



## **Parliamentary Procedure Basics for Virtual General Resolutions Committee Meeting**

*The League observes Robert's Rules of Order. The following information is designed to provide practical examples of common procedural matters encountered by League committees and has been adapted to explain how those matters may be addressed in the virtual General Resolutions Committee meeting environment. The purpose of this information is to provide guidance to foster a productive and efficient meeting; it is not meant to be an exhaustive or comprehensive discussion of Robert's Rules. It is the role and discretion of the chair to provide helpful guidance to individuals that may digress from the appropriate form and substance related to the conduct of meetings and the presentation of motions and other procedural matters set forth below.*

### **I. PRESENTING A MOTION**

1. A committee member may obtain the floor by clicking the blue “raise hand” icon in the zoom platform and being recognized by the chair. (Instructions for accessing the “raise hand” icon in the zoom platform will be provided at each meeting.) Once a committee member with his or her hand raised is recognized by the chair, he or she will be able to unmute his or her line to speak.
2. A committee member should do the following when making a motion:
  - a. Speak clearly and concisely.
  - b. Always state a motion affirmatively. For example, "I move the staff recommendation that we support AB 123..." rather than, "I move that we do not take a position ..."
  - c. Avoid comments unrelated to the subject of the motion.
  - d. Avoid making any arguments supporting the motion as it is being made, simply state the motion.
3. Once the motion is made, the chair will call for a second to the motion before proceeding with further discussion.
4. A committee member may second the motion by clicking the green “yes” icon in the zoom platform. (Instructions for accessing the green “yes” icon in the zoom platform will be provided at each meeting.)
5. If there is no second to a motion when the chair calls for a second, it is lost and no vote will be taken on the motion by the committee.
6. If there is a second to the motion, the chair should re-state the motion, or ask League staff to re-state the motion.
  - a. The chair will say, "it has been moved and seconded that we ..." This places the motion before the committee for consideration and action.
  - b. The committee then either debates the motion or may move directly to a vote.
  - c. Once a motion is presented to the committee by the chair it becomes "committee property," and cannot be changed by the maker of the motion without the consent of the committee.
7. At this point the committee member making the initial motion (the mover) may

elect to expand on the motion. For example, this would be the appropriate time for the mover to present an argument in support of the motion.

8. The chair should always recognize the mover first.
  - a. All comments and debate must be directed to the chair.
  - b. Keep to the time limit (if any) for speaking that has been established.
  - c. The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the chair.
9. Putting the Question to the Committee
  - a. The chair asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
  - b. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken on the motion.
  - c. If the motion passes, the committee moves on to the next item on the agenda.
  - d. If the motion fails, and no other motion is on the floor, then a new motion is in order.

## II. COMMON MOTIONS

### 1. Main Motions

*Purpose:* To introduce items to the committee for their consideration.

*Example:* "I move to support AB 123."

### 2. Motion to Amend

*Purpose:* Retains the main motion under discussion, but changes it in some way.

*Example:* "I move to amend the (presented main) motion to support AB 123 if amended."

#### "Friendly" Amendments

*Purpose:* To offer an amendment to the main motion that is still supportive of the main motion.

*Example:* If there is currently a motion to support AB 123 on the floor and a committee member makes a "friendly" amendment to support AB 123 and also request that staff report back after contacting the sponsor for clarification on specific language.

*Note:* This is commonly mishandled procedurally. Often the individual that seeks to offer the "friendly" amendment will inquire if the maker of the original motion will "accept" the amendment, and if so the chair will treat the motion as amended. This is not the proper way to handle such an amendment. It is not the discretion of the mover of the original motion (or the chair) to accept or decline the amendment, rather it must be adopted by the committee.

However, if it appears to the chair that an amendment (or any other motion) is uncontroversial, it is proper for the chair to ask if there is "any objection" to adopting the amendment. If no objection is made, the chair may declare the amendment adopted. If even one member objects, however, the amendment is subject to debate and vote like any other, regardless of whether its proposer calls it "friendly" and regardless of whether the maker of the original motion endorses its adoption.

