

Meeting Management *for Beginners*



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voice

Minnesota State College
Student Association

by Jason Fossum



FORMER MSCSA
DIRECTOR
OF GOVERNMENT
RELATIONS

Preface

I remember walking through the somewhat cluttered hallways of that student union, not noticing much, except perhaps the occasional passerby. I made my way through to the cafeteria of the union, and as I sat at one of the squared tables that was placed near the walkway, I noticed a glass office that had in huge dark blue letters the words STUDENT SENATE plastered across the length of the glass.

I stared for a moment into that office and thought back to my high school days and assumed that this must be the college version of student council. I was certain this would be the place where important decisions such as the cost of a bottle of pop in the machine, the color of the student senate shirt, and the catchy phrase and logo that would be this year's attempt at getting students to care about what was going on around them.

It wasn't until much later in my college experience that I would learn what really happened in that office, and more importantly, within the institution of student government on campuses. From that day, my freshmen year in school, until the night during my third year when I was encouraged to join the senate by a friend and classmate in a Political Theory class, I was certain that I knew all I needed to know about what happened on my college campus.

I attended my first student senate meeting with very low expectations, similar to the one time I participated in a student council meeting in high school. When I walked into the room, I fully expected to see a tornado of disorganization that would have certainly lead to a 45 minute business meeting taking over 2 hours to complete.

I had shown up to run for an open spot on the senate, which they filled by "internal elections," or a vote by the senate from interested candidates. As the meeting started, the President very professionally ran the meeting and business items were, one-by-one, picked off of the printed agenda that had been distributed prior to the gavel dropping. After what seemed like a millisecond, they reached the election item on the agenda, and each of the candidates was given a minute to introduce themselves, a few hardball questions that would make even the most hardened radio talk show host blush, and one minute to offer a closing statement. After answering those questions and telling a room full of people about this small town kid from rural Minnesota, I walked out of the room and waited with the five other candidates for the one open spot.

As I sat in that adjacent room waiting for the results of the balloting, it became clear to me that the group I just campaigned in front of was far from a student council. The meeting ran like clock-work, there was little bickering and “dead horse beating” over issues that do not matter in the grand scheme of things, it was plain and simple; a professional business meeting that accomplished the predetermined goals for the senate.

Had the chair of that meeting allowed it to spiral out of control it would have certainly only served to further my skeptical view of the organization. Had the members of the senate not acted in a focused businesslike manner for most of the meeting, I would have probably walked out of the room before standing for election. Fortunately, I was able to see the power of a well run, professional organization that functioned at a high level and accomplished its business while still seemingly being able to enjoy themselves.

Much to my surprise, I won the election that day and went on to serve in several positions on that senate, including as President. Certainly, I didn't always run a highly effective meeting, but I always attempted to follow the rules that guided our senate and our meetings.

After all, the rules were designed to protect the rights of all members of a group, whether your opinion is that of the majority or the minority. Perhaps, even if your opinion isn't shared by another person, you still have the right to be heard. The rules are blind to personalities and differences of opinions. The rules are to be used to maintain order, facilitate healthy debate, and allow for resolutions of the issues before the body.

This manual will explore several aspects of running an effective meeting, as well as managing your student organization. The following areas will be discussed in the pages of this book:

- How a meeting can affect your organizations reputation.
- Preparing for a meeting and setting the process for how you will conduct business.
- How a meeting should run, including sample meeting dialogue and the nuts and bolts of keeping order.
- Parliamentary Procedure and how the rules should be used in your meeting. Further, how “parli-pro” relates to the working documents of your group.

- A discussion of how you can have a focused mission and goals for your organization.
- How to keep from “beating dead horses.”

Ideally, this manual will act as a guide to help new leaders or those who just want to brush up on the basics of being a part of a well run organization. Nothing adds to the prestige and ability of a group to influence people more than its ability to manage itself. If your group appears unorganized internally, you appear especially incompetent to those on the outside. Hopefully, this manual will help prevent some of the problems that can surface when your meetings get out of control.

Chapter 1: *Institutional Integrity*

Psst...the horse is already dead so stop beating it!

