



Appendix

Glossary of Parliamentary Terms

absentee voting: Voting by (postal or electronic) mail, fax, or proxy by persons not in attendance at a meeting; not permissible unless authorized in the bylaws.

abstention: The result of abstaining from casting a vote. An abstention counts neither when considering the number of votes for or against nor in determining the total number of votes cast.

accept: To adopt, as in "accept a proposal." Due to the technical definition, it's usually unwise to vote to accept a report.

acclamation: An election by unanimous consent.

ad hoc: Latin meaning "for this purpose only." Used with committee. See *special committee*.

adhering motions: Pending secondary motions that must be decided before the main question can be decided and, as a result, remain pending along with the main motion when a motion is referred, postponed, or laid on the table.

adjourn: To close a meeting.

adjourn sine die: To close the final meeting of a session with no further meetings of the same group. See *sine die*.

adjourned meeting: A meeting that continues a session working through a single order of business.

adjournment: 1) The closing of a meeting, as in "Everyone left after adjournment." 2) An adjourned meeting, as in "Tonight's meeting is an adjournment of last week's meeting, at which we ran out of time."

adopt: To accept or agree to.

affirmative vote: A vote in favor of adopting a motion.

agenda: A list of the items of business to come before a meeting. See *order of business*.

alternates: Substitute delegates who serve if the regular delegate is unable to serve.

amend: (v.) To change. (n.) Name of a subsidiary motion that proposes to change a main motion (or any other amendable motion) before it's finally adopted.

amendment: A proposed change. Offered as a motion to *Amend* or, when applied to past actions, a motion to *Amend Something Previously Adopted*.

annual meeting: As provided in a group's bylaws, a meeting held once a year at which a group elects new officers and hears annual reports of officers, the board, and standing committees. An assembly that holds regular monthly or quarterly meetings may designate one of the regular meetings as the annual meeting.

appoint: To designate and authorize a person to serve in a particular role.

articles of incorporation: The terms under which an organization establishes its legal standing as a corporation chartered by state government.

assembly: A deliberative body. The membership present at a meeting.

ballot: A slip of paper on which a voter's preference is written. A ballot is always understood to be a secret ballot unless specifically qualified otherwise, as with a signed ballot.

board: A management and policy-making deliberative assembly that is either subordinate to a larger assembly or autonomous and established by law or charter.

bylaws: An organization's rules about itself that are of such importance that no change should be possible without previous notice and a two-thirds vote. In Robert's Rules, the term refers collectively to the constitution and bylaws if a society has both documents.

call (or notice) of a meeting: Written notice of the time and location of a meeting, which is sent to all members entitled to vote. Must include the specific items to be considered if the meeting is a "special meeting."

call the roll: A secretary's formal oral inquiry of each member, by name, to establish, for the record, the member's presence at the meeting or the member's vote on a specific question before the assembly.

call up the motion to Reconsider: The motion to *Reconsider* can be in order even if it's not in order to consider it at the time it's made. In such a case, the motion is made and works like a notice, and the actual decision of whether to *Reconsider* is made later when a member calls up the motion to *Reconsider*. If it's in order at that time, the vote on whether to *Reconsider* is taken up.

caucus: A group of members or delegates who meet to decide how they'll vote in a meeting or to plan strategy regarding items of business.

censure: Official expression of disapproval.

chair: The presiding officer, or the station of the presiding officer in a meeting, as in the reference, "The chair rules the motion out of order."

chairman: A gender-neutral title that refers to a group's presiding officer or the presiding officer of a committee.

charter: A group's articles of incorporation. Also, a document issued by a superior organization authorizing or establishing a subordinate or constituent unit or society.

close nominations: To formally end the nomination process and proceed to the election. This action isn't in order as long as anyone is actually trying to make a nomination or there hasn't been a reasonable opportunity for nominations.

close the polls: To conclude the acceptance of ballots and proceed to the count and determination of the result.

commit: To send, or refer, a motion to a committee.

