

Synopsis of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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The following information is offered as an aid for those seeking assistance in parliamentary procedure. All page references are to the 10th Edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, published by Perseus Publishing. Charts summarizing the motions and the requirements for each appear on pp. 27–29 of this section of the *2011 Pre-Assembly Report*. (Note: Parliamentary procedure may be modified by the Churchwide Assembly's Rules of Organization and Procedure.)

Agenda, Amendment of, §41, p. 340ff

An item of business can be taken out of its prescribed order a) by adopting, by a two-thirds vote, a motion to suspend the rules, or b) by unanimous consent (p. 351), or c) under a special assembly rule by majority vote when the change is proposed by the chair.

Amendments, §12, p. 125ff

A motion may be amended before it is voted upon by inserting words, striking out words, striking out and inserting words, adding words at the end of a sentence, and substituting. A motion to amend must be germane to the motion to be amended. A motion to amend requires a second; is debatable, if the motion to be amended is debatable; can be amended; requires a majority vote even though the motion amended requires a two-thirds vote for its adoption; and can be reconsidered (pp. 108–111, 126–128).

Appeal, §24, p. 247ff

If a member believes that the chair has ruled incorrectly, an appeal may be made. However, an appeal may not be made if the chair has expressed only an opinion (p. 250). An appeal must be made at the time of the ruling; if any debate or business has intervened, it is not in order. An appeal must be seconded; is debatable, unless it addresses a matter of decorum or the matter appealed from is not debatable; is not amendable; and a majority vote or tie sustains the decision of the chair. An appeal may be reconsidered.

Courtesy, §3, p. 22ff

Members always should act with decorum. Members should address only the chair; they should refer to other speakers by title or some other designation, and should avoid mentioning names, if possible. A speaker's motives should not be called into question. During debate, presentations, and remarks from the stage, members should avoid conduct that would disturb the assembly (pp. 22–23, 41, 379–382).

Division of a Question, §27, p. 261ff

A motion that focuses on a single question, but consists of several parts, each of which can stand as a distinct proposal, even if separated from the other parts, may be considered and voted upon as separate parts following adoption of a motion to “divide the question.” The motion to divide must state clearly the manner in which the question is to be divided (pp. 262–263).

Germane

A “germane” matter is something closely related to or having a bearing on a motion before the assembly. A motion to amend must be germane to the motion to be amended; i.e., no new subject can be introduced under the pretext of a motion to amend (p. 125). In debate a member's remarks must be germane to the question before the assembly; i.e., the statements must have a bearing on whether the pending motion should be adopted (p. 379).

Incidental Motions, §6, p. 66ff, Chapter VIII

Incidental motions usually relate to questions of procedure and, unlike subsidiary motions, do not have a rank. They include:

- Point of order
- Appeal
- Suspend the rules
- Objection to consideration of the question
- Division of a question
- Consideration by paragraph or seriatim
- Division of the assembly
- Motions relating to methods of voting and polls
- Motions relating to nominations
- Parliamentary inquiry
- Point of information
- Request permission to withdraw or modify a motion
- Request to read papers
- Request for any other privilege

Lay on the Table, §17, p. 201ff

A motion to lay on the table, if adopted, would permit the assembly to put aside temporarily a pending question so that a more urgent matter can be considered. This motion requires a second; cannot be debated; cannot be amended; requires a majority vote; and only a negative vote may be reconsidered (pp. 201–204).

A motion to lay on the table should not be made if the intent is to “kill” the pending motion (p. 208). See “Postpone Indefinitely” below.

Limit or Extend Limits of Debate, §15, p. 183ff

The purpose of this motion may be 1) to shorten or to increase the limit placed upon each speaker, 2) to limit the number of speeches, 3) to close debate at a specified time, or 4) to close debate after a specified period of time. This motion requires a second; can be amended; cannot be debated; requires a two-thirds vote; and can be reconsidered (pp. 184–185).

