NSPE

House of Delegates

Key Rules of Order

and

Parliamentary Procedure Primer
1. In accordance with NSPE Bylaw 15, Robert’s Rules of Order (most recent edition) shall govern matters of parliamentary procedure at all Assemblies of the NSPE House of Delegates (see Parliamentary Procedures Primer Section). The presiding officer, in consultation with the parliamentarian, shall rule on all questions pertaining to the NSPE Bylaws, rules of order, and interpretations of parliamentary procedure.

2. Individuals who desire to address the NSPE House of Delegates shall approach a microphone and wait to be recognized by the presiding officer. When recognized, the speaker shall give his or her name and state society or other affiliation. Each speaker shall address comments to the presiding officer.

3. In all cases, the maker of a motion or resolution shall be entitled to speak first. The presiding officer will then ask for those who wish to speak in favor and then those who wish to speak against the motion or resolution to address the assembly in alternating fashion. This procedure will continue until there are no persons desiring to speak on one side of the question or the other, at which time debate will cease and the issue will be voted on. The presiding officer may impose a reasonable time limit per speaker if circumstances warrant. The presiding office may also rule a speaker’s comments to be redundant to those of prior speaker(s) and ask the current speaker to be seated.

4. The report of the Candidate Screening Committee shall be presented during the NSPE House of Delegates Meeting.

5. Where there is but one candidate for election, a ballot vote shall be unnecessary, and an election by acclamation shall be held. However, upon the request of a single member with support of at least one additional member, a ballot vote will be conducted.

6. A Consent Agenda may be presented to the delegates for adoption without debate. Upon request of a single delegate, any item may be removed from the Consent Agenda for separate consideration and action by the NSPE House of Delegates as an item on the Main Agenda.

7. An affirmative vote of two thirds of votes cast by the NSPE House of Delegates present and eligible shall be required to adopt amendments to the NSPE Bylaws.

8. Motions proposed by committees, task forces, and the NSPE Board of Directors prior to the start of the House of Delegates Assembly do not need a second. These motions will be included in the meeting agenda. A motion proposed by a delegate does require a second.

9. Should any delegate have an emergency that requires early departure from the NSPE House of Delegates meeting, the delegate shall notify the NSPE Secretary.
Parliamentary procedures are necessary for the efficient conduct of a meeting and, when used properly, can make the meeting more productive and enjoyable. Below are some general guidelines for using parliamentary procedure during an NSPE House of Delegates Assembly.

What is parliamentary procedure and where did it come from?

Parliamentary procedure is merely a set of rules for the conduct of meetings. These rules, when effectively used, allow everyone attending the meeting to be heard and to participate in the decision-making process. This also helps eliminate confusion.

Parliamentary procedures originated in the early English Parliaments and were brought to America with the first settlers. In 1876, Henry M. Robert published these procedures as a uniform manual on parliamentary law. Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised is widely used today by most professional associations and is the basic handbook for presiding officers.

Why is parliamentary procedure important?

Parliamentary procedure has become an essential tool in conducting meetings because:

- it allows for democratic rule, flexibility, protection of rights, and a fair hearing for all participants;
- it has been tested over the years and has proven successful; and
- it is adaptable to any organization

How do we use parliamentary procedure?

Parliamentary procedure is used in a variety of ways in planning and conducting meetings, most notably by preparing and following a set agenda, by establishing a quorum (the number of members that must be present for business to be conducted legally), and by making motions.

Motions

A motion is merely a proposal that the body takes a stand or takes action on some issue. Motions are presented, seconded, debated and decided (by vote). There are four general types of motions: main motions, subsidiary motions, privileged motions and incidental motions:

- **Main motions** introduce subjects to the body for its consideration. Main motions cannot be made while another motion is before the House. Main motions yield to privileged, subsidiary, and incidental motions. An example of a main motion is, “I move that the NSPE House of Delegates approve the proposed NSPE Professional Policy…”

- **Subsidiary motions** are more commonly known as amendments. The purpose of a subsidiary motion is to change the main motion or affect how it is handled. The
proposed amendment must relate to the subject as presented in the main motion. An example of a subsidiary motion is, “I move the proposed NSPE Professional Policy be amended by striking the word ‘the’ in the first sentence and replacing it with the word ‘a’…."

