

THE RIGHTS OF MEMBERS

Have you ever been in a meeting where you felt frustrated because you were not sure how to participate fully in discussing an issue? Or maybe you were embarrassed because you were told your comments were out of order. Perhaps you kept silent because you felt you did not know how to make a motion.

Every member attending a meeting should have the goal to understand the issues and make certain their voice is heard both in debate and in voting. The chairman has responsibilities to make sure members have a fair opportunity to express themselves, but members need to be aware of their rights and responsibilities as well.

Knowledge + Action = Power

In RONR, you can find the emphasis on the rights of members before the manual of rules even begins. On page *li* Principles Underlying Parliamentary Procedure it states “These rules are based on a regard for the rights:

- Of a majority
- Of the minority, especially a strong minority--greater than one-third
- Of individual members
- Of absentees, and
- Of all these together”

Protecting these right is the reason parliamentary law exists.

As a member of an organization you have these general rights:

- To choose to belong
- To be notified of all meetings
- To attend the meetings
- To help influence decision making by making motion, debating, and voting
- To serve on committees
- To have a copy of the society’s rules, especially the bylaws
- To help determine dues and how money is spent
- To be nominated, elected, and serve as an officer.

Can you think of other rights members have? Which of these rights may be limited by bylaws or special rules?

In addition to rights, members also have responsibilities.

General responsibilities of members include:

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- To pay dues on time
- To attend and remain to the end of the meetings
- To know and obey the rules of the society, including bylaws, special and standing rules
- To support and defend the purpose of the society.
- To know your rights and learn how to use them
- To participate. Express your opinions while you are in the meeting when it is in order
- To observe the rules of decorum in meetings
- To carry out any duty or assigned task or ask to be excused
- To support the decisions of the majority without animosity and further criticism

In addition to these general rules there are many specific rules that greatly empower a single member.

For each of the following statements, identify the motion or action that identifies this right and cite a page number in RONR for each one.

SPECIFIC RIGHTS OF A SINGLE MEMBER

1. Demand a standing vote if you doubt the chair's announcement of a vote.
2. Require the chair to rule when you think a parliamentary rule is broken.
3. Require the adopted agenda to be followed.
4. Change your vote up to the time the result is announced.
5. Vote, even though you have not paid your dues.
6. Require the chair to reopen debate even after the result of the vote is announced.
7. Request permission to give an explanation before making a motion.
8. Refer to yourself in the first person as "I" or "my" rather than in the third person.
9. Require a formal vote on a motion by calling out an objection.