Object to Consideration of a Matter, §26, p. 258ff

This motion is used to test the assembly's desire even to consider an original main motion. It must be made immediately after the question is stated by the chair and before there has been any debate or higher-ranking motion stated by the chair. Its use is to prevent discussion on controversial or personal questions. A member may rise and, without waiting for recognition, say, "I object to the consideration of the question (or motion)." A second is not required, and the motion may not be debated or amended. A two-thirds vote is required to sustain an objection to consideration. A negative vote can be reconsidered (pp. 258–261).

Obtaining the Floor, §3, p. 28ff

Prior to speaking in the assembly, whether to make a motion or to engage in debate, a member must obtain the floor, i.e., be recognized by the chair as having the right to speak at that time.

Microphones are placed at convenient locations so that members may address the chair when no one else "has the floor." Once recognized by the chair, the member is entitled to speak, subject to the limitations in the Rules of Organization and Procedure.

Persons recognized by the chair are asked to identify themselves by giving their names and the names of their synods.

In a few instances, it is not necessary to seek recognition of the chair before speaking. These include:

- to appeal a decision by the chair—appeal to be made before any debate or other business has intervened (pp. 247–252);
- to suggest amount, name, place, date, or numbers to "fill blanks" when invited by the chair (pp. 155–160);
- to call for "division," if vote is doubtful (pp. 270–273);
- to call for a count, if the result of the "division" is in doubt (pp. 270–273);
- to extend time for consideration of a pending question or until scheduled recess or adjournment, when the orders of the day are announced or called for (pp. 215–216);
- to call for the orders of the day (pp. 211–216);
- to raise a point of order, or a question of order (pp. 240–247);
- to make a parliamentary inquiry (pp. 281–282);
- to raise a question of privilege, unless a person is speaking or unless such interruption is unavoidable (pp. 216–222);
- to request permission to read a paper or a section of a book (pp. 280–281, 286–287);
- to move reconsideration of a motion previously acted upon (pp. 304–321);
- to request permission to withdraw a motion, or to modify a motion, that has been stated by the chair (pp. 280–286);
- to object to consideration of the question (pp. 258–261).

Orders of the Day, §18, p. 211ff

A motion calling for the "Orders of the Day" is made for the purpose of requiring the assembly to conform to its adopted agenda. The chair will rule on the motion. Upon a call for the "Orders of the Day" by a single member, the assembly must return to the approved agenda, unless by a two-thirds vote the assembly refuses to proceed to the orders of the day or by a two-thirds vote the assembly adopts a motion to suspend the rules.

Point of Order, §23, p. 240 ff

If a member believes that the rules of the assembly are being violated, he or she may rise to a "point of order" or "raise a question of order." This calls upon the chair for a ruling and enforcement of the assembly's rules. A "point of order" may be made by raising a white card from the member's seat, even if someone has the floor; it does not require a second; is not debatable or amendable; is normally ruled upon by the chair; and cannot be reconsidered. It must be raised at the time the alleged breach of rules occurs, unless the breach is ongoing (p. 243).

Postpone Indefinitely, §11, p. 121ff

A motion to "postpone indefinitely" is used for one of three purposes: 1) to dispose of an ill-considered motion without voting on it directly; or 2) to get a "reading" on the strength of those supporting and those opposing a main motion; or 3) to extend the limits of debate on a matter. The effect of the motion, if adopted, is to "kill" the main motion. The motion to postpone indefinitely requires a second; is debatable; cannot be amended; requires a majority vote; and only an affirmative vote can be reconsidered (pp. 121–124).

Postpone to a Certain Time, §14, p. 172ff

A member has the right to make a motion to postpone action on another motion 1) so that it can be discussed 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. The time to which the motion is to be postponed should be stated definitely in this motion. The motion requires a second; is debatable, but only with respect to the proposed postponement; and can be amended. A majority vote is required unless the effect of the postponement is to create a special order, in which case a two-thirds vote is required; however, an amendment to the motion to postpone to a certain time requires only a majority vote. The motion to postpone to a certain time can be reconsidered (pp. 172–183).

