



Colonial Williamsburg

2025 Speaker & Committee Chair Training Guide

Welcome to Your Role

Thank you for serving as a Speaker or Committee Chair. You are the facilitator, referee, and timekeeper for your session. Your job is to keep things moving smoothly while being fair to all participants. This guide will prepare you to manage your chamber or committee effectively.

Committee Chairs run sessions where members present and vet legislation before it reaches the full chamber. Each bill gets 15 minutes of consideration time.

Speakers run the full chamber sessions where the entire House debates and votes on bills that passed out of committee. Each bill gets 30 minutes of consideration time.

Both roles include a ballot that you will submit for each competitor in your chamber, which counts for 35% of each participant's score for that portion of the competition. You will evaluate participants on five criteria at the end of your session.

Your Clerks Are Your Partners

In committee, you will have one clerk assisting you. In chamber, you may have one or two clerks. Your clerk sits next to you and tracks who has spoken (frequency), who spoke most recently (recency), timing for speeches and bills, and manages amendment forms. If you have a second clerk in chamber, they assist the other judges with scoring ballots and other administrative tasks. If you have only one clerk in chamber, they focus on assisting you.

Before you start, brief your clerk on what you need them to track. Make sure they understand there are two different timing systems running simultaneously: a master timer for the entire bill and separate timers for individual speeches. This distinction is critical, and it will be explained in detail later.

Before Your Session Starts: The 30-Minute Checklist

Arrive thirty minutes before your session begins if you can. Here is what you need to do:

Meet your clerk. Introduce yourselves and clarify who is tracking what. The tournament will provide a dedicated timer for the bill timer that is visible to the competitors. Your clerk can use their phone for individual speeches. Ask them to practice running both timers simultaneously because they will need to do this throughout the session.

Review your participant list. Note the party assignments. Half of your participants are Loyalists and half are Patriots. Check the pronunciation of any names you are unsure about. Identify which participants wrote which bills.

Review your bill docket. Read the title of each bill. Understand the general subject matter of each bill because you will need to make rulings about whether any proposed amendments are related to the bill's topic.

Set up your space. Position yourself where you can see all participants. Place your gavel within easy reach. Have water¹ available because you will be talking continuously. Make sure you can clearly see both timing displays: the master bill timer and the individual speech timer.

Prepare your ballot. Have your scoring sheet ready and fill in your name and the names of all participants. You will score participants after the session ends based on five criteria. Note what those five criteria are so you know what to watch for during the session. You can take notes on the ballot sheet during the session.

¹ Water is allowed in the competition rooms provided it is in a container with a sealable opening. No food or other beverages are allowed inside the competition rooms at Colonial Williamsburg.

Understanding What You Are Managing: The Big Picture

Before diving into detailed procedures, let's walk you through what happens from start to finish when a bill comes to the floor. Understanding this flow will help everything else make sense.

- **Preliminaries.** There are some preliminaries at the beginning of the session, such as taking the roll, introducing yourself, your judge(s) and your clerk(s) among other opening housekeeping items.
- **Calling (announcing) the bill coming up for debate.** You read the bill's title out loud and call for the author to present the bill in what is known as an authorship speech. That competitor stands and comes to the front of the room.
- **The authorship (first speech) for the bill.** The authorship speech is when the bill's author explains what their bill does and why the committee or chamber should pass it. They get up to three minutes. In committee, this is the only speech that gets questioned by other members. In the chamber, both the authorship speech and the first negation speech (this is the next speech given after the authorship) are questioned. As soon as the author starts speaking, two timers start running simultaneously: a three-minute timer for this speech and a master timer (15 minutes in committee, 30 minutes in chamber) for the entire bill's consideration.
- **Questions for the bill author.** After the authorship speech, other members get to ask the bill's author questions for two minutes. Members stand at their seats to be recognized. You call on them one at a time. They ask one question each. The author answers or declines to answer. Then you call on the next questioner. When two minutes expire, question time ends.
- ***In the chamber only: the first negation speech.*** After questions on the authorship speech, you must ask if anyone from the opposite party² wants to speak against the bill. If someone does, they get three minutes to explain why the bill should fail, followed by two minutes of questions directed at them. This only happens in the chamber, not in committee.
- **Open debate on the bill starts.** Now, any member can give a two-minute speech either supporting or opposing the bill. You try to alternate between speakers who support the bill and speakers who oppose it. Members stand to seek recognition, and you call on them based on who has spoken least recently and least frequently. Each gets two minutes. They do not get questioned after these speeches.

