use double (or 1.5) spacing and adjust the size of the print so that it is easy for you to see. Use *italics* and/or (parentheses) for directions to yourself. Use ALL CAPS, <u>underlining</u> or **bold print** for those words you want to have really stand out. Color can be helpful, too. Number the pages, punch holes in them and place them in a folder. Voila - you have a Script and your presiding will be smooth!

Q. What do I need to include in the Script?

- A. A Script would include:
- The names of all the people you will be introducing to give reports, etc.; and the content of any reports,
- ♦ Introductions or comments you plan to make;
- The steps in processing motions (on a side sheet) even your own name if you get nervous!
- Phrases you will find helpful:
 - The meeting will come to order ...
 - Are there any (further) corrections to the Minutes? ...
 - Are there any questions concerning the Treasurer's Report?
 ...
 - The Treasurer's Report will be filed for audit ...
 - The next item of business is ...
 - The Chair recognizes ...
- ◆ Thank you ...
- If there is no objection, the meeting is adjourned.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about the Scripting (cont.)

Your Script for the Treasurer's Report might look like this:

- ◆ The next item of business is the TREASURER'S REPORT.
- ◆ The Chair recognizes Treasurer Penny Banker...(Listen to her report.) ...
- ♦ Are there any questions concerning the Treasurer's Report?...
- The Treasurer's Report will be filed for audit.
- ♦ Thank you, Penny.

Q. Do I need to make copies of my Script for anyone else?

A. Yes, it would be helpful to make copies of the final Script for your secretary and parliamentarian. If you have to cancel at the last minute or step out of the meeting for a while, your Vice President can use one of these Scripts to conduct the meeting without skipping a beat. The Secretary will find her copy helpful when she writes up the minutes.

Q: Is a Script really worth the time it takes to write it?

A. It does sound like a lot of work, but a Script will pay big dividends for the rest of your term, since you can save it in your computer and just tweak it for future meetings. A Script makes the President look competent and professional, which strengthens the image of the organization, as well as helping her gain more confidence. And she will sleep a whole lot better the night before!





ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about New Officers

Q. If a new officer misses the installation, when can she take office?

A. An installation is a nice ceremony - especially when it involves prayer - but it does not have "official" status. Therefore, she takes office when the bylaws stipulate - usually at the end of the convention at which she was elected. If your bylaws say "elected and installed", please amend them by striking out "and installed." If you wish to hold another installation ceremony for someone who missed the first one, you may; but that does not affect when she begins her term of office.

Q. What should be passed along from an officer to her successor?

A. Usually 2 years' of minutes (unless she is the secretary, who should get all the minutes - if they are not otherwise kept in a designated place), the current bylaws and standing rules, a recent roster, a recent budget and current information about the office she is holding. Please do not hand over boxes and boxes of old materials. Those items need to be sorted by someone who can throw out the unnecessary stuff (in the recycling bin, of course) and find a good home for the things that should be kept. If in doubt, ask a former president or holder of this office to go through things with you.

Q. Is it better to elect officers by plurality vote or majority vote?

A. Robert's prefers majority vote for the election of officers. This means that one candidate needs to get more than half of all votes cast. This may be difficult if you have 3 or more candidates in the running. If no one has a majority, the balloting is repeated- keeping all candidates - unless someone withdraws or unless your bylaws state that you may drop the bottom candidate. If your bylaws state that a plurality elects, then the person with the most votes wins the election.

Q. We cannot find a candidate for secretary; the current secretary is willing to stay on but the bylaws say that she has termed out. What should we do?

A. If the bylaws state that she holds office for a certain number of terms or until her successor is elected, then she may stay in - since you are unable to provide a successor. She may not "run" or be re-elected, but she may stay if you have no candidates. However, I strongly encourage you to begin grooming a few people to become secretaries in the future by including training for all your membership.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Content of Minutes

Q. What goes into the Minutes?

A. The Minutes are the official record of what was **done** (not what was **said**) at a meeting. In the first paragraph, the Minutes state the name of the organization; the kind of meeting held (regular, special, convention, annual, adjourned); the date and time of the meeting; the location, if it is different from the usual; the name of the presiding officer; and whether or not the secretary was present.