- **Privileged motions** are most urgent and pertain to special or important matters not related to pending business. An example of a privileged motion is, “I move the NSPE House of Delegates adjourn…."

- **Incidental motions** involve issues of procedure that arise out of other motions. Incidental motions must be considered before the other motion. An example of an incidental is, “I move to suspend the rules for the purpose of…."

For a motion to be considered “in order”, the motion must relate to the business at hand and be presented at the proper time. A motion must not be obstructive, frivolous or contrary to the NSPE Bylaws.

Most motions require a “second”, i.e., an affirmation by another voting member of the NSPE House of Delegates to consider the motion. This practice prevents the body from spending time on a question that interests only one member.

One particular type of a Subsidiary Motion is a Substitute Motion. When a member wishes to offer a complete alternative to a main motion, that member gets recognized by the presiding officer and states the alternate motion that must be seconded. At this point the Assembly effectively has ‘dual main motions’ and must determine which of the two alternatives will be ultimately acted upon. During the debate amendments to either motion (secondary amendments) may be entertained. Once all such amendments have been adjudicated the Assembly votes to select the motion to be acted upon, i.e. either the original Main Motion or the Substitute Motion.

Consider this scenario: A body owns a barn that it wishes to repaint. A motion is made and seconded to repaint the barn red within 30 days. Another member, not liking that color and sensing that 30 days is too short an interval, moves to substitute that the barn be repainted blue within 90 days. Now the body has ‘dual main motions’ motions to consider. A supporter of the original motion, recognizing that 30 days may be too short, moves an amendment to change “30 days” to “60 days.” This amendment is approved by the body, resulting in an amended Main Motion. A supporter of the Substitute Motion, recognizing that the amended Main Motion now makes it more appealing, moves an amendment to the Substitute Motion to reduce the interval from “90 days” to “60 days.” This amendment is also approved. Now the body must vote on whether to consider the amended Main Motion or the amended Substitute Motion. After that vote is decided the body then finishes debate on the successful alternative, and the body votes that motion up or down.

The right to free and open debate is provided on most motions; some privileged and incidental motions are not debatable.

Most motions require only a simple majority vote, but motions concerning the rights of the Assembly or its members generally require a 2/3 majority vote for adoption.

Some motions can be re-debated and re-voted to give members an opportunity to change their mind. The “motion to reconsider” must come from a member who voted for the prevailing side.
Methods of voting on motions

There are five methods of voting to decide the outcome of motions: by voice, by a show of voting signs, by roll call, by ballot and by general consent.

- **Voting by voice** is the most frequently used method at meetings. In this instance, the presiding officer asks those in favor to say “aye” and those opposed to say “no”. This method is used only for motions that require a majority vote. The presiding officer rules as to which side of the motion has received the greater number of votes. Any delegate may move for an exact count.

- **Voting by a show of voting signs** is accomplished by the delegates raising their voting cards and tallying the sum of the weighted votes for both sides. This method is frequently used to clarify the results of a voice vote.

- **Voting by roll call** is conducted if a record of each delegate’s vote is needed. When voting by roll call, each delegate responds “yes” or “no” when his/her name is called. The weighted vote of each delegate is tallied to determine the result.

- **Voting by ballot** is used when secrecy is desired. In this type of voting, the members cast their votes on slips of paper or by computer. Again, the weighted votes of each voting delegate are tallied to determine the result.

- **Voting by general consent** is sometimes used when the motion is unlikely to be opposed. If someone objects to this method, the motion must be put to one of the types of vote described above.

In addition to the option of voting for or against an issue, a delegate may also abstain from voting (choose not to vote). When abstentions exist, the number of affirmative votes shall determine if a majority has been achieved to approve the proposed action.

A “motion to table” (lay on the table) is used to temporarily lay an issue aside to tend to a more urgent matter. The option to “take from the table” is always available to enable a body to reconsider the motion. This must occur before the adjournment of the current assembly.

A “motion to postpone indefinitely” is a strategy to dispose of a motion without making a decision for or against. It is useful in the case of a badly chosen main motion for which either a “yes” or “no” vote would have undesirable consequences.
Parliamentary Procedure Summary

1. A motion must be on the floor before a topic is discussed. If a delegate starts to discuss something, the presiding officer must interrupt to ask “Does someone want to make a motion?” A motion is then made.