² If no one from the opposite party wants to speak against the bill but there is someone from the party of the bill sponsor that does, you should recognize that person to speak.

- **Amendments may be proposed.** At any point after the authorship speech and questions, a member can stand and propose an amendment to change the bill. You must rule on whether the amendment is germane, meaning related to the bill's subject matter. If germane, the amendment sponsor gets one minute to explain it, the bill author gets one minute to respond, and then other members can speak for or against it. Then you vote on whether to adopt the amendment.
- **Motions may be made.** Members can make various motions to control the process. The most common is calling the previous question, which means "stop debate and vote now." Other motions include recessing for five minutes to negotiate, tabling the bill to set it aside, or reconsidering a vote that has already happened.
- **Vote on the bill.** The bill timer runs out, or someone calls the question. Eventually, either the master timer (15 or 30 minutes) expires or someone successfully moves to call the previous question. When this happens, debate stops immediately and there is a vote on the bill. Your clerk calls the roll alphabetically. Each member responds "aye," "nay," or "abstain." You announce the results. The bill passes or fails.
- **You move to the next bill.** You call the next representative on your list, and the process repeats.

The Two-Timer System Explained

Now that you understand what you are managing, let me explain the timing system in detail. This is one of the most important technical aspects of your role and the most common source of confusion.

There are two completely different timing systems running simultaneously, and they serve different purposes.

- **The Bill Timer.** The Bill Timer is your master clock. In committee, it is 15 minutes. In chamber, it is 30 minutes. This timer starts the moment the bill sponsor begins their authorship speech and runs continuously through everything: speeches, questions, amendments, motions, votes, pauses between speakers, and even silence. The bill timer only stops in three specific situations: when a motion to recess passes or when you call a recess, when someone appeals your ruling to the Speaker's Office and it gets seconded, or when you place the chamber "at ease" to resolve a procedural problem. When the bill timer reaches zero, the debate ends immediately, and you call for a vote. There are no exceptions and no extensions possible.
- **The Speech Timer.** Individual Speech Timers tell you when to gavel individual speakers. The authorship speech gets three minutes. Question periods get two minutes. Other speeches get two minutes. Amendment-related speeches get one minute. These timers tell you when one person's turn to speak is done. They do not stop or affect the bill timer at all.

Think of a basketball game. The bill timer is the game clock. When it hits zero, the game is over, regardless of what is happening. The individual speech timer is like the shot clock. It tells you when one team's possession is over, but the game clock keeps running.

Your clerk should quietly alert you when the bill timer reaches five minutes remaining, two minutes remaining, and one minute remaining. You should announce these warnings out loud so participants can make strategic decisions about whether to propose amendments or call the question.

Understanding the Partisan Dynamic

This competition has a unique feature that creates strategic tension. Your committee or chamber is split evenly between two parties: the Loyalists and the Patriots. The Loyalists generally support the British Crown and colonial administration. The Patriots generally oppose British policies they see as harmful to colonial interests.

Because the parties are evenly split, no bill can pass without at least some bipartisan support. If all Loyalists vote one way and all Patriots vote the other way, the bill fails on a tie vote. This means members must negotiate across party lines to pass anything.

However, members are also incentivized to be partisan. If one party passes more bills than the other party during your session, every member of the winning party receives bonus points. So members want their party to succeed.

At the same time, everyone is penalized severely if your committee or chamber becomes gridlocked. If your committee or chamber fails to pass at least three bills, every member receives a 50 percent penalty on their committee score or chamber score.

This creates fascinating strategic dynamics. Watch how participants navigate the tension between partisan loyalty, personal interest in passing their own bill, and collective interest in avoiding gridlock. In your scoring, you will reward participants who find creative compromises and negotiate across party lines while still advocating for their positions.

Opening Your Session

Do not start until the scheduled time. Right at start time, use this script:

"I now call the [Committee / House] to order. The clerk will call the roll."

Your clerk will call each name alphabetically. Listen carefully. Members should respond "here" or "present." If someone does not respond, the clerk notes them as absent. If someone arrives late, they can answer when their name is called on a later roll call.

After roll call, your clerk will announce whether you have a quorum. A quorum means at least 50 percent of assigned members are present. The clerk will say:

"Madam Chair / Mister Speaker, we [have / do not have] a quorum."

