

STURGIS

Why should DCLIR bylaws contain a parliamentary procedure reference?

The Board meetings are conducted according to generally recognized parliamentary procedures and as long as I have been on the Board there have been no parliamentary battles. However, in the event that a question should arise such as whether or not a motion is in order, whether the motion requires recognition by the chairperson, in which order subsidiary amendments to a motion should be voted on, it is helpful not only for the chairperson but for the entire Board to have a reference in which the answers can be found.

Most of us have heard at some time the expression, “According to Robert’s Rules of Order,..” The problem is that there is no one reference for “Robert’s Rules of Order” and documents which purport to include them are actually various revisions with various changes and conflicts.

The Sturgis Code of Parliamentary Procedure by Alice Sturgis was first published in 1950. Since then it has been revised and updated by The American Institute of Parliamentarians and thus is the currently accepted parliamentary reference. It is commonly referred to simply as Sturgis.

Below is an example of some common issues as they are addressed by the Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure.

Summary:

Basic Rules of Precedence:

1. When a motion is being considered, any motion of higher precedence may be proposed, but no motion of lower precedence may be proposed.
2. Motions are considered and voted on in reverse order to their proposal. The motion last proposed is considered and disposed of first.

Common Motions in Order of Precedence:

LANGUAGE		INTERRUPT SPEAKER?	SECOND NEEDED?	MOTION DEBATABLE?	VOTE NEEDED?
Privileged Motions: Motions of urgency entitled to immediate consideration.					
1) *Adjourn the meeting	I move that we adjourn.	NO	YES	YES**	MAJORITY
2) *Recess the meeting	I move that we recess until...	NO	YES	YES**	MAJORITY
3) Questions of Privilege (Noise, temperature, etc.)	I raise the question of privilege....	YES	NO	NO	Decided by presiding officer
Subsidiary Motions: Motions which alter the main motion, or delay or hasten its consideration.					
4) Postpone temporarily	I move we table the motion.	NO	YES	NO	MAJORITY
5) Close debate	I move to close debate and vote immediately.	NO	YES	NO	TWO THIRDS
6) *Limit or extend debate	I move that the debate on this question be limited to...	NO	YES	YES**	TWO THIRDS
7) *Postpone to a certain time	I move we postpone this matter until...	NO	YES	YES**	MAJORITY
8) *Refer to committee	I move we refer this matter to committee.	NO	YES	YES**	MAJORITY
9) *Amend	I move that we amend this motion by....	NO	YES	YES	MAJORITY

Main Motions: Motions bringing substantive proposals before the assembly for consideration and action.					
10) *Main motions and restorative main motions	I move that...	NO	YES	YES	MAJORITY

The following motions can be offered whenever they are needed and have no order of precedence. They should be handled as soon as they arise.

LANGUAGE		INTERRUPT SPEAKER?	SECOND NEEDED?	MOTION DEBATABLE?	VOTE NEEDED?
Incidental Motions: Motions that arise incidentally out of the business at hand. They relate to matters incidental to the conduct of the meeting.					
1) Appeal a decision of the chair	I appeal the chair's decision.	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY
2) Suspend the rules	I move to suspend the rules and....	NO	YES	NO	TWO THIRDS
3) Point of order	I rise to a point of order.	YES	NO	NO	Decided by presiding officer
4) Raise a question relating to procedure.	I rise to a parliamentary inquiry.	YES	NO	NO	Decided by presiding officer
5) Withdrawal of a motion	I move to withdraw my motion.	YES	NO	NO	MAJORITY
6) Separate a multi-part question for voting purposes	I move division on the question.	NO	NO	NO	MAJORITY

*Can be amended.

**Debatable if no other motion is pending.

Note: General consent is a way of saving time by avoiding votes on routine or non controversial matters. After a motion has been moved and seconded the presiding officer may ask if there are any objections. If anyone objects, a vote must be taken on the action. If there are no objections, the matter has been decided by general consent. The presiding officer may also propose actions by general consent without any motion. If anyone immediately objects, the question must be stated and voted on in the usual way.

Submitted by John J. Beck
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