

How the Southern Wisconsin Area 75 Assembly Operates

Summary of Assembly Procedures

Generally speaking, we follow Robert's Rules of Order, and proceed on as informal a basis as possible consistent with the rights of all concerned. However, over the years the Assembly will adopt some exceptions to Robert's Rules, which will help it proceed more closely with the Traditions. It is important to remember that the purpose of rules of order is to make it easier for the Assembly to conduct its business; rules exist to allow the Assembly to do what it needs to do to carry out the will of the Area by reaching an informed group conscience.

Assembly Quorum

A quorum shall be a majority of the number of voting members at the time the vote is taken.

General Rules of Debate (Agreed to at the beginning of each Assembly)

1. People who wish to speak line up at the microphones and are call on in order.
2. Each Person may speak for two (2) minutes.
3. No one may speak for a second time on a topic until all who wish to have spoken for the first time.
4. Voting is by show of hands, for or against the motion.

Substantial Unanimity Majority Vote

In order to become an Assembly Action, a proposal must be approved by substantial unanimity — defined as a two-thirds majority of the vote. Once an assembly action has been adopted a substantial unanimity will be required to change or rescind the assembly action.

Because the number of members present in the hall during the Area Assembly varies from time to time, the phrase "majority vote" is taken to mean the majority of the voting members present.

After the establishment or rejection of any matter of policy by a majority vote, the minority will always be given the opportunity to speak to the opposition.

It requires a majority vote of the Assembly to depart in any significant way from the agenda during the Assembly.

Calling the Question

Calling the question brings debate to a halt while Assembly members decide whether to proceed directly to a vote (the question) or go on with the debate. A motion to call the question:

1. must be made in order at the microphone;
2. requires a second;
3. is not debatable; and,
4. requires a majority vote.

If the question is passed, debate ceases, and the Assembly members proceed immediately to vote on the issue before them. If the question is not passed, debate on the main issue resumes.

Reconsideration

A request to reconsider after the vote must be made by someone who voted with the majority and, after hearing minority opinions, wishes to change his or her vote.

1. Only a simple majority is required
2. No action may be reconsidered twice
3. If the majority votes to reconsider, full debate, pro and con, is resumed. (Assembly members are limited to discussion of new considerations of the question under debate.)

Tabling A Motion

Tabling a motion (postponing discussion to a future time):

1. requires a motion and a second;
2. is not debatable; and,
3. needs only a simple majority to pass.

Tips, Hints, and Word of Caution

Full discussion of a recommendation should take place before the vote. Premature actions (e.g., amending motions early in discussion or hastily calling the question) can divert attention from the subject at hand, thus confusing and/or delaying Assembly business.

Everyone is entitled to, and should, express his or her opinion. However, if your perspective has already been stated by someone else, it is not necessary to go to the microphone and say it again.

Remember, too, that saving “minority opinions” for after the vote, when there is no rebuttal, is another time-waster, for it can force the Assembly body to reconsider a question that might well have been decided the first time around if it had been thoroughly examined for all sides.