

# PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

... at a glance



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 HEAT, NOISE, ETC.	"I rise to a question of privilege"	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE	NO (usually)
TEMPORARILY SUSPEND CONSIDERATION OF AN ISSUE	"I move to table the motion"	NO	YES	NO	NO	MAJORITY	NO
END DEBATE AND AMENDMENTS	"I move the previous question"	NO	YES	NO	NO	2/3	NO <sup>①</sup>
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 <sup>②</sup>
AMEND A MOTION	"I move to amend the motion by..."	NO	YES	YES <sup>③</sup>	YES	MAJORITY	YES
INTRODUCE BUSINESS	"I move that..."	NO	YES	YES	YES	MAJORITY	YES

## THE MOTIONS LISTED ABOVE ARE IN ORDER OF PRECEDENCE...

PROTEST BREACH OF RULES OR CONDUCT	"I rise to a point of order."	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO VOTE <sup>④</sup>	NO
VOTE ON A RULING OF THE CHAIR	"I appeal from the chair's decision"	YES	YES	YES	NO	MAJORITY <sup>⑤</sup>	YES
SUSPEND 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 <sup>⑥</sup>	— <sup>⑦</sup>
VERIFY A VOICE VOTE BY HAVING MEMBERS STAND	"I call for a 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	— <sup>⑧</sup>	NO	MAJORITY	NO

### NOTES:

① Unless vote on question is not yet taken.

② Unless the committee has already taken up the subject.

③ Only if the motion to be amended is debatable.

④ Except in doubtful cases.

⑤ A majority vote in negative needed to reverse ruling of chair.

⑥ A 2/3 vote in negative needed to prevent consideration of main motion.

⑦ Only if the main question or motion was not, in fact, considered.

⑧ Only if motion to be reconsidered is debatable.

# Procedural Notes from the Parliamentarian

Marshall University  
August 2020

The Marshall University Faculty Senate represents the university's faculty as part of Marshall's shared governance. Meetings are run according to the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* and West Virginia Code. The goal of *Robert's Rules* is to support the ability for each Senator to fully participate in meetings and the ability of the Senate as a whole to conduct business.

The Parliamentarian is an advisor in this process. The Chair and individual Senators can consult the Parliamentarian at any time. The Parliamentarian is not a member of the Senate and does not vote or speak for or against any motion. You are very welcome to email or call me outside of Senate meetings. I will be glad to advise you about the best procedure to achieve your goals.

## Basic procedures

1. The Faculty Senate has two common types of business items: recommendations and resolutions. Recommendations are items that will be sent to the University President for approval or disapproval. Resolutions are items that express the opinion of the Senate and do not require further approval by the President.
2. Each piece of business requires a motion, a second, a period of discussion, and a vote. When the Chair introduces an item from the agenda, a Senator must move to consider that item and another Senator must second the motion. You do not have to stand in that situation.
3. In other situations, you should stand to address the Senate, if possible. Go to a microphone and wait for the Chair to recognize you. State your name and affiliation for the meeting recording, then go ahead with your remarks. If you cannot stand, gain the attention of the Chair, and someone will bring you a microphone. This process is called obtaining the floor.
4. If you would like to change the text of the current business item, obtain the floor and make a motion to amend. Please have the exact changes ready, ideally in writing. *Robert's Rules* do not allow for "friendly amendments" once the text of an item has been distributed to Senators or stated by the Chair. Amendments for obvious typographical errors and similar minor corrections can be made by unanimous consent.
5. An amendment can itself be amended, but this process can only go two levels deep. For example, suppose an amendment to an item is made and seconded. Now the amendment is being discussed. Someone moves to amend the amendment. Now that "subamendment" is being discussed. A vote will be held on the subamendment, at which point discussion returns to the amendment. Once a vote is held on the amendment, discussion returns to the main item, at which point other amendments might be proposed.

6. Please do not make a motion to “call the question” in ordinary circumstances. The Chair will call for a vote on an item when discussion winds down. The time to “call the question” is when it appears discussion will not wind down on its own. In this case, you might also consider a motion to refer the item to an appropriate committee to allow more discussion outside the Senate meeting.
7. Whenever possible, direct your remarks to the Chair rather than to another person, even if you are asking a question or responding to a question. Please maintain a courteous tone, and focus on issues rather than personalities or motives.
8. According to *Robert’s Rules*, each Senator may speak twice to each motion or amendment. Please make sure to compose your thoughts before you rise to speak.
9. If a question of procedure arises, the Chair will make a decision. The Chair may pause to consult the Parliamentarian first. The Senate may appeal the decision of the Chair with a motion to appeal.

## **Common motions**

1. **To add a motion to the agenda**, obtain the floor when no other item is being discussed. Make a motion to *Suspend the rules*: “I move to suspend the rules in order to allow a motion about ... to be made from the floor.” This motion requires two-thirds support. Once the motion to suspend the rules is approved, the desired new motion can now be made immediately. *Robert’s Rules* has no specific motion to “suspend the agenda”, and there is no need for a motion to “return to the agenda”. The Chair will return to the agenda once the new motion is resolved. It is helpful if you can alert the Chair before the meeting that you will move to suspend the rules. The Chair can advise you about the most convenient place on the agenda to add your motion, although you can make it whenever you have the floor with no business item pending.
2. **To stop consideration of an item**, without needing to vote on the item, make a motion to *Postpone Indefinitely*. This is technically not the same as a motion to *Table* an item, but in practice a motion to “table” is often interpreted as a motion to postpone indefinitely. If the goal is to allow more time for an item to be studied, consider a motion to refer the item to a specific committee. If the goal is simply to defeat a motion, and a majority will vote against the item, it is usually better to allow the vote on the item to happen. Use a motion to postpone indefinitely is when it is better to avoid taking any vote on an item.

## **Executive Session**

West Virginia Code 6–9A.4 allows for executive sessions (closed meetings) under fixed circumstances. The most common reason for the Faculty Senate to go into executive session is to discuss a possible speaker or honorary degree.

To enter executive session, a Senator will make a motion to enter executive session. The Chair will make a reference to the West Virginia Code 6–9A.4. Once the Senate votes to enter executive session, all non-Senators will leave the room and the recording will be stopped. Once discussion is over, a motion and vote is needed to leave executive session.

Votes must happen outside of executive session. This can be done by referring to the item’s number on the agenda: “I move to approve item SR-20–21–7”. All Senators must maintain the confidentiality of the executive session.