### 3. Substitute Motion<sup>1</sup>

*Purpose:* Removes the motion under discussion and replaces it with a new motion.

*Example:* When there is a main motion on the floor to support a bill, a substitute motion would be, "I move a substitute motion that the committee oppose AB 123."

#### **Addressing Multiple Motions**

The following examples provide guidance relating to how multiple motions are handled, and the impact failed substitute motions have on original (main motions) and any proposed amendments. The last motion presented should be considered first.

#### **Example 1**

*Committee Member 1:* "I move that we support AB 123."

*Committee Member 2:* "I move that we support AB 123, if amended."

*Committee Member 3:* "I move a substitute motion that we oppose AB 123."

#### **Characterizing the Motions:**

In the above example:

Committee Member 1 has made a (main) motion.

Committee Member 2 has made an *amendment* to Committee Member 1's motion.

Committee Member 3 has made a *substitute* motion to Committee Member 1's motion.

#### **Order for Consideration and the Possible Outcomes**

Committee Member 3's motion is considered first. If Committee Member 3's motion *fails*, Committee Member 2's motion will be considered next. If Committee Member 2's motion *fails*, Committee Member 1's motion will be considered. If Committee Member 2's motion *passes*, there is no need to consider Committee Member 1's motion.

If Committee Member 3's motion *passes*, there is no need to consider Committee Member 1's motion because Committee Member 3's motion replaces Committee Member 1's original motion. There is also no need to consider Committee Member 2's motion since it is an amendment to Committee Member 1's motion that has been replaced by Committee Member 3's substitute motion.

#### **Example 2**

*Committee Member 1:* "I move that we support AB 123."

*Committee Member 2:* "I move a substitute motion that we oppose AB 123."

*Committee Member 3:* "I move that oppose AB 123 unless amended."

#### **Characterizing the Motions**

In the above example:

Committee Member 1 has made a (main) motion.

Committee Member 2 has made a substitute motion to Committee Member 1's motion.

Committee Member 3 has made an amendment to Committee Member 2's substitute motion (sometimes referred to as a substitute to a substitute motion).

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Substitute motions commonly occur during League committee meetings, yet Robert's Rules does not make a distinction between motions to amend and substitute motions. However, motions to amend must be considered prior to a main motion. Because the use of "substitute" motions is fairly widespread, the label as it is reflected in practice is used in the examples.

### **Reviewing the Possible Outcomes**

Committee Member 3's motion should be considered first. If the motion *fails*, Committee Member 2's motion is considered. If Committee Member 2's motion *passes*, it is not necessary to consider Committee Member 1's motion because Committee Member 2's motion substitutes for it.

If Committee Member 3's motion *fails*, Committee Member 2's motion is considered. If Committee Member 2's motion *fails*, the substitute motion for Committee Member 1's motion fails, and Committee Member 1's motion is considered.

If Committee Member 3's motion *passes*, it is not necessary to consider Committee Member 1's motion because Committee Member 3's motion substitutes for it.

### **Example 3**

*Committee Member 1: "I move that we support AB 123."*

*Committee Member 2: "I move a substitute motion that we oppose AB 123."*

*Committee Member 3: "I move a substitute to the substitute motion that we take no position on AB 123."*

### **Characterizing the Motions**

In the above example:

Committee Member 1 has made a (main) motion.

Committee Member 2 has made a substitute motion to Committee Member 1's motion.

Committee Member 3 has attempted to make a substitute to Committee Member 2's substitute motion (sometimes referred to as a substitute to a substitute motion).

### **Reviewing the Possible Outcomes**

While procedurally permissible, in an effort to avoid confusion Committee Member 3's motion should *not* be entertained by the chair until Committee Member 1 and Committee Member 2's motions have been discussed and voted upon.