committee: A group of persons (or one person) assigned to a particular task by or under the authority of a deliberative assembly.

committee of the whole: The entire assembly acting as a committee and chaired by another member who's not the presiding officer of the assembly; it operates under the rules for committees instead of the rules for regular assemblies. Operating as a committee of the whole allows the members to speak an unlimited number of times in debate on the particular subject referred to the committee, and its votes on the subject become recommendations to the assembly, which then takes the final votes.

consent agenda (consent calendar): A list of noncontroversial items of business that can be adopted all at once, saving the time that would be consumed if each item were voted on separately. The list can also contain special preference items to be considered in order at the appropriate time.

consideration by paragraph: See *seriatim*.

constituent society: A quasi-independent organization subordinate to (or otherwise operating under the authority of) a superior organization. Also known as a constituent unit.

constitution: An organizational document once used more widely than is common today. A constitution is different from bylaws only in that the constitution contains articles that rarely change, and amending it requires a higher voting threshold than for bylaws. Robert's Rules uses the term bylaws to refer to both constitutions and bylaws.

convention standing rules: Rules of order and policy that a convention of delegates adopts and that apply to the conduct of business during a complete session.

counted vote: A vote in which the prevailing side is determined by a count (conducted by the chair, the secretary, or tellers) of the number of members voting on each side of the question. It's used only when the chair or the assembly desires it; an individual member can move that a vote be counted but doesn't have the right to demand it.

cumulative voting: A form of voting used when filling positions on boards or committees or when appointing delegates. The process allows a voter one vote for each seat to be filled and permits the voter to cast all the votes in any combination for any number of the choices. Not permissible unless authorized in bylaws.

dark horse: A candidate for office who is the first choice of few but who may have wide support as a second choice. A compromise candidate.

debate: Formal discussions of the pros and cons of motions.

decorum in debate: Being nice; keeping debate on the merits of the question and not venturing into questions on the motives of members. Also refers to following the rules for debate.

defer action: The result of adopting a motion to *Postpone to a Certain Time* (or *Postpone* definitely).

delegates: Elected or appointed representatives from constituent units chosen for a single session of a larger assembly that's convened to act in the name of the entire society.

deliberative assembly: A group convened to discuss and debate action to be taken in the name of the group; it operates under the rules of parliamentary procedure.

dilatory: Intending to thwart the will of the assembly by misusing parliamentary motions.

disciplinary procedure: A procedure by which an assembly holds members and officers accountable for offenses such as serious breaches of order in meetings, or serious violations of the duties and obligations of membership and of holding office.

Division of a Question: An incidental motion that results in voting on parts of a motion separately. The parts must be capable of standing alone as complete motions.

division of the assembly: A rising vote required on demand of a single member who doubts the result of a voice vote. The chair may also call for a division of the assembly if in doubt as to the result of the vote or when an unrepresentative number of members have voted.

executive board: A body subordinate to a society that is empowered to act in a management or administrative nature in the name of the society between regular meetings of the membership. See **board**.

executive committee: A committee (expressly authorized by the bylaws) appointed to act for or in the name of an executive board.

executive session: A session during which only members and invitees are permitted to attend and in which all discussion is to be held in confidence by those in attendance.

ex officio: Latin for "by virtue of office."

ex-officio members: Members who hold membership (on a particular board or committee, for example) by virtue of an office they hold.

filling blanks: A method of choosing by majority vote from an unlimited number of alternatives to complete a detail in a main motion or primary amendment.

Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn: The privileged motion used, while business is pending, to establish a continuation of the current meeting.

fixed membership: The number of members specifically authorized to compose a board or committee, as distinguished from the current number of members actually serving on the board or committee (when less than the total number authorized).

friendly amendment: An improper form of amendment conditioned on the approval of the maker of the motion to which it's to be applied.

fundamental principle of parliamentary law: A rule of order so basic that it's held to be inviolate and unspendable.

general consent: See *unanimous consent*.

general order: An item of business that, in the prior meeting, was pending when the meeting adjourned or otherwise was postponed to the current meeting without being made a special order. See *order of the day*, *special order*.

germane: Pertaining to the subject. Amendments are required to be germane to the motion being amended.

honorary officers and members: Persons granted a special title or membership status, but in name only and without any rights of office or membership except as the bylaws specify.

illegal vote: Refers to a ballot cast for an unidentifiable (or ineligible) candidate, a ballot with votes for too many candidates, or a ballot that's otherwise unintelligible. An illegal vote cast by a member entitled to vote, however, still counts as a vote cast when determining the number of votes required to adopt or elect.

immediately pending question: The motion that must be decided before any other pending motions may be considered further. Yields only to a higher-ranking motion.

incidental main motion: A main motion that deals with the business of the assembly or its past or future action. It can't have *Objection to the Consideration of a Question* applied to it.

incidental motion: A secondary motion that deals with questions of procedure.

incomplete election: An election not completed before adjournment, including one in which no candidate has achieved the required number of votes.

informal consideration: Occurs when an assembly suspends the rules relating to the number of times a member may speak in debate on a main motion and its proposed amendments.

item of business: A specific report or motion within a particular class of business. For example, when moving from the report of your finance committee to the report of your membership committee, the chair says, "The next item of business is the report of the membership committee."

Lay on the Table: The subsidiary motion used to set aside the pending question to handle an urgent matter. "Tabling" can't be used to kill the pending question or to postpone it to a specific time.

main motion: A motion whose introduction brings business before the assembly.

majority: More than half.

majority of the entire membership: More than half of the total membership, including absentees.

majority vote: The vote of more than half the members present and voting at a properly called meeting.

mass meeting: A meeting of an unorganized assembly that is called for a particular purpose. The mass meeting is open to invitees interested in a particular subject who are generally in favor of accomplishing the announced objectives of the meeting.

meeting: An official gathering of the members of a deliberative assembly or committee, for any length of time, to transact official business, with no break in the proceedings for more than a few minutes. Such a break is called a *recess*, not to be confused with an *adjournment*.

member: A person with unrestricted rights of participation in meetings of a society, including the right to make motions, debate, and vote.

member in good standing: A member whose rights aren't under suspension because of disciplinary action or a provision in the bylaws.

minutes: A concise and official record of the proceedings of a meeting, containing (generally) what was done in the meeting but not what was said.

motion: A proposal formally offered by a member in a meeting, requesting that the assembly take specific action.

nomination: Derived from Latin meaning "to name," a name offered as a proposal that someone be elected or appointed to an office or other service position. Nominations don't require a second.

notice: 1) See *call (or notice) of a meeting*. 2) See *previous notice*.

object: The bylaws article stating the purpose of the organization.

officer: An elected or appointed person holding office as defined in bylaws, who is assigned specific duties, responsibilities, and term of office.

old business: An improper term sometimes used in place of the term *unfinished business*. Should be avoided because it implies that it's appropriate to discuss business that the assembly has already disposed of.

order of business: The sequence in which business comes before an assembly as established by rule. An order of business in which times are assigned to the items or classes of business is commonly referred to as a program or an agenda.

order of precedence of motions: The ranking of motions so that one motion takes precedence over another, which must yield to the higher-ranked motion.

order of the day: A prescheduled item of business. See **general order**, **special order**.

original main motion: A main motion which, when introduced, brings before the assembly a substantially new question on a new subject that's not related to the internal business of the assembly. The motion *Objection to the Consideration of a Question* can be applied only to an original main motion.

parliamentarian: A consultant who advises on matters of parliamentary procedure.

parliamentary authority: A manual of parliamentary procedure that an assembly adopts and makes binding unless superseded by the charter, bylaws, or special rules of order of the organization.

parliamentary inquiry: A question about parliamentary procedure raised by a member during a meeting.