Minutes should also contain:

- the fact that the Minutes of the last meeting were approved,
- all main motions in their <u>final form</u> (unless they are withdrawn),
- their disposition,
- notices of motions to be made in the future,
- votes for and against if the votes were counted, and
- any appeals and Points of Order.

Q. Our Minutes needed 5 corrections this time. Do I need to list each correction in the Minutes of the current meeting?

A. No. The official copy of the previous meeting's Minutes should be corrected by hand (with the secretary's initials). The current Minutes need only state that the Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as corrected.

Q. What else should NOT go into the Minutes?

A. Avoid all editorial comments, such as "lovely", "inspiring" and "delicious." It is not advisable to summarize speeches, debate or committee reports. Do not name the person who seconded motions (unless you have a rule that requires it). Do not count or record abstentions - unless someone needs to prove that she did not vote when there would be a conflict of interest. (Note: that does NOT mean she cannot vote for herself!)

Q. Do I need to sign the Minutes with "Respectfully Submitted"?

A. No, that is no longer in vogue (or Robert's). Make sure that you sign the official copy and then add the date they were approved beside your initials. In some cases, the president may be asked by the assembly to sign them as well.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Approval of Minutes

Q. What is the proper way to approve the Minutes?

A. The president asks if there are any corrections to the Minutes. If there are, she asks for further corrections. When everyone is finished offering corrections, the president says, "If there are no (further) corrections, the Minutes are approved as read (or corrected.) No vote needs to be taken because this is approval by unanimous consent.

Q. Do the Minutes need to be read aloud at every meeting?

A. Basically, yes, but there are exceptions. If they have been distributed to everyone in advance, the chair may assume that all have read them, and she may go directly to asking for corrections. However, one person has the authority to require that the Minutes be read aloud.

Q. But what about voting to dispense with the reading of the Minutes?

- A. That is a motion (requiring a second and majority vote) that merely delays the reading of the Minutes to later in this meeting or to the next meeting. When no other business is pending at this meeting, a motion may be made (and adopted by majority vote) to read the Minutes from the previous meeting. If that doesn't occur in the current meeting, then they are on the agenda for the next meeting to be read before the Minutes of the current meeting. In other words, they are read in chronological order.
- Q. I missed the last meeting when the Minutes were approved. Now I notice a significant error in them. Is it too late to correct those Minutes?
- A. No, the Minutes may be corrected at any time that a mistake is noted. The motion is to Amend Something Previously Adopted. It requires a second and 2/3 vote (or a majority with previous notice, or 2/3 of the entire membership, or unanimous consent whatever works for you.) Minutes are the official record of your organization's proceedings, so it is important to have them be accurate!



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Treasurer's Reports

Q. Why are the Minutes adopted but the Treasurer's Report is not?

A. Because no one else in the room has enough information to know if the Treasurer's Report is accurate, yet almost everyone was at the previous meeting and can tell if the Minutes are correct. In extreme cases, an organization can get into serious trouble if they have adopted a Treasurer's Report that is fraudulent. Annually or biennially an audit (informal is OK) should be performed that goes over the check book, vouchers, bank statements and the Minutes to make sure that everything is in order. The Report of the Auditor is then adopted.

Q. If the council adopted a Budget, do they still have to approve every expense?

- A. Yes, in my opinion, because a budget is a just a guide or plan. Suppose a committee of 3 members was appointed to plan a spring tea and given a budget of \$500. If 2 of them (the majority) decide to spend \$450 on decorations, leaving only \$50 for food for 200 guests, does that seem right? Things can get out of hand if expenses are not monitored carefully and debated! When the Auditor goes over the Minutes, she will be looking for motions to authorize expenditures.
- Q. I was asked by the president to purchase several items for the council, but I am embarrassed to make a motion to be reimbursed. What should I do?
- A. There's no reason to be embarrassed but the best way to be reimbursed is to submit the bill, receipt and voucher (you do have vouchers, don't you?) to the Treasurer before the meeting and ask her to make a motion to pay your bill. This may be done at the time of her report or under New Business. And it's OK for you to vote in favor of the motion!