To maximize the effectiveness of any organization, it is crucial to always show your constituents your best, regardless of the activity in which you are engaged. However, there is no better way for your group to show your professionalism than when you are holding a business meeting.

The integrity of your student organization goes well beyond simply how your meetings run when conducting business. Often times, what business you conduct, as well as the result of your business are just as important.

The institutional integrity, or in other words, the respect level for your group among your constituency is crucial to the success you hope to achieve. If people attend your meetings and witness disorderly discussion, constant arguments regarding procedure, debate around petty or insignificant issues and several unresolved or poorly resolved issues, this will cause a severe decline in the integrity of your organization.

In order to avoid many of the pitfalls that cause major erosion of institutional integrity it is important to remember a few key things as you plan your meetings:

- Your agenda should be limited to those items that require action or discussion by the larger group. When deciding what issues need full consideration by the large group, or perhaps even more relevant, at that very point in time, you should ask yourself: Can the issue be best handled by a

subcommittee or working group to allow for more research and perhaps a recommendation? Does this issue need to be debated or discussed now, or is it best left for a future meeting? Is this an issue that helps advance the mission of the organization?

- If a member of your group requests inclusion of an item on the agenda, discuss with them whether this is an appropriate action item for the larger group. Pose the same questions to them that you have already answered regarding the items you have deemed worthy.
- Be conscientious of the time and remember any limitations you may face when planning your agenda (i.e. room reservation time, etc).

Using these guides when planning your meeting will help you stay focused on the issues that matter and will save you from some of the pitfalls that often derail organizations.

Sometimes it is not possible to prevent items from being added to the agenda that might cause controversy or add time to your meeting. It is the right of every member of your group to add an issue for consideration. Later in this manual, we will discuss ways to help you deal with these matters in a timely manner.

Even if you have the most tightly run and well planned meeting, it is still possible for your organization to suffer hits to your integrity if you leave issues unresolved or reach a conclusion that leaves your group struggling to carry out its mission.

As the chair or presiding officer, it is not your job to control the outcome of a vote anymore than any other member. However, it is your duty to control the debate and steer the body toward a workable solution whenever possible. This is most often accomplished through an appropriate use of the rules that allows everyone to have their say, but not necessarily their way.

As a debate on an issue moves along there are ways under parliamentary procedure for the presiding officer to control discussion and move the meeting along. Under Robert's Rules, the chair of a meeting must recognize anyone and "give them the floor" before they can enter into debate or make a motion (there are motions where the maker does not need the floor, but as a general rule they do). In general the chair will recognize those who wish to speak by name or proper title depending on the size and venue for a meeting. No person is entitled to speak twice in one day on the same issue as long as any other person who has not already spoken desires to have the floor. Further, when the chair knows that those wishing to speak have opposing views on the issue, they must "let the floor alternate" between those favoring and those opposing as long as the discussion is in order.¹

1 *Robert's Rules of Order (10th Edition.), p. 29 lines 33-35 and p. 30, lines 1-16*

Remembering and enforcing these rules will help you guide the discussion and keep meetings running in an efficient manner. It is not always necessary to strictly enforce the rules, but adherence to them during most meetings will allow all members to have clear expectations when issues get heated.

Running an effective meeting will help your organization maintain the utmost integrity and your constituents will realize they are well represented.

Chapter 2: *Meeting Planning*:

Set up your agenda

Once you have decided what issues belong on the agenda for your meeting you will need to put your agenda on paper so that it can be posted publicly prior to your meeting (if possible or as guided by your organization's by-laws or constitution) and printed and distributed at the business meeting. Your printed agenda should act as the guide for your business and when set up correctly will be easy for anyone to follow.