If you have a quorum, proceed immediately. Do brief introductions:

"Good morning. I am [Name], and I will be serving as your [Speaker / Chair] today. To my right is [Clerk Name] who will assist with timing and roll calls. [If you have a second clerk, add: We also have [Clerk Name] who will assist the judges with scoring.] We also have Judges [Names] who will be evaluating your speeches. Let us have a productive session."

Keep this under two minutes. Do not explain procedures or ask participants to introduce themselves.

If you do not have a quorum, wait ten minutes from the official start time. Place the chamber "at ease" by saying:

"The chamber stands at ease pending the arrival of a quorum."

Contact the Speaker's Office after ten minutes. Do not start without permission if you do not have a quorum.

Calling a Bill and Starting the Timers

Bills are heard in a predetermined order that you cannot change. When it is time to call a bill, use this script:

"I now call on Representative [First Last Name] to present their bill, '[Full Bill Title],' to the [committee / House]."

If the sponsor is present, they will stand and approach the front. Get ready because you (or your clerk) are about to start both timers. Signal your clerk to prepare both the bill timer (15 or 30 minutes) and the three-minute authorship speech timer.

If the sponsor is not present after waiting ten seconds, say:

"Representative [Name] is not present. I place Representative [Name] at the end of the bill order."

Mark this on your list and call the next person. You will call the bill for the member who missed their speech after you have gone through the remainder of the bill list.

Important note for committee chairs only: Sometimes a bill's sponsor is not actually a member of your committee. The Speaker's Office assigns bills to committees by subject matter, not by who wrote them. When this happens, the clerks will manage bringing the sponsor from their home committee to your committee.

Accordingly, some of your committee members may need to step out to present a bill in another committee. Your clerk will track that they left. While gone, the sponsor can designate another member of their party to vote by proxy on their behalf. When the sponsor finishes presenting to the other committee, they return, and the proxy ends. Your job is simply to be aware that this might happen. The clerks handle the logistics.

The moment the sponsor begins speaking, signal your clerk to start both timers: the bill timer and the three-minute authorship speech timer.

Managing the Authorship Speech

The authorship speech is when the bill's author explains what their bill does and argues why it should pass. The author gets up to three minutes. This is the only speech that is followed by questions.

While they speak, take notes on their argument, delivery, and demeanor. You will use these observations when scoring your ballot later. Do not allow any props or visual aids other than their electronic device or speech.

Your clerk is running two timers simultaneously. The three-minute speech timer tells you when to gavel this speaker. The bill timer (15 or 30 minutes) keeps running and will not stop.

When the three-minute speech timer expires, gavel once firmly but not aggressively. Say:

"Time has expired for the authorship speech."

Let the speaker finish their sentence. One sentence only, not a paragraph. The bill timer continues running even during this sentence.

If the author finishes speaking before three minutes expires (say at two minutes and thirty seconds), that unused time gets added to their question period. So instead of two minutes for questions, they would get two minutes and thirty seconds. However, the bill timer keeps running regardless of whether the author uses their full time.

Managing Question Time After Authorship

Immediately after the authorship speech ends, transition to questions. Say:

"The sponsor will now take questions. The question period is [two minutes / two minutes plus any unused speech time]."

Your clerk starts a question timer. This is separate from the bill timer, which continues running.

Members who want to ask questions will stand at their seats. Do not call on members who are sitting down. Look around the room and recognize someone by saying:

"I recognize Representative [Name]."

How do you choose who to recognize? Your clerk should be tracking frequency and recency. Frequency means how many times each person has spoken so far. Recency means who spoke most recently. Use this priority order: first, recognize people who have not asked any questions yet on this bill. Second, recognize people who spoke less recently than others. Third, recognize people who have spoken less frequently overall during the entire session. If multiple people are tied, try to alternate between parties.

The person you recognize should ask one brief question. Listen to make sure it is actually a question and not a speech disguised as a question. If someone gives a long (more than 10 second) preamble, interrupt them:

"The member will please state their question."

If it becomes egregious (more than 20 seconds), tap your gavel and say:

"The member is out of order. Please be seated."

Some important rules about questions:

Two-part questions are not allowed. If someone says "First, how will you fund this, and second, what about trade impacts?" interrupt them:

"The member may ask one question. Please choose which question to ask."