Committee Member 2's motion should be considered first. If the motion *fails* Committee Member 1's motion is considered. If Committee Member 1's motion *fails*, then Committee Member 3's may make the motion to "take no position on AB 123."

If Committee Member 2's motion *passes*, it is not necessary to consider Committee Member 1's motion because Committee Member 2's motion substitutes for it.

## **4. Motion to Withdraw**

*Purpose:* To withdraw an item from discussion.

*Making the Motion to Reconsider:* Only the individual that made the initial motion can make a motion to withdraw an item from discussion. The individual may interrupt a speaker (after being recognized by the chair) to withdraw the motion under discussion at any time.

*Note:* This type of motion typically occurs following some debate by the committee that may provide additional information that influences the mover to reconsider

continued debate on the original motion presented. Another member may subsequently make the same motion after it has been properly withdrawn.

*Example: “Madame Chair, I move to withdraw my motion to support AB 123.”*

## **5. Motion to Reconsider**

*Purpose:* To revisit discussion of an issue.

*Making the Motion to Reconsider:* A motion to reconsider must be made by an individual that previously voted in the majority of the original motion. A motion to reconsider made by an individual that previously voted in the minority must be characterized as out of order.

*Timing:* A motion to reconsider must be made at the same meeting where the original motion was discussed, or the next meeting of the body. Motions for reconsideration following the next meeting are out of order.

*Example: “I move to reconsider the committee’s position to support AB 123.”*

## **6. Motion to Table**

*Purpose:* This motion is often used in the attempt to "kill" a motion by setting it aside. The option is always present, however, to "take from the table," for reconsideration by the committee.

*Note:* This type of motion should be reserved to temporarily set an item aside if agreed upon by a majority of the committee to take up an item of immediate urgency. However, in practice it is sometimes used as an option to end debate and prevent a vote, and not typically to take up an item of immediate urgency. This is technically improper procedure (or out of order) under Robert's Rules.

*Example: “I move that the committee table the motion to support AB 123.”*

## **7. Call for the Question**

*Purpose:* To refocus the committee on the agenda in the event there is sentiment that the discussion has drifted. The individual seeking to end debate must first be recognized by the Chair, make the motion and the motion must receive a second. The motion must be adopted by a 2/3 vote or unanimous consent.

*Example: “I move the previous question.”*

*Note:* The above procedure is consistent with Roberts Rules, however, in practice when an individual calls for the question a vote is not usually taken. The motion simply serves as an indicator to the chair that the debate may have drifted from the agenda, and the chair should remind the committee to return to the agenda. If there is a sense that the current discussion is productive the chair may elect to ask for a vote relating to the motion to call for the question, or the chair may propose continued discussion for some short period to allow individuals that wish to speak the opportunity.

## **8. Motion to Appeal**

*Purpose:* To appeal a ruling made by the chair. A committee member may move to appeal a ruling by the Chair, but it must be seconded and receive a majority vote to be reversed.

*Example:* “I move to appeal the Chair’s ruling that the committee approved support of AB 123.”

## **9. Adding an Item to the Agenda for Consideration**

*Purpose:* To have the committee discuss an item that is not on the prepared agenda before them. Because the League is committed to complying with the legal requirements and spirit of the Brown Act additional agenda items may be considered only if they fall within any of the below exceptions:

- An item may be added to the agenda by circulation to the committee members and posting on the League website at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.
- An item may be placed on the agenda at the meeting if the majority decides that it is an “emergency situation.” An emergency situation includes work stoppage, crippling disaster, or any other activity that impairs public health safety or both.
- Two-thirds of the committee members present (or all of the members if less than two-thirds are present) must determine that there is a need for immediate action, and the need to take action arose subsequent to the circulation of the agenda.

If an item does not fall within one of these exceptions it may not be discussed and acted upon, but may be added to a subsequent agenda.