The basic meeting agenda will follow a general outline and will contain categories that will remain the same from meeting to meeting. Your agenda should contain a section for:

- **Roll Call:** Needed to establish quorum (or the number of members needed to conduct business). This will usually require a designated officer of the group to call the roll of members present.
- **Approval of the Agenda:** This is done so that members of the group can have the opportunity to add items that they would like to see considered during the meeting.
- **Approval of the Minutes:** This allows any member of the group to correct the record of a previous meeting should it be necessary. A broader discussion of minutes will occur later.
- **Reports from Committees or Officers:** Reports are a good way for members to update the body on what they have been doing and more importantly, how the actions taken by the group have been implemented.
- **Unfinished or Old Business:** These categories are often used interchangeably and while there is a difference between the two, both allow an item to be brought back before the assembly or committee.

- **New Business:** This section is necessary to handle any item that has not come under consideration of the assembly before but requires action in order to carry out the mission or goals of the association.
- **Adjournment:** Signifies the end of the meeting and requires a motion from the body to close business.

These mandatory categories play an important role in allowing your organization to function with consistency and focus that will allow those who attend your meeting on a regular basis to have some idea of what to expect.

Beyond those business sections that must appear on your agenda, there are optional categories that can be used on your agenda to achieve specific purposes. Some of these may include:

- **Comments for the Good of the Order:** This is most often used to allow members of your group to bring to attention something important to the business of the organization or committee. Comments for the Good of the Order should not be used for general announcements unless otherwise specified by the chair of the meeting.
- **Announcements:** Can be placed on the agenda to allow for general comments from any member about just about any topic that is appropriate for a business meeting. Many times, action under this section can help group members share information about related events or perhaps business for the remainder of a conference or other gathering.

Once you have decided on the business categories that will compose your agenda, the next step would be to place each of your action items under the appropriate category. Once you have completed this task, you will have your agenda set. This will make your meeting run smoothly. A sample agenda may look like this:

**Minnesota State College Student Association
Governing Council Meeting
June 24th 2008**

- I. Call to Order
- II. Roll Call
- III. Approval of the Agenda
- IV. Approval of the Minutes
- V. Reports
 1. President's Report
 2. Vice President's Report
 3. Treasurer's Report
 4. Committee Reports

VI. Old Business/Unfinished Business

1. Voting Structure

VII. New Business

1. Approval of the Calendar

VII. Comments for the Good of the Order

IX. Announcements

X. Adjournment

As you can see, this sample agenda is simple, straightforward, and allows you to run an efficient meeting while letting anyone who wants to follow along as you move through your business. It is not necessary that your agenda look like this. In fact Robert's Rules of Order, the 10th Edition, lays out specific categories and explanations for each that must be used if RROO are the governing rules of your group or committee.²

Now that you have finalized your agenda, you are ready for your meeting. A good, easy to follow agenda is the first step toward running an effective meeting. However, the agenda only sets the stage for the bigger show, the business meeting.

Chapter 3: *Meeting Protocol and Handling an Action Item*

The Mechanics of your meeting

As the chair of the meeting, your responsibility during the meeting is to facilitate the movement of business and to keep the meeting moving in a productive manner. As was discussed earlier, it is not the chair's role to "control the outcome of the action," but instead to control the meeting and steer business to a conclusion.

At the start of every meeting, you must "call the meeting to order." This signifies the start of the meeting and allows the person in charge of taking minutes to note the start time as well as allows all those in the room to know that business is under way.

Once the meeting is called to order, it is appropriate to "call the roll." Roll call is simply identifying the members of your group that are present at the meeting and is necessary to establish "quorum." According to Robert's Rules of Order the 10th

2 *Robert's Rules of Order (10th Edition), p. 342*

Edition, quorum is “the number of voting members who must be present in order that business can be legally transacted.”³ Normally, quorum will be determined by your organizations by-laws. In a case when your operating documents do not specify, quorum is typically a majority of the total membership.

Once the roll has been called and it is determined that a quorum is present, it is permissible to continue with your agenda. As you can see from the sample agenda, typically you will move to approval of the agenda. In this case, as the chair, you would inquire with the body as to whether there are necessary changes or additions to the agenda as proposed. If there are none, this would be the point where you would “entertain” a motion to approve the agenda. To entertain a motion is to essentially ask someone to make a motion. Once a motion has been made and seconded, the agenda can be approved by a vote of the group.

