



WEST VIRGINIA  
**Higher Education  
Policy Commission**

June 15, 2021

**Parliamentary Procedure Seminar**

Members have rights: [1:4, RONR<sup>1</sup>]

- Attend meetings
- Make motions
- Speak in debate
- Vote

Altering the rights of members requires you to amend the bylaws!

10 Mistakes you learned from TV	
1. Misuse of the gavel	Rap once to signal call to order and adjournment.
2. Calling the question	The motion to “Call the question” or to “Move the previous question” is not in order when another has the floor. It requires a second, is not debatable, and requires a 2/3 vote for approval.
3. Ex officio members can’t vote	Ex officio members can vote just like other members unless the bylaws say otherwise.
4. Minutes	The minutes should be a record of what was DONE at the meeting and not what was said by the members.
5. Applying open meeting laws or US Constitution to private clubs	Frequently, neither applies. Usually the assembly may meet in executive session and may limit debate.
6. President is all-powerful	The president has only those powers given by the members. They are usually stated in the bylaws or in an adopted motion.
7. Executive Board is all-powerful	The board’s power to overturn actions of the membership is limited.
8. “Talk Show” Decorum	The chairman is responsible for maintaining decorum at all times.
9. Tabling motions	Normally the motion “postpone to a definite time” is meant instead.
10. Who seconded the motion?	It is not required that the seconder of a motion be recorded in the minutes or even identified at all.

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<sup>1</sup> “RONR” is an abbreviation parliamentarians use to cite Henry M. Robert III, et. al., Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Publishing, 2011).

### Role of the Parliamentarian

The parliamentarian is a consultant, commonly a professional, who advises the president and other officers, committees, and members on matters of parliamentary procedure. The parliamentarian's role during a meeting is purely an advisory and consultative one. Parliamentary law gives to the chair alone the power to rule on questions of order or to answer parliamentary inquiries. [47:46, RONR]

### Rule for Larger Meetings

Meetings of more than about a dozen attendees should have a more formal setting with a podium for the speaker and another for the chairman with the secretary and parliamentarian nearby.

The chairman maintains the appearance of impartiality by not making motions, by not speaking in debate without relinquishing the chair and by not voting unless his/her vote could affect the outcome. [3:7, 4:56 RONR]

### Rule for Smaller Meetings

Meetings of less than about a dozen attendees frequently allow a less formal procedure. Details are summarized on 4:21, RONR

### Presiding Officer must have in hand: [47:8, RONR]

- Bylaws and other rules of the organization
- Parliamentary authority, e.g. RONR or RONRIB
- List of all standing and special committees and their members
- The complete order of business in correct sequence and under correct headings

### Steps in Handling a Motion [4:2ff, RONR]

1. A member obtains the floor and makes a motion.
2. Another member seconds the motion
3. Chairman **states** the question
4. Debate (amendment and secondary motions)
5. Chairman **puts** the question to a vote
6. Chairman announces the result of the vote

### To table or postpone? [17:13-19, RONR]

If you want to	Say I move:
Lay the pending motion aside temporarily	To lay the question on the table. (May not interrupt, needs a second, not debatable, majority vote required.)
Postpone the motion to a certain time	To postpone the motion to ... (May not interrupt, needs a second, debatable, majority vote required. If you meet at least quarterly, may not postpone beyond the next regular meeting; otherwise not beyond end of current session.)
Refer to committee	To refer the motion to... (May not interrupt, needs a second, debatable, majority vote required.)
Kill the main motion	That the motion be postponed indefinitely. (May not interrupt, needs a second, debatable, majority vote required.)
Avoid the main motion altogether	An objection to the consideration of the question. (May interrupt, second not needed, not debatable, 2/3 vote required.)
Close the meeting	To adjourn. (May not interrupt, needs a second, not debatable, majority vote required.)