

**the ONLY CURRENT AUTHORIZED EDITION of the
CLASSIC WORK on PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE**

ROBERT'S RULES OF ORDER NEWLY REVISED

11TH EDITION



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of those voting wish to close debate immediately, they can do 1
so by adopting the motion for the *Previous Question* (16). If
a series of adhering debatable questions (p. 118) is pending,
either of these motions can also be applied to the entire series 5
or any consecutive part of the series beginning with the
immediately pending question. (For forms, see pp. 196–97,
207–9, 639–40.) If it is desired to prevent any discussion
of a subject—even by the introducer of the motion, who has
the right to the floor first—the only way this can be done is
to raise an *Objection to the Consideration of the Question* (26) 10
before debate begins or any subsidiary motion (other than a
motion to *Lay on the Table*) is stated. If the objection is sus-
tained by a two-thirds vote, the question cannot be consid-
ered in any way at that time or during that session.

On the other hand, if, in considering a particular ques- 15
tion, it is desired to retain the usual limit on the length of
speeches but remove restrictions on the total number of times
members can speak, the assembly by a majority vote can re-
solve itself into a committee of the whole or into quasi com-
mittee of the whole, or it can consider the question informally 20
(see p. 529, l. 30 to p. 530, l. 5). Speeches made under these
procedures do not count against a member's right to debate
the same question if it is further considered by the assembly
on the same day under the regular rules. If the question under
consideration is composed of a number of sections or para- 25
graphs—as in the case of bylaws, for example—the total num-
ber of speeches allowed each member can be greatly
increased, but not made unlimited, by considering the docu-
ment *seriatim* (28), in which case each member can speak
twice on each paragraph, section, or unit that is taken up as a 30
separate part.

Decorum in Debate

The following practices and customs observed by speakers 35
and other members in an assembly assist the carrying on of

1 debate in a smooth and orderly manner. The paragraphs under the head *Pattern of Formality* on pages 22–25 should be read in connection with this subject.

5 **CONFINING REMARKS TO THE MERITS OF THE PENDING QUESTION.** In debate a member's remarks must be germane to the question before the assembly—that is, his statements must have bearing on whether the immediately pending motion should be adopted (see also *Principles*
10 *Governing the Debatability of Motions*, pp. 396–99).

REFRAINING FROM ATTACKING A MEMBER'S MOTIVES. When a question is pending, a member can condemn the nature or likely consequences of the proposed
15 measure in strong terms, but he must avoid personalities, and under no circumstances can he attack or question the motives of another member. The measure, not the member, is the subject of debate. If a member disagrees with a statement by another in regard to an event that both witnessed, he cannot
20 state in debate that the other's statement "is false." But he might say, "I believe there is strong evidence that the member is mistaken." The moment the chair hears such words as "fraud," "liar," or "lie" used about a member in debate, he must act immediately and decisively to correct the matter and
25 prevent its repetition (see 61).

ADDRESSING ALL REMARKS THROUGH THE CHAIR. Members of an assembly cannot address one another directly, but must address all remarks through the chair.
30 If, while a member is speaking in debate, another member wishes to address a question to him—which the person speaking can permit or not as he chooses, but which is taken out of his time if he does—the member desiring to ask the question should rise and address the chair, proceeding as explained
35 under *Request for Information* (pp. 294–95).

AVOIDING THE USE OF MEMBERS' NAMES. As much as possible, the use of names of members should be avoided in debate. It is better to describe a member in some other way, as by saying, "the member who spoke last," or, "the delegate from Mason County." The officers of the society should always be referred to by their official titles. There is no need, however, to refer to oneself in debate in the third person as by the use of such expressions as "this member." A member's debate is expected and intended to be partial, and the first person is quite acceptable.

REFRAINING FROM SPEAKING ADVERSELY ON A PRIOR ACTION NOT PENDING. In debate, a member cannot reflect adversely on any prior act of the society that is not then pending, unless a motion to reconsider, rescind, or amend it is pending, or unless he intends to conclude his remarks by making or giving notice of one of these motions.

REFRAINING FROM SPEAKING AGAINST ONE'S OWN MOTION. In debate, the maker of a motion, while he can vote against it, is not allowed to speak against his own motion. He need not speak at all, but if he does he is obliged to take a favorable position. If he changes his mind while the motion he made is pending, he can, in effect, advise the assembly of this by asking permission to withdraw the motion (pp. 295-97).

READING FROM REPORTS, QUOTATIONS, ETC., ONLY WITHOUT OBJECTION OR WITH PERMISSION. If any member objects, a member has no right to read from—or to have the secretary read from—any paper or book as part of his speech, without permission of the assembly. Members are usually permitted to read short, pertinent, printed extracts in debate, however, so long as they do not abuse the privilege (see also pp. 298-99).