

Basic Parliamentary Information

To participate effectively in the proceedings of the meeting, each member needs to be familiar with the basic rules of parliamentary procedure. These rules enable you to transact business with expediency and efficiency and in a manner fair to all. The parliamentary authority used by the AVMA is *Robert's Rules of Order Revised*. These rules ensure that the majority rules, that the voice of the minority is heard, and that the rights of absentees are protected.

Steps necessary to adopt a motion:

1. Rise and address the chair. (Mr./Madam chair...)
2. Receive recognition. (The chair will speak your name or nod.)
3. Make the motion. ("I move to..." or "I move that...")
4. Someone seconds the motion. (Secunder need not rise or address the chair.)
5. Chair states the motion.
6. Discussion or debate is opened.
7. Chair puts the question to vote.
8. Chair announces the vote and the result. (Adopted or defeated.)

Required vote—Vote required to adopt a motion. Any motion which restricts the privileges of the members, or changes something which has already been adopted, requires a two-thirds (2/3) vote; all others require a majority vote, unless otherwise specified in the bylaws.

General consent—When the chair feels everyone is in favor of a motion, the chair may say, "If there is no objection, we will..." This is called voting by general consent and saves time. If anyone calls "I object," the chair proceeds to take the vote as though the motion had duly been made, seconded, and stated.

Decorum in debate is one of the most important factors in conducting an orderly meeting and facilitating the transaction of business.

Rules governing decorum in debate:

1. All debate must be germane to the question on the floor. If the pending question is on apples and grapes, it would be out of order to talk about bananas.
2. Refrain from attacking a member's motives. The matter, not the person, is the subject of debate.
3. Address all remarks through the chair. Members are not allowed to address each other. All remarks must be directed to the chair.
4. Avoid using members' names. Officers should be referred to by their titles except in the case of testimonials by someone. When members refer to each other,

they should use expressions such as "the member who spoke last" or some other such designation.

5. Refrain from speaking adversely on a prior action not under discussion at the time. No one should speak against any prior action not on the floor unless a motion to reconsider, rescind, or amend is pending, or unless the intent is to conclude the remarks by making one of these motions.
6. Members must refrain from speaking against their own motion. A member is not obliged to speak to the question; but if he does, he must speak favorably. If the member has changed positions after listening to debate, permission may be asked to withdraw the motion. It is permissible for the member to vote against the member's own motion, however.
7. No one is allowed to read from papers or have the secretary read from papers as part of debate without the permission of the assembly. The chair usually asks for general consent. ("If there are no objections...")
8. If the chair stands to make a ruling or otherwise speak, the member who is speaking should be seated or step back slightly from the microphone until the presiding officer is finished. The member can resume speaking unless denied the right or as ruled by the chair.
9. Members must refrain from disturbing the assembly. When there is debate, remarks by the chair, or voting, members must not disturb the assembly by whispering, walking across the floor, or in any other way.

Rules of Debate

Until a matter has been brought before the assembly in the form of a motion or a resolution, it is not debatable. A motion must be made, seconded, and stated by the chair before any debate can legally begin. At the conclusion of stating the motion, the chair will say, "Are you ready for the question?" or "Is there any discussion?" If the chair says, "Are you ready for the question?", the proper response is silence unless you wish to debate the question that is before you at that time.

If a member calls "Question" from the floor, it should be ignored by the chair, as this is not a motion. The motion used to stop debate and take the vote on the question is Previous Question.

The person who made the motion has the right to speak first in debate.

As much as possible, those with opposing viewpoints should be called upon alternately.

When debate appears to be over, the chair may ask, "Is there further discussion?" or "Are you ready for the question?" If, after a reasonable pause, no one rises to claim the floor, the chair assumes that no member wish-

es to speak and immediately puts the question to the vote.

Time allowed under Robert's is ten minutes per member, and each member may speak twice to the same question on the same day. Often, in conventions, a special rule is adopted to restrict or liberalize debate. Sometimes the number of times a member may speak is limited, the number of speeches pro and con is specified, or a time limit may be placed on the specific subject or for each speaker. In the case of a motion that is limited to a certain number of speeches pro and con, the member should

preface debate with the words, "I speak for the motion" or "I speak in opposition to the motion." This is always a good idea when speaking in debate on any motion.

According to Robert's, "The application of parliamentary law is the best method yet devised to enable assemblies of any size, with due regard for every member's opinion, to arrive at the general will on the maximum number of questions of varying complexity in a minimum time and under all kinds of internal climate ranging from total harmony to hardened or impassioned division of opinion."