

A Brief Guide to
WKU University Senate
Parliamentary Procedures

Table of Contents

- [Introduction](#)
- [Summary Tables](#)
 - [Table 1](#)
 - [Table 2](#)
 - [Table 3](#)
- [Making Motions](#)
- [Evaluating 'Order'](#)
- [Description of Motions](#)
 - [Main Motions](#)
 - [Specific Motions](#)
 - [Motion to Reconsider](#)
 - [Motion to Rescind](#)
 - [Motion to Resume Consideration](#)
 - [Subsidiary Motions](#)
 - [Motion to Amend](#)
 - [Motion to Refer to Committee](#)
 - [Motion to Postpone Definitely](#)
 - [Motion to Limit or Extend Debate](#)
 - [Motion to Close Debate](#)
 - [Motion to Postpone Temporarily](#)
 - [Privileged Motions](#)
 - [Question of Privilege](#)
 - [Motion to Recess](#)
 - [Motion to Adjourn](#)
 - [Incidental Motions](#)
 - [Motion to Appeal](#)
 - [Motion to Suspend Rules](#)
 - [Motion to Consider Informally](#)
 - [Point of Order](#)
 - [Parliamentary Inquiry](#)
 - [Request to Withdraw a Motion](#)
 - [Request for Division of Question](#)
 - [Request for Division of Assembly](#)

INTRODUCTION

According to Chapter III - Section F, of its charter, the "University Senate shall use the most recent edition of *Sturgis Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* to govern its meetings." This document is intended as a brief introduction to the parliamentary procedures outlined in that text and to serve as a quick reference for senators. This precis will not replace a thorough reading of the book but is intended to provide the reader a reference tool that can be carried to meetings and kept at hand to facilitate the business of the senate and its committees. Much of what follows is quoted directly from the text and page numbers, when applicable, are supplied.

These references come from:

Sturgis, A. (1988). *The standard code of parliamentary procedure*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc. ISBN: 0-07-062522-0

This text can be ordered from any bookstore or on the web by clicking on the following links: Amazon.Com, bn.com, or American Institute of Parliamentarians.

SUMMARY TABLES

[Table 1](#)

summarizes these factors and also provides the orders of precedence for each. Motions are only 'in order' if no motion higher on the list is currently before the body. Thus, a motion to close debate would be out of order if a motion to recess is before the body.

[Table 2](#)

presents the chief purposes of motions and describes what motions can be used for similar purposes.

[Table 3](#)

provides a list of suggested strategies for when a senator is in FAVOR of a motion or OPPOSES a motion.

MAKING MOTIONS

Steps to present a motion (p. 11):

1. Member rises and addresses the president.
"Madam President" or "Mr. President"
2. The member is recognized by the president.
3. The member proposes the motion.
"I move..."
Proposing member sits down.
4. Another member seconds the motion.
5. The presiding officer states the motion to the assembly.
"The motion is..."
Followed by: "Is there any discussion?"

Debate, specific main motions, subsidiary motions, can then ensue.

EVALUATING 'ORDER'

1. What is a motion's precedence?
2. Can the motion interrupt a speaker?
3. Does the motion require a second?
4. Is the motion debatable?
5. Can the motion be amended?
6. What vote does it require?
7. What are the motions that the current motion can apply to?
8. What motions can be applied to the current motion?

DESCRIPTION OF MOTIONS

Main Motions

The purpose of the main motion is to bring before the body a specific proposal or concern for discussion and decision. This is the basic motion for the transaction of business by the body. Typical main motions involve appropriation, resolutions, appointments, creation of committees, etc. Motions are generally debated and then accepted by the senate with a majority 'yes' vote. Defeated motions can be "Reconsidered," in which case another vote is taken in the hope that this time the motion will pass. Defeated motions can also be "Renewed," in essence proposed as new main motions in subsequent meetings.