Previous Question, §16, p. 189ff

To move the "previous question" is to bring the assembly to an immediate decision as to whether debate on another motion should cease. The maker of the motion must proceed to a microphone and be properly recognized by the chair. By assembly rule, the motion cannot be made by someone who has first participated in the debate. This motion requires a second; is not debatable; cannot be amended; requires a two-thirds vote; and can be reconsidered before any vote is taken under it. If adopted,

the assembly proceeds, without further debate, to vote on the pending question. If the previous question is moved on “all pending questions,” and adopted, the assembly proceeds without further debate, to vote successively on each pending question (pp. 189–201).

Privileged Motions, §6, p. 64ff

(In order of precedence from highest to lowest, Table 4)

- Fix the time to which to adjourn
- Adjourn
- Recess
- Question of Privilege
- Call for Orders of the Day

Quasi Committee of the Whole, §52, p. 512ff

The assembly can “go into the quasi committee of the whole” to discuss under conditions of freedom approximating those of a committee a matter that can best be discussed informally (p. 160).

The motion to go into the quasi committee of the whole is a form of the motion to refer, and the motion may specify the format and applicable procedures. No binding decisions may be taken by a quasi committee of the whole; however, it may make recommendations to the assembly. Absent specification in the motion to refer, the rules of debate approved by the assembly apply in the quasi committee of the whole.

The chair of the quasi committee of the whole is the presiding officer (p. 513).

During the period when the assembly is meeting as a quasi committee of the whole, even though the committee consists solely of members having vote and voice, it is technically not the assembly (pp. 521–523).

Reconsideration, §37, p. 304ff

Should it be deemed desirable to return to a motion already voted on, whether adopted or rejected, a motion is made to reconsider the vote on that subject, if such a motion is otherwise in order. Such motion may be offered only by one who voted on the prevailing side of the issue, and may be made only on the day the previous vote on the subject was taken or on the next succeeding day of assembly business. If adopted, the question before the assembly is exactly the same question and it is in the form as at the time the original vote was taken. The motion to reconsider requires a second; is debatable if the motion to be reconsidered is debatable; cannot be amended; requires a majority vote; and cannot be reconsidered (pp. 304–324).

Refer (or Commit), §13, p. 160ff

This motion may be used to commit a main motion, with or without amendments and with or without subsidiary motions, to the Church Council, a churchwide unit to be designated by the Church Council for study and report to a future assembly (or for interim action), or to an assembly committee or a special committee for study and report back to the present assembly. The motion to refer requires a second; is debatable; can be amended; requires a majority vote; and cannot be reconsidered, if the committee has begun to function (pp. 160–171).

Rescind or Amend Something Previously Adopted, §35, p. 293ff

These two motions may be applied to an earlier action of an assembly. If adopted, the motion to rescind has the effect of nullifying the earlier action; the motion to amend something previously adopted is to be used, if only a part of the earlier action is to be changed. The motion requires a second; is debatable; and can be amended. Under proposed assembly rules, a two-thirds vote is necessary to adopt, and constitution and bylaw amendments, once approved, cannot be rescinded or amended. Only a negative vote can be reconsidered (pp. 293–299).

Standing Rules for a Convention, Adoption of, §59, p. 599ff

“Standing Rules of the Convention” cannot conflict with the constitution or bylaws, but they can modify rules contained in the parliamentary authority, as well as other matters. These rules, known as the Churchwide Assembly Rules of Organization and Procedure, while applying to only the immediate assembly, often have become developed to a point where there is little change from one assembly to another. While the rules are presented under an enacting motion, they are in fact a group of separate main motions. Voting members may request separate consideration of particular rules for purposes of debate, amendment, deletion, or addition. These requests for separate consideration will be held in abeyance without being voted upon until after the remainder of the rules (those for which no requests for separate consideration were made) have been adopted by a two-thirds vote. Then each of the requests will be considered, with a two-thirds vote required if a parliamentary rule from *Robert’s Rules of Order* is being changed or a simple majority vote if no parliamentary rule is involved.