Immediate follow-up questions are not allowed. However, if no one else is standing, someone who has asked a question may ask another one.

Permission to preface is not required. If someone says, "Permission to preface, Madam Chair?" just say:

"You may ask your question."

However, watch carefully. If their "preface" turns into a speech, gavel it down.

After each question is asked, the bill author responds. Then you recognize the next questioner. Continue until the question timer expires or no one else is standing to ask questions.

Extending question time: A motion can be made to add two more minutes to question time. Someone will say:

"Madam Chair, I move that we suspend the rules and extend time for questioning of the bill sponsor by two additional minutes."

Respond:

"Is there a second?"

If someone says "second," then say:

"All in favor of extending question time, say aye. All opposed, say nay."

Count hands. Simple majority. If it passes, say:

"The motion carries. Question time is extended by two minutes."

Tell your clerk to add two minutes to the question timer. This motion can only be made once per authorship speech. This is the only time a motion to suspend the rules is allowed in this entire event. Remember that the bill timer continues running during the motion, the vote, and the extended question time.

When the question timer expires, gavel once and say:

"Time for questions has expired."

Managing the First Negation Speech

Move immediately to the next phase, the first negation speech. The bill timer continues running.

"Having heard a speech in support of the bill, does any Representative wish to speak in opposition?"

Wait three to five seconds. Give people time to stand. The bill timer is still running during this pause.

If someone from the opposite party from the bill's author stands, recognize them:

"I recognize Representative [Name]. You have three minutes."

Your clerk starts a new three-minute speech timer. The bill timer keeps running. This is called the first negation speech. After their three minutes, they get two minutes of questions following the exact same rules as questions after the authorship speech. The motion to extend question time by two minutes can also be made once for the first negation speech.

If someone from the same party as the sponsor stands, say:

"The first negation speech must come from the party opposite the sponsor. Does any member of the [other party] wish to speak in opposition?"

Wait a few seconds. If still no one from the opposite party stands, say:

"Hearing no opposition, I recognize Representative [Name]."

Recognize the person who stood (from the same party) and proceed to regular speeches.

The first negation speech gets questions in the chamber ONLY, not in committee. This is handled the same as questions are for the the authorship speech. All other speeches after this do not get questions. But remember, the bill timer runs through everything.

Managing Subsequent Speeches for the Bill on the Floor

After the authorship speech and questions (and after the first negation in committee or the first negation and questions in the chamber), any member can give a two-minute speech supporting or opposing the bill.

Try to alternate between speeches supporting the bill and speeches opposing it. After each speech, ask:

"Is there a member seeking to speak [opposition to / support of] the bill."

If no one from that side stands, ask the same for the other side. For example, if someone has given a speech in opposition and there is no one seeking to speak in support, ask if there is another person to speak in opposition. Always ask for the next speaker for the opposite view first, but if there is none, keep taking speeches from the same side with members looking to speak.

When you recognize a speaker, say:

"I recognize Representative [Name]. You have two minutes."

Your clerk starts a two-minute speech timer. The bill timer keeps running. When the two-minute timer expires, gavel once and say:

"The member's time has expired. Please take your seat."

Let them finish their sentence. The bill timer continues running.

Remember that every second of speaking, every second between speeches, and every second of silence, the bill timer is running continuously.

Managing Amendments: Step by Step

At any point after the authorship speech and questions conclude, a member can propose an amendment to change the bill³. The bill timer runs through the entire amendment process.

Someone will stand and say:

"Madam Chair, I rise for the purpose of proposing an amendment to the pending legislation."

You respond:

"Proceed."

They will read their amendment. They should have filled out an amendment form⁴. Listen carefully because you must rule on whether the amendment is germane, which means related to the bill's subject matter. They hand you the physical paper form. Keep it.

Germaneness means the amendment must be related to what the bill is about. If the bill builds a road, an amendment that changes the road's route is germane. An amendment that adds a bridge along the road is germane. An amendment that removes the funding is germane even though it may kill the bill. An amendment that adds a completely unrelated harbor project is probably not germane unless the harbor directly connects to the road. An amendment that forms a militia instead is definitely not germane.

When in doubt, ask yourself two questions: Is this the same general topic area as the bill? Could this amendment be its own completely separate bill? If it is the same topic area, it is probably germane. If it could stand alone as its own bill, it is probably not germane.