This same process can be used when dealing with the minutes from a previous meeting. This particular time is when members can correct the record of previous meetings. Most often, changes to the minutes will be technical in nature or perhaps a change in attendance records. There may be a few cases where a member of the group takes issue with the characterization of something in the minutes, but these issues are rare.

Once you have passed the initial stages of the meeting, you will head into the “meat and potato” issues of your meeting. These action items will require you as the chair to manage the discussion on each topic. As was discussed earlier, every member of the group has a right to state their opinion on a given issue as long as they stay within the rules laid out by your parliamentary guide (most likely Robert’s Rules of Order).

In most cases, action items on your agenda will require some sort of action by the body. Almost exclusively, this action will be some sort of “motion.” A motion is simply a way for members of the group to bring a proposal or action before the body for discussion. In order to properly bring a motion before the body, a voting member must “move” something. For example, if you are discussing whether your campus should grant an exclusive vending contract to Schank and Klander Vending (a facetious company for this example) the appropriate motion would be:

- Madam Chair, I move that student senate support the exclusive rights vending proposal for Schank and Klander Vending.

This simple step will make all the difference in how your meetings will run. Too often, business meetings will begin to run exasperatingly long because action items are considered without a motion or a possible solution being offered. As the chair, you can bring recommended motions that will spur discussion or you can “entertain a motion” from the floor (i.e. allow members of the group to make a motion to get debate started).

Now that you have this motion before you, debate or discussion should center on whether or not the Senate should support the contract for Schank and Klander Vending. As the chair, you need to monitor to ensure that the following “traps” do not grab your meeting:

- **Personal attacks:** Debates can get emotional and heated. Discussion or debate should never get personal. Anyone who makes a personal attack should be ruled out of order immediately. As the chair, you have the right to deem discussion out of order if you feel it is getting personal.
- **Washington Style Filibuster (or beating the dead horse again):** Many times, meetings are held up by the continued debate from a small number of people or even a single member of your group. It is often best to run your meetings as informally as possible, however, as chair, if you feel the group is “spinning its wheels” and that a few people are continuing to own the debate, you may encourage the group to move to a vote. Consult your parliamentary rules for more options to move debate along.
- **Runaway horses:** The most common “trap” that will often slow down meetings is discussion that drifts far from the motion before the body. In short, debate must be on the subject of the motion and not on peripheral portions of the topic. As the chair, it will be easy for you to spot a “runaway horse.” At that point, you have the right to gavel that person out of order or simply remind the group to stick to the motion.

Once discussion on a given motion is complete, you will simply move to a vote on the motion. As the chair, when you sense that discussion is ending or when no new ideas are being brought forward, you will move to a vote, which may go something like:

- “Seeing no more discussion on the motion, we will proceed to a vote, once again the motion reads, ‘I move that student senate support the exclusive rights vending proposal for Schank and Klander Vending.’ All those in favor of the motion say AYE, all those opposed say NAY, any abstentions.”

As the chair of the meeting it is your responsibility to do three things on each vote:

- **Reread the Motion:** It is crucial that every member of the group knows and understands what they are voting on. Before a vote can be taken, you as the chair must reread the motion and ask if everyone understands what is before them. Once everyone is clear it is permissible to move on to the vote.
- **Clarify the vote:** If the motion is confusing or complicated, it is best to explain what a “yes” vote or a “no” vote means. Often this is self explanatory, but if you have doubts simply clarify it before hand. This is specifically important on complicated procedural votes.
- **Determine the outcome:** On voice votes, the chair of the meeting must determine which side has the most votes based on the rules for that vote. On most action item motions, a simple majority is required. In that case, you will be forced to determine if the motion received enough AYE (yes) votes to receive one more than half of the voting members (if you have ten people voting, a motion must receive 6 votes to pass). If a vote ends in a tie, and your group does not allow for a tiebreaking vote, a motion is considered to have failed.

Should the motion before the group pass, you can simply move on to the next agenda item. If the motion fails, the next step is to either craft another motion for the group to consider as an alternative, or use some other parliamentary motion to dispose of the item.

