



BYLAWS NEWSLETTER

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The Art of Voting

An important part of your bylaws should be the voting procedure you follow. There are several ways to vote.

The usual method of voting is voting on a motion. Members vote by saying “aye” or “nay”, by raising their hands, or by standing. The presiding officer declares the result she sees and announces that the motion has been adopted or has failed. If a member feels strongly that the presiding officer is not correct in her decision, any member (a second is not required) may say “Division” or “I doubt the result of the vote” and the chair must then immediately take a rising vote (the members stand). If the result is still not clear, then the presiding officer on her own may call for a counted vote. If the presiding officer does not call for a counted vote, any member who is in doubt may make a motion (this does require a second) to have a counted vote and the assembly votes on this motion. The handling of motions at a regular meeting does not have to be in the bylaws. It is assumed that the presiding officer/president knows how to handle a motion.

For more important matters, your bylaws should state what method of voting is required, and what kind of vote is needed for the motion to be adopted: a majority, a plurality, 2/3 vote, majority of the entire membership, or something else. Usually for amendments to the bylaws, a 2/3 affirmative vote of those present and voting is required.

A majority vote means more than half of votes cast by those entitled to vote at a regular or properly called meeting.

A plurality vote means whoever, or whatever, gets the most votes wins. However, this can only be used if there are three or more choices.

A two-thirds vote means at least two-thirds of the votes cast by those entitled to vote at a regular or properly called meeting.

There are some cases when a majority of the entire membership or two-thirds of the entire membership is required.

No voting procedure counts blank ballots, or ballots made out in a way that does not pertain to the question at hand. Mickey Mouse cannot run for election!

No voting of any kind can take place if a quorum is not present.

A member has the right to abstain but should not say why she is doing so, nor should she be asked.

There is frequently a question about the presiding officer voting. The answer is based on the theory that a presiding officer/president can influence the vote of others. A president may vote if there is a ballot vote. If there is a roll-call vote, hers can be the final vote. In the case of a regular vote at a meeting, the chair would usually not vote unless it is to make or break a tie. If the vote is 34-34, the president, if she so wishes, can vote and break the tie. If the vote is 34-33, the president can vote in the negative and create a tie, which means that the motion would not be adopted. A tied vote is a lost vote.

The results of all votes should be announced. In the case of elections, there should be a tellers' report and the number of votes each candidate received must be announced.

Before a vote is taken, the presiding officer asks, "Are you ready for the question" or "Is there any further discussion?" This is to make sure that everyone who wants to speak has had the opportunity to do so. Then, she states the question (the motion). If she states the question incorrectly, a member should rise and say, "Point of Order" even if someone is speaking. The chair then asks what her point is, and the member states it. However, if no one raises a point of order and the question is voted on as stated by the presiding officer, the way the officer has stated it becomes the question. For example, after a motion was made to charge \$20.00 for admission into the card party, there was a lengthy discussion. The member voted to amend the motion by striking out "\$20.00" and inserting "22.50". The presiding officer must then take a vote on the motion as amended and by accident says "\$20.00". Unless someone catches it and calls a point of order, the members will vote on "\$20.00" and that will become the cost of admission. Of course, usually the president would be corrected immediately, but that is not always the case.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions on Bylaws.

Sincerely,

Deen

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