



National Model Congress Rules and Procedures

Revised: December 26, 2015

Adapted by the National Model Congress from the following works consulted:

Representative Pete Sessions, Chairman, Committee on Rules for the 113th Congress (02/2013)

The Legislative Process as provided by Congress.Gov

The Legislative Process, as provided by the U.S. Senate

How Our Laws Are Made, John V. Sullivan, Parliamentarian, House of Representatives, 110th Congress

Rules of the House of Representatives as prepared by Karen L. Hass, Clerk of the House, 114th Congress

National Model Congress

Rules of Procedure

Section I: Parliamentary Authority

1. These Rules shall be the official rules of the Model Congress.
2. No one may amend these by-laws except members of the Committee on Rules.

Section II: House of Representatives, Senate, and Congress Officers

1. Each delegate shall be assigned to the House of Representatives or the Senate prior to the opening of the Model Congress.
2. The Speaker of the House, Speaker Pro Tempore of the House, President of the Senate, and President Pro Tempore of the Senate (referred to as Chairpersons), committee chairpersons, parliamentarians, clerks, secretaries, and runners shall be appointed prior to the opening session of Congress, by the Chairperson of Congress.
3. The duties of the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate or President/Speaker Pro Tempore of the Model Congress shall be:
 1. To declare the opening and closing of each meeting.
 2. To recognize all speakers.
 3. To decide all points of order.
 4. To put questions to a vote and announce the results.
 5. To preserve order and decorum and to clear the floor of any disorderly persons.
4. The duties of the clerk/secretary shall be:
 1. To read all bills and amendments.
 2. To assist in the counting of all votes.
 3. To insure the distribution of such official materials as instructed by the Chairperson.
 4. To determine the time limitations on each speaker.
 5. To make sure that there is a quorum present at all times during which business is being transacted.
5. The duties of the parliamentarian shall be:
 1. To assist the chairperson in maintaining order and decorum.
 2. To advise the chairperson in the decision of any parliamentary questions.
6. The duties of the committee chairperson shall be:
 1. To chair all committee meetings and proceedings.
 2. Elect, as appropriate, a Secretary.
 3. Maintain decorum in committee proceedings at all times.
 4. Facilitate debate of legislation assigned to the committee.
 5. Adhere to the established Rules of Procedure for committee proceedings at the Model Congress.
7. The Chairperson may not vote except when necessary to complete a 2/3 vote, to make a quorum, or in any case where their vote would change the results, at which time they may vote if they choose.

Section III: Standing Committees

1. The Executive Committee shall determine the standing committees and shall assign each delegate to one of them prior to the opening of the Model Congress.
2. There shall be one chairperson, vice chairperson/ranking member and a secretary for each committee.
3. The chairperson who is not actually presiding shall have all the privileges and responsibilities of another delegate.
4. The Committee on the Rules shall consist of the Executive Committee of Model Congress and such persons as the Chairperson may arbitrarily admit.

Section IV: Committees Procedures

Committee Meetings – Quorum and Consent Calendar:

1. Quorum:
 - Established by taking roll when the committee meeting is called to order. This roll call process shall be done by name. The Secretary of the committee will complete this task. Quorum is established with at least half of the committee members present. A quorum must be present for the transaction of any and all business.
2. Consent Calendar:
 - Established prior to the opening of the Model Congress in coordination with the Majority Leader and Committee Chair with broad input from the Ranking Minority Member.

Committee Meetings – Public and Private Input/Witness Testimony

1. Public and Private Input (Committee Hearings):
 1. Input may be taken at the discretion of the chair. Input can be taken all at one time before the committee debates, amends, and votes on the legislation. Or, time can be allotted for public and private input during debate, amending, and voting of the bill. The time limit should be set by the chair for public and private input.

