

Unanimous Consent
Compiled by Patrick Wilson, September 2014

Where there is no law, there is no freedom.

— John Locke

Unanimous consent is an extremely useful procedure for simultaneously achieving the competing goals of fairness and efficiency in meetings. Especially in uncontroversial situations, the chair can expedite business and often avoid a formal vote by simply asking whether there is any objection to a given motion or action or by pausing to allow for such an objection. Each voting member—including those who approve of the motion or action but want to see it voted on—reserves the right to insist on a vote. (Unanimous consent is thus entirely different from an actual vote that turns out to be unanimous.)

Typical situations in which unanimous consent is useful:

CHAIR: Are there any corrections to the minutes for the September meeting? [Pause.] The minutes for the September meeting are approved.

CHAIR: Is there any objection to taking up the report of the Faculty Affairs Committee before the report of the Academic Affairs Committee? [Pause.] The chair recognizes Professor A, chair of the Faculty Affairs Committee, for a report.

CHAIR: If there is no objection, the speaker's time will be extended two minutes. [Pause.] Since there is no objection, the speaker's time is extended two minutes.

CHAIR: Is there any objection to striking out "Hampton" and inserting "Hampden"? [Pause.] The question is now on the main motion as amended, "That the faculty of Hampden-Sydney College. . . ."

CHAIR: Without objection [pause], the motion just read commending Prof. B for his many years of service is adopted.

CHAIR: Is there any objection to dividing the question so as to consider the approval of the two INDS courses separately? [Pause.] The question is on the adoption of the motion "that INDS 101: *Parliamentary Law* (3) be approved for inclusion in the next edition of the Academic Catalogue."

CHAIR: Prof. C has been nominated for Clerk of the Faculty. Are there further nominations? [Pause.] Prof. C is elected by acclamation.

MEMBER D (who made a motion that is being debated): Mr. Chairman, I ask permission to withdraw the motion.

CHAIR: Unless there is objection [pause], the motion is withdrawn.

CHAIR: Is there any New Business? [Pause.] The meeting is adjourned.