

Tips on Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure provides for good structure and efficiency in conducting business. Its purpose is to:

1. expedite business in an orderly manner;
2. put democracy into action, giving the majority the right to decide and the minority the right to express dissenting views; and
3. show courtesy, fairness and impartiality.

Familiarity with parliamentary procedure helps voting members participate in convention business meetings with confidence. These pages focus on the procedures most commonly needed by voting members at the triennial convention. An additional information source is *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, latest edition, which in accordance with the bylaws, will govern procedures used at the convention.

During a meeting, a voting member may ask the presiding officer for parliamentary help. One of the presiding officer's responsibilities is to facilitate consideration of business.

A hearing on the proposed 2022 Women of the ELCA budget is planned. Those interested will have an opportunity to discuss the recommendations before the budget comes to the floor of the convention.

INTRODUCING BUSINESS

Four main channels are available for introducing business to the convention.

1. Reports of the president, treasurer, executive board and executive director

These reports, found here in the *Convention Program and Reports*, will be introduced by an officer at the appropriate time in the agenda. These reports are received by virtue of their presentation and are not acted upon. Recommendations attached to these reports will be presented for action to the convention.

2. Reports of convention business committees

These reports are presented by the committee chairpersons at the appropriate times in the agenda. The role of the committees is to review the reports, memorials or resolutions referred to them and formulate recommendations to the convention.

3. Main motions

A main motion is the basic form of motion. It is the only way new business may be introduced to the convention.

- a. Voting members may introduce main motions when the motions are germane (closely related) to the subject before the convention.

These main motions must be submitted on the online form provided for this purpose. A sample form is provided in this *Convention Program and Reports* (see page 83). A link to the online form will be provided. One copy is given to the president, one to the secretary and one to the parliamentarian.

- b. Resolutions are main motions used by voting members to introduce new business.

Resolutions may be introduced by voting members at specified times in the convention agenda. The proposed Rules of Procedure state that such resolutions must be consented to by at least five voting members.

Resolutions must be submitted on the online form provided for this purpose. A form is provided in this *Convention Program and Reports* (see page 83). A link to the online form will be provided. One copy is given to the president, one to the secretary and one to the parliamentarian.

When these resolutions are introduced, the presenter states the topic of the resolution but does not read the resolution. The resolutions are not discussed, debated

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or acted on at this time. Instead they are transmitted to the reference and counsel committee, which will report on them to the convention with its recommendations for action.

If the reference and counsel committee wishes to hear discussion on a specific resolution, the committee may schedule a hearing. The committee chairperson conducts the hearing. Hearings have no legislative authority. Views and opinions expressed in the hearing are considered by the reference and counsel committee in preparing its recommendations for convention action.

4. Amendments to Women of the ELCA Constitution and Bylaws

The executive board is proposing several amendments to the constitution and bylaws. Voting members may also propose amendments according to the procedures outlined in Article XVIII of the Women of the ELCA Constitution.

INTRODUCING MAIN MOTIONS

The usual way to begin consideration on a matter is to make a main motion. Only one motion should be placed before the convention at one time. A main motion can be debated, amended, referred, postponed or tabled. It ranks below all other subsidiary motions.

1. Obtain the floor.

A voting member addresses the presiding officer in the chat feature: *Madam President* or *Madam Chairperson*. Then the voting member gives her name and her synodical women's organization (for example: *Susan Anderson, Central/Southern Illinois*). The presiding officer then recognizes the voting member.

2. Introduce the business.

The voting member then states the motion: *I move that ...*

Another voting member seconds the motion. She does not give her name or SWO. When the presiding officer has the written motion, she states it again. This opens the matter for debate.

ACTING ON BUSINESS

A motion will usually be adopted or rejected in its original form or in an amended form after using appropriate procedure. (See "Amending a Main Motion.")

Business before the convention will generally be disposed of in one of three ways:

1. By adoption.
2. By rejection.
3. By applying an appropriate subsidiary motion. (See listing of these motions.)

AMENDING A MAIN MOTION

A main motion before the convention can be changed or amended at the will of the convention. A motion to amend is made after a main motion is made and seconded. It must be germane (closely related) to the subject of the main motion. Amendments may be made by (1) adding to, (2) inserting, (3) striking out, (4) striking out and inserting, or (5) substituting.

Example of amending by "adding to":

Mary: "I move that the churchwide organization plan a series of environmental conferences during the next triennium."

Voting member: "I second it."

Presiding Officer: "It is moved and seconded that the churchwide organization plan a series of environmental conferences during the next triennium. Is there any discussion?"

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Martha: “I move to amend the motion to add the words, ‘in various locations throughout the organization.’”

Voting member: “I second it.”

Presiding Officer: “It has been moved and seconded that the motion be amended to add the words, ‘in various locations throughout the organization.’ Is there any discussion?”

At this point, discussion concerns the amendment, not the main motion. The amendment to the main motion can be amended.

