

Understanding *Roberts's Rules of Order*

Understanding the Rules of Order helps insure that we can conduct church business in a Christ-like manner. Sometimes the formality of the Rules can seem unnatural and a bit silly. But, they prevent conferences from becoming unruly, and guarantee that each member is treated with courtesy and respect. Finally, strict observance of the Rules helps us remember that a difference of opinion does not represent a personal attack. Please study these Rules carefully. If you have any questions you may contact Steve Bass, Marty Lambert or Joe Plummer.

The Fundamentals:

- The body may consider only one item of business at a time
- The majority rules- but the minority can not be unfairly suppressed
- All questions, comments, discussion or introduction of motions must be directed to the Moderator
- When the body is prepared to vote- the body votes

Your Rights As A Member Of The Body:

You have a right to...

- Understand what is going on
- Propose- or second- a motion, resolution or amendment
- Speak for, or against, any matter before the body
- Vote as you please
- Insist upon the enforcement of the rules by raising a "Point of Order"
- "Call" for the question at any time
- Insist the Moderator and the body follows the agenda by a "Call for the Orders of the Day."

How to Address the Moderator:

- Raise your hand (*A member that speaks first is to be ruled "Out of Order"*)
- The Moderator will recognize you. (*The chair recognizes John Smith*)
- You must address your remarks to the Moderator
 - "Mr. Moderator, I move that....."
 - "Mr. Moderator, I believe that....."
 - "Mr. Moderator, I would like to ask a question....."

The Definition of a "Motion"

A motion is the formal procedure by which business is introduced to the deliberative body. A motion must call for a specific action to be taken by the body.

What the Body Can Do With a Motion

- Accept the motion (Unless otherwise noted in the Constitution or by-laws a motion passes with a simple majority vote)
- Reject the motion (Unless otherwise noted in the Constitution or by-laws a motion is defeated with a simple majority vote)
- Refer the motion (Is debatable. A vote to refer indicates the body wants more information before it makes its decision. The referral must send the motion to a specific committee, group or organization. The referral must provide a specific time to report back to the body)
- Lay the motion on the table (Is not debatable. This should only be used if a more pressing item of business is presented to the body)

How a Motion Is Decided

- 1) The motion is presented to the body
- 2) The Moderator restates the motion.
- 3) The Moderator opens the floor for questions and/or debate.
- 4) Amendments are resolved
- 5) The Moderator restates the motion (As amended if applicable)
- 6) The vote is taken
- 7) The Moderator (a) announces the outcome of the vote, (b) orders the execution of the motion, and (c) proceeds to the next item of business

FAQ Concerning Motions

Q *"Who can introduce a motion?"*

A Any member of the body.

Q *"What do I need to do if I want to make a motion?"*

A

- † Raise your hand and be recognized by the Moderator.
- † State your motion. (It is helpful- but not required- to write out your motion.)
- † Do not discuss your motion until the Moderator:
 - a) asks if there is a "second", and
 - b) recognizes you to "speak to the motion"

Q *"When does a motion need to be 'seconded'?"*

A Seconds are required when a motion comes from an individual member of the body. (A second does not indicate that the person offering a "second" supports the motion- merely that he or she thinks the motion should be considered.)

Q *"Why does a motion coming from a committee, group or organization not require a second?"*

A By definition a committee, group or organization contains more than one person. The second is not required because two or more members of the body believe the motion should be considered.

Q *"When is a motion considered 'out of order'?"*

A Whenever the body is considering another item of business, or when the motion would contradict the church's Constitution or by-laws. (Being ruled "out of order" should not be considered a personal attack, The Moderator is saying that this is not the appropriate time in the conference to bring the matter before the body.)

Q *"Why do some motions require more than a simple majority vote to pass?"*

A Because the Constitution or by-laws says so. Generally matters requiring a "super majority" involve issues of fundamental importance to the body. (Such as- Sunset Road freely affiliates with the Southern Baptist Convention) The "super majority" insures that a small group can not change the fundamental nature of the body.

The Definition of an Amendment

An amendment is a class of motion that proposes to make a specific change to an original motion.

FAQ About Amendments

Q. *"What happens when an amendment is made and seconded?"*

A. Discussion of the original motion is immediately halted so that the amendment can be considered. Any questions or debate must be focused on the amendment only.

Q. *"Why do you have to deal with amendments before you decide the original motion?"*

A. Because the amendment will change the original motion.

Q. *"Can the effect of an amendment be to kill- or radically alter- the original motion?"*

A. Yes

Q. *"How is an amendment approved?"*

A. Unless otherwise noted in the Constitution or by-laws, an amendment is approved on a simple majority vote.

The Definition of Debate

Debate is an essential feature of a deliberative body. It exists to help the body reach a decision.

Rules of Debate

- No person may speak until recognized by the Moderator. Only one person may speak at a time.
- Comments or questions must be directed to the Moderator, and may not be directed towards another member of the body.
- The debate ends when (a) a specified time of debate has expired, (b) the Moderator asks if the body "Are you ready to voter?" or someone 'calls for the question"
- When someone makes a "call for the question" debate on the motion immediately ceases. Without debate the Moderator "call the question" If 2/3's of the body vote in the affirmative, a vote on the pending motion is then conducted.