Q. How much detail should the Treasurer's Report include?

A It should be very detailed and printed for, at least, the president and secretary. Include a list of all sources and amounts of income and expenditures. If there is a special fund, such as a savings account or CD, list it separately. Note that funds collected for a designated purpose may be used for that purpose only.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about the Parliamentarian

Q. What is a Parliamentarian and why do I (as President) need one?

A. A Parliamentarian is a student of Robert's *Rules of Order, Newly Revised* whose primary job is to **make you look good!** (How can you resist having a person like that?) She will help you with your Agenda, Script, Rules and Bylaws whenever your need it. She should sit next to you during a meeting and *discreetly* advise you when something tricky comes up. She is the logical choice for Chair of the Bylaws and Standing Rules Committee for your organization.

Q. Where do I find a Parliamentarian?

A. There are professionals (such as myself) all over the country; those who work with the public for pay are listed on the NAP (National Association of Parliamentarians) website (www.parliamentarians.org) However, most of the time you will be able to find all the help that you need from an interested member who owns the latest version of RONR (Rules of Order, Newly Revised) or RONR In Brief and is willing to continue learning. If you have someone who is interested but does not have a copy of the book, buy one for her.

Q. Is there training for beginning Parliamentarians?

A. Yes, training is available from your local State Association of Parliamentarians, whose contact information is listed on the NAP website above. There are study units sponsored by NAP around most large cities that welcome beginners; they conduct their meetings using proper procedure and they include educational sessions within them. Your deanery or diocesan CCWs often offer a segment on Parliamentary Procedure in their officer training. A chapter of the NCCW *Guidance and Resource Manual* has a great deal of information on Parliamentary Procedure, as does this column.

Q. How does a Parliamentarian act during a meeting?

A. She sits next to the President and is discreet in giving assistance to her. She remains neutral on all issues (except those involving correct procedure) and, thus, she may not participate in debate. She may not vote publicly but may vote by ballot - if she is actually a member of your organization or board. Your CCW may make a Standing Rule that allows the Parliamentarian to speak, if you wish, especially if your organization is small and you would benefit from her insights as a member.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Processing Motions

Q. What is the correct way to make and process a motion?

A. A motion is processed in the following way:

A member must receive permission (recognition) from the Chair before speaking.

- After that she says, "I move that ..."
- The Chair (President) waits to hear a second from another member, who does not need to be recognized nor entered into the minutes.
- ♦ After the second the Chair restates the motion, "It is moved and seconded that.... Is there any debate?"
- After debate, the Chair restates the question and calls for the vote. "The question is on the motion to ... Those in favor, say, 'Aye.' Those opposed, say 'No.'
- Always ask for the negative vote, even if the vote seems unanimous.
- She announces the result of the vote by saying, "The ayes have it, the motion is adopted and we will..... " (OR) "The noes have it and the motion is lost."

A separate sheet with these steps should be made and tucked into the President's Script. It's a fun exercise for the group to practice making and processing motions.

Q. When is the correct time to make amendments?

A. <u>During debate</u> members may offer amendments (which then need to be processed before continuing the debate of the main motion), move to refer the motion to a committee, move to stop debate (Previous Question) and many other secondary motions which help in the disposal of the main motion. Amendments made during debate of the motion require a second and only a majority vote; amendments made after a motion is adopted require a second and a ½ vote.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Rules of Debate

Q. What are the rules of debate?

A. All remarks must be germane (related) to the motion and are to be addressed to the Chair, not to other members. Anyone wishing to speak to the motion must be recognized by the Chair. The maker of the motion has the right to speak first to her motion. Everyone may speak **only twice** to the same motion - the second time only after everyone else has had the opportunity to speak the first time. In other words, take turns and make your comments count!

Q. May the President stop debate when she thinks it has gone on long enough?

A. No. It is the right of members to make motions, debate (within the limits stated above) and vote.

One person acting alone cannot abridge those rights. Usually debate dies out on its own, but, if it goes on too long, a member may move the Previous Question (which is a motion to stop debate.) That motion requires a **second and a** % **vote** to pass, since it interferes with one of the rights of members.





ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Methods of Voting

Q. How should we take the vote at our general meetings?

A. Most of the time you will take a voice vote: "The question is on the motion to.. Those in favor, say 'Aye.' Those opposed, say 'No.'

Note that you are asking for the **ayes** and the **noes**; granted, the responses don't quite "match" each other, but that is what is proper, as defined by Robert's . If you have trouble remembering this, think of a face.

You are taking the ayes (eyes) and the noes (nose)!

Q. Is it OK to ask members to raise their hands when they vote?

A. A show of hands is a good method to use in meetings of committees and small boards when everyone can see who is voting. A voice vote in a small group is frequently inconclusive because one side may speak more loudly than the other.

Q. What is the best method of voting at our diocesan convention?

A. For conventions with a good bit of business, I recommend Voting Cards. At registration, those who are eligible to vote should receive a brightly colored index card, which they should sign. The number distributed will need to be reported at the Credentials Report. The use of Voting Cards must be authorized by the Convention Rules, which are adopted by 3/4 vote. A voice vote will be called for until the Rules are adopted. If you are electing officers, you will probably be required by your Bylaws to have a ballot vote.

When taking the vote with voting cards, the Chair should say:

"The question is on the motion to ...

- Those in favor, raise your Voting Cards.
- Lower them.
- Those opposed, raise your Voting Cards.
- Lower them.
- There is a majority in the affirmative, the motion is adopted and we will.... (OR) There is not a majority in the affirmative and the motion is lost."



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Methods of Voting (cont.)

Q. When do we need to take a 3/4 vote and how is it done?

A. A ¾ vote is always taken as a rising vote, which may be counted if it is too close to call. You are looking for the number of those in the affirmative to be at least twice the size of those in the negative.

When taking the vote with voting cards, the Chair should say:

"The Chair says, "The question is on the motion to...

- ◆ Those in favor, please rise...
- You may be seated.
- Those opposed, please rise...
- ♦ You may be seated.
- ◆ There are ¾ in the affirmative, the motion is adopted and we will... (OR) There are not ¾ in the affirmative and the motion is lost."

Common motions that require a 3/4 vote to adopt include:

- ♦ The approval of the Convention Rules;
- Any that change the regular limits of debate, such as Previous Question;
- ♦ Suspend the rules; and
- (Normally) amendments to the Bylaws.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Problems with Officers

Q. Our President has been in office forever! How do we get her to step down?

A. First, check your Bylaws to see if there are term limits for officers. (If there are not, you should consider adding them at your next opportunity.) Also, look in the Bylaws for the selection process for the Nominating Committee; make sure that happens at the appointed time. Next, find a candidate - such as yourself - who would be willing to run for the office. Be sure to thank the president profusely for her many years of service with a plaque, corsage, party, bulletin notice, etc. Include her in future deliberations as the Immediate Past President, if that is workable.

Q. Our Treasurer is never around to give a financial report at our meetings. What should we do?

A. That always makes me nervous! Make sure that the President and/or the Secretary has access to the accounts and the check book so that she can make a preliminary report in the Treasurer's absence, pay bills - and check for discrepancies. Have an audit done annually or biennially - just to be sure everything is proper. You may want to ask her to resign her office - but not her membership - since officers truly need to be present to do an adequate job. Check your bylaws for the process for filling vacancies in office.

Q. What can we do about our Secretary who takes terrible minutes that are full of inaccuracies and misspellings?

A. Try to work with her by offering a mentor - such as a former secretary - to assist her. Have the mentor or someone else proof-read her minutes before they are sent or handed out. Ask your parliamentarian to take meeting notes, too, to compare with hers. If this doesn't fix the problem, ask her to resign the office and take a different job within the organization (if possible). It may sound harsh, but it is in everyone's best interest - including her own. No one likes to do a poor job, so try to give her something to do that is in her skill set. Remember that the minutes are very important as your legal record of the group's proceedings. Note that a Secretary Pro Tem should be elected at every meeting to take the minutes until the vacancy is filled.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Amending

Q. When is the best time to make an amendment to a motion?

A. During debate on the motion, for then an amendment requires only a majority vote (after a second and debate on itself). After a motion is adopted, an amendment to it requires ½ vote.

