

# Parliamentary Law & Procedure

National  
Association of  
Postal Supervisors  
Training

*Conducting NAPS Business Under  
Robert's Rules of Order*



# Parliamentary Law & Procedure

Parliamentary procedure allows everyone to be heard and decisions can be made without confusion.



# Parliamentary Law & Procedure

## Key Assumptions

- Those who affiliate with professional associations and boards like to talk.
- People want to be taken seriously and want to be persuasive.
- People like to “get their way”.
- People are social – they enjoy networking (in fact, they thrive on it)



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All of those factors contribute to long meetings, delay decision making, and increase animosity

As much as you enjoy meetings and networking – hopefully, there is something else you would rather do.....



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## KEY ISSUE

- WHAT IS THE BEST AND/OR MOST APPROPRIATE WAY FOR A GROUP OF PEOPLE TO MAKE A DECISION?
- HOW CAN WE ASSURE THAT ONCE THE DECISION IS MADE IT WILL BE SUPPORTED BY THE GROUP?



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## HOW DO YOU MAKE DECISIONS?

- “Parliament” – refers to a decision making body
  - Elected legislative body
  - Corporate board
  - Appointed committee
  - Volunteer organization
  - Social club or fraternity



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- “Procedure” -- refers to the rules or process or model that will be followed in the conduct of meetings and the making of decisions.
- Rules that everyone agrees to follow in relation to how decisions will be made.
- Assures that everyone has a fair opportunity to impact the outcome.
- The more people that are involved in making a decision the more complex and difficult it is to make a decision.
- Promote efficiency --
  - Effective use of time
  - Avoid tangents
  - Prohibit abuse
  - Avoid redundancy
  - Maintain order



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- State and federal laws require all public and most private organizations to follow a recognized set of parliamentary principles in the conduct of all business.
- U.S. courts uphold the principle of “common parliamentary law” absent an adopted parliamentary authority.
- An organization may create their own parliamentary rules consistent with common parliamentary law.





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## Common Parliamentary Law

- Schedule a meeting (Notice)
- Protect quorum
- Assure the will of the majority prevails
- Assure the minority is heard
- Everyone has an equal opportunity to vote
- Everything is debatable
- Vote on everything
- Historical record – keep minutes



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## Parliamentary Authorities

- Robert's Rules of Order, Henry M. Robert
- The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure, American Institute of Parliamentarians
- Rules of Order, Hugh Cannon
- Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law and Procedure, George Demeter
- Modern Parliamentary Procedure, Ray Keeseey
- Riddick's Rules of Procedure, Floyd M. Riddick





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## Robert's Rules of Order

- Most common of all parliamentary authorities in the United States
- First published in 1876 by General Henry Martin Robert
- Now in 11<sup>th</sup> edition
- Preceded by Thomas Jefferson's Manual of Parliamentary Procedure (1801) as VP of the US

# Parliamentary Law & Procedure

## KEY ELEMENTS

- Members – decision makers
- Officers – facilitators
- Committees – research and recommend
- Motions – (ideas) business
- Decisions – consent or majority vote
- Standing Rules – local rules
- Bylaws – governing document



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## Parliamentary Rules of Order

- Presiding Officer – legitimate authority to control meeting and maintain order
- Members – Defer to the authority of the presiding officer
- All business is conducted through motions
- Motions are subject to debate
- Motions are amendable
- Debate is **not** discussion



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## The Chair

- President, Presiding Officer, Chair
- Elected or appointed
- The “Boss”
- Controls the meeting
- Answers to the membership
- Assures efficiency



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## Members

- Be informed
- Be familiar with the agenda
- Participate in debate and discussion
- Ask responsible questions
- Keep discussion relevant to pending issue
- Avoid monopolizing the discussion
- **VOTE!!!**



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## Motions

- Main motions = ideas
  - Allow the organization to conduct business
    - Spend \$, appoint, plan projects, adopt policy
- Secondary motions = facilitate business
  - Allow the organization to act efficiently
    - Refer to committee, close or extend debate, ask questions / clarification, appeal, recess, adjourn
- Motions can be amended (modified)





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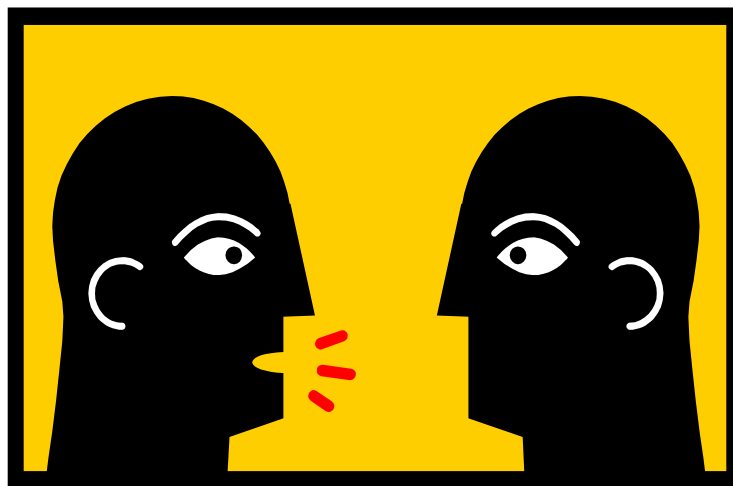
## Making Motions

- Everyone must be recognized by Chair
  - Raise your hand and be called on
- Correct language “I move that . . . .”
- Motions require a “second”
  - Second does not mean agreement
    - Does not require recognition or note



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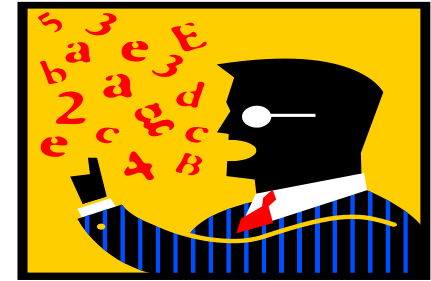
After the proposal has been “motioned” and “second” the members can debate the motion that is before them. This is called “discussion.”



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## Rules of Debate

- Decorum (rules of order)
- Chair controls debate
- Speakers must be recognized
- Questions addressed to Chair
- Each person allowed one opportunity
- May receive permission for 2<sup>nd</sup> speech after everyone has had a chance
- Must alternate – in favor & opposed



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- Debate must move forward
  - Avoid repeating arguments
- Each speech should *add* something to the argument
- No right to “respond”
- Limited time to speak

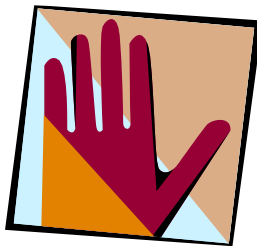




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## Voting

- All decisions are made by majority vote of those who actually “vote”
- Types of votes
  - Voice vote
  - Hand vote
  - Counted vote
  - Without objection (consensus)
  - Ballot
  - other



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## Privileged Motions

- Point of Order
- Point of information or clarification
- General Privilege
- Personal Privilege



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## Letter v. Spirit

- Parliamentary authority prescriptive
- Designed to promote effective and efficient decision making process – not necessarily “good” decisions
- Don’t need exact language
- Close enough often works
- Parliamentary procedure is forgiving
- Requires good faith effort



# *Thank You!*



# *Questions?*