Specific Motions

Motion to Reconsider

To enable a body to set aside a vote on any motion taken at the same meeting and to consider the motion as if no vote had been previously taken upon motion to be reconsidered. This motion is limited to reconsideration of main motions. This motion may be offered by any member at almost any time, but pending business is handled prior to consideration of a motion to reconsider. Debate on this motion is restricted to the motion to reconsider, not the merits of the main motion or the previous vote/action.

Motion to Rescind

To repeal a main motion passed at a previous meeting. This motion may be offered by any member of the body and may be applied to any main motion, regardless of the amount of time that has passed. However, this vote may not be applied to motions that resulted in actions that the body cannot rescind. For example, a motion to rescind could not be applied to a resolution that has already been forwarded to the President of the University or the Governing Board.

Motion to Resume Consideration (Take from the Table)

To enable the body to consider a motion that was temporarily postponed (tabled) earlier in the meeting. Beyond the current meeting, any temporarily postponed motion dies and must be reintroduced as a main motion. This motion takes priority over an new main motions, but pending business before the body should be decided first. Any motions adhering to the motion being resumed are still in effect should the motion to resume consideration pass.

Subsidiary Motions

Motion to Amend

"To modify a motion that is being considered by the assembly so that it will express more satisfactorily the will of the members." Members of the body can amend by: (1) addition, (2) deletion, (3) striking out and inserting, and (4) by substituting a new amendment. This motion may be applied to main motions and previous motions to amend. The motions to postpone definitely, to limit debate, and to recess may be amended with regards to times proposed. A motion to refer to committee may be amended (e.g., any details associated with committee as well as the date/time that report to the body is due). Substitution of wording that is not germane to the topic of the motion or would change the type of motion under consideration should be ruled out of order. However, amendments that reverse the meaning of the original motion, so long as they are germane, would be in order!

Amendments come in two ranks: primary and secondary. A primary amendment relates directly to the main motion. A secondary amendment relates to a primary amendment. Only one motion of each rank is allowed to be before the body at any time.

Amendment by substituting a new motion may be preferable than considering a motion with several pending amendments dealing with wording, etc. Such an amendment must be germane to the original motion but may differ completely in purpose, wording, and effect. Amendments by substitution are considered primary amendments.

Amendments are voted in the reverse order of their proposal. An amendment requires only a majority vote regardless of the priority of the motion being amended

Motion to Refer to Committee

The purpose of this motion is to transfer a motion that is pending before the body to a committee. The committee can be directed to report back findings, a decision, results of a hearing, or even to defer decision until a more favorable time. This motion may simply identify the committee or may include additional instructions to the committee. Due to the University Senate charter, Ad Hoc

committees are appointed by the Executive Committee of the Senate. It would be possible, however, to instruct the Executive Committee to establish such an ad hoc committee, instruct them to name specified individuals to the ad hoc committee, and even to include, as part of the motion, a time line for when the ad hoc committee should report back. Each of these would be open to amending from the floor. However, debate is restricted to the motion to refer, not on the main motion being referred to the committee. Additionally, any amendments to the main motion being referred adhere and would also be directed to the committee.

Motion to Postpone Definitely

To put off consideration, or further consideration, of a pending main motion and to fix a definite time for its consideration. Unlike the motion to postpone indefinitely, which is not debatable, the motion to postpone definitely is both debatable and amendable. This motion to postpone definitely may also make it a general or special order for the body to consider the main motion being postponed at a future date. A special order is taken up immediately, regardless of what pending business is before the body. A general order is taken up when pending business has been concluded. A motion to postpone definitely is out of order when it names a meeting that has not already been scheduled or for any time that would render the main motion ineffective. For example, postponing a motion to contribute funds to an exhibit could not be postponed definitely to a time following the scheduled exhibition. A motion that had been postponed but is now before the body can again be postponed definitely.