Q. How should an amendment be worded?

- A. **Always** begin with the words: "I move to amend by...... " After that you need to indicate **exactly** what it is that you want to do:
 - ◆ Amend by...Striking Out a specific word or phrase;
 - Inserting a specific word or phrase;
 - Striking Out a word or phrase and Inserting another word or phrase in the same place;
 - Adding words (at the end); or
 - **Substituting** another motion for the pending one.

Do not say, "I want it to read...."

A really tangled mess can ensue if amending is not done properly.

Q. How does the President handle amendments?

A. Carefully!

The President processes the amendment immediately, in the same manner she would any other motion.

- After the amendment is seconded, she repeats it: "It is moved and seconded to amend by striking out \$5.00 and inserting \$8.00." (only)
- She should say what the result would be if the amendment is adopted. "If the amendment is adopted, the motion would be to change the dues from \$2 to \$8. Is there any debate?"
- After debate on the amendment (only),
- The President calls for the vote.

An amendment requires a majority to pass.

The original motion, as amended or not, would then be pending and open to further debate and possible amendment.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Special Motions

Q. What can I do at a meeting when the discussion goes on and on and nothing new is being said?

- A. Line up someone who will second your motion, seek recognition by the President and then make the motion that stops debate: "I move the Previous Question." If she is well informed, the President will know that the motion requires a second and a ¾ vote to pass, which is always taken by asking members to rise. If the motion to stop debate is adopted, the pending motion is brought to an immediate vote.
- Q. Our group often spends too much time at a meeting discussing small details. What can I do?
- A. This sounds like the time to make the motion to Refer the matter (or pending motion) to a committee. In your motion, specify the committee who will deal with it for instance, a standing committee (such as a Commission) or a special committee of a certain size that the President should appoint.

Example: "I move that the matter of a bake sale be referred to a special committee of 3 members appointed by the President who will report at the next regular meeting."

Also, mention when they should report.

- Q. If we want to debate something later but it is next on the agenda, it is OK to table it?
- A. No, the proper motion is Postpone. It requires a second and majority vote to pass.

Example: "I move to postpone the matter (or pending motion) until.... (2:00 this afternoon, the Treasurer arrives, the next meeting, etc.),"

The postponed matter or motion is automatically made part of the agenda for that time period. Lay on the Table should be used rarely only when an urgent matter interferes; 99 times out of 100, the correct motion to use is Postpone instead of Lay on the Table.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Remedying Errors

THREE R'S FOR REMEDYING ERRORS Refer — Rescind — Reconsider

- Q. A motion has just been made that I believe would be a disaster, yet everyone else is enthusiastic about it. How can I get them to think this through?
- A. You can move to **Refer** the motion to a committee for further study. You should specify which committee will investigate it and when they should report their findings. The motion to refer requires a second and a majority vote to adopt. Debate may go into the merits of referring so talk it up- but not the merits of the main question. If the Chair has the authority to appoint the committee and she asks for volunteers, be sure to raise your hand!
- Q. At the last meeting our council made a decision that turns out to be a really bad idea. What can we do?
- A. If no action has been taken on the decision, you may move to **Rescind** the motion at the next meeting. This requires a second and a 2/3 vote (in most cases). The result is that the action is cancelled. If part of the action has already been carried out, you may be able to rescind the part that has **no**t been carried out. (If the case involves a contract, there may be a penalty for cancellation.)
- Q. Earlier in the current meeting our group made a decision that is clearly a mistake. How can we change our mind?
- A. Since you are dealing with the motion on the same day it was adopted, you may move to Reconsider the vote if you voted on the prevailing (winning) side. You would say, "Madame President, I move that the vote to ______ be reconsidered. I voted on the prevailing side." This motion requires a second and majority vote to adopt. Debate may go into the merits of the main question. If the motion to reconsider is adopted, the original motion is brought to the floor again for further debate (if needed) and a vote. If it does not receive a majority vote this time, it is lost. Note that Reconsider requires that the maker has voted on the winning side, that it be moved on the same day that the original motion was adopted and that 2 votes be taken. There are no such restrictions on Rescind; however, it requires a 2/3 vote to adopt (or a majority, if notice has been given at the previous meeting).