Subsidiary Motions, §6, p. 60ff

(In order of precedence from highest to lowest, Table 4)

- Lay on the Table
- Previous Question
- Limit Debate
- Postpone to a Certain Time
- Refer or Commit
- Amend
- Postpone Indefinitely

Substitute, §12, p. 146ff

A motion to strike out an entire paragraph, section, article, or a complete main motion and to insert a different paragraph, section, article, or main motion is a motion to substitute. A motion to substitute is a type of motion to amend. The motion to substitute requires a second; is debatable, if the motion is debatable; requires a majority vote; and is amendable. Amendments can be made first to the original and then to the substitute motion. Unlike other motions to amend, debate may address both the original text and the substitute (p. 147). When both have been perfected, the vote is taken on whether to substitute the proposed substitute (with any amendments to it that

have been adopted) for the original paragraph, section, article, or main motion with any amendments that previously had been adopted. A majority vote is required. If the motion to substitute has been adopted, the substitute becomes the pending paragraph, section, article, or main motion, and then the substituted material cannot be amended except by adding something that does not alter the content of the substituted material. When material has been substituted for other material, the assembly must still vote on whether the substituted material is to be adopted.

Suspend the Rules, §25, p. 252ff

If, by reason of the assembly's rules, it is not possible according to *Robert's Rules of Order* to take a procedural action (such as bringing forward an action scheduled for later consideration), a member may move to suspend the rules, stating the specific purpose to be achieved, but not the specific rule.

Any such suspension of rules, however, may not conflict with the constitution or bylaws of this church, or with the fundamental principles of parliamentary law. A motion to suspend the rules requires a second; cannot be debated; and cannot be amended. Under a proposed assembly rule, a two-thirds vote is required to adopt. It cannot be reconsidered (pp. 252–258).

Take from the Table, §34, p. 289ff

The purpose of a motion to “take from the table” is to enable renewed consideration of a motion that had previously been laid on the table. Such motion is in order any time after the business that interfered with consideration at an earlier time has been completed, provided no other business is before the assembly. A matter that has been tabled dies at the close of the assembly, if no motion is adopted to take it from the table. A motion to take it from the table requires a second; cannot be debated; and cannot be amended. A majority vote is required to adopt. It cannot be reconsidered (pp. 289–293).

Voting, §4, p. 42ff

The Rules of Organization and Procedure of the assembly describe voting protocols.

Most motions can be adopted by a majority of the members present and voting, provided a quorum is present.

Under *Robert's Rules of Order*, the following motions require a two-thirds vote of members present and voting to adopt:

- Amend or rescind something previously adopted, if notice has not been given;
- Close nominations;
- Discharge an order for the day before it is pending;
- Extend time for consideration of pending question, or time until scheduled adjournment or recess;
- Limit or extend limits of debate;
- Make a special order;
- Previous question;
- Refuse to proceed to the orders of the day;
- Suspend the rules;
- Take up a question out of its proper order, or take up an order of the day before the time for which it has been set (Table 46).

Language for Introducing Motions

For clarity and consistency, voting members should use the standard language of parliamentary procedure when introducing motions on the floor of the assembly. The chart below offers standard phrases used when introducing motions for various purposes.

<i>If you wish to . . .</i>	<i>You say. . .</i>
Close the meeting	I move to adjourn.
Take a break	I move to recess for [<i>specify time duration</i>] OR until [<i>time certain</i>].
Register a complaint	I rise to a question of privilege.
Require the assembly to return to its agenda	I call for the orders of the day.
Lay a matter aside temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table.
Close debate	I move the previous question.
Limit or extend debate	I move that debate be limited to . . .
Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to [<i>time certain</i>].
Refer the motion to a committee	I move to refer the motion to [<i>committee name</i>].
Modify wording of the motion	I move to amend the motion by . . .
Kill the main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely.
Bring business before the assembly	I move that . . . OR I move to . . .