You must also ensure the amendment complies with tournament subject matter rules. Amendments cannot discuss enslavement in any form. Amendments cannot call for complete independence from Great Britain.

While you think (do this quickly), the bill timer is still running.

If you rule the amendment out of order, say:

"The chair rules the amendment not germane to the bill and therefore out of order."

³ *In Committee Only*: If the bill author is not a sitting member of your committee, they cannot offer an amendment to their bill if it is on the floor. They do not have standing. Only sitting members of your committee may offer amendments.

⁴ The clerk will have blank forms for the members to use.

Hand the form back to them. Move on. Your decision is final and not subject to appeal or vote. The bill timer keeps running.

If the amendment is germane, say:

"The amendment is in order. Representative [Name], you have one minute to speak to your amendment."

Your clerk starts a one-minute speech timer. The bill timer keeps running. The amendment sponsor explains why their amendment improves the bill. When the one-minute timer expires, gavel and say:

"The member's time has expired."

Next, recognize the bill sponsor for one minute to respond to the amendment:

"Representative [Bill Sponsor], you have one minute to respond to the amendment."

Your clerk starts another one-minute speech timer. The bill timer keeps running. The bill sponsor should say whether they view the amendment as "friendly" (they support it) or "unfriendly" (they oppose it) and explain why. If the bill sponsor is the person who proposed the amendment, skip this step.

Then open the floor for other members to speak on the amendment:

"The floor is now open for members wishing to speak for or against the amendment. Each member may speak for up to one minute."

Recognize speakers and time each one with a one-minute timer. The bill timer keeps running through all of this.

Someone can move to call the previous question on the amendment anytime after the bill sponsor responds. Otherwise, when no one else wants to speak, say:

"Hearing no members wishing to speak on the amendment, the clerk will call the roll."

The bill timer keeps running during the roll call vote on the amendment. Use the same roll call procedure as for voting on bills (explained later).

Critical timing rule: If the bill timer expires during the roll call vote on an amendment, stop the roll call immediately. The amendment dies without a vote. Move to voting on the bill itself.

If the amendment passes, keep the form to give to your clerk at the end. If the amendment fails, hand the form back to the person who proposed it. You can have multiple amendments to the same bill. Track carefully which amendments were passed and which failed. Once the bill timer expires or you take a final passage vote on the bill itself, no more amendments are allowed.

Managing Motions

Motions are how members control the process. Most motions do not pause the bill timer. When someone makes a motion, first check whether it is in order. If yes, ask:

"Is there a second?"

If someone says "second," handle the motion according to its rules. If no one seconds it, say:

"Hearing no second, the motion fails."

Move on immediately.

- **A motion to call the previous question** ends the debate and forces an immediate vote. Someone says:

"Mister Speaker, I move the previous question."

Ask for a second. If seconded, say:

"There is a motion to call the previous question. This motion is not debatable and requires a two-thirds vote. All in favor, say aye and raise your hand. All opposed, say nay and raise your hand."

Count hands carefully. You need two-thirds of members present and seated, not two-thirds of the total committee or chamber. If eight people are present and seated, you need six votes.

If it passes, say:

"The motion carries. The [committee/House] will now vote on the bill. Clerk, call the roll."

The bill timer stops mattering now because you are moving to the vote. If the motion fails, say:

"The motion fails. Debate will continue."

The bill timer continues running.

- **A motion to recess** is the only motion that pauses the bill timer. Someone says:

"Madam Chair, I move that we recess for five minutes."

Ask for a second. If seconded, say:

"There is a motion to recess for five minutes. This motion is debatable. Is there any discussion?"

If anyone wants to discuss it, allow one brief speech for and one brief speech against. Then say:

"All in favor of the motion to recess, say aye and raise your hand. All opposed, say nay and raise your hand."

Count hands. Simple majority.

If it passes, say:

"The motion carries. The [committee/House] stands in recess for five minutes. The bill timer is paused at [X minutes remaining]."

Tell your clerk explicitly: "Pause the bill timer." Set a timer for five minutes. After five minutes, say:

"The [committee/House] will come to order. The bill timer resumes at [X minutes remaining]."

Tell your clerk: "Resume the bill timer."

This motion can only pass twice per committee session or twice per chamber session (morning or afternoon count separately). You can call a recess anytime at your own discretion without it counting against this limit.

