

RULES OF ORDER

As adapted for Marijuana Anonymous

The MAWS Conference and many MA groups utilize a modified version of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised to conduct business in an orderly way that's fair to all meeting members.

A quorum must be present for a group to conduct business and to vote. A quorum is the assembly of at least two-thirds of the members eligible to vote at that particular meeting.

A Chairperson presides over the meeting. A member who wishes to address the assembly gets the attention of the Chair by raising a hand, and waits until called upon. This is done in silence with two notable exceptions: "Point of Order" and "Point of Information" (see below).

MOTIONS are formal proposals for action. A motion must be offered by a voting member or recognized committee. It must be seconded, that is, endorsed for discussion by another member who calls out "second!" If there is no second, the motion is not put before the group for debate (discussion) or decision. Motions that have been moved, seconded and repeated by the Chair are no longer the property of the mover, but of the assembly. Therefore, the original maker no longer has the sole right to withdraw or change the motion. There may be only one main motion active, or "on the floor" at a time.

AMENDMENTS modify the wording, and often the meaning, of the main motion. Amendments made and seconded are debated and voted upon (or accepted by unanimous consent) by the assembly before the vote for the main motion occurs. Amendments should say exactly where in the main motion the change is to be made, and precisely what words to use. The assembly must adopt any amendment either by a vote or by unanimous consent in order to attach it to the main motion. This is true regardless of whether an amendment's proposer calls it "friendly," or whether the maker of the original motion endorses it.

PREVIOUS QUESTION. When recognized by the Chair, a member may offer a motion to close debate on the pending motion(s). The proper wording is "I move the Previous Question." A motion for Previous Question must be seconded, is not debatable, and may be adopted by an immediate vote or by unanimous consent.

POSTPONEMENT OF MOTIONS. There are three methods of postponing pending motions. These are subsidiary motions that require proper recognition by the Chair, and must be seconded. A motion to Postpone to a Certain Time is debatable, and temporarily sets the motion aside until the designated time. A motion to Postpone Indefinitely is debatable and, in effect, "kills" the motion. A motion to Lay on the Table is not debatable, and sets the motion aside in order to take up something else of immediate urgency. The original motion remains set aside until a member moves to bring it back up.

A member may at any point get the Chair's attention by calling out:

"POINT OF ORDER" – Used to call the attention of the Chair to a violation of the Rules. The Chair rules on the point of order, briefly giving reasons. No second is necessary and no vote is taken.

"POINT OF INFORMATION" – Used to ask a question relevant to the business before the body, but not related to parliamentary procedure. It is not used to give information; instead, one must wait to be recognized and make the informative point as part of debate.

VOTING:

UNANIMOUS CONSENT. If it appears to the Chair that a motion or amendment is uncontroversial, it is proper for the Chair to ask if there is “any objection” to adopting the motion or amendment. If no objection is made, the Chair may declare the motion or amendment adopted.

If even one member objects, however, the motion or amendment is subject to debate and vote.

VOTES. Each member who votes casts a vote of “yes” or “no.” A “yes” vote of at least two-thirds of the assembled quorum is required for a motion or amendment to pass.

A member who “abstains” is choosing not to cast a vote. However, members must be aware that in the system of vote counting defined by MAWS’ governing documents, in which the outcome is based upon a specific number of “yes” votes, if you are in the room while the vote is being taken, and you abstain, your vote is equivalent to voting “no.”