The first amendment is called a primary amendment; the second, a secondary amendment. The secondary amendment must always apply directly to the primary amendment and not revert to the main motion. Only two amendments can be applied to a motion at one time. Using the above example, then, amending the amendment would be as follows:

Sarah: “I move to amend the amendment by striking out the word ‘various’ and inserting ‘at least two.’”

Voting member: “I second it.”

Presiding Officer: “It has been moved and seconded to amend the amendment by striking out the word ‘various’ and inserting ‘at least two.’ The amendment therefore would say, ‘in at least two locations throughout the organization.’ Is there any discussion?”

Discussion at this point is on the secondary amendment and not on the primary amendment or the main motion.

VOTING ON AMENDMENTS

In using the above example, three votes are needed to act on the main motion and two amendments.

1. *First vote:* the secondary amendment, changing the words of the primary amendment by striking out the word “various” and inserting “at least two.” A majority vote needed. If carried, then a second vote is held.

2. *Second vote:* on adopting the primary amendment as changed, “in at least two locations throughout the organization.” A majority vote is needed. If carried, then a third vote is held.
3. *Third vote:* on adopting the main motion as changed: “That the churchwide organization plan a series of environmental conferences during the next triennium in at least two locations throughout the organization.” A majority vote is needed.

In each instance, the presiding officer states what is being voted on before the actual voting so that each voting member will know what she is voting on.

In case of an amendment by substitution, after the proposed substitute is “stated,” the presiding officer asks for further discussion on the original motion, then on the substitute motion. Either may be altered by secondary amendment. After discussion has ended, a vote is taken on the motion to substitute. A majority vote is required. If the vote is “yes,” then the substitute motion with any amendments that have been made becomes the pending question. The original motion has been replaced and is no longer pending. A final vote is taken on the adoption of the motion as amended by substitution. No further amendments are in order except by adding, as long as the added amendments do not alter the content of the substituted amendment. If the vote to substitute is “no,” then discussion and amendment may resume on the original motion before the final vote is taken.

TYPES OF MOTIONS

During a triennial convention, a variety of motions may be used to transact the business. Listed below are a number of motions which might be used, along with a few brief notes about their use, whether they can be amended and debated, and the vote required.

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Privileged motions

Privileged motions have to do with the rights or needs of the assembly. They outrank (that is, take precedence over) all other motions and have rank among themselves. They are as follows:

1. **Fix the time at which to adjourn**
 - “I move that when we adjourn, we adjourn to meet at [time and place].”
 - Use to set a time and place for an adjourned meeting.
 - Not debatable. Amendable. Majority vote.
2. **To urn** (to bring convention to a close)
 - “I move we adjourn.”
 - Not debatable. Not amendable. Majority vote.
3. **To recess** (to call an intermission)
 - “I move we recess for... [state time: for example, 30 minutes, until 2 p.m.].”
 - Not debatable. Amendable. Majority vote.
4. **To raise a question of privilege** (to request rights and privileges of the convention or an individual; for example, to point out that one cannot hear the proceedings)
 - “I rise to a question of privilege.”
 - Use to request rights or privileges.
 - Not debatable. Not amendable. Chair decides.
5. **To call for the orders of the day** (to return to the established agenda)
 - “I call for the orders of the day.”
 - Not debatable. Not amendable. Chair decides.

Subsidiary motions

Subsidiary motions assist the convention in treating or disposing of main motions. They rank below privileged and above main motions.

1. **To lay on the table**
 - “I move to lay the question on the table.”
 - Use to lay one matter aside temporarily so that a more urgent matter can be considered.
 - Not debatable. Not amendable. Majority vote.
2. **To end debate and vote immediately**
 - “I move the previous question.”
 - Use to stop debate and vote immediately on the question (pending motion) before the convention. This motion to end debate requires that an immediate vote be taken on the question, which limits the rights of those who wish to continue to debate.
 - Not debatable. Not amendable. Two-thirds vote.
3. **To limit or extend limits of debate**
 - “I move that debate be limited to (or end at, etc.).”
 - Use to define length of time of speeches or numbers of speakers, or to close debate at a specified time.
 - Not debatable. Amendable. Two-thirds vote.
4. **To postpone to a definite time**
 - “I move that we postpone consideration of this question to ... (state time: for example, next business meeting of this convention).”
 - Use (1) to set a time when a question can be considered more fully at a more convenient time, or (2) because arguments advanced during debate have indicated the need to make a decision at a later time.
 - Debatable. Amendable. Majority vote.
5. **To refer**
 - “I move that the question of ____ be referred to (state group: for example, executive board, reference and counsel committee, a committee to be [elected or appointed] for [further study, study and report back]).”

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- Use to have a question considered more intensively by a small group.
- Debatable. Amendable. Majority vote.