In the example above, a motion is brought to the floor, discussion is held and a vote determines the result of the motion. While some of the work you do may be this simple and straightforward, it is likely there will be a desire among your group to modify the motion in some way. This can be done through an amendment process. This process can be both simple and complicated at the same time and when mismanaged can lead to a disaster in your meeting.

There are a few rules that must be enforced when dealing with amendments your main motion. First, there are generally two types of amendments that will most often be used in your business meetings:

- **Deletion:** This is simply a way for a member to remove a single word or multiple words from the main motion. When words are deleted from the amendment it is important to ensure that the removal of words does not drastically change the intent of the main motion as well as does not violate the grammatical integrity of the amendment itself (I.e. once the word or words are removed the amendment still makes sense).
- **Substitution:** This amendment type simply allows members to take out and insert words in the place of what was originally proposed.

As you work through your business and amendments are made to your proposals, it is important to remember that there cannot be more than three steps of business on one given motion. In other words, you can have a main motion on the floor, an amendment offered to change that motion, and an amendment to the amendment, but no more changes can be proposed until the amendment to the amendment is acted on.

In real terms, if a motion is made at your meeting that reads “Mister Chair, I move that pizza should be served at every meeting,” an amendment could be offered that would add the word “pepperoni” into the main motion. After discussion, an amendment to the amendment could be offered to add the words “and at least one cheese” to the motion. Once this point is reached, discussion should switch to whether there should be one cheese pizza and that question must be resolved before going on, and no more changes can be proposed until it is properly disposed of in some fashion.

Following this simple, yet organized approach will lend itself to efficient meetings and business being handled in a way that anyone can understand.

Chapter 4: *Motion Types and Precedence of Motions*

What’s with all the commotions?

There are numerous types of motions beyond the simple main motion we have discussed thus far in the previous chapters. Robert’s Rules of Order were designed to give participants in a meeting several tools to conduct business, maintain order, and protect the rights of every member of the group.

To that end, the four major categories of motions are:

- Subsidiary
- Privileged
- Incidental
- Motions that bring a question before the body

Subsidiary motions seek to help the group dispose of or act on main motions in an orderly and effective way. The most common subsidiary motion is the amendment. As was

discussed earlier, this allows members to modify a main motion. Other commonly used motions that fall under this category include:

- Commit or refer
- Postpone
- Lay on the Table
- Previous Question

A Privileged motion are motions that do not deal directly with the main motion or the business that might be on the floor, but instead deal with other matters that may be more important or pressing than what is currently being discussed. In most cases these motions are used to bring business back on track, make an urgent point, or end the meeting altogether. Some of the most common Privileged motions are:

- Adjourn
- Recess
- Raise a question of privilege

Incidental motions under Robert's Rules of Order related to the main motion, although in many different and unique ways. The appropriate use of an incidental motion will depend on the specifics of every situation. Some of the most common Incidental motions are:

- Appeal the ruling of the chair
- Point of Order
- Objection to the Consideration of a motion
- Division

The final group of motions are ones known as, "motions that bring a question before the body." The purpose of this category of motions is pretty evident from the name. The most common types are:

- Take from the table
- Rescind
- Reconsider

Now that we have a general understanding of these different motions, it is crucial to your success that you understand the basics of motion precedence for your meetings. There are different motions that are allowed at different times and having an understanding of this rank order will allow your business to flow smoothly. Robert's Rules of Order the 10th edition displays a chart that ranks all of the motions in their proper order. In order to help set the table for further expansion of this topic on your own, below is a simplified chart that will assist you when the larger version of Robert's Rules is not available to you.