parliamentary law: Generally, the body of rules applicable to procedures for the conduct of business in deliberative assemblies.

parliamentary motion: Any motion relating to procedure and to the conduct of business in a deliberative assembly. Includes secondary motions (subsidiary, privileged, and incidental motions) and motions that bring a question again before the assembly.

parliamentary procedure: Generally, the rules and procedures under which a deliberative assembly conducts its business and arrives at decisions in the name of the group. The application of common parliamentary law and rules of order.

pending question: A motion currently under consideration, even if it's not the immediately pending question. A motion subject to becoming the immediately pending question whenever pending motions of higher rank are disposed of.

plurality: Largest number of votes received in situations with more than two choices. A plurality isn't decisive unless the assembly has a special rule of order (or a bylaw, in the case of officer elections) that permits it to be the basis for a decision.

preferential voting: A form of voting in which voters indicate the relative preference of each candidate. Preferential voting yields the election of the most preferable when it might be impossible to achieve a majority vote for any one candidate. Can be used for election of officers only if the bylaws permit.

prevailing side: The constituency voting in the affirmative if a motion passes, or in the negative if the motion fails.

previous notice: A notice that a particular motion will be introduced at the next meeting. The notice includes an accurate and complete statement of the motion's purport, but does not need to include its exact content. Depending on provisions in the bylaws and intervals between meetings, previous notice is given in writing with the call of a meeting or orally at the prior meeting.

Previous Question: The subsidiary motion used to close debate, stop amendments, and take an immediate vote on the pending question. Calling out "Question!" to close debate is never in order.

primary amendment: An amendment applied to any main motion or amendable secondary motion, except to another amendment. (When an amendment is applied to a pending primary amendment, it's called a secondary amendment.)

privileged motion: A secondary motion of higher rank than any subsidiary motion. Deals with the privileges of the assembly.

pro tem: Latin abbreviation for *pro tempore*, meaning "for the time (being)"; temporary.

program: 1) The nonbusiness part of a meeting, such as when a guest speaker makes a presentation. 2) A written schedule of events. See **agenda**. The order of business of a convention is sometimes called the program or is included in "the program."

proviso: A provision related to transition; a condition precedent usually to the enactment of a bylaw. Often deals with an effective date.

proxy: 1) A power of attorney authorizing a person to vote in the stead of another. 2) The person holding a proxy.

putting the question: Putting a motion to a vote.

quarterly time interval: A period beginning on the date of a meeting and extending to the last day of the calendar month three months beyond the calendar month in which the first meeting occurs. For example, if a meeting is held on the first day of January, a meeting held on April 30 is within a quarterly time interval. (Yes, that's right. The *quarterly time interval* can actually include up to four full months.)

quasi: Latin meaning "as if"; commonly used in the phrase "quasi-committee of the whole."

question: The decision to be made, as in, "The question is on the adoption of the motion to send Dan out for pizza."

quorum: The minimum number of members who must be present at a properly called meeting for business to be legally conducted.

ratify: To affirm or uphold a decision made in the name of the assembly, but without proper authority at the time the decision was made or carried out.

recess: A short break in the proceedings of a meeting during which members may leave the room. A recess doesn't end the meeting.

recognition: The chair's assignment of the floor to a member entitled to speak or propose a motion.

Reconsider: The motion that, if adopted, allows the assembly to consider and vote again on a motion that was voted on earlier in the same meeting, or during the same or previous business day in a session consisting of more than one meeting, such as a convention. In a committee, there is no time limit on making a motion to *Reconsider*.

refer: To send a motion to a committee. Also known as "to commit."

regular meeting: An organization's meeting that occurs on a regular basis and is usually prescribed in the bylaws.

renew: To offer again a motion that was disposed of without being adopted or defeated. Generally, failed main motions are renewable only at a new session. Renewable secondary motions can be in order in the same meeting, as long as material debate or business has transpired making such a motion, in essence, a new question. A withdrawn main motion can be renewed (proposed again) in the same session.

