

A Selection of Rights Protected by Parliamentary Procedure
Compiled by Patrick Wilson, September 2008

Where there is no law, but every man does what is right in his own eyes,
there is the least of real liberty. —Henry M. Robert

The fundamental purpose of parliamentary procedure, as specifically adapted for nonlegislative bodies such as college faculties, is to strike a fair balance among the rights of individuals, absentees, minorities, and the majority—while expediting the business of discerning the will of the majority.

Rights of Individual Voting Members

- To make motions, debate, and vote
- To raise points of order and to appeal decisions of the chair
- To be treated fairly and courteously by the chair and by the assembly
- To have votes verified and results of elections disclosed
- To have their fundamental rights protected from suspension of the rules (e.g., not even a unanimous vote can prevent a member from debating or voting)

Provisions Protecting Absentees

- Quorum required for transaction of business at any meeting
- Faculty Handbook not suspendable, even by unanimous vote
- Advance notice required for many important motions, including Handbook revisions
- Rules protecting rights of absentees not suspendable, even by unanimous vote

Powers of a Significant Minority (Greater than One-Third)

- To prevent cutting off debate (by someone calling the previous question)
- To prevent limiting or extending debate in any other way
- To prevent suspending the rules
- To block revising Handbook or Special Rules of Order
- To require adhering to order of business

Powers of the Majority

- To adjourn at any time
- To reverse chair's decision on appeal
- To call for counted vote
- To ratify emergency action (taken without quorum or by Executive Committee)

Provisions for Expediency

- Speeches limited in length and number, and to the issue on the floor
- Floor held by one person at a time
- One subject debated at a time

- Many important motions undebatable