



**Stanislaus Valley Groups of Narcotics Anonymous®**  
**P.O. Box 578399**  
**Modesto, CA 95357**

**[www.svgna.com](http://www.svgna.com)**



## **ATTACHMENT G; RULES OF ORDER; APPROVED SEPT. 2005**

On the following pages, you'll find a simple set of rules of order. They have been adapted from Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, which in turn are based on the Rules of the US House of Representatives. These rules differ in some details from Robert's Rules. They are the SVGNA ASC adopted Rules of Order.

### **DEBATE, LIMITS**

Debate is the formal exchange of views on an idea. Unless otherwise specified, debate on both main motions and parliamentary motions is usually limited to two pros and two cons (speakers for and against the motion). Speakers addressing a motion in debate usually have two or three minutes in which to speak their minds.

### **MOTIONS**

There are two basic types of motions. It is important to understand the difference between them. The two kinds of motions are **main motions** and **parliamentary motions**.

#### **1) MAIN MOTIONS**

A motion is a statement of an idea a member wants the committee to put into practice. After being recognized by the chairperson, the member says, "I move that such-and-such be done by (this committee, one of its subcommittees, or a particular individual) under these terms." The person making the motion then speaks briefly about why he or she feels the idea is important; this is called speaking to the intent of a motion. Because the exact wording of all motions must be recorded in the minutes, the maker of the motion should write it out whenever possible. This is especially important for long or complicated motions.

**Every motion requires a second by a GSR** —the backing of a GSR who either wants the idea put into practice or simply wants to see further discussion of the idea take place.

Once a motion has been made, the chairperson may rule it out of order. A motion may be ruled out of order for any one of a number of reasons: the motion goes against the committee's standing policy, clearly contradicts one of the Twelve Traditions or Twelve Concepts for NA Service, or is inappropriate at the particular point in the meeting at which it is made. Robert's Rules of Order can be consulted for more specific examples of motions, which are out of order at any given time. Any member of the committee who wishes to challenge a ruling made by the chairperson may appeal that ruling, as described below. If no appeal is made, or if the decision of the chair is upheld, the committee moves on to other business.

### **PARLIAMENTARY MOTIONS**

Parliamentary motions can be best understood as "sub-motions" made during debate on a main motion that affect that motion in some way.

#### **2) MOTION TO AMEND.**

**SIMPLE** majority required. Is **DEBATABLE**.

This is perhaps the most commonly used parliamentary motion. During debate on a motion, if a member feels that the motion would benefit from a change in its language, that member can say, "I move to amend the motion..." and suggest specific language changes in the motion. Ordinarily, an amendment must be moved and seconded before it can be debated. When debate on the amendment is exhausted, the body votes on the amendment. Then, debate resumes on the merits of the main motion (as amended, if the amendment has carried). When debate is exhausted on the merits of the main motion itself, a vote is taken and the body moves on to the next item of business.

**Making a Friendly amendment;** If an amendment is offered and the persons making and seconding the original motion accept it, no second is required, no debate is called for, and no vote need be taken on the amendment; debate proceeds as if the main motion had been formally amended.

#### **3) MOTION TO CALL THE QUESTION.**

**TWO-THIRDS** majority required. Is **NOT DEBATABLE**.

For our purposes, this may be the most important parliamentary motion. Use it often. This motion is made by a member saying, "call for the question," or "move the previous question." It is another way of saying, "I move that debate stop right now and that we vote immediately." This is one of many motions that can be used to prevent needless, lengthy debate once an issue is clearly understood. This motion is in order after any speaker is finished. You need not be called on. The chair must recognize you when you make this motion, and a vote must be taken with no debate. If two-thirds of the body feels that no more debate is necessary, then it is time to vote and move on. One point worth making about this motion is that you must be careful not to squelch debate before an issue has been thoroughly aired. Be sure to vote "no" to this motion if you are still confused about the issue at hand or are unsure of how to vote. By allowing debate to continue, we avoid half-baked decisions about half-understood questions. On the other hand, the liberal use of this motion makes it unnecessary for the chair to be heavy-handed in stopping discussion, because the chair knows you will stop it soon enough.

#### **4) MOTION TO TABLE.**

**SIMPLE majority required. Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

One way of disposing of a motion that is not ready for a vote is to table it. This is done by saying, "I move we table this motion until such-and-such a date/meeting." This motion is not debatable; if it is made and seconded, it is voted on immediately. If it fails, debate continues on the motion itself. If it passes, the committee moves on to its next item of business. The tabled motion will be included in the committee agenda on the date specified.

#### **5) MOTION TO REMOVE FROM THE TABLE.**

**SIMPLE majority required. Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

A motion that has been tabled can be taken up before the time originally set in the motion to table. This is done by saying, "I move to remove from the table the motion to such-and-such." If this motion passes, the motion that had been tabled becomes the main motion and debate on it begins again. If the motion to remove from the table fails, the body moves on to the next item of business.

#### **6) MOTION TO REFER TO COMMITTEE.**

**SIMPLE majority required. Is DEBATABLE.**

Sometimes the committee does not have enough information to make an immediate decision on a main motion. Such motions can be removed from debate and sent to either a standing subcommittee or an ad hoc committee for further study. This can be done by a member saying, "I move to refer the motion to the such-and-such subcommittee." If the motion to refer is seconded, the body may debate it before voting. If the motion to refer passes, the committee moves on to its next item of business. If the motion to refer does not pass, the committee either continues debating the main motion or votes on it. The subcommittee to which a motion is referred will take it up at its next meeting. The subcommittee will report back on what it has come up with at the next meeting of the ASC committee.

