

# Notes on Parliamentary Procedure

## From Melinda Fredricks, TFRW Parliamentarian



Most of you reading this probably attended the Republican Party state convention in Houston in June. There you saw first hand why it is important to know both Parliamentary procedure and the by-laws (rules) of an organization. Not only is it important to running your own meetings smoothly; it also is important so that you can play an active role at convention.

The best place to watch Robert's Rules in action was in the committees, particularly the Credentials Committee. I talked with one member of that committee who said she wished she had known Parliamentary Procedure better because it was easy to get lost in the debate. I was really glad to see several of our Republican women leaders on that committee, including one of our previous parliamentarians, Daphne Hamilton.

Below, I have asked and answered some questions about Parliamentary Procedure, some of which came up during the convention.

### ***Some of the delegates called out "Point of order" at the microphone. What did that mean?***

The delegate believed that the convention chairman was not following the rules of the assembly. A delegate can call out "point of order" and wait for the chair to acknowledge her. The delegate tells the chair what rule they believe is being broken, and then the chair decides if she agrees. If she agrees, the chair states, "The point of order is well taken," and then she changes her actions accordingly. If the chair disagrees, then she states, "The point of order is not well taken."

### ***What can you do if you disagree with the chair's decision?***

A delegate can motion to appeal the chair's decision by rising and calling out, "I appeal from the decision of the chair," and it must be seconded. This takes the decision away from the chair and gives it to the body to decide. The chair replies, "The question is 'shall the decision of the chair be sustained?'" And then the delegates vote. If the majority agrees with the chair's decision, then business continues. If not, the chair changes her actions accordingly. You might recall that this happened on the convention floor and the delegates voted to sustain the chair's decision.

### ***How can a delegate get removed from a convention?***

Sometimes a delegate can try to use a point of order or other motions to slow down or obstruct the proceedings. These motions are called dilatory motions. When the chair becomes convinced that a delegate is using parliamentary procedure to hinder a meeting, it is the responsibility of the chair to stop it from happening. The chair should either rule the dilatory motions out of order or refuse to acknowledge the delegate who is making them. If the delegate refuses to stop the dilatory motions, he can be removed from the convention.

***Other delegates called out “Point of information.” What did that mean?***

The delegate wanted or needed some information in order to make an informed decision about a pending motion. Sometimes, a delegate will misuse the point of information and begin a speech by cloaking it in a point of information. This is out of order, and the chair can interrupt the speaker.

***I always thought that the chair did not vote. But the chair voted in my caucus. Were they wrong to do this?***

A chairman can vote when the vote is by ballot. Also the chair can vote to make or break a tie vote.



**To Do:**

Following is a Standard Agenda written according to Robert’s Rules. See if you can fill in the blanks. Then refer to Robert’s Rules page 342 to check yourself.

**Robert’s Rules Standard Agenda**

1. Opening \_\_\_\_\_ – Optional (RONR page 349)
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Reports of Officers and \_\_\_\_\_ Committees
4. Reports of \_\_\_\_\_ Committees
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Orders
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Business
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Business
8. \_\_\_\_\_ – Optional (RONR page 351)
9. \_\_\_\_\_ (*can be placed elsewhere in the agenda if that is what the club is accustomed to*)