Committee Meetings – Debate, Amendments, and Favorable/Unfavorable

1. Debate:
 1. Debate on any measure before the committee will follow the order:
 - Sponsor of the bill: 5 minutes (introduce bill: state importance and make valid points)
 - Questions of the sponsor (sponsor may yield to all questions at once or one by one)
 - Speaker against the bill: 2 minutes
 2. The chair will then ask for pro/con (general) debate. The amount of times and length of debate should be included in the motion. The chair may recommend a different length and round if deemed necessary. ****Public/private input may be accepted at this point****
 - The sponsor of a motion may not speak against their own motion.
 - The sponsor may vote for or against their own motion.
 3. Amendments:
 - Amendments must be presented in writing to the committee secretary or chair.

- Amendments may be offered at any time as long as they are in order and follow established procedures.
 - Amendments will be read by the Secretary. The debate on the amendment process will be the same for debate on the main bill. Except, the sponsor of the amendment will explain the purpose of the amendment, pro/con debate will take place (time/round established by the chair), and finally voting on the amendment. This process will be completed for each amendment to the bill.
 - Amendments must be voted on and passed/failed before the bill is voted on.
 - Favorable/Unfavorable
4. After all amendments have been voted on and passed or failed the bill sponsor will close out the bill. After the bill sponsor has closed out the bill the committee will vote. All committee members should vote yes or no. Abstention should only be used if the committee member/legislator will gain personally from the legislation.
 5. This process will be completed for each bill.
 6. A bill is reported with no changes or with amendments.
 7. Debate in the committee on any one item of legislation shall be limited to 20 minutes subject to one 5 minute extension, if called for by a 2/3 vote of the committee in suspension of the rules.

Final Consent Calendar

1. After all bills have been passed or failed the committee leadership will prepare a mark-up report. The mark-up summarizes the purpose and provisions of the measure. The mark-up should include the vote record. This info is reported to the Committee on Rules which will set the legislative calendars for the houses of Congress.

Section V: Agenda and Order of Business

1. The Agenda for the House, the Senate, and each of the standing committees shall be drawn up in advance of the opening of the respective sessions.
2. The clerk shall see that each member of the chamber has received a copy of the agenda for that chamber.
3. The order of business shall be the numerical order in which the bills appear on the agenda.
4. Bills not on the agenda may only be introduced by a motion to suspend the rules.
5. Bills passed in committee should be forwarded to the Committee on Rules, where they will be placed on the agenda of the House or Senate.
6. In committee, the sponsor of the bill may make any changes on their bill by arranging them with the chairperson before the bill is moved.
7. The sponsor of a bill may withdraw it only before it has been moved, unless he/she received the leave of the assembly to do so through a majority vote.
8. A motion, once defeated may not be reconsidered except upon discretion of the chairperson.

Section VI: General Rules of Debate

1. A quorum shall consist of a majority of the chamber in question.
2. A quorum must be present for the transaction of any and all business.
3. Any delegate receiving the recognition of the chair shall have the right to address the chamber provided that their remarks conform to the personal confessions and slander. The chair may allow persons who

are members of the chamber to take the floor if the majority gives its consent. All remarks should be addressed to the chair and not to individual members.

4. Debate in the Congress on any legislation shall be limited to 45 minutes subject to one 15 minute extension, if called for by a 2/3 vote of the chamber in suspension of the rules.
5. Debate in the Congress shall be limited at the discretion of the chairperson.
6. The order of the speakers on the main motion shall be as follows:
 - a. Structured debate:
 - i. Sponsor of the bill: 8 minutes
 - ii. Speaker against the bill: 5 minutes
 - b. General debate: 3 minutes per speaker
 - i. The sponsor of a motion may not speak against their own motion. However, he/she may vote against it.
 - c. Order of Debate:
 - i. Any bill or resolution shall follow the following order of debate:
 1. Opening statement by floor managers (committee chair and ranking member or their designee)
 2. Committee Amendments. Committee amendments are taken up one by one unless a motion to accept all amendments is made and passed by unanimous consent. If the motion does not pass then the amendments will be considered one by one.
 3. Structured debate
 4. General debate and floor amendments
7. Amendments:
 - a. Amendments shall be in order at any time after consideration of a measure has begun.
 - b. Amendments must be presented in writing to the desk of the presiding officer.
 - i. Amendment debate:
 1. Sponsor of the amendment: 2 minutes
 2. Speaker against the amendment: 1 minute
 3. General debate: pro/con not to exceed 2 minutes
 - c. Debate on amendments shall not exceed the established time for total debate on any legislative measure.

