

Helpful Hints from the Senate Parliamentarian

Mechanics:

- The Senate works from a fixed agenda that is distributed at least one week in advance of the Senate meeting. If it is not on the agenda, we can't vote on it, unless there is an overwhelming sentiment to suspend the rules and address the issue (3/4 vote required). This is done for your protection so that there are no surprises at the meeting.
- The Senate has five types of reports/actions:
 - *Legislative* – Senate has complete authority (i.e., curricular matters)
 - *Advisory/Consultative* – Board of Trustees requires that the President consult with the faculty (i.e., calendar, HR-23)
 - *Informational* – no action taken; committee/group/official presents information
 - *Forensic* – an issue that is presented to elicit discussion and obtain Senate opinion. This type of report precedes a Legislative or Advisory/Consultative Report.
 - *Recognition/Courtesy* – recognition of someone or an accomplishment
- Only Senators vote and make motions. Non-senators must have prior approval from the Chair to participate in Senate discussions.
- You must be recognized to speak. When recognized by the Chair, stand, identify yourself, and give your voting unit.

Parliamentary Procedure:

- Generally, there must be a motion on the floor for the Senate to conduct any business and it takes two Senators to accomplish this. One makes the motion and one seconds the motion. This means that at least two Senators are interested in the topic and one individual cannot delay or impede the operation of the Senate. It is assumed that reports coming from Senate committees have been moved and seconded.
- **Amendments:** Motions can be amended any number of times, however, there can only be one amendment to an amendment.
- **Ending debate:** Generally, debate is ended when the Chair senses that the discussion has progressed as far as it is going to go or when the points being raised are repetitive. The Chair usually says something like, “unless there are additional comments, we will move to a vote on this motion.” However, if Senators are getting tired of the discussion and want to end debate and vote, they can be recognized and then say “I call the question” or “I move the previous question.” If seconded, this effectively ends the discussion and the Chair then takes a vote to determine whether the Senate wants to end discussion or continue the discussion. If a majority of the Senate votes in the affirmative, all discussion ends and the vote is taken on the motion before the Senate.
- **Delaying a vote:** If the Senate decides that a topic before the body is not ready for a vote or that additional information needs to be provided, the usual motion is “I move to return this report to the committee....” and then it is specified what needs to be done to the report before it comes back to the Senate. Making a motion “to table” a report is a motion to “kill the report” and make it very difficult for it to come back to the Senate for consideration. This is hardly ever done.
- **Point of Order/Information:** Whenever a senator is confused about what is taking place, especially if a vote is about to be taken, if he/she shouts “point of order” or “point of information,” action stops, and the Chair will ask about the point of order, clear up the confusion, and then proceed.
- **Editorial/Spelling Corrections:** A Senator may suggest minor editorial changes for clarification without changing the meaning or intent of the original statement of the motion. After being recognized by the Chair, a Senator can rise and “suggest a minor editorial change/correction.”
- **Voting:** Voting is carried out in one of two ways: by voice or by the use of a Personal Response System (clicker). If clickers are to be used, instruction for voting *aye* or *nay* will be given prior to each vote.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

-- at a glance

Here are some motions you might make, how to make them, and what to expect of the rules.

TO DO THIS:	YOU SAY THIS:	MAY YOU INTERRUPT THE SPEAKER?	DO YOU NEED A SECOND?	IS IT DEBATABLE?	CAN IT BE AMENDED?	WHAT VOTE IS NEEDED?	CAN IT BE RECONSIDERED?
Adjourn meeting	"I move that we adjourn"	NO	YES	NO	NO	MAJORITY	NO
Call an intermission	"I move that we recess for...."	NO	YES	NO	YES	MAJORITY	NO
Complain about the heat, noise, etc	"I rise to a question of privilege"	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE	NO
Temporarily suspend consideration of an issue	"I move to table the motion"	NO	YES	NO	NO	MAJORITY	NO ¹
End debate and amendments	"I move the previous question"	NO	YES	NO	NO	2/3	YES ²
Limit-Extend Limits of Debate	"I move that the debate on the pending motion be limited (extended) to ..."	NO	YES	NO	YES	2/3	YES
Postpone discussion for a certain time	"I move to postpone the discussion until...."	NO	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY	YES
Give closer study of something	"I move to refer the matter to committee"	NO	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY	YES ³
Amend a motion	"I move to amend the motion by...."	NO	YES	YES ⁴	YES	MAJORITY	YES
Introduce business	"I move that...."	NO	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY	YES

THE MOTIONS LISTED ABOVE ARE IN ORDER OF PRECEDENCE.... BELOW THERE IS NO ORDER....

Protest breach of rules or conduct	"I rise to a point of order."	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE ⁵	NO
Vote on a ruling of the chair	"I appeal from the chair's decision"	YES	YES	YES	NO	MAJORITY	YES
Suspend the rules temporarily	"I move to suspend the rules so that...."	NO	YES	NO	NO	2/3	NO
Avoid considering an improper matter	"I object to consideration of this motion"	YES	NO	NO	NO	2/3 ⁶	YES ⁷
Verify a voice vote by having members stand	"I call for division" or "Division!"	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE	NO
Request information	"Point of information"	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE	NO
Take up a matter previously tabled	"I move to take from the table...."	NO	YES	NO	NO	MAJORITY	NO
Reconsider a hasty action	"I move to reconsider the vote on...."	YES	YES	YES ⁸	NO	MAJORITY	NO

NOTES:

- 1 - Affirmative votes may not be reconsidered.
- 2 - Unless vote on question has begun.
- 3 - Unless the committee has already taken up the subject.
- 4 - Unless the motion to be amended is not debatable.

- 5 - Unless the chair submits to the assembly for decision.
- 6 - A 2/3 vote in negative is needed to prevent consideration of main motion.
- 7 - Only if the main question has not been debated yet.
- 8 - Unless the motion to be reconsidered is not debatable.