

# Quora, Majorities and Supermajorities

(An old Latin teacher once told me that the plural of anything ending in “-um” is “-a,” just like the singular ‘datum’ and the plural ‘data’)



# Quora

- “A Quorum of an assembly is such a number [of participants] as must be present [at a minimum] in order that business can be legally transacted.”

– *Robert’s Rules of Order*

- In SPE, a quorum for Council is two-fifths of the Council; a quorum for an SPE committee is normally more than one-half the members of the committee, unless the SPE Bylaws say otherwise.



# Quora

- Without a quorum, binding actions can't be taken.
  - As a matter of practicality, if actions truly need to be taken when a quorum isn't present, they will require later ratification at a meeting where there is a quorum, to make sure that a majority of the group agrees with the action taken.



# Majorities

- Most actions of Council and Committees of SPE are approved by a majority of votes cast.
  - Votes on most motions
  - Elections of Officers
    - In SPE, a plurality (most votes received, but not a majority) may not elect.
    - note: A nomination for office is not a motion, therefore, a second is neither required nor desired.



# Majorities

- If a vote is taken in writing, any ballot which is invalid is taken as a “vote not cast.”
  - In SPE, a written ballot other than “Yes,” “No,” “Abstain” or the candidate’s name (preferably first and last names) is invalid.



# Majorities

- If a voter abstains, it has the same effect as if he/she had voted on the prevailing side.
- A blank ballot is not counted as a vote cast.
- The Chair may vote in three situations:
  - Break a tie (*e.g.*, 40 yes, 40 no, and the chair wants the measure to pass)
  - Create a tie (*e.g.*, 40 yes, 39 no, and the chair wants the measure to fail)
  - If the ballot is written (the chair's vote is not known)



# Supermajorities

- There are some actions which require a “Supermajority,” an approval by more than a simple majority:
  - A vote to limit debate (*e.g.*, “call the previous question” or set a time limit for discussion) requires a 2/3 majority to pass;
  - A motion by Council to declare a Section or Division Council seat vacant (2/3)



# Supermajorities

- More Supermajority examples:
  - Amending an automatic dues increase (2/3)
  - Bylaw amendment final passage (2/3)
  - Employ an Executive Director (3/4)
  - A vote to remove an SPE Officer (2/3),
  - A motion by Council to review an action of an SPE Committee (2/3),
  - Removal of a Councilor from Office (2/3)





# Supermajorities

- One Supermajority that cannot be used is a requirement for “unanimity” (a supermajority of 100%) in order to pass a motion.
  - This effectively gives one voter control over the outcome.
  - This rule does not prevent a body from requesting that the minutes show a ‘unanimous’ vote, if everyone agrees. If even one voter objects, the minutes may not show such an outcome.



# Quora, Majorities and Supermajorities

- That's all the data I have;
- Does anyone have a question?

