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**👁 Freemasons: Information Pack 8a - Lodge Parliamentary Procedures**

2 messages

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Wed, Sep 8, 2021 at 6:41 PM

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## Information Pack 8 part 1 of 3 Lodge Parliamentary Procedures

### Brother Elman,

The following information is a deeper dive into the expected parliamentary procedures that should be used during normal procedures of lodge. This section is long, but important - however we do not expect you to have a perfect working knowledge of the topic. Do not feel any hesitation to present or address your Lodge, stand and wait to be recognized. Remember that your brothers are there to assist and provide council you in your development.

**Definition:** Parliamentary law consists of accepted rules, both written and unwritten, by which organized assemblies govern their deliberations. The term “parliamentary” refers to the British Parliament but is derived from the French word “parlor,” meaning to speak. Parliamentary law, in this instance, refers to proper procedures that control *speaking in a deliberative assembly*.

**Purpose:** The purpose of parliamentary law is to facilitate the smooth functioning of an assembly and to provide a firm basis for resolving questions of procedure that may arise. It is a mechanism designed to maintain decorum, ascertain the will of the majority, protect the rights of the minority, and to assist the assembly toward its goal: the orderly, expeditious and equitable disposition of business.

**Scope:** Legislative bodies, such as the Congress and state legislatures, have developed highly complex parliamentary procedures specific to their particular needs. Many organizations adopt the use of a particular set of parliamentary laws, such as *Roberts’ Rules of Order* or *Sturgis’ Code of Parliamentary Procedure*, and subsequently modify them so that the peculiar needs of the assembly might be more appropriately satisfied. This is particularly true in Indiana Masonic lodges. Because the entire structure, purpose and function of Freemasonry is unlike that of any other organization, we are not bound by the usual customary parliamentary rules of order as exemplified in the texts mentioned above.

The rules of parliamentary procedure governing our Masonic meetings are influenced by our history, customs, traditions, edicts and laws that have evolved over a period of many, many years. Although some of these rules are in the Constitution and the Laws of the Grand Lodge of Indiana, many others are established in the edicts and decisions of Grand

Masters and reports of committees, approved by the Grand Lodge of Indiana. The deliberative authority entrusted to the Worshipful Master of the lodge dictates that we use a very different approach to the process of parliamentary procedure. Commonly accepted versions of parliamentary law are not consonant with basic Masonic principles and are therefore inappropriate for use in Masonic lodges.

### **MASONIC PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE VS. TRADITIONAL APPLICATIONS:**

The fundamental difference in Masonic parliamentary procedure and that of traditional versions employed by other deliberative assemblies, stems from the powers entrusted to the Worshipful Master and his role in the lodge. The parliamentary focal point in the Masonic Blue Lodge is the East. The Worshipful Master, unlike the presiding officer of any other deliberative assembly, is vested with virtually limitless parliamentary power. He is charged with the paramount duty of preserving order and decorum in the lodge room and may take just about whatever steps he deems necessary to fulfill this duty.

The Worshipful Master has the right, and indeed the responsibility, to preside. However, at his pleasure he may request and permit another Brother to do so, provided that the Brother is a current Warden or a Past Master of the Worshipful Master's lodge. The Worshipful Master may resume the gavel whenever he so desires.

When the Worshipful Master drops the gavel, he takes charge of his lodge, demanding silence in the room and requiring every Brother to be properly clothed and seated. Any Brother who disobeys the gavel may be reprimanded by the Worshipful Master and/or may be ordered from the lodge room.

The following are some of the powers of deliberation afforded the Worshipful Master that are not shared by moderators of other deliberative assemblies.

1. He may propose any motion.
2. He may second any motion (except an incidental motion).
3. He may initiate, participate in and terminate debate.
4. He may vote on any question.
5. He may open and close a meeting (subject to Grand Lodge Law and the bylaws of his lodge) and call the lodge from labor to refreshment and from refreshment to labor at his will and pleasure.
6. He may reject any motion that he deems to be in violation of Grand Lodge Constitution and Laws, in violation of the lodge bylaws, in conflict with the landmarks and customs of Freemasonry, or in danger of jeopardizing the peace and harmony of the lodge itself.
7. He may require every member of his lodge present to vote upon any pending question.
8. He may seek the council of any member of the lodge before ruling on any decision.
9. He may rap the gavel and order any member to cease speaking if he feels the discussion becomes acrimonious and threatens the peace and harmony of the lodge.
10. He may limit discussion on any matter and call for an immediate vote.
11. He may postpone indefinitely any matter of business (subject to Grand Lodge Law, i.e. petitions for membership, etc.).
12. He may reject a motion to table or a motion to postpone temporarily if he feels the intent is to kill the motion.
13. He may require a secret ballot if he feels confidentiality is a concern.
14. He decides and rules on all points of order without appeal from his decision, except to the Grand Master and/or the Grand Lodge.

The Worshipful Master is not empowered with a casting vote (a second vote in the event of a tie), however, he may cast his vote and break the tie, provided he did not vote initially. If the Worshipful Master did vote initially and the result was a tie, the motion fails.

The Worshipful Master may not second an incidental motion (a motion to withdraw or divide). A motion to withdraw is a formal motion that must be made by the maker of the original motion to which it pertains. Obviously, this motion is used when the proposer of a motion changes his mind *after the motion has been restated by the Worshipful Master* ("stating" a motion will be explained later). A motion to divide splits a complicated motion into two or more simpler motions, thereby increasing clarity.

The Worshipful Master is indeed vested with supreme authority. Fortunately, Masons hold this office in such high esteem that most Worshipful Masters need exercise only a minimum of authority in conducting the business of the lodge. In addition, Worshipful Masters themselves appreciate the honor and significance of the office and generally evidence a sincere desire to preside justly, fairly, impartially and courteously.

To Be Continued...

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