Motion to Limit or Extend Debate

To limit or extend the time that will be devoted to discussion of a pending motion or to modify or remove limitations already imposed on discussion. This motion can affect the number of speakers, who may participate, time allotted to speakers, total time allotted for discussion, or some variation/combination of the above. This motion may be limited to a single pending motion or all pending motions. If the main motion is postponed definitely, then the motion to limit/extend debate is no longer effective.

Motion to Close Debate

To prevent or stop discussion on the pending question or questions, to prevent the proposal of other subsidiary motions except to postpone temporarily, and to bring the pending motion to an immediate vote. This motion may be proposed at any time after the motion to which it applies has been stated to the body. This motion is not debatable. It cannot be combined with the motion to which it applies. For example, one could not say "I move that we recess for five minutes and that we close debate on this motion." A 2/3 vote is required for this motion to pass.

A common practice is to call out "Question!" from the floor of the body. It is out of order to do so while another senator holds the floor, however, during a lull in the discussion, it can be treated as an information motion to close debate. The chair may proceed by general consent or may ask for a vote.

Motion to Postpone Temporarily

To stop debate on the main motion and move it, with amendments and adhering motions, from the consideration of the assembly during the current meeting or convention... This motion is not debatable and cannot be amended. However, the motion can be withdrawn. A motion to reconsider can be used to place the main motion before the body for consideration. One practice associated with this motion has been to effectively kill a main motion by placing it 'on the table' indefinitely. Motions which have been postponed indefinitely expire at the end of the current meeting or session. Thus, they would have to be reintroduced at a subsequent meeting.

In practice, the Senate has typically not distinguished between a motion to postpone temporarily and definitely. Motions to postpone have been treated as motions to postpone definitely until the next meeting of the senate and are then treated as general orders. None-the-less, senators may wish to

make use of this motion in order to gain time to consider a motion or to deal with more urgent business.

Privileged Motions

Question of Privilege (Requests)

To secure appropriate action by the President on a request or by the assembly on a motion in order to meet an immediate need or emergency. There can be questions of personal privilege, the privilege of the assembly, or a motion of privilege. Questions of personal privilege pertain to an individual senator and relate to their rights, reputation, conduct, safety, or convenience as a member of the body. Questions pertaining to the privileges of the assembly have to do with rights, safety, integrity, or convenience of the entire senate. These may deal with lighting, heating, seating, or control of noise.

It may be that other business is before the senate when it becomes necessary to propose a motion as a Question of Privilege. It is at the discretion of the President whether to treat the question raised by the senator as privileged or out of order. The member may appeal this decision.

Motion to Recess

To permit an interlude in a meeting and to set a definite time for continuing the meeting. Unlike the motion to adjourn which would terminate the meeting, the motion recess resumes the meeting after a specified period of time. A motion to recess requires a second and debate is restricted to time or duration of the recess. Similarly, amendments dealing with time can be accepted.

Motion to Adjourn

To terminate a meeting or convention. This motion can end the meeting immediately or can end the meeting at a specified time (e.g., 5:00 pm). It is the duty of the President, or that of other senators, to point out any important business that remains to the assembly. The President should then ask the member proposing adjournment to withdraw their motion. If the senator refuses to withdraw the motion, and there is a second, and the Senate votes to adjourn, the meeting is effectively over. The decision to adjourn the meeting rests with the Senate. The President cannot arbitrarily declare adjournment. A formal vote of adjournment is not required. Simply asking for further business, and hearing none, may simply state that "hearing no objection, this meeting is adjourned."

Incidental Motions

Motion to Appeal

To enable a member who believes that the president of the senate is mistaken or unfair in a ruling to have the senate as a whole decide by vote whether the officer's decision should be upheld or overruled. Statements of fact are not subject to appeal. If, following the president's explanation of their decision, the senator may withdraw their motion to appeal. This motion is acceptable only immediately after the president has announced their decision. Because of this 'immediacy' the motion to appeal can interrupt another senator who has the floor. If the decision of the president is sustained by the body, it becomes a decision of the senate.