- **A motion to appeal the decision of the chair** challenges one of your rulings. Someone must make this motion within two minutes of your ruling. They say:

"Madam Chair, I appeal the decision of the chair."

Ask for a second. If seconded, say:

"The member's appeal is seconded. The [committee/House] stands at ease pending resolution of the appeal. The bill timer is paused at [X minutes remaining]."

Tell your clerk: "Pause the bill timer." Contact the Speaker's Office immediately. They will come resolve the appeal. When resolved, say:

"The [committee/House] comes to order. The bill timer resumes at [X minutes remaining]."

Tell your clerk: "Resume the bill timer."

Each member may only appeal once per session. The appeal goes to the tournament director, not to a vote by members.

- **A motion to table or take from the table** sets a bill aside or brings it back. To table a bill, someone says:

"Madam Chair, I move to lay the bill on the table."

Ask for a second. If seconded, say:

"There is a motion to table the bill. This motion is debatable. Is there discussion?"

Allow brief debate if anyone wants it. Then take a voice vote by a show of hands. Simple majority.

If it passes, say:

"The motion carries. The bill is tabled."

Now the bill timer stops because the bill is no longer under active consideration. **Note the time remaining for debate on the bill.** The bill can be brought back later with a motion to take it from the table, but only when no other bill is currently on the floor.

To take a bill from the table, someone says (when no bill is currently being debated):

"Madam Chair, I move to take [bill name] from the table."

Follow the same procedure. If it passes, resume consideration with the time remaining noted at the time of tabling.

- **A motion to reconsider a previous vote** brings back a bill that already received a final vote. This can only happen between bills, not while another bill is on the floor. Someone says:

"Mister Speaker, having voted on the prevailing side, I move that the vote on [bill name] be reconsidered."

Check your records. Did this person vote on the prevailing side? The prevailing side is whichever side won the vote. If the bill passed, the prevailing side is those who voted aye. If the bill failed, the prevailing side is those who voted nay.

If they did vote on the prevailing side, ask for a second. If seconded, say:

"There is a motion to reconsider the vote on [bill name]. This motion is debatable. Is there discussion?"

Allow brief debate. Then take a voice vote. If it passes, say:

"The motion carries. The [committee/House] will now vote on [bill name] without further debate. Clerk, call the roll."

Immediately take a new roll call vote. No debate. No amendments. Just vote.

- Motions that are not in order: If someone tries to make these motions, simply say "That motion is not in order" and move on. Motions that are not allowed include:
 - A motion to suspend the rules (except for extending question time, which is the one exception)
 - A motion to extend debate,
 - A motion to close the chamber,
 - A motion to extend the bill time limit,
 - Any other motion that contradicts these rules.

When the Bill Timer Expires

When the bill timer reaches zero, everything stops immediately. This is absolute. Gavel loudly three times and announce:

"Time has expired for consideration of this bill."

If someone is speaking, they may finish their sentence. One sentence only, not a paragraph. Then immediately say:

"The [committee/House] will now vote on the question of passage. Clerk, please call the roll."

There are no exceptions, no extensions, and no motions allowed at this point. This happens even if someone is mid-speech, an amendment is being proposed, a motion is pending, or members are negotiating. The bill timer expiring overrides everything else.

Roll Call Voting: The Complete Procedure

Use roll call votes for final passage of bills, votes on amendments, and votes to reconsider. Use show of hands for procedural motions.

To call for a roll call vote on final passage, say:

"The [committee/House] will now vote on the question of whether to pass Representative [Name]'s bill, [title]. Clerk, call the roll."

For an amendment, say:

"The [committee/House] will now vote on the question of whether to adopt the amendment proposed by Representative [Name]. Clerk, call the roll."

Your clerk calls names in alphabetical order. Each member responds with one of three options: "Aye" means yes, "Nay" means no, or "Abstain" means they decline to vote. The member must be present and seated in the room to vote. If they are not in their seat when their name is called, they cannot vote at that moment.

Special note for committee chairs only: If a member is presenting their bill in a different committee, they may have designated someone from their party to vote by proxy on their behalf. When the absent member's name is called, the proxy holder announces both their own vote and the absent member's vote.

After all names are called, your clerk counts the votes and announces:

"X ayes, Y nays, Z abstentions."

Then you ask:

"Does any member wish to change their vote?"

