

## Handout 2

# **Basic Rules and Principles of Parliamentary Procedure**

*Parliamentary procedure exists to facilitate the transaction of business and to promote cooperation and harmony among members in an organization.*

1. **THE RIGHTS OF THE ORGANIZATION SUPERSEDE THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS** - The organization has the right to make its own rules which then must be observed by all members. Should a conflict arise between the rights of a member and the right of the organization to do its business, the rights of the organization prevail.
2. **ALL MEMBERS ARE EQUAL AND THEIR RIGHTS ARE EQUAL** - These rights include the right to attend meetings, to make motions and speak in debate, to nominate, to vote, and to hold office.
3. **A QUORUM MUST BE PRESENT TO DO BUSINESS** - A quorum is the number of members who must be present to legally transact business and is usually stated in the bylaws. In a committee or a small board, the quorum is the majority of its members. The purpose of a quorum is to prevent an unrepresentative group from taking action in the name of the organization.
4. **THE MAJORITY\* RULES** - This rule is basic to the democratic process. The minority has the right to be heard, but once a decision has been reached by a majority of the members present and voting, the minority must then respect and abide by the decision.
5. **SILENCE IS CONSENT** - Those members who do not vote agree to go along with the decision of the majority by their silence.
6. **TWO-THIRDS VOTE\*\* RULE** - A two-thirds vote is necessary whenever you are limiting or taking away the rights of members or whenever you are changing something that has already been decided.
7. **ONE QUESTION AT A TIME AND ONE SPEAKER AT A TIME** - No motion is in order which does not directly relate to the question under consideration. In addition, once a member has been recognized, he has been granted "the floor" and another member may not interrupt him.
8. **DEBATABLE MOTIONS MUST RECEIVE FULL DEBATE** - The presiding officer may not put a debatable motion to vote as long as members wish to debate it. Debate can only be suspended by a two-thirds vote of the members present. No one can speak a second time on the same question as long as another wants to speak a first time.
9. **ONCE A QUESTION IS DECIDED, IT IS NOT IN ORDER TO BRING UP THE SAME MOTION OR ONE ESSENTIALLY LIKE IT AT THE SAME MEETING** - Such motions are out of order. (Note: Restorative motions are a special class of motions which do bring a motion back to the group.)
10. **PERSONAL REMARKS IN DEBATE ARE ALWAYS OUT OF ORDER** - The presiding officer must rule all personal remarks out of order. Debate must be directed to motions and not motives; principles and not personalities. The chair should be strictly impartial.

\* A **majority vote** means more than half of the votes cast (not including members who abstain) at a legal meeting with a quorum being present.

\*\*A **two-thirds vote** means at least two-thirds of the votes cast (not counting members who abstain) at a legal meeting with a quorum being present, ie, at least twice as many in the affirmative as in the negative.

Adapted from Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11<sup>th</sup> edition