Section VII: Rules of Order

The following are some motions, which shall be used in Congress. If two motions are on the floor simultaneously, the higher numbered one shall take precedence.

1. MAIN MOTION

The main motion is what is being discussed in the chamber at a particular time. It can be in the form of a bill, an amendment to the bill, or it can be in the form of a constitutional amendment. The main motion requires a majority vote to pass unless it is a constitutional amendment, in which case it would require a 2/3 vote.

2. ACCLAMATION

A bill may be passed by acclamation only before debate has begun. It requires a unanimous vote.

3. OBJECT TO CONSIDERATION

This motion, if passed, has the effect of canceling the effect of the bill. It is used only if the body feels that the bill being discussed is frivolous, irrelevant, not within the body's jurisdiction, or clearly unconstitutional. It must be done before debate on the bill has begun. It requires a 2/3 vote to pass. **A member who objects shall have one minute to explain their objection before a vote is made.**

4. PRIMARY AMENDMENT

A primary amendment changes the text of the main motion. To introduce an amendment, one must obtain the floor oneself or be yielded the floor by someone who has not yet spoken. It requires a majority vote to pass.

5. SECONDARY AMENDMENT

A secondary amendment changes the text of a primary amendment, and is subject to the same changes and conditions as a primary amendment.

6. TO DIVIDE A MOTION

If a delegate calls for a division of a motion, it means he/she wants the bill to be voted on separately from its amendments. No vote is required to divide a motion.

7. PREVIOUS QUESTION

This ends debate prematurely and brings the assembly to an immediate vote on the main motion. It requires a 2/3 vote to pass. **NOTE: The previous question cannot be called on an amendment. Calling the previous question during the amendment process will end debate immediately and the body will revert to voting on passage or failure of the bill as is (including any passed amendments up to the previous question being called).**

8. SUSPEND THE RULES

This motion suspends the rules of the chamber involved for a definite purpose, for a specified time. It requires a 2/3 vote to pass.

9. CLOSURE OF DEBATE

This motion closes debate on the current motion.

10. TO LAY THE QUESTION ON THE TABLE (to table a motion)

The effect of this motion is to put aside a main motion. It is generally used to put a bill aside so that the assembly may debate a bill of greater importance. It must be done before debate begins, it requires a majority vote, and it is out of order in committee sessions.

11. POINT OF QUERY

A series of three questions addressed to the speaker, through the chairperson. It is out of order in the House and Senate.

12. POINT OF INQUIRY

A single question may be put to the speaker, through the chairperson, if the chairperson yields to the point.

13. POINT OF INFORMATION

A single question may be addressed to the chairperson, if it is unrelated to the subject matter of the pending question. This point is used generally to request parliamentary information.

14. POINT OF ORDER

If a breach of parliamentary procedure occurs, a delegate may bring it to the attention of the chair. The punishment of the offender shall be at the discretion of the chair.

15. POINT OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE

A delegate may rise to appoint of privilege if there is a question concerning the rights of a member or the entire assembly. It can call for the reading of pertinent papers, the opening of a window, etc.

16. RECESS

A member may, at their discretion call for a recess of any meeting. The length of the recess shall be at the discretion of the chair. It requires a majority vote to pass.

17. ADJOURN

A member may move to adjourn the meeting. It requires a majority vote to pass.

SECTION VIII: Voting

1. All voting on the main motion shall consist of a show of hands of the ayes and nays unless it is done by acclamation or a division of the assembly, but this is done only if there is a marked uncertainty as to the result of the vote. No division shall be allowed if any new motion has been made since the vote has been taken.
2. The majority vote as well as the 2/3 vote shall consist of the number of delegates present and voting.
3. All motions and points shall be out of order once the vote has begun except for points of privilege, order and information relating to the vote.
4. Abstentions shall not be counted.