PURPOSE:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT?	2ND?	DEBATE?	AMEND?	VOTE?
Close Meeting	I move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Take Break	I move to recess for...	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
Register complaint	I rise to a question of privilege	Yes	No	No	No	None
Make follow agenda	I call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
Lay aside Temporarily	I move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Close Debate	I move to the previous question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Limit or extend Debate	I move that the debate be limited to...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
Postpone to a certain time	I move to postpone the motion to...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Refer to a committee	I move to refer the motion to...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Modify wording of a motion	I move to amend the motion by...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Kill main motion	I move that the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
Bring Business before assembly (a main motion)	I move that [or "to"]	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

Chapter 5: *What You Need to Know*

Pre-Meeting Preparation is a Crucial Step to Running an Effective Meeting

The importance of process in your business meeting is almost impossible to quantify, but knowing the proper process is only half the battle. One of the most common mistakes made by organizations is a broken flow of communication between its top level leadership, committee members, and its constituencies in general. In order to best represent those who elected you and the members of your committee or senate, it is imperative that meeting day not be the first time your group members have seen the agenda or heard of the issues that will be discussed.

There are several easy ways for you as the leadership in your senate to disseminate information to your general membership. Each of these have advantages and limitations, but each will help you close a broken line of communication to your membership.

First and foremost, it is imperative that your core leadership (Executive Committee or otherwise) meet before each meeting to discuss and create your meeting agenda. Having your leadership group on the same page will help eliminate unnecessary conflict, guide and develop discussion at the meeting, as well as brainstorm possible solutions to the problems you are trying to address.

Once your leadership team has met and come to an understanding regarding the action items on your agenda, it is crucial that the agenda be distributed to your membership as a whole. Simply posting your agenda on a bulletin board or even a website is not enough to fully engage your constituents who may not have time to seek out that information. To better reach your constituents as a whole, you may want to try the some of the following ideas:

- **Outreach to other clubs:** Student clubs tend to be a great place to turn when looking to connect with your constituency (students). Make it a goal for each of your senators or committee members to visit one student club per week to give them an update on what is going on and what important work is to be done in the near future.
- **Campus-wide emails before “big meetings:”** You do not want to become the biggest source of annoying spam emails for your students, but strategically timed mass emails during a time when big discussion will happen can increase awareness. The best example would be around the time when tuition is being discussed on campus. This is an issue impor-

tant to almost all students and could cause a great number to show up and add to your discussion. On most campuses, student-wide emails can be arranged through discussions with administration on your campus.

- **High Traffic Advertisements:** A classic example of this approach is to place fliers on all of the tables in your student center or cafeteria. People are forced to look at something if they are lying on a table that they want to use. These fliers should be simple and make clear that something important is happening and that people should pay attention.
- **Tabling:** Setting up a table during high traffic times can be a great way to show your constituents that you want to hear from them and that their ideas and feedback are important. This also gives your senate a chance to advertise its accomplishments and its upcoming meetings and business.

While none of these ideas are guaranteed to increase the number of people coming to your meetings or getting involved in your issues, each of these will increase the institutional integrity of your group. The more you are seen by your constituents, the more they will know about what you do and who you are. This can only serve to better allow you to represent their interests.

Chapter 6: *Conclusion*

Running an effective business meeting can be simple, or it can be complicated. It can be casual, or it can be very formal. The level of detail and rule enforcement will often depend on the type of group you are working with. If your approach is typically very casual, the rules allow you to run your meetings this way as long as the basics are followed.

Often times you will find it necessary to change styles within a given meeting. This can occur quickly as you move from one non controversial item to an action item that will bring forward a heated discussion. In most cases the necessity of this change will become evident quickly. If you are the presiding officer, you must be able to make this decision before the discussion gets out of control.

In this manual we have discussed many of the basic aspects of running an effective meeting for your senate. Most of all, it is important to understand that Robert's Rules of Order and other parliamentary systems are complicated for a very important reason—to balance the rights of all group members while allowing your group to get its business down in an organized manner.

This manual is by no means an extensive look at Robert's Rules of Order, but

instead it is an attempt to give you a quick reference guide when preparing for your senate meetings, or even during a meeting. I would strongly encourage your senate and any other group to purchase a full version of Robert's Rules to have on hand when carrying out your business.

In closing remember to keep it simple, keep it civilized, and let dead horses die. In the end your Senate will gain immense credibility and your business meetings will be efficient and effective.