6. To amend main motion

- “I move to amend this motion by ...”
- Use to change or modify a motion. Change must be related to the subject of the motion. Amendments can be made by adding to, striking out, inserting, striking out and inserting, and substituting.
- Debatable. Amendable. Majority vote.

7. To postpone indefinitely

- “I move to postpone consideration of the question indefinitely.”
- Use to reject a motion or to test the strength of those supporting and those opposing the question.
- Debatable. Not amendable. Majority vote.

Motions to bring a question again before an assembly

1. To reconsider

- “I move to reconsider the vote on the question of _____. I voted with the prevailing side.”
- Use to suspend action that a motion already carried requires. A motion to reconsider may be offered only by one who voted on the prevailing side of the question and may be made only on the day the previous vote on the question was taken or on the next succeeding day of convention business. If the motion to reconsider is adopted, the question before the convention is exactly the same question and in the same form as at the time the original vote was taken.
Not debatable. Not amendable. Majority vote.

2. To take from table

- “I move to take from the table the motion that ____, which was laid on the table (state time: for example, at the meeting on Tuesday morning, at the last meeting).”
- Use to take a matter previously set aside by being laid on the table. To bring back this motion, the business that was interrupted at the earlier time should be complete.
- Not debatable. Not amendable. Majority vote.

3. To rescind

- “I move we rescind the action ____, which was adopted ____.”
- Use to annul something previously adopted. If notice of interest to rescind is given at a previous meeting, a simple majority vote is needed. If the motion to rescind is made at the current meeting and the intention is to call for a vote at this meeting, then a two-thirds vote is necessary for immediate passage.
- Debatable. Amendable.

Incidental motions

Incidental motions are incidental to the pending question. They must be disposed of before action is taken on questions from which they arise. They have no rank in this class.

1. To call for a point of order

- “I rise to a point of order.”
- Use to call attention to a mistake in parliamentary procedure or the order of business or the relevancy of a voting member’s remarks. The voting member rises and addresses the presiding officer. She need not be recognized before speaking and she may interrupt a speaker who has the floor. Not debatable. Not amendable. Chair decides.

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2. **To make a parliamentary inquiry**
 - “I rise to a parliamentary inquiry.”
 - Use to ask for information on parliamentary procedure.
 - Not debatable. Not amendable. Chair responds.
3. **To request additional information**
 - “I rise for information.”
 - Use to request additional information about the question before the convention.
 - Not debatable. Not amendable. Chair responds.
4. **To request a division of the convention (to *verify the accuracy of a vote*)**
 - “Division” or “I ask for a division.”
 - Use to request a vote again on the same question when the results of the first vote (voice or show of hands) seem to be in doubt.
 - Not debatable. Not amendable. No vote.
5. **To withdraw a motion before it is stated by the chair.**
 - “I move that I be allowed to withdraw my motion.”
 - Use to withdraw a motion after it is seconded.
 - Not debatable. Not amendable. No vote.
6. **To withdraw a second**
 - “I wish to withdraw my second to the motion.”
 - Use to indicate disagreement with changes made in a motion by the maker. The second may be withdrawn only if the question has not yet been stated by the chair.
 - Not debatable. Not amendable. No vote.
7. **To object to consideration of a question**
 - “I object to consideration of the question.”
 - Use to test the convention’s desire even to consider a main motion.
 - An objection must be made before any debate on the main motion begins.
 - Not debatable. Not amendable. Two-thirds vote.
8. **To appeal from the decision of the chair**
 - “I appeal from the decision of the chair.”
 - Use to challenge the ruling of the presiding officer.
 - Debatable only when applied to a debatable motion. Not amendable. Majority vote.
9. **To close nominations**
 - “I move that nominations for (treasurer, secretary, etc.) be closed.”
 - Use to closed nominations.
 - Not debatable. Amendable only as to time. Two-thirds vote.
 - The presiding officer also may declare that nominations are closed.
10. **To divide a question**
 - “I move that the motion be divided into ___ and ____.”
 - Use to divide a motion that consists of several parts, each of which can stand as a distinct proposal even if separated from the other parts.
 - Not debatable. Amendable. Majority vote.

NOMINATIONS AND ELECTION PROCEDURES

Three major procedures are used in choosing nominees for the four officers of the churchwide organization and the 17 members of the executive board.

1. By nominating ballot

This kind of ballot is used in the nomination of candidates for the offices of president and vice president. The first ballot taken in the election process for these officers is referred to as the nominating ballot. The use of the nominating ballot provides all voting members with opportunity to nominate persons for these two offices.

2. By the nominating committee

A slate of nominees for the offices of secretary and treasurer and the seventeen executive board members is presented by the nominating committee. All voting members of the convention, as well as congregational units, have had the opportunity and responsibility to suggest candidates to the committee.

3. From the floor

Nominations from the floor can be made according to the Rules of Procedure. The complete text of procedures governing nominations and elections of the churchwide officers and board members is located in Article XIV in the Women of the ELCA Constitution and Bylaws and in the Rules of Procedure.