

PRESBYTERY OF CHARLOTTE

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE & RULES FOR DEBATE

- ◆ When any commissioner wishes to speak (other than to second a motion, which can be done from one's chair), he or she shall go to one of the floor microphones and seek recognition from the Moderator.
- ◆ When recognized, the commissioner shall state his or her name and position in Presbytery before contributing to the debate.
- ◆ All remarks should be addressed to the Moderator, should be confined to the merits of the pending question, and must not attack a commissioner's motives.
- ◆ If several commissioners are standing at microphones waiting to speak to the same motion, the Moderator shall attempt to alternate pro and con speakers.

- ◆ **MAIN MOTION:** A motion is moved and seconded (If coming from Committee or Commission, no second is needed) Motion is stated by the moderator who then calls for debate; Following debate, the motion is then restated by moderator; Vote taken (simple majority); Moderator declares results.

- ◆ **AMENDMENTS:** An amendment is moved and must be seconded; all proposed amendments (other than a few consecutive words) must be submitted in writing to the Stated Clerk, preferably in advance of making a motion. The amendment is stated by the moderator who then calls for debate; motion is restated by moderator; Vote taken (simple majority); Moderator declares results. **SECONDARY AMENDMENT;** Can an amendment be amended? Yes; follows the same procedure.

- ◆ **SUBSTITUTE MOTION:** A substitute motion is a form of amendment applied when the desire is to amend a motion in several different, nonconsecutive places. It also is used when the text to be amended is longer than a paragraph. The following procedure may be used (at the Moderator's discretion) after a substitute motion is made:
 - The Moderator calls for perfecting (improving) amendments to the main motion. The amendments may be debated. Nothing else is in order.
 - The Moderator calls for perfecting (improving) amendments to the substitute motion. The amendments may be debated. Nothing else is in order.
 - The Moderator puts the question: "Shall the substitute motion replace the main motion?" At this time, the merits of both the main motion and the substitute motion may be debated, but no further amendments are in order.
 - The Moderator takes vote on the above question.
 - If the question is approved, the main motion disappears and the substitute motion is before the assembly for further debate and vote.
 - If the question is defeated, the substitute motion disappears and the main motion is before the assembly for further debate and vote. **POINT OF ORDER:** Does not require a second; Not debatable; Not amendable; Moderator decides - Is the point well taken or not? Moderator may wish to consult before making a ruling. If time for further study or consultation is desired before a vote is taken, commissioners shall ordinarily offer the motion to Postpone to a Particular Time, instead of a motion to Lay on the Table.

◆ **CALLING THE QUESTION:**

It is a fairly common misconception that, after debate has continued for some time, if any member shouts out “Question!” or “I call the question!” debate must immediately cease and the chair must put the pending question to a vote. This is not the case. Any member who wishes to force an end to debate must first obtain the floor by being duly recognized to speak by the chair, and must then move the Previous Question. Such a motion must be seconded, and then adopted by a two-thirds vote, or by unanimous consent. It is not in order to interrupt a speaker with cries of “Question” or “Call the Question,” and even if no one is speaking, it is still necessary to seek recognition.

◆ **VOTING:**

- Unanimous consent—A motion is made, the Moderator states, “If there is no objection...” (after allowing time, the Moderator states, “So ordered.”)
- A plurality is the largest number of votes when three or more choices are given.
- A majority is more than half votes cast.
- Division of the house is just a voice vote by standing (not a counted vote). Can be called for by anyone. Does not require a vote.
- A counted vote requires a motion and a majority affirmation.

◆ **VOTING ON CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS:** Proposed amendments are presented to the Presbytery for a “yes” or “no” vote; Majority rules...even Confessions; No absentee or proxy votes; cannot be further amended.

◆ **MOTION TO COMMIT OR REFER -** Requires a second; Is debatable (only on the referral); Is amendable; Requires a majority vote

◆ **MOTION TO POSTPONE TO A CERTAIN TIME:** Requires a second; Is debatable; Is amendable; Requires a majority vote; Preferred over Postponing Indefinitely or Tabling

◆ **MOTION TO LAY ON THE TABLE:** To interrupt pending business to permit doing something else immediately; Requires a second; Is not debatable; Is not amendable; Requires majority vote

◆ **MOTION TO POSTPONE INDEFINITELY:** Requires second: Is debatable: Is not amendable: requires a majority vote: Should be avoided. Postpone to a Certain Time is preferred.

◆ **LIMIT OR EXTEND DEBATE:** Motion to change or limit debate: Requires a second: Is not debatable: Is amendable; requires 2/3 vote; Example: “I move we limit debate speeches to 2 minutes.”

◆ **MOTION TO RECONSIDER:** Moderator attests motion maker voted with prevailing side; Requires a second; Making the motion vs. considering the motion; can be taken up later; Moderator calls up the motion; It is debatable if the original motion was debatable; Requires a majority vote; Must be at the same meeting, or the 2nd day of 2-day meeting; To reconsider an amendment you must bring back main motion.