Motion to Suspend Rules

To permit the senate to take action that would otherwise be prevented by a procedural rule. Some rules cannot be suspended. For example, rules deriving from statute or from the charter of the organization or basic rules of parliamentary law (e.g., quorum, notice of action, voting methods). Rules may be suspended only for a specific purpose and for a limited time. Thus, a motion to suspend must specify the object (motion or other action) to which the suspension will apply.

In some instances, the motion before the body has become so confused that nobody is certain how to

proceed. This might occur, for example, when numerous motions to amend a motion are currently before the senate and nobody is certain which motions were offered when. It would be proper for a senator to rise and say words to the effect of: "Madam President, in view of the confusion surrounding this resolution, I move that the rules be suspended to permit the cancellation of this pending motion and all subsequent amendments to allow the resolution to be resubmitted in whatever form the maker wishes." Given the frequency of rewording of resolutions on the floor of the senate, we might find this particular motion useful.

Motion to Consider Informally

To enable the senate to discuss a problem or issue before the proposal of a motion and to allow the organization to set aside the formal rules governing discussion and debate. In the example, a senator may rise and ask the senate to informally consider the wording of a resolution prior to its submission for discussion and debate. In the second case, senators may wish to brainstorm regarding an issue and possible action without making formal motions for the various proposals. In such an instance a senator may rise and simply ask that the senate informally consider possible responses to faculty release time. In both examples, any senator rising and proposing a main motion terminates the informal discussion and the body resumes with the normal rules of debate enforced. (See discussion of this issue on pp. 120-120, and also on p. 222. of *Sturgis*.)

Point of Order

To call to the attention of the senate and the president an error, mistake, violation of rules, and to secure an opinion from the president of the senate. In general, it is the role of the president to point out errors and rule violations to the members of the senate. In the event, however, that the president fails to do so, or does not notice an error/mistake, it is the right of any senator to call attention to the violation by rising to a point of order. In general, points of order must be raised immediately following the violation. This motion cannot be brought up at a subsequent time. Exceptions to this rule would include questions regarding the accuracy of minutes from previous meetings. The president must rule immediately on the point of order. If the president is unsure, they may then refer the question to the senate as a whole.

Parliamentary Inquiry

To enable a senator to ask the president or proposer of a motion a question. As this is a request and not a true motion, no second is required. This motion can interrupt another speaker only if the question requires an immediate answer (see Point of Order). Any member has the right to inquire at any time about procedures directly connected with the pending motion, or with a motion that the member may wish to bring before the assembly immediately, or about the meaning or effect of the pending motions. This motion is always addressed to the president or presiding officer. Interrupting a speaker for a question is not a right, it is a privilege which may be granted by the speaker (not the president). In general, the senate has not followed this particular convention and questions have generally been handled during debate. This does not mean that the senate must continue to do so in the future.

Request to Withdraw a Motion

To enable a member who has proposed a motion to remove it from consideration by the senate. If the maker of a resolution, for example, withdraws it prior to the president restating the resolution to the senate, then no vote is required. If the president has stated the resolution to the senate, however, then a vote must be taken to withdraw the motion. This is because the resolution becomes the property of the senate, and thus, requires the consent of that body to withdraw the motion. If a main motion is withdrawn, all amendments adhering to the motion are withdrawn as well.

Request for Division of Question

To divide a motion that consists of two or more independent parts into individual motions that can

then be considered and voted on separately. Senators making this motion should clearly state which propositions will be divided into separate motions. Any senator may propose an alternative division of motions. These are, in effect, different proposals and should be voted upon in order of submission, with the proposal receiving the highest number of votes being implemented.

Request for Division of Assembly

To verify an indecisive voice or hand vote by requiring the voters to rise and, if necessary, to be counted. Any member may call for division following a vote. The president has the responsibility for correctly announcing the vote and should call for division whenever they have doubt as to the accuracy of the vote.