#### **7) MOTIONS TO RECONSIDER OR RESCIND.**

**MAJORITY required varies. Is DEBATABLE.**

Sometimes a member feels that a motion the committee has passed will prove harmful. That member can move to either reconsider (reopen for debate and voting) or rescind (void the effect of) the original motion.

There are a few conditions on motions to reconsider or rescind:

- The motion must have been passed in either the last or the current meeting.
- The member making the motion must have information on the issue that was not available in the original debate on the motion.
- The member must have been with the winning side in the original vote.

These limits are placed to protect the committee from having to reconsider again and again the motions it passes while still allowing it to examine potentially harmful situations it has created inadvertently. If any of these requirements are not met, the chairperson will declare the motion out of order.

The motion to reconsider requires a simple majority.

The motion to rescind requires a simple majority, provided that committee members were informed prior to the meeting that such a motion would be made. If prior notice is not given, the motion to rescind requires a two-thirds majority.

#### **8) REQUEST TO WITHDRAW A MOTION. UNANIMOUS CONSENT REQUIRED.**

**Is NOT DEBATABLE.**

Once a motion is made and the debate begins, the maker of the motion may ask to withdraw it. The chair asks if there are any objections. If there is even one objection, the motion stays on the floor and debate resumes. If there are no objections, the motion is withdrawn and the body moves on.

**9) AMEND BY A SUBSTITUTE MOTION.**

SIMPLE majority required. Is DEBATABLE.

A substitute motion is the same thing as an amendment to a main motion. The only difference is that it is offered to entirely replace the original idea, instead of merely revising a portion of it. It is handled in the same way an amendment is handled.

**10) SUSPEND THE RULES.**

TWO-THIRDS majority required. Is NOT DEBATABLE.

A motion to suspend the rules is made when a member of the ASC would like to waive a certain ASC procedure. The motion will include the rule to be suspended and the length of time it shall be suspended.

**OTHER PROCEDURES**

In addition to parliamentary motions, there are other ways in which members may alter or clarify the proceedings. Here are a few of the most common.

**11) ORDER OF THE DAY.**

If a committee member feels that business is going too far astray from the original agenda, that member can help get things back on track. The member says, "I call for the order of the day." This means, "I move that the chair bring us back on track and conduct the meeting according to procedure, adhering to the agenda." This does not require a second, is not debatable, and does not even require a vote—the chairperson is obligated to enforce the request unless two-thirds of the body tell the chair otherwise.

**12) POINT OF INFORMATION**

If a committee member needs certain information before making a decision about a motion at hand, that member can say at any time to the chairperson, "Point of information." This means, "I have a question to ask," Not "I have information to offer." One does not need a second to raise a point of information; it is neither debatable nor to be voted upon. The person raising the point of information may ask the question of either the chairperson or another member of the body.

**13) POINT OF ORDER**

If it appears to a committee member that something is happening in violation of the rules of order, and if the chairperson has not yet done anything about it, the member can ask the chairperson for clarification of the rules at any time. The member may simply say out loud, "Point of order." The chairperson then says, "What is your point of order?" The member then states the question and asks the chairperson for clarification. If the chair agrees that the rules are not being followed, the chair says "Your point is well taken" and restates the appropriate rule. If the chair does not agree, the chair says, "Overruled." This decision, as all others, can be appealed.

**14) APPEAL RULING OF CHAIR**

Any time the chair makes a decision, that decision may be appealed. Any voting member who wishes to appeal a decision may do so by saying, "I appeal the decision of the chair." If the appeal is seconded, the chair then asks, "On what grounds do you appeal my decision?" The member states the reasons. The chairperson then speaks briefly to the intent of the ruling being appealed. The body may then debate the ruling and the merits of the appeal. A vote is taken, requiring a simple majority or tie to overrule the original decision of the chairperson.

**15) PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY**

If a committee member wants to do something but doesn't know how it fits in with the rules of order, all that member has to do is ask. At any time, a member may simply say out loud, "Point of parliamentary inquiry." The chairperson must immediately recognize the member so that person may ask how to do such-and-such. The chair will answer the question, possibly by referring to a specific passage in this document in explanation. A point of parliamentary inquiry needs no second, is not debatable, and is not voted upon.

**VOTING PROCEDURES**

There are several ways that votes can be taken. The most commonly used method is the show of hands. With rare exceptions, votes will be taken by a request from the chair to see the hands of all in favor, then all opposed, then all abstaining on each issue. The chairperson should ask for all three categories every time, just to be thorough, even when the majority is overwhelming.

**UNANIMOUS CONSENT**

This is a method that allows the ASC to move quickly through routine business or questions. This is a less formal way of handling business and is an alternative to taking a vote on a motion. If the Chairperson senses no opposition to a motion, then he/she may proclaim that the motion is carried by unanimous consent unless there is an objection. If there is no objection to this, the minutes will reflect that all of the voting members were in favor. If a member objects to this, the matter will go to a vote as prescribed for that motion.

These are only brief notes on rules of order for business meetings. For further information, see Robert's Rules of Order—Newly Revised.