SECTION IX: Final Passage

Legislation must pass both houses of Congress in the same form before being sent to the President for action. If there is a difference in the bill versions, each chamber will appoint members to a special conference committee. The conference committee will work to draft a bill. If the committee is able to work out the differences a conference committee report will be submitted to both houses of Congress for final passage. If the report passes, the bill is sent to the President for action. The President then has 10 days to either sign the bill into law, veto the bill and return it to the originating chamber with a message or, if the original chamber has adjourned sine die within the ten day period and the president hasn't signed the bill, it is vetoed (pocket veto), if the originating chamber is still in session within the ten days and the president hasn't signed the bill, it becomes law.

SECTION X: Political Parties

There shall be only two political parties at the Model Congress. The Democrats and Republicans will serve as political parties.

SECTION XI: Special Authority of the Executive Committee of Model Congress

Due to the time limitations, the Executive Committee of Model Congress may in good faith exercise their discretion in all matters.

Appendix One – House of Representatives

A1.1 – Committee of the Whole

A1.1 Purpose

Major legislation except privileged matters (such as appropriation bills, budget resolutions, and conference reports) not in violation of any rule of the Model Congress needs a “special rule” to be adopted before the measure can be considered. The special rule must be adopted by a House Resolution which sets the terms for debate and amendment. A simple majority vote is required to adopt a special rule as recommended by the Rules Committee. Bills considered under the suspension of the rules do not require a special rule in order to be considered. The Committee of the Whole, composed of all house members, is used to consider major legislation.

A1.2 Considering a Special Rule on the House Floor

To consider a special rule, the House will follow the following procedure:

1. Rule is called up for consideration in the House by the floor manager (committee chair or ranking member of the committee with jurisdiction of the legislation).
2. Five minutes of debate is permitted; time is split equally between the majority and minority managers.
3. Amendments may be offered but only by unanimous consent.
4. After debate is over, the previous question is moved and put to the House by the Chair for a vote.
5. Once the previous question is ordered, the House then votes on the rule. Upon adoption of the rule, the House may proceed to consider the legislation.

A1.3 Resolving Into the Committee of the Whole

After the House has passed a resolution adopting a special rule for any piece of legislation, it is in order for the house to resolve into the Committee of the Whole. The Chair (Speaker of the House) shall announce that the House is resolved into the Committee of the Whole; this action requires no vote. The manager of the bill (committee chair or ranking member) may also move that the House resolve into the Committee of the Whole. The Chair (Speaker of the House) shall appoint a majority member to preside over the Committee of the Whole.

A1.4 General Debate in the Committee of the Whole

1. Bill is read by the Clerk by title only.
2. Chair recognizes a majority and minority party member to manage debate. This will be the Chairperson and Ranking Member of the committee with jurisdiction over the bill.
3. Debate time shall be equally divided between the majority and minority party.
4. Debate time for any measure during the Committee of the Whole shall not exceed 20 minutes.
5. Committee members will be given the first opportunity to offer general debate. After committee members have spoken, debate time will alternate between the majority and minority members of the House; floor managers will manage the debate.
6. Floor managers will yield time to a Member, and the Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole will recognize the Member for the allotted time. Once time is yielded, the member will begin by saying “**Mr.**

Chair (or Madam Chair), I ask unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks.” The member may proceed to address the body. If a member wishes to ask another member a direct question or comment, they should address the chair by saying **“Mr. Chair (or Madam Chair), will the gentleman (or gentlewoman) from (STATE) yield to me?”** If the member yields, the question or comment is in order.

