

What is Parliamentary Law?

Definitions

Parliamentary law is:

- * Rules of the game of democracy.
- * Rules that govern procedures by which civil and criminal laws are made and adopted.
- * Rules and customs that govern deliberative and decision-making assemblies and organizations.

Parliamentary procedure, often used interchangeably with "parliamentary law," is more correctly defined as parliamentary law in combination with the rules of order that a given assembly or organization has adopted.

Objectives

Parliamentary procedure

- * Establishes the purpose and structure of organizations;
- * Defines membership classifications, rights, and obligations; and
- * Defines rules and procedures for conducting business.

Principles

Parliamentary law is based upon

- * The will of the majority;
- * The right of the minority to be heard;
- * Protection of the rights of absentees;
- * Courtesy and justice for all; and
- * Consideration of one subject at a time.

Why Use Parliamentary Law?

Members/Participants

A knowledge of basic parliamentary procedure prepares a member of any organization to be more effective when participating in business meetings, and allows them to support the fundamental principles of parliamentary law.

Organizations and Leaders

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised provides perhaps the best summary of the broad benefit of parliamentary law to organizations:

The application of parliamentary law is the best method yet devised to enable assemblies of any size, with due regard for every member's opinion, to arrive at the general will on the maximum number of questions of varying complexity in a minimum time and under all kinds of internal climate ranging from total harmony to hardened or impassioned division of opinion.

— *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*

Who Uses Parliamentary Law?

Organizations

- * Government and civic organizations
- * U.S. Congress
- * State legislatures
- * City and county councils
- * School boards
- * Neighborhood and homeowners' associations
- * Corporations
- * Boards of Directors
- * Shareholder meetings
- * Non-profit organizations

- * Charitable organizations
- * Fraternal organizations
- * Churches
- * Clubs
- * Unions
- * Professional organizations

Parliamentarians

A parliamentarian can be

- * a meeting facilitator
- * an election consultant
- * a professional presider
- * an agenda planner
- * a bylaws consultant
- * a procedure advisor
- * a seminar/workshop presenter
- * a meeting script writer
- * a minutes-taking expert
- * an officer orientation advisor
- * a parliamentary opinion writer
- * a convention consultant
- * an expert witness regarding parliamentary procedure

Bylaws and Standing Rules

WSAP Bylaws

The bylaws of an organization

- * define the primary characteristics of the organization,
- * serve as the fundamental instrument establishing an unincorporated society, and
- * prescribe how the organization functions.

Excerpted from RONR, 10th ed., p.12

WSAP's bylaws were last amended in April 2003; the last revision was adopted in 1996.

WSAP Standing Rules

An organization's standing rules govern administrative details of the organization. WSAP's standing rules were last amended in April 2003.

NAP Bylaws and Standing Rules

The National Association of Parliamentarians is WSAP's parent organization; WSAP is subject to its rules and in the event of a conflict, NAP's rules supersede those of WSAP.

NAP provides copies of its bylaws and standing rules on the [NAP website](#).