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# Information Pack 8 part 1 of 3

## Lodge Parliamentary Procedures



The following information is a deeper dive into the expected parliamentary procedures that should be used during normal procedures of the 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 counsel to you in your development.

**Definition:** Parliamentary law consists of accepted rules, both written and unwritten, by which organized assemblies govern their deliberations. The term

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**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 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 are 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 between 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

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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 is 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 the 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 counsel 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.

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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 to 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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