Wait three to five seconds. If someone raises their hand, your clerk calls their name, they state their new vote, and the clerk updates the tally. If a member who was absent when their name was called has now returned and is seated, they may raise their hand, and the clerk will add their vote.

When no more changes occur, say:

"The clerk will close the roll."

The clerk announces the final tally again. You repeat it and announce the outcome:

"X ayes, Y nays. The bill passes." (if more ayes than nays)

"X ayes, Y nays. The bill fails." (if more nays than ayes, or if tied)

"X ayes, Y nays. The amendment is adopted." (for amendments that pass)

"X ayes, Y nays. The amendment fails." (for amendments that fail)

For bills and amendments, you need a simple majority of votes cast. Abstentions do not count toward the total. Example: eight aye, seven nay, two abstain means the bill passes because eight is greater than seven. The two abstentions are ignored for calculating the majority.

Tie votes always fail. If there are seven ayes and seven nays, the bill fails automatically with no tiebreaker (unless partisan imbalance requires you to cast votes, which is explained next).

Partisan Imbalance and Your Voting Responsibility

***** This section only applies when there is a permanent partisan imbalance in your committee or chamber to ensure a fair competition.*****

A partisan imbalance exists when one party has fewer members present than the other party. This can happen if someone is absent for the entire session or if someone leaves mid-session and tells you via point of personal privilege that they cannot return.

It does not apply when someone is just temporarily out of the room or when someone is presenting their bill in another committee with a proxy voting on their behalf.

To determine if there is an imbalance, count how many Loyalists are present and seated, then count how many Patriots are present and seated. If the numbers are different, there is an imbalance. The imbalance equals the difference between the two numbers. If there are eight Loyalists and six Patriots, the imbalance is two.

When there is an imbalance, you cast votes equal to the imbalance number in order to keep things fair. You cast these votes following a specific mathematical formula. You have zero discretion. Do not vote based on what you think the bill's merits are or what seems fair. Just follow this formula exactly:

1. Wait for your clerk to announce the initial vote tally after the roll call.
2. Look at how the minority party voted. The minority party is whichever party has fewer members present. In our example with eight Loyalists and six Patriots, the Patriots are the minority party.
3. Determine how the majority of the minority party voted. If four Patriots voted aye and two Patriots voted nay, the majority of Patriots voted aye. You therefore cast your votes (two votes in this example) as aye.
4. Announce the result. After the clerk announces the initial tally, say:

"The clerk has announced [X] ayes and [Y] nays. Due to partisan imbalance, the chair casts [number] votes [aye/nay] following the majority position of the minority party. The final tally is [new X] ayes and [new Y] nays. The bill [passes/fails]."

Special case: If the minority party splits their votes evenly (three aye, three nay), use these automatic rules. You vote no on:

- Motions to table
- Motions to call the previous question
- Amendments

- Final passage of bills.

You vote yes on:

- Motions to take from the table
- Motions to reconsider
- Motions to recess.

This voting responsibility does not affect your ballot scoring at all. You are still evaluating members on the five criteria based on their performance. Your voting is purely mechanical and does not reflect on anyone's performance.

Scoring Your Ballot: The Five Criteria

At the end of your session, you will score each participant on five criteria. Each criterion is worth one to twenty points. Take ten to fifteen minutes after the session ends to complete your ballot. During the session, take notes on each participant so you remember their performance.

Criterion 1: Active and Courteous Participation (1-20 points)

Evaluate whether the participant was engaged throughout the session, asked quality questions that advanced understanding of the bills, was respectful to opponents even in heated disagreement, maintained proper decorum, and was courteous to you and the clerks.

High scores (16-20) go to participants who asked insightful questions, actively listened when others spoke, remained polite even during intense debates, and maintained a professional demeanor throughout.

Low scores (1-5) go to participants who were disruptive, disrespectful, barely participated, or had to be gaveled to order multiple times.

Criterion 2: Understanding of Rules (1-20 points)

Evaluate whether the participant used motions correctly, offered appropriate amendments, understood basic procedure, and used parliamentary language properly.

High scores (16-20) go to participants who made strategic, well-timed motions, proposed germane amendments, used procedure to their advantage, and showed mastery of the parliamentary process.

Do not penalize someone who simply does not make any motions. But reward participants who use procedure skillfully.

Low scores (1-5) go to participants who were completely lost on procedure, constantly made errors, and could not follow basic rules.