Chapter 7: *Parli-Glossary*

The words you need to know to be successful

As has been discussed earlier in this manual, parliamentary procedure can seem complicated and can be intimidating to use. We have discussed its importance and its flexibility in allowing you to run your meeting as it fits your group, and how its proper use can increase your institutional integrity among your constituents. The following is a list of "parli" or "meeting" terms and a practical definition of what they mean.

This is by no means a complete list of all the important terms, but these can be a quick guide for you either during a meeting or in preparation for your business gathering.

A:

Action Item: An agenda item that requires action by your group in order for it to be properly disposed of during your meeting.

Ad Hoc Committee: A committee that is created to handle a specific purpose and that is not a standing committee of your organization.

Adjourn: A motion that ends business immediately following its passage. Is most often done once business has concluded, but can be made at any time with support of a majority of the body.

Agenda: A document that lays out the order in which certain items will be considered during a meeting.

Amendment: A proposal brought forward by a member of your group to in some way change a main motion without drastically changing the intent of the motion.

Appeal the ruling: An incidental motion within Robert's Rules of Order that allows any member of a group to challenge by vote of the body a ruling by the presiding officer of a meeting.

B:

By-Laws: A set of rules that generally lay out the group's purpose, spell out qualifications for membership and selection of membership, provides for officers, committees, and meetings, and sets up other structural aspects of the organization.

C:

Call to Order: An action that must be done at the start of every meeting in order to notify all in attendance that the meeting is going to begin.

Chair or Presiding Officer: The person who is charged with facilitating the meeting.

Commit or Refer: A subsidiary motion under Robert's Rules of Order that allows any member to propose sending a main motion to a committee or some other subgroup for further study or discussion.

D:

Division: A motion that is used to clarify the result of a voice vote. Most often used to ensure that the presiding officer or chair has properly determined the outcome of a vote.

E:

Ease or Standing at Ease: A motion that allows the chair or presiding officer to request that the body stay in their seats while allowing for a short break in the business proceedings.

F:

Fix the Time to Which to adjourn: A motion that allows members of the body to set a specific time for adjournment of the meeting.

G:

Germane: Speech or an amendment must relate to the subject of the main motion. In the terms of speech, your debate must speak to whether or not the main motion should be adopted. For amendments, your proposed change must stay with the basic question asked by the original motion.

I:

Inquiry: A term that allows members to ask a question or seek clarification of a point during a meeting.

L:

Limit Debate: A motion that allows members or the body as a whole to set limits on the amount or length of debate on issues.

M:

Main Motion: A motion that effectively brings a matter before the body for consideration and is a general signal that debate can begin on the issue.

Minutes: A written or oral record of the business conducted a current or previous meeting of a group.

Motion: A general term referring to possible actions by members of a meeting.

O:

Objection to the Consideration of the Motion: An incidental motion in Robert's Rules of Order that allows for a motion must be made before debate begins and requires 2/3 of the body to agree with the objection for it to stand.

P:

Parliamentarian: Often an appointed position within an organization that assists the presiding officer in handling parliamentary procedure issues and running a meeting.

Postpone Definitely: A motion that allows the body to postpone or put off discussion of a motion to a future time.

Postpone Indefinitely: A motion that allows the body to put off discussion or action of an item without determining whether or not it may come back before the group.

Previous Question or Calling the Question: A motion that allows the body to end debate on a matter and move directly to a vote on the main motion in question.

Q:

Quorum: The number of members needed at a meeting to conduct business.

Author's Bio:

Jason Fossum has been with MSCSA since March of 2007 as the Director of Government Relations. Prior to his time with MSCSA, Jason spent five years working at the Minnesota House of Representatives in several different capacities. Jason spent two years as a Legislative Assistant before spending a short time as a Constituent Services Specialist. Jason's final two years working at the legislature were as a Research Consultant for the House Republican Caucus covering committees such as, State Government Finance, Governmental Operations and Veterans Affairs, Higher Education, and Health and Human Services. Jason also has worked as a full time campaign staffer during both the 2002 and 2004 elections and has worked as a volunteer on numerous other campaigns. Jason is a 2002 graduate of Winona State University where he served as Student Association President in the 2001-2002 school year.