7. Membership of the Committee of the Whole shall consist of the entire House of Representatives. A quorum in the Committee of the Whole shall consist of $\frac{1}{4}$ of the registered House Members of the Model Congress.
8. After general debate has concluded, the clerk will read the bill for the second time by title only. The Chairperson of the Committee of the Whole shall ask for any amendments. Amendments must be in writing and provided to the clerk/chair prior to the second reading of the bill.
9. Debate is limited to five minutes per amendment. The sponsor of the amendment will be given one minute to present the amendment. A member against the amendment is given one minute to speak against. Members may speak for or against the amendment by seeking recognition from the chair. No specific order is required to speak on an amendment.
10. Once all debate has concluded on an amendment, the Chair will state, **“The question occurs on the amendment offered by the Gentleman (or Gentlewoman) from (STATE). All those in favor will say aye. Those opposed will say no.”** The chair will announce the outcome of the voice vote.
11. After all amendments have been disposed of, the Committee of the Whole rises and reports the bill back to the House with the recommendation that the bill, as amended, do pass. The Speaker will resume chairmanship of the session.
12. The Speaker asks the House: **“Is a separate vote demanded on any amendment adopted in the Committee of the Whole?”** If so, members will vote on each committee amendment one by one. If not, the previous question is in order.
13. If the previous question is moved, the body will move to vote on the legislation. If an objection is made, the previous question must be voted on; otherwise, the previous question is moved without objection.
14. After the previous question is called and a vote is made, the bill is read for the third and final time and is on its way to final passage.
15. The speaker will call for votes and announce the results. Passed legislation will be engrossed and forwarded to the Senate for consideration. Failed legislation dies.
16. **NOTE:** A motion to recommit may be made after the third reading and engrossment. This motion is generally made by a member opposed to the measure. If the motion is passed, the bill is sent back to the committee of origin for reconsideration. The motion is debatable for 5 minutes and in no specific order. If the motion passes and the bill goes back to the committee. Once the committee reports the measure back to the house it will immediately be in order for final passage.

A1.5 – Suspension of the Rules

Consideration of legislation under suspension of the rules do not require a “special rule” and shall follow the general and structured debate guidelines provided in **Section VI – General Rules of Debate.**

Appendix Two – Senate

A2.1 Senators' Rights

Senate rules and practices emphasize full deliberation more than expeditious decision and rights of individual senators more than the powers of the minority. Senators can protect their rights by objecting to unanimous consent requests to waive rules.

A2.2 Debate, Filibusters, and Cloture

The presiding officer of the Senate may not use the power to recognize senators to control the flow of business. Any senator seeking recognition has a right to be recognized. A senator can move to call up any measure or offer any amendment or motion that is in order. The Model Congress rules do not allow for a filibuster. Senators may initiate Cloture if a petition is signed by at least $\frac{1}{4}$ of the Senate Body. If Cloture is invoked, discussion on the measure is then limited to 20 minutes including the time it takes for votes and quorum calls. Debate in the Senate shall follow the procedures for general and structured debate as provided in **Section VI – General Rules of Debate**

A2.3 Scheduling of Legislative Business

The responsibility of scheduling legislative business in the Senate is accorded to the Senate Majority Leader. The Majority and Minority leaders are recognized preferentially. The Senate Majority and Minority leaders will work with the Model Congress Executive Board for the scheduling of business for Senate consideration.

A2.4 The Daily Order of Business

After the Senate has convened and the morning business is concluded, each party leader will be allotted "leader time." This leader time gives the party leaders the opportunity to address the members and provide any necessary updates. This reserved leader time may be set aside for a later part of the day. After the leader time has concluded, the Senate will move to consideration of legislation.

A2.5 Unanimous Consent Agreements

The rules of debate may be limited or changed but only by unanimous consent of the members present and voting.

A2.6 The Amending Process

Floor managers (Committee Chair and Ranking Member of the reporting committee) provide the opening statements for legislation under consideration. Amendments from committee must be disposed of first. This can be done by unanimous consent or, if there is an objection, one at a time. The floor manager, after introduction of the measure, will move that the amendments from committee be accepted by unanimous consent. After committee amendments are disposed of, other amendments may be offered. Amendment debate shall follow the rules as outline in **Section VI: General Rules of Debate**.

A2.7 Voting and Quorum Calls

The Senate is always assumed to be under Quorum unless a senator suggests the absence of a quorum. If such suggestion is made, the chair shall reestablish quorum.