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Protocol

Q. What do you mean by protocol?

A. To me protocol means official good manners. It is a set of customs or code of etiquette that properly respects the offices that members and guests may hold.

Good manners also dictate that only one person speak at a time; side conversations are a breach of protocol as well as manners.

When making an introduction, keep it brief with information that is of interest to the audience. Mention the name of the speaker only at the end - your final words of the introduction.

Q. How does protocol apply at a regular business meeting?

A. Members should address the officers by their titles, rather than by their names: Madame President, Madame Secretary, etc. When the officers give their reports, the President should go first. Officers should be seated at the head table, along with the Spiritual Advisor and Parliamentarian (who is sometimes considered an appointed officer).

Q. What protocol is used when you have a visiting dignitary?

A. It is imperative that one person be designated as the host for your special guest. She should meet the guest (at the airport or at the door); escort him/her to the coat room; indicate the rest room if the guest travelled far; give him/her refreshments or take him/her to the head of the refreshment line; escort the guest to his/her seat (probably at the head table); introduce the guest to others who will sit with him/her; provide a glass of water when he/she is speaking; say goodbye and take the guest to the airport (if applicable). The care of the special guest should be the host's only duty for the meeting.

O. Who sits at the head table?

A. During a business meeting the officers, Spiritual Advisor, special guests and Parliamentarian should be seated at the head table. The President is usually at the center with the Secretary and Parliamentarian on either side. Those of higher rank, such as the Spiritual Advisor and special guests, should sit on the President's right side; the others should sit on the left.

At a banquet at which no business will be conducted, the arrangement is similar but the Parliamentarian does not need to be included.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Committees

Q. What is the purpose of a committee?

- A. There really are at least 2 purposes:
 - To keep the assembly from making a hasty decision, and
 - To authorize a small group to make detailed plans without tying up a large chunk of time during a general meeting.

Q. How do I suggest that a committee be formed?

It depends on your purpose.

- If you want to keep the assembly from making a hasty decision, you could move to refer the matter or motion to a committee, usually while the matter is pending (i.e., during the debate). This motion requires a second and majority vote to adopt. If passed, the members named in the motion or by the President (see your bylaws) will meet to investigate the matter and report their recommendations to the assembly for action. Note that, if a motion is referred to a committee, it is set aside until the committee makes its report. The committee will recommend the adoption, rejection or amendment of the motion or matter; the assembly then votes to make the final decision.
- If the group has decided to hold a bake sale, for instance, you
 could move to form a Bake Sale Committee to plan and carry out
 the event. This also takes a second and a majority vote to adopt.
 If the motion is passed, the members named in the motion (or
 by the President) would begin their work on the bake sale and
 report their progress as they go along.

When a motion is made to send a matter to a committee, it should specify if it is to be dealt with by a Standing Committee or a Special Committee.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Committees (cont.)

Q What's the difference between a Standing Committee and a Special (or Ad Hoc) Committee?

A. Standing Committees are on-going and are listed in the Bylaws. In the CCW they are usually the Commissions, although you may have additional ones such as Budget, Bylaws and Membership. Special Committees are formed for a special purpose (e.g, a bake sale) as needed and go out of existence when their task is complete.

Q. Should the Nominating Committee be appointed by the President?

A. No, it is preferred that the Nominating Committee be <u>elected</u> by the Board or general membership for the task of selecting a slate of officers. Make sure that your bylaws reflect this!





ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Bylaws

Q. Bylaws are scary! Can you break them down for me?

A. As you know, bylaws are very important because they define the basic structure of your organization. When they are followed, they assure consistency and fairness. Below is a suggested outline for the articles and the questions that should be addressed in each section of that particular article.

