



Introduction to Special Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order allow electronic meetings, provided there are "conditions of opportunity for simultaneous aural communication among all participating members equivalent to those of meetings held in one room or area" [Robert's rules of order. Article IV, 9. p. 97].

Because MLA's 2020 annual business meeting is being held online via WebEx, MLA's parliamentarian and the Bylaws Committee recommend adopting at the May 19 business meeting the following Special Rules of Order that will support the transaction of business. These rules, if adopted, will remain in effect in perpetuity but can be revised, suspended, or eliminated by a two-thirds vote at any future annual meeting.

Special Rules of Order

1. **Quorum Calls.** The presence of a quorum shall be established by a count of participating members or by the online list of participating members, unless any member demands a quorum count by audible roll call. Such a demand may be made following any vote for which the announced totals add to less than a quorum.
2. **Speaking on the Floor.** Only MLA members are permitted to speak on the floor of the assembly. When first taking the floor, MLA members should identify their name and institution, as well as city and state or province.
3. **Motions.** Main motions (those introducing new business) may be brought to the assembly only if written copies have been distributed at least twenty-four hours before the meeting to each voting member who is present or by unanimous consent of voting members who are present. Resolutions are motions presented formally.
4. **Debate.** Debate is limited to two minutes for each speaker; no speaker may have the floor twice on the same question until all who wish to speak have spoken. Members speaking a second time are limited to one minute.
5. **Login information.** The secretary shall send by email to every member, at least one week before each meeting, the time of the meeting, the uniform resource locator (URL), codes necessary to connect to the Internet meeting service, and, as an alternative and backup to the audio connection included in the Internet service, the telephone number and access code(s) that the member needs to participate aurally by telephone. The secretary shall also include a copy of or a link to these rules of order.
6. **Login time.** The secretary shall schedule Internet meeting service availability to begin at least fifteen minutes before the start of each meeting.
7. **Signing in and out.** Members shall identify themselves as required to sign in to the Internet meeting service and shall maintain Internet and audio access throughout the meeting whenever present but shall sign out upon any departure before adjournment.
8. **Technical requirements and malfunctions.** Each member is responsible for their audio and Internet connections; no action shall be invalidated on the grounds that the loss of or poor quality of a member's individual connection prevented their participation in the meeting.
9. **Forced disconnections.** The president may cause or direct the disconnection or muting of a member's connection if it is causing undue interference with the meeting. The president's decision to do so, which is subject to an undebatable appeal that can be made by any member, shall be announced during the meeting and recorded in the minutes.
10. **Assignment of the floor.** To seek recognition by the president, a member shall use the "raise hand" feature of the Internet meeting service. Upon assigning the floor to a member, the president shall clear the online queue of members who had been seeking recognition. To claim preference in recognition, another member who had been seeking recognition may promptly seek recognition again, and the president shall recognize the member for the limited purpose of determining whether that member is entitled to preference in recognition.
11. **Interrupting a member.** A member who intends to make a motion or request under the rules to interrupt a speaker shall use the "raise hand" feature of the Internet meeting service and shall thereafter wait a reasonable time for the president's instructions before attempting to interrupt the speaker by voice.
12. **Motions submitted in writing.** A member intending to make a main motion, to offer an amendment, or to propose instructions to a committee shall, before or after being recognized, post the motion in writing to the online area designated by the secretary for this purpose, preceded by the member's name and a number corresponding to how many written motions the member has so far posted during the meeting (e.g., "SMITH 3: "; "FRANCES JONES 2: "). Use of the online area designated by the secretary for this purpose shall be restricted to posting the text of intended motions.

13. **Display of motions.** The secretary shall designate an online area exclusively for the display of the immediately pending question and other relevant pending questions (such as the main motion or the pertinent part of the main motion, when an amendment to it is immediately pending), and to the extent feasible, the secretary or any assistants appointed by them for this purpose shall cause such questions or any other documents that are currently before the meeting for action or information to be displayed therein until disposed of.
14. **Voting.** Votes shall be taken by the anonymous voting feature of the Internet meeting service, unless a different method is ordered by the MLA Board or required by the rules. When required or ordered, other permissible methods of voting are by electronic roll call or by audible roll call. The president's announcement of the voting result shall include the number of members voting on each side of the question and the number, if any, who explicitly respond to acknowledge their presence without casting a vote. Business may also be conducted by unanimous consent.
15. **Video display.** The president, the secretary, or their assistants shall cause a video of the president to be displayed throughout the meeting and shall cause display of the video of the member currently recognized to speak or report.