

HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENTARIAN

Committee:

Constitution & Bylaws

Contact Information for Questions:

constitution&bylaws@ALAforVeterans.org or your department Constitution & Bylaws chairman

Step-by-Step Instructions:

- **BE IMPARTIAL** – The parliamentarian is much like an official in a game. She is to be impartial and make sure everyone plays by the rules. Similarly, as the official does not play the game, the parliamentarian does not exercise the same rights as a member. She does not make motions, debate, or vote, except by ballot.
- **KNOW THE RULES** – Just as a referee must know the rules of the game, a parliamentarian must know the rules of the organization and of the parliamentary authority. As the size of the group increases, so must the depth of knowledge of the parliamentarian. A department parliamentarian must know and understand bylaws, standing rules, and parliamentary procedure much better than a unit parliamentarian.
- **PRESIDENT'S APPOINTMENT** – The president appoints the parliamentarian for her knowledge and skills, not as an honor or special appointment for a friend. The parliamentarian should be someone reliable and trusted to provide accurate advice for everyone on both sides of an issue. The president and parliamentarian should have a good working relationship.
- **VARIED ROLES** – The parliamentarian has a variety of duties before and during meetings with members, committees, officers, and boards. The goal is for the business to be handled properly and smoothly.
- **DUTIES BEFORE A MEETING** – Review the agenda with the president to be familiar with the business and possible problems that may arise. Review the bylaws and standing rules of the organization. Work with any committee members who request assistance in preparing reports for the meeting.
- **DUTIES DURING A MEETING** – Preparatory work before the meeting should reduce the work necessary during the meeting. The parliamentarian should arrive early to counsel as needed. Have a copy of the governing documents at the meeting. Keep track of the motions to assist the presiding officer. Be as inconspicuous as possible. Provide advice when requested and communicate with the president tactfully and discreetly. Remain impartial and be prepared to cite references if needed. Be available after the meeting for further counsel.

- **DUTIES FOR A CONVENTION** – The duties of the parliamentarian for a convention include those listed for meetings. Also be prepared to advise convention committees such as resolutions, credentials, rules, and elections. Review the script with the presiding officer. Stay focused, steady, patient, and fair.
- **PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY** – Any organization requires rules of operation. The most important should be the hardest to change. Typically these include a Corporate Charter, Constitution and/or Bylaws, Rules of Order such as *Robert's Rules*, and Standing Rules. The Charter, Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules are written specifically for a given organization. Those rules take precedence in governance. On matters not specifically addressed in those documents, the Rules of Order specified in the Bylaws are the parliamentary authority. This is usually the most recent edition *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. A parliamentarian should spend time studying these rules.
- **HELP MEMBERS LEARN** – During your year of service as parliamentarian also consider working with members to educate them in parliamentary procedure. This can be as you counsel them in their roles or teach lessons to further develop their knowledge and skills.
- **DEVELOP YOUR KNOWLEDGE** – Good parliamentarians are always learning their craft. Invest in your knowledge. Resources are available through Emblem Sales, through parliamentary associations, and online.

Resources Available through Emblem Sales at emblem.legion.org:

1. National Constitution, Bylaws, and Standing Rules (also available on the Auxiliary's website at www.ALAforVeterans.org)
2. *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* (also available on the internet at <http://www.robertsrules.com/>)
3. Parliamentary Procedure Booklet

See the Constitution & Bylaws page at www.ALAforVeterans.org for additional resources.