

Myths About Parliamentary Procedure

Things you maybe wanted to know
and couldn't live without,
but no one would tell you



Myth Number 1:

- A majority is the same as 50% plus 1
 - *False:* A “majority” is “more than half”.
 - For an even-numbered vote total, “50%+1” is correct, but
 - For odd-numbered vote totals, “50%+1” is too high.



Myth Number 2:

➤ Chairs cannot make motions and cannot vote

– *False, but also partly true:*

- A chair never loses rights as a member, and therefore can make a motion, but in bigger groups, the duties of the chair demand impartiality so the chair should not do so
- In a small group (say 10 or so), motions by the chair may be useful and expedient
- A chair should not vote unless that vote will make a difference, (e.g. make or break a tie)
- A chair may vote if a secret ballot is used



Myth Number 3:

- After a committee report, it is proper for someone to move, “That the committee report be accepted.”
 - *False* If the report contains a recommendation, then the recommendation itself is moved, not the whole report. If a report contains no recommendation, then the report simply goes to the secretary for archiving with the minutes.



Myth Number 4:

➤ *Ex Officio* members cannot vote

- *False, unless the bylaws or policies say otherwise (which SPE's Bylaws and Policies do, in several places).*

Ex Officio members are still members of the group, even though they are part of the group by virtue of their offices or by appointment, and therefore they have all the privileges of any member of the group.



Myth Number 5:

- Minutes must include the name of the seconder
 - *False* Minutes are not to include the name of seconds. As a matter of fact, Robert's Rules even says that the name of the person making the motion is to be included only in the case of "important motions". A good form is for the minutes to say, "It was moved, seconded and passed that..."



Myth Number 6:

- Abstentions count as ayes (or, as noes)
 - *False* Abstentions don't count. Ballots that are blank, or hands that aren't raised or voices that remain silent, are not votes. They are ignored.



Myth Number 7:

- The chair should ask for the ayes, the noes and the abstentions
 - *False* Robert's Rules says only that the chair ask for "ayes."
 - If the requirement is that the motion needs a majority of those "present" to vote aye in order to pass (rather than just a majority of votes cast), then the chair announces both how many ayes were voted, and the number of voters present, thus avoiding counting the noes.
 - Abstentions are not counted, as they may wish to remain anonymous. It is proper to ask if any voters wish to be recorded.



Why use Parliamentary Procedure? (This is no myth)

- In a nutshell, Parliamentary Procedure **guards members' rights**: for the majority, for the minority, for individuals, for absentees and for the group as a whole.
 - The will of the majority must be carried out
 - The rights of the minority must be protected