Criterion 3: Furthering Personal Legislative Goals (1-20 points)

Evaluate whether the participant worked to advance their own bill, built coalitions, made strategic alliances, defended their bill effectively against criticism, and voted strategically.

High scores (16-20) go to participants who negotiated effectively for their bill, built cross-party support, defended against attacks, made helpful strategic amendments and voted strategically.

For participants who do not have a bill on the docket, score them on how well they advanced their own speeches and arguments and positioned themselves effectively in debates.

Low scores (1-5) go to participants who completely neglected their own bill (if they were on the docket) and showed no visible strategy during the round.

Criterion 4: Furthering Party Goals (1-20 points)

Evaluate whether the participant supported their party's bills, worked with party members, voted with their party when appropriate, and represented party positions effectively.

High scores (16-20) go to strong party advocates who voted with their party strategically, helped other party members advance their bills, and coordinated with their party.

Do not penalize someone for voting against their party if they made good faith efforts to negotiate first. Strategic bipartisanship to avoid gridlock should be rewarded under criterion five, not penalized here.

Low scores (1-5) go to participants who actively undermined their party or showed no party coordination whatsoever.

Criterion 5: Finding Compromises (1-20 points)

Evaluate whether the participant made good faith efforts to avoid gridlock, negotiated across the aisle with the opposing party, balanced partisanship with pragmatism, and was willing to compromise when necessary.

High scores (16-20) go to participants who actively negotiated with the other party, made reasonable compromises, helped avoid gridlock, and balanced partisan and pragmatic interests effectively. Even if they ultimately voted against something, clearly trying to find a middle ground deserves a high score here.

Low scores (1-5) go to participants who were completely rigid, refused to negotiate or compromise, and contributed to gridlock.

The critical distinction is this: a participant who says "I tried hard to negotiate and find common ground, but I ultimately could not support the bill" deserves a high score. A participant who says "I refused to negotiate because this is the other party's bill and I will never support them" deserves a low score.

Important Scoring Reminders

Use the full range of one to twenty points on each criterion. Not everyone deserves fifteen to seventeen on everything. Some participants were genuinely better than others. Do not let one great speech inflate all their scores. Do not let one mistake destroy all their scores. Consider the entire session, not just the most recent thing you remember. Do not score based on whether you personally agree with their political positions. You are scoring their effectiveness, strategic thinking, understanding of procedure, and ability to work within the system.

Wrapping Up and Final Tasks

When you have completed all bills on your docket, say:

"The [committee/House] has completed consideration of all bills on today's docket. Does any member have outstanding business?"

Wait ten seconds. This is the last opportunity for motions to reconsider, motions to take bills off the table, or other unfinished business. If nothing, say:

"Hearing no outstanding business, the [committee/House] stands adjourned."

No motion to adjourn is needed. You simply adjourn.

Immediately complete your ballot. Take ten to fifteen minutes. Score all five criteria for each participant honestly and carefully.

Collect materials from your clerk, including any amendment forms that passed, timing records, and notes they took for you.

Committee Chairs have a critical time-sensitive task: You must give the Speaker's Office all adopted amendment forms immediately. The Speaker's Office needs these forms to update the bills before the chamber session. This is urgent. Do not delay.

Give your completed ballot to the clerk for judges. Give all tournament materials to the appropriate clerk, who will return them to the Speaker's Office. Keep copies of nothing.

Thank your clerk for their hard work. Make yourself available for ten to fifteen minutes in case there are questions from the Speaker's Office.

Do not discuss your scores or any feedback with participants. If a participant asks about their score, say:

"Scoring will be disclosed at the end of the tournament. If you have concerns about the process, please speak with the Speaker's Office."

Do not discuss your scores with other judges until after the tournament ends. If you realize you made a scoring error, go to the Speaker's Office immediately, and they will help you correct it if possible.

Final Thoughts

You have one of the most important roles in this tournament. Your professionalism and competence allow participants to showcase the skills they have worked hard to develop. Stay neutral because you are not here to pick winners based on their political positions. Keep things moving because the clock is always ticking. Be decisive and make rulings confidently. Even if you make a mistake, acknowledge it quickly and move on. Be fair and give everyone equal treatment and opportunity. Watch the timer constantly because it is your most important technical responsibility. Take good notes for scoring later. Stay calm when debates get heated. This is a unique and exciting event with talented participants. Thank you for serving in this critical role.