Request for Information: A request made to the chair for information regarding the pending business and not about parliamentary procedure. Sometimes called *point of information*.

rescind: To repeal or annul action taken by the assembly.

resignation: A request to be excused from all further obligations of holding office or of membership.

resolution: A written form for a main motion that begins with the word *Resolved*, setting forth in specific terms the action to be taken. Often, but not necessarily, a resolution is preceded by a preamble of one or more paragraphs formally stating the rationale for the resolution.

revision of bylaws: A procedure for the amendment of bylaws in which a set of amendments makes such substantive changes throughout the current bylaws that it's offered and considered as a substitution for the current bylaws.

rising vote: A vote in which members stand to express their support or opposition to a proposal. Allows for visual rather than aural determination of the prevailing side. Used instead of a voice vote when a two-thirds vote is required, or any time a member calls for a division of the assembly.

Robert's Rules: 1) (Informal) Parliamentary procedure. **Caveat:** Although the term "Robert's Rules" is often used to mean parliamentary procedure generally in casual use, parliamentarians will be careful to make the distinction between parliamentary procedure itself and a particular manual on the subject (even if it is the most widely used manual). 2) The parliamentary authority that is *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*. The current title in the series of official revisions and editions of the parliamentary authority originally published as *Robert's Rules of Order* in 1876 by Henry M. Robert.

roll-call vote: Yeas and nays. A vote in which each voting member (or delegation) is called by name and a record is made of the vote. This type of voting procedure should be used only in representative or constituent bodies.

rules of order: Any written rules of parliamentary procedure a deliberative assembly adopts.

scope of notice: The range within which amendments may be applied to motions for which the required previous notice has been given. Amendments outside the scope of notice aren't in order because the notice protects the rights of absentees. In cases where previous notice isn't actually required, but giving notice lowers the threshold required for adoption, amendments outside the scope of notice are in order, but if they're adopted, the motion now requires the same threshold for adoption as if no notice was given. (Unless the effect of this would be that a vote of a majority of the entire membership is required and there are not that many members present, in which case such amendments are not in order.)

second: An acknowledgment by a second member that a motion should come before the assembly. A second doesn't imply agreement with the object of the motion; it indicates only that the second member wants the motion to be decided. If discussion or debate ensues without a second having been obtained, the fact that there was no second is of no consequence.

secondary amendment: An amendment applied to a primary amendment.

secondary motions: A collective term for subsidiary, privileged, and incidental motions.

secret ballot: Under Robert's Rules, all ballots are secret ballots unless specifically designated otherwise, such as with a signed ballot. See *ballot*.

select committee: See *special committee*, *ad hoc*.

seriatim: Latin meaning "step by step." Used in the incidental motion consideration by paragraph or seriatim. A procedure for considering a document — such as bylaws — one section or paragraph at a time.

session: A meeting or series of meetings devoted to one continuous order of business.

signed ballot: A ballot that identifies the person who casts it. This voting procedure is a substitute for roll call when a record is required of who voted and how. May be advisable when dealing with a large number of voting members or when only a relatively small portion of the entire membership is present.

sine die: Latin meaning "without day." See *adjourn sine die*.

society: The entity (association or organization) that's governed by a deliberative assembly.

special committee: A committee that is formed for a specific task and that ceases to exist after the task is complete. Also known as a *select* or *ad hoc committee*.

special meeting: A meeting other than a regular meeting at which only business specified in the notice for the meeting may be considered. Special meetings usually are reserved for urgent matters that can't wait until the next regular meeting or for scheduling an entire meeting devoted to one subject, such as disciplinary proceedings against a member or officer. Must be authorized in the bylaws (except in the case of disciplinary trials).

special order: An item of business that's set for a particular meeting or a particular time in a meeting and that takes precedence over any other business, with very few exceptions. See *general order*, *order of the day*.

special rules of order: Rules (adopted by an assembly) related to parliamentary procedure that supplement or supersede particular rules in the assembly's parliamentary authority.

