



Parliamentary Procedure Made Simple

August 7-9, 2014 – National Conference of Family Medicine Residents and Medical Students – Kansas City, MO

Parliamentary procedure refers to a group of rules for how the order of business will be conducted. If these rules did not exist, the meeting would break down and nothing would be accomplished. The Congress Chair is responsible for enforcing the rules. A parliamentarian assists with this job. The current edition of the ***American Institute of Parliamentarians Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*** is the resource that we utilize. The primary motions that you need to know are listed below in descending order of precedence (meaning the first one takes precedence over the ones that follow).

- (1) **Adjourn** – This is a motion to end the business session and should be held until all business is finished. It requires a second and a simple majority vote.
- (2) **Recess** – This is a motion to stop and rest for a while. It is used to end business between sessions. It requires a second and a simple majority vote.
- (3) **Question of Privilege** – This is a device that allows anyone to interrupt debate to provide important information. It does not require a vote.
- (4) **Table** – It allows you to move an issue to the end of debate to allow more time for preparing arguments or substitute resolutions. It requires a second and must be passed by a 2/3 majority.
- (5) **Close Debate** – If discussions are running too long, this can be used to move directly to a vote. As this takes away the right of some to speak, it requires a second and must be passed by a 2/3 majority.
- (6) **Limit Debate** – This motion is used to shorten the allotted time to discuss each issue. As this takes away the right of some to speak, it requires a second and must be passed by a 2/3 majority.
- (7) **Postpone to a Certain Time** – This motion is used when you need a little more time to work on debate or to construct amendments to resolutions. This allows other business to go on in the meantime. It requires a second and a simple majority vote. It is necessary that you specify how long you want the issue postponed.
- (8) **Refer to Committee** – This motion has no true place in our business session because we don't have committees in which to refer unresolved issues.
- (9) **Amend** – This motion is used to reword a resolution. It requires a second and a simple majority vote. If passed, the new reworded resolution becomes the item to be considered in subsequent debate.
- (10) **Main Motion** – This is the resolution itself. It requires a second and a simple majority vote.

Don't let these motions confuse you.

- If you want to say something, but are not sure of the proper procedure, the Chair can provide assistance. The important thing is to become involved and learn on the job.
- If you are not sure of the proper procedure for resolving an issue, you can make a **parliamentary inquiry**.
- If you want to take back what you did before it is voted on, you can **withdraw a motion**.
- If you agree with one resolved statement in a resolution, but do not support another, you can ask for a **division of question**.
- If you feel that there was no way the Chair could have said that the “ayes” beat out the “nays” and would like a hand count, you ask for a **division of assembly**.
- If you think the Chair has gotten everything mixed up, you can make a **point of order** to suggest the correct order of business.