

Parliamentary Tips for Efficient Meetings  
Compiled by Patrick Wilson, January 2009

Fairness and efficiency are the purposes of parliamentary procedure, which for the Hampden-Sydney faculty comprises the Faculty Handbook, our Special Rules of Order, and the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, in that order of priority. My last missive covered fairness; this time, it's efficiency. Please keep in mind the following.

- Important main motions and amendments should be in writing for clarity and accurate recording and, if applicable, should include an effective date.
- Debate must be germane to the immediately pending motion, e.g., debate on an amendment must concern the amendment itself, not the main motion.
- New and complex issues are often best referred to a standing or special (ad hoc) committee, which the faculty can direct to report at a specific time. Referral requires a majority vote.
- Although no one can call for the previous question from his or her seat, anyone who obtains the floor can do so and thereby close debate immediately if the call receives a two-thirds vote.
- Debate can be limited, also with a two-thirds vote, in any way the faculty sees fit, e.g.,
  - to speeches of, say, only five minutes instead of ten
  - to one speech per person instead of two
  - to a total of, say, twenty minutes for a given question, after which time debate is closed and a vote taken
- The motion to adjourn is privileged and requires only a majority vote.

The Chair plays an essential role in the efficient conduct of business by

- properly recognizing those who wish to make motions or engage in debate
- adhering to the order of business (agenda)
- clarifying what is being debated or voted on
- keeping debate germane to the issue at hand
- expediting business wherever possible
- enforcing the rules of order and decorum

The Faculty has the final word: any ruling of the Chair (e.g., on a point of order) may be appealed and voted on.