

Parliamentary Procedure 101

Sargun Handa, 2022-23 ASWWU President
Associated Students of Western Washington University

What is Parliamentary Procedure?

- The ASWWU follows a very casual form of Parliamentary Procedure and Robert's Rules of Order
- It is meant to facilitate discussion, ensure cooperation, and help meetings run smoothly!
- The Basic Principles:
 1. Consider only one item at a time
 2. Justice, courtesy, and equal treatment to all (every member has equal rights, no speaking over one another)
 3. Will of the majority will be carried out
 4. The rights of the minority are preserved

Vocabulary

- Quorum: A majority (50% + 1) of the *active membership*
- Majority vote: 50% + 1 of *members present at the meeting*
- Call to order: Beginning a meeting
- Adjournment: Ending a meeting
- Seeking the floor: Asking to speak
- Making a motion: Asking to make a decision
- Seconding a motion: Supporting a motion
- Amendment: Editing a motion

Vocabulary

- Acclamation: Consensus (a decision without a vote)
- Roll call vote: Each member votes one at a time
- Failed vote: A vote that does not pass
- Tabling an item: Delaying an item to a future meeting
- Sponsor: The person who is presenting the agenda item
- Speakers list: A list in the order of which member's asked to speak (by extending their hand)

Responsibilities of the Chair

- The Chair is responsible for managing conversation, including keeping track of time and may end discussion/debate early in order to do so.
- The Chair exists to preserve order and the rights of all members. The Chair must remain impartial and treat everyone equally.
- Typically, the Chair is already determined in a body's governing documents. However, sometimes the Chair is elected by the body.
- The body's governing documents state if the Chair may vote.

Seeking the Floor

- If you wish to speak (seeking the floor), extend your hand so that the Chair can add you to the speakers list (the order in which people extended their hand).
- No member should speak unless recognized by the Chair.
- When another has the floor, every member should listen attentively and refrain from conversation.
- Seeking the floor prevents members from talking over each other during debate.

Tabling an Item

- An item may be tabled (delayed to a future meeting) by rule of the Chair, or by motion and vote of the body.
- An item should be tabled if (including but not limited to):
 1. There are many issues with the document
 2. Significant edits are being made
 3. Vital members are not present
 4. There is not enough time
 5. Members need more time to think about an item

The Path of an Agenda Item

1. The Chair announces the agenda item and turns the floor over to the sponsor to introduce the item and its document (if applicable).
 2. The sponsor introduces the document. The introduction is not meant to be a summary of or to read through the document (members should have read it ahead of time); it only should call out key points.
 3. Debate/questions begin. The speakers list is opened.
- (If this is the first time seeing an agenda item, end here)

The Path of an Agenda Item

(If this is the second time seeing an agenda item, begin here)

4. Repeat steps 1-3

5. A motion is made and seconded. State your name when making a motion or seconding a motion!

6. Debate may continue after the motion is made. Amendments may be made at this stage.

7. The Chair will end debate and call for a vote.

8. The vote proceeds and a decision is made. If the vote is not passed, see points 1-2 on slide 14.

Making a Motion

- Motions are the vehicles of decision-making used by the body. Only one motion may be heard at a time.
- To make a motion:
 - "(State last name) I make a motion to... (decision)"
- To second a motion:
 - "(State last name) I second"

Complications in a Motion

- If a motion is made and not seconded, a vote does not have to occur. The motion dies there.
- If a motion is made and seconded, a vote must occur. The motion must continue.
- A motion may be withdrawn (by the creator) prior to voting. This would be requesting a "leave of the house." Leave of the house means that every member would have to unanimously agree that the motion can be withdrawn. If it is not unanimous, the motion must continue to a vote.

Acclamation

- Acclamation is a decision without a vote. A motion may be passed without debate if there is no objection (consensus).
- If a member objects the Acclamation, the item must be brought to discussion and a vote.
- The Chair will set norms and direction for the use of Acclamation.
 - • E.g. Consent Items, committee appointment

Voting

- The Chair will call the vote.
- Options to vote:
 - Aye/yay/yes: yes
 - Nay/no: no
 - Oye/abstain: not voting
- Abstentions may be made when (including but not limited to)
 1. You may not have enough information
 2. You may have a conflict of interest
 3. You did not read the item before the meeting
- Abstentions should be used sparingly.

Voting

- After a failed vote (not passed by a majority), the body may vote on it again or a new motion may be made. A tie vote is a failed vote as it is not passed by a majority.
- For some bodies, the Chair may only vote as a tie-breaker.
- Roll call vote: Each member is called upon by the Chair and votes one at a time. This may be used due to (including but not limited to)
 1. Transparency reasons
 2. A large voting body
 3. A divisive topic

Reminders

- Always ask questions when in doubt
- If you "mess up," that is okay!
- We are all learning here
- The ASWWU follows a very casual form of Parliamentary Procedure and Robert's Rules of Order