<i>If you wish to . . .</i>	<i>You say. . .</i>
Enforce the rules	Point of order.
Submit a matter to the assembly after a ruling from the chair	I appeal the decision of the chair.
Suspend the rules	I move to suspend the rules.
Avoid a main motion altogether	I object to the consideration of . . .
Divide a motion	I move to divide the question.
Demand a rising vote	I move for a rising vote.
Ask a parliamentary law question	Parliamentary inquiry.
Request for information	Point of information.
Take a matter from the table	I move to take from the table. . .
Reconsider a motion	I move to reconsider . . .
Cancel a previous action	I move to rescind . . .

NOTES FOR CHARTS ON FOLLOWING PAGES:

- * = Exceptions exist
- + = Only an affirmative vote can be reconsidered
- = Only a negative vote can be reconsidered
- M = Majority

CHART OF NONRANKING MOTIONS

Name of Motion	Section	Interrupt?	Second?	Debatable?	Amendable?	Vote	Reconsider?
<i>Incidental</i>							
Appeal	24	YES	YES	YES	NO	M	YES
Consider by paragraph/seriatim	28	NO	YES	NO	YES	M	NO
Division of the Assembly	29	YES	NO	NO	NO	DEMAND	NO
Division of a question	27	NO	YES	NO	YES	M	NO
Nominations and polls (reopen)	31	NO	YES	NO	YES	M	YES (-)
Nominations and polls (close)	31	NO	YES	NO	YES	2/3	NO
Objection to consideration of a question	26	YES	NO	NO	NO	2/3	YES (-)
Parliamentary inquiry	33	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO-CHAIR	NO
Point of information	33	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO-CHAIR	NO
Point of order	23	YES	NO	NO*	NO	NO-CHAIR	NO
Ratify/confirm	10	NO	YES	YES	YES	M	YES
Requests to withdraw a motion, read a paper, etc.	33	YES	NO*	NO	NO	M*	YES*
Suspend the rules	25	NO	YES	NO	NO	2/3*	NO
Voting	30	NO	YES	NO*	YES	M*	YES
<i>Bring Back Motions</i>							
Discharge a committee	36	NO	YES	YES	YES	2/3*	YES(-)
Reconsider	37	YES*	YES	YES	NO	M	NO
Rescind or amend something previously adopted	35	NO	YES	YES	YES	2/3*	YES(-)
Take from the table	34	NO	YES	NO	NO	M	NO

CHART OF RANKING MOTIONS

Name of Motion in Order of Rank	Section	Interrupt?	Second?	Debatable?	Amendable?	Vote	Reconsider?
<i>Privileged</i>							
Fix the time to which to adjourn	22	NO	YES	NO*	YES	M	YES
Adjourn	21	NO	YES	NO*	NO*	M	NO
Take a recess	20	NO	YES	NO	YES	M	NO
Raise a question of privilege	19	YES	NO	NO	NO	CHAIR*	NO
Call for the orders of the day	18	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO*	NO
<i>Subsidiary</i>							
Lay on the table	17	NO	YES	NO	NO	M	YES(-)
Previous question	16	NO	YES	NO	NO*	2/3	YES*
Limit or extend limits of debate	15	NO	YES	NO	YES	2/3	YES
Postpone to a certain time	14	NO	YES	YES	YES	M*	YES
Commit or refer	13	NO	YES	YES	YES	M	YES*
Amend	12	NO	YES	YES*	YES*(x1)	M	YES
Postpone indefinitely	11	NO	YES	YES	NO	M	YES(+)
<i>Main motion</i>							
Main motion	10	NO	YES	YES	YES	M	YES

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