ARTICLE I.Name

What is the official name of your organization? What is the acronym that you prefer to use to describe it?

ARTICLE II. Object

What are the purposes or mission statement?

ARTICLE III. Membership

What are the qualifications for membership? What categories of membership are there? How are the dues determined (but don't specify the amount)?

ARTICLE IV. Officers

What officers do you have? What are their qualifications? How are they nominated and elected? What are their duties? How long are their terms?

ARTICLE V. Meetings

What meetings do you have and when are they? What is the quorum (the minimum number of members who must be in attendance)? How are special meetings called?

ARTICLE VI. Board of Directors (optional)

Who makes up the Board (if you have one)? What are their responsibilities? What is the quorum for a Board meeting? When are the meetings and how are special meetings called?



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIAN about Bylaws (cont.)

ARTICLE VII. Committees

What are the names and duties of the Standing Committees? How are members selected? How are Special Committees formed? (Note: the Nominating Committee should appear in ARTICLE IV. Officers, not here.)

ARTICLE VIII. Parliamentary Authority

Something like... "The latest edition of **Robert's** *Rules* of *Order*, *Newly Revised* shall be the parliamentary authority in all instances that do not conflict with these bylaws or other rules of order that the organization may adopt."

ARTICLE IX. Amendment of Bylaws

What is the procedure for amending these bylaws (previous notice and a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote are recommended)?

Q. How often should the bylaws be reviewed?

A. Every 2 years is ideal. If there isn't a Bylaws Committee already, a special committee can be formed to review them and make recommendations for amendments to the Board and assembly.

Be sure to follow the amendment procedure specified in your own ARTICLE IX **Amendment of Bylaws.**



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIA about Standing Rules

Q. What are the differences between bylaws and standing rules?

A. The bylaws define the structure of the organization, while the standing rules deal with administrative details. Bylaws are adopted when an organization is being formed, while the standing rules are adopted only as they are needed; the latter may be amended more easily than bylaws. Frequently, the standing rules affect mainly a Board rather than the entire assembly.

Q. Can you give some examples of possible standing rules?

A. Sure! These may not fit every organization, but you will get the idea.

- The registration fee for the President to attend the NCCW convention will be paid by the organization.
- All requests for reimbursement of approved expenses shall be accompanied by a receipt and a voucher signed by the President or Commission Chair.
- ◆ Those who travel more than 30 miles each way to attend a Board meeting will be reimbursed at \$.35 per mile, if they request it.
- Commissions will take turns bringing refreshments to meetings.
- Anyone who attends a workshop or seminar paid for by the organization will be required to give an oral report at the next meeting.
- At the June meeting all monies (less \$500) will be distributed to charity.
- All Officers and Commission Chairs are required to contribute an article to the quarterly newsletter.

You will note that these are important rules, but they should not be placed in the bylaws because they are administrative in nature.



ASK THE PARLIAMENTARIA about Standing Rules (cont.)

Q. How are standing rules adopted and amended?

A. A new standing rule may be proposed by any member at any meeting; it requires a second and majority vote to adopt. An amendment to an existing rule requires a ½ vote without previous notice, or a majority vote with notice, or a ¾ vote of the entire membership (whichever is easiest).

Q. Does every organization need bylaws and standing rules?

A. Every organization certainly needs bylaws but it might not need standing rules, although they are really helpful to maintain fairness and consistency (as the bylaws are). Observe your organization's customs and determine if some of them should be recorded as standing rules so that they are not lost.





Notes:



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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In 2002 Pat Reymann earned the designation of Professional Registered Parliamentarian from the National Association of Parliamentarians. Since then she has worked with dozens of local, national and international organizations as meeting parliamentarian, workshop presenter, opinion author and bylaws consultant. In addition to her parliamentary work with various rings of Council, Pat has served in many capacities including Archdiocesan President, women's issues vice-chairman and leadership trainer. She has received the *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* Medal from the Holy Father. Pat and her husband Joe live in a suburb of St. Paul, Minnesota; they have 3 adult children, 11 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

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