specification: In disciplinary proceedings, a statement of what the accused has allegedly done to warrant being charged with an offense.

stand at ease: A request by the chair for the assembly to pause briefly in its proceedings (but not recess or adjourn). This request may be used to accommodate the chair's brief consultation with the parliamentarian or secretary, to permit adjustment of audiovisual equipment, and so on.

standing committee: A permanent committee that performs a continuing function, usually established in the bylaws.

standing rules: Adopted rules that establish policy and usually aren't related to meeting procedures. They require a majority vote without notice to adopt. Standing rules may not be suspended unless their application is in the context of a meeting.

standing rules of a convention: See *convention standing rules*.

straw poll: An informal poll to determine voters' leanings. A straw poll is never in order because it doesn't decide anything.

subcommittee: A committee that's subordinate to another committee.

subsidiary motion: A motion that aids in the disposal of other motions.

substitute: A form of amendment whose purpose is to strike out and insert an entire paragraph (or paragraphs).

substitute motion: See *substitute*.

Suspend the rules: An incidental motion to enable action that would otherwise violate the rules of order. This motion requires a two-thirds vote and is applicable only to rules of order, not to the bylaws (unless the rule in the bylaws is clearly in the nature of a rule of order or provides for its own suspension).

tellers: Persons appointed to receive and count ballots or other votes.

two-thirds vote: A voting threshold of two-thirds of the members present and voting. This threshold is required to adopt certain motions as a means of protecting the interests of a minority greater than one-third.

unanimous ballot: A ballot cast by an officer (usually the secretary) to elect a sole candidate to office. A unanimous ballot is out of order if the bylaws require a ballot vote because the unanimous ballot denies members the right to vote against the candidate by casting write-in votes.

unanimous consent: An expedient procedure for adopting a motion or confirming agreement by the assembly to a course of action without the formality of a vote or, in some cases, even a motion. The chair obtains unanimous consent by requesting it; if no objection is raised, the chair may proceed as if the assembly had voted formally. Also called *general consent*.

unanimous vote: A vote in which all members present and voting vote the same. This term is often misused; it's never correct to declare a vote unanimous if the outcome of the ballot vote was not unanimous to begin with, unless the motion to make the ballot vote unanimous is itself voted on by ballot.

undebatable motion: A motion on which the question isn't subject to discussion.

unfinished business: Questions carried over from the immediately preceding meeting that didn't complete its order of business before adjournment. Unfinished business includes motions pending when the last meeting adjourned and any other business left on the prior meeting's agenda that wasn't reached before it adjourned (except for special orders). Unfinished business isn't an applicable order of business in meetings separated by more than a quarterly time interval. See also *general order*.

vacancy in office: Occurs when, due to death, resignation, or removal, an officer doesn't complete the term. Unless a vacancy is to be filled according to the assembly's standard procedure for appointing or electing a person to that office, the bylaws should specify provisions for filling vacancies. Under Robert's Rules, when there's a vacancy in the office of president, the vice president automatically succeeds to the presidency, creating a vacancy in the office of vice president.

viva voce: Latin meaning "with the living voice." Refers to a vote taken by voice. ("Those in favor of the motion, say aye . . .")

vote of no confidence: Not a parliamentary term under Robert's Rules. To express disapproval of an officer or adopt a motion of censure.

with power: Describes a committee that's authorized to take **binding** action in matters referred to it.

withdraw or modify a motion: Until the chair states a question (bringing it officially before the assembly), the member making the motion has a right to withdraw it or modify it without the permission of the assembly. Once stated by the chair, however, the member must obtain the permission of the assembly to withdraw or modify the motion. A withdrawn motion is considered one that has never been made, so it can be offered again (renewed) during the same session without violating any rules.

without objection: See *unanimous consent*.

write-in: A vote for an individual or choice not nominated or shown on a preprinted ballot.

yays and nays: See *roll-call vote*.