2. The presiding officer restates the motion and asks, “Is there a second?” Someone will generally second, but if no one seconds the motion, there cannot be discussion on the motion and it dies for lack of a second.

3. The presiding officer asks, “Is there any discussion? Would the maker of the motion like to speak to the motion?”

4. Individuals are then recognized by the presiding officer and allowed to speak in alternating order for or against the motion. Discussion must all relate to the topic of the motion.

5. The presiding officer asks “Is there any further discussion?” If there is no further discussion, the presiding officer will state “Hearing none – the motion before the House is as follows…”

6. The presiding officer then directs “All in favor of the motion say aye; all opposed to the motion say no.” The motion carries or the motion fails.

7. Amendments to the main motion should be made prior to voting on the main (original motion).

8. Substitute Motions shall be handled as follows:
   • Main Motion to paint the barn red, motion seconded, discussion of the motion;
   • Substitute Motion to paint the barn blue, substitute motion seconded, discussion of substitute motion;
   • Discuss and perfect Main Motion and Substitute Motion concurrently;
   • Vote to replace Substitute Motion for Main Motion;
   • Vote on surviving Motion.
Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance

The following is a handy table for use at the NSPE House of Delegates Meeting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To Do This:</th>
<th>You Say This:</th>
<th>May You Interrupt the Speaker?</th>
<th>Do You Need a Second?</th>
<th>Is It Debatable?</th>
<th>Can It Be Amended?</th>
<th>What Vote is Needed?</th>
<th>Can It Be Reconsidered?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADJOURN MEETING</td>
<td>“I move to adjourn.”</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>MAJORITY</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CALL AN INTERMISSION</td>
<td>“I move to recess for…”</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAJORITY</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPLAIN ABOUT HEAT, NOISE, ETC.</td>
<td>“I rise to a question of privilege.”</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO VOTE</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEMPORARILY SUSPEND CONSIDERATION OF AN ISSUE</td>
<td>“I move to lay the motion on the table.”</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>MAJORITY</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>END DEBATE AND AMENDMENTS</td>
<td>“I move the previous question.”</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSTPONE DISCUSSION FOR A CERTAIN TIME</td>
<td>“I move to postpone the discussion until…”</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAJORITY</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIVE CLOSER STUDY OF SOMETHING</td>
<td>“I move to refer the matter to committee.”</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAJORITY</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMEND A MOTION</td>
<td>“I move to amend the motion by…”</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>MAJORITY</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCE BUSINESS</td>
<td>“I move that….”</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>MAJORITY</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE MOTIONS LISTED ABOVE ARE IN ORDER OF PRECEDENCE… BELOW, THERE IS NO ORDER…

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</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>PROTEST BREACH OF RULES OR CONDUCT</td>
<td>“I rise to a point of order.”</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO VOTE</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOTE ON A RULING OF THE CHAIR</td>
<td>“I appeal from the chair’s decision.”</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>MAJORITY</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUSPEND RULES TEMPORARILY</td>
<td>“I move to suspend the rules so that…”</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AVOID CONSIDERING AN IMPROPER MATTER</td>
<td>“I object to consideration of this motion.”</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERIFY A VOICE VOTE BY HAVING MEMBERS STAND</td>
<td>“I call for a division,” or “Division!”</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO VOTE</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REQUEST INFORMATION</td>
<td>“Point of information…”</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO VOTE</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAKE UP A MATTER PREVIOUSLY TABLED</td>
<td>“I move to take from the table…”</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>MAJORITY</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECONSIDER A HASTY ACTION</td>
<td>“I move to reconsider the vote on…”</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>MAJORITY</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES:
1 Unless moved when no question is pending.
2 Affirmative votes may not be reconsidered.
3 Unless vote on question has begun.
4 Unless the committee has already taken up the subject.
5 Unless the motion to be amended is not debatable.
6 Unless the chair submits to the assembly for decision.
7 A 2/3 vote in negative is needed to prevent consideration of the main motion.
8 Only if the speaker has the floor but has not actually begun to speak.
9 Unless the motion to be reconsidered is not debatable.