

Basic Parliamentary Procedure

During meetings of the NALA Board and the NALA membership, NALA bylaws govern most of the parliamentary procedures. Where the bylaws are silent, we consult Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, as the parliamentary authority. Here is a quick summary of parliamentary procedure for your reference.

Making Meetings Work

1. Effective meetings require planning in advance, both on the part of the person who chairs them and of the people who participate.
2. Do not have a meeting unless it is necessary.
3. Don't engage in political game playing or parliamentary maneuvering. Members must commit themselves to the group purpose.
4. Listen to what others at the meeting have to say.
5. Make sure you understand the reason for a meeting and do your homework in accordance with this understanding.
6. Actively engage in the discussion.
7. Recognize that five kinds of knowledge are all needed for a successful meeting participant:
 - Knowledge of the subject matter at hand
 - Knowledge of parliamentary rules of order
 - Knowledge of rhetoric-the power to persuade
 - Knowledge of problem solving and decision making
 - Knowledge of human social-emotional dynamics
8. Be sure the purpose of each meeting, and each item on the agenda, is clear to the members:
 - To share ideas and information only
 - To brief members before action
 - To generate new ideas
 - To make a decision
 - To make a recommendation
9. Be sensitive to the physical, informational and social needs of others.
10. Suggest committee work when an issue is too big for the group or the group hasn't adequately considered the topic. Demand hard work and good reports from the committee.

Basic Principles

1. Parliamentary procedure exists to facilitate the transaction of business and to promote cooperation and harmony.
2. All members have equal rights, privileges, and obligations.. The minority has rights which must be protected.
3. A quorum must be present for the group to act.
4. Full and free discussion of every motion is considered a basic right.
5. Only one question can be considered at any given time.
6. Members have the right to know at all times what the immediately pending question is, and to have it restated before a vote is taken.
7. No member can speak until recognized by the chair.
8. No one can speak a second time on the same question as long as another wants to speak a first time.
9. The chair should be strictly impartial.

Handling a Motion

Three steps by which a motion is brought before the group:

1. A member makes a motion.
2. Another member seconds the motion.
3. The chair states the question on the motion.

Three steps in consideration of a motion

1. The members debate the motion (unless no member claims the floor for that purpose).
2. The chair puts the question to a vote.

A. The chair restates the question.

B. The chair takes the vote:

"All in favor of the motion, say aye."

"Those opposed, say no."

3. The chair announces the result of a vote. A complete announcement should include:
 - A. Report on the voting itself, stating which side prevailed (and giving the count if a count prevailed).
 - B. Declaration that the motion is adopted or lost.
 - C. Statement indicating the effect of the vote or ordering its execution
 - D. Where applicable, announcement of the next item of business or stating the question of the next motion that consequently comes up for vote.

Voting

Basic Methods of Voting

Voice vote

Rising vote - used principally when a voice vote has produced an inconclusive result and as the normal method of voting on motions requiring a two-thirds vote, members indicate their vote by standing.

Show of hands - as an alternative to the voice vote or as a way to verify an inconclusive result, members show their vote by raising their hand. A vote by show of hands should be limited to very small meetings.

Other methods which may be ordered:

Ballot voting - by ballot is used when secrecy of the member's votes is desired. Voting by ballot is sometimes required in certain cases by the bylaws of an organization. Any vote relating to charges or proposed charges against a member or an officer should always be by ballot.

Roll call

Bases for determining a voting result

Majority vote - The basic requirement for approval for action, except where a rule provided otherwise, is a majority vote. the term "majority" means "more than half," excluding blanks and abstentions, at a properly called meeting with a quorum.

Two-thirds vote

Rules Governing Debate

The term debate applies to the discussion on the merits of a pending question. (Note that less formal rules apply to boards and committees. Also, smaller groups may relax the formality of these rules).

1. A member may not speak until recognized by the chair.

2. When no special rule relating to the length of speeches is adopted by the group, a member can speak no longer than ten minutes unless the consent of the group is obtained.
3. Rights in debate are not transferable. A member cannot yield an unexplored portion of his/her time to another member (the chair controls who speaks) or reserve any portion of time for later.
4. No member may be allowed to speak more than twice to the same question on the same day.
5. Proper decorum in debate must be observed:

* Remarks must be germane to the question before the group.

* Speakers should speak loudly and clearly.

Boards and Committees

The rules for small committee and board meetings are different from the rules which apply to large meetings of assemblies or plenary bodies.

1. Members are not required to obtain the floor before making motions or speaking, which they can do while seated.
2. Motions need not be seconded.
3. There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a question, and motions to close or limit debate generally are not allowed. (Note: in practice, even these motions are in fact usually allowed.)
4. Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending.
5. The chair can speak in discussion, make motions, and usually votes on all questions.
6. Sometimes, when a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion's having been introduced. Unless agreed by general consent, however, all proposed actions of a committee must be approved by vote under the same rules as an assembly.

Making Committees Work

A committee, as understood in parliamentary law, is a body of one or more person, elected or appointed by an assembly to consider, investigate, or take action on certain matters or subjects, or to do all these. To function effectively, a committee and chair need to have:

1. A list of committee members.
2. A copy of the motion or problem referred to the committee.

3. Special instructions to the committee, if any. These instructions should include a statement of exactly what the committee is expected to do, and whether the question is referred to it for the discussion, study, hearings, investigations, recommendations, or actions
4. A statement of the powers and duties of the committee.
5. Copies of all papers or correspondence relating to the subject assigned to the committee.
6. Copies of any rules, policies, or decisions of the organization relating to the subject.
7. Information on the type of report desired and the date set for its presentation.

Reports from committees should minimally contain

1. A statement of the charge of the committee.
2. A statement of the methods employed by the committee in accomplishing its charge.
4. A statement of conclusions or findings.
5. A specific recommendation, together with a rationale for that recommendation.
6. The names of the members of the committee.
7. A summary (often called an "executive summary") at the beginning of the report is helpful for long reports. **NALA**