

Notes on Parliamentary Procedure From TRFW Parliamentarian Melinda Fredricks



As I sit writing this on August 15, 2008, I am thinking of the time you will read it. Things will be different by then. We will know who the two vice-presidential candidates are; we will know if Senator Clinton managed to wrest the Democrat nomination out of Sen. Barak H. Obama's hands; we will know if Georgia has prevailed against Russian Once-a-KGB-Director-Always-a-KGB-Director Putin; the Republican National Convention will be behind us; and we all will be geared up and ready to work

ourselves into exhaustion until November 4 because America's children, grandchildren, and patriot forefathers are counting on us.

Furthermore, all the RW clubs will be preparing to elect next year's officers. In August's newsletter, I wrote about Nominating Committees. This month, I am writing about the actual election of officers.

The quickest way to develop factions in your club is to elect officers unfairly, or at least to be perceived as doing so. Following Robert's Rules and your club's bylaws ensures that elections are done fairly. Moreover, doing things on a fair and even playing field is part of what it means to be a Republican.

Now would be a very good time to refresh yourself on your club's bylaws regarding officer election rules and quorum. A quorum is required to transact any business that comes before a club. If you don't have a quorum at your meeting, then you won't be able to have your officer elections. Also, remember that only full members count toward a quorum, and only full members are allowed to vote. That means the men can't vote(!), nor can any women associate members of your club vote.

Some clubs have passed bylaws requiring membership for a specified length of time before a woman becomes a voting member. If your club is one of these, then keep that in mind when checking for a quorum.

The Nominating Committee's report lists a nominee or nominees for each position. Nominations from the floor must also be called for. Normally, when a member wants to speak to the group, the president must first call them on; however, in the case of nominations, a member simply calls out their nominee's name after the president asks for nominations from the floor, without waiting for permission from the president. And contrary to what many believe, nominations do not require a second. People often want to give a second, as a matter of support for the nominee, but it is not required.

The president has a duty to be fair and impartial, and to conduct the elections with patience and kindness. She should not let her opinion be known from the chair, and she should give ample time for floor nominations to be made.

A sample script for holding the election:

President: “The Nominating Committee will give its report.”

Nominating Committee Chair: “The Nominating Committee submits the following nominations: For President, Sally A; For First Vice-President, Sally B; for Second Vice-President, Sally C;”

President: “For President, Sally A is nominated by the Nominating Committee. Are there any further nominations for President?” (If another person is nominated, then the president says), “Sally P is nominated. Are there any further nominations?”

(When it appears that no more nominations are forthcoming, then ask one more time), “Are there any further nominations? If not, (pause), nominations are closed.”

(Note: a member might try to hurry you along by moving to close nominations. This motion is not in order if sufficient time has not been given for further nominations, and Robert’s Rules discourages it.)

(If there is more than one nominee, elections should be done by ballot. If there is only one nominee, then the election may be done by voice vote, if your club’s bylaws allow it.)

President: (If there’s only one nominee) “Sally A is your new club president!”

(If there’s more than one nominee) “Will the secretary please hand a ballot to each person? And each candidate needs to appoint a teller to observe the counting.” (After the counting is complete, announce who the winner is), “Sally A is next year’s president.”



To do:

In order to assure you are prepared for your club’s officer elections, find out the answers to the following questions from your club’s bylaws:

1. What is your club’s quorum? _____ How many members does that equal exactly (associate members cannot be counted toward a quorum)? _____
2. During what month does your Nominating Committee gives its report? _____
3. During what month is your club’s election held? _____
4. Is the Nominating Committee required to tell ahead of time who its nominees are (that is, “give notice”)? Y or N If so, how many days/weeks notice must be given? _____
5. Does the Nominating Committee have any other responsibilities, such as providing a bio of each nominee to the membership? Y or N If so what are they? _____
6. Are there any requirements for holding an office? Y or N If so, what are they? _____
7. Is prior consent required for someone to be nominated? Y or N
8. If there’s only one candidate, can the election be held by voice vote? Y or N (If there’s more than one candidate, elections must be held by ballot.)
9. Is a plurality (person getting highest number of votes) or a majority (winner must receive greater than 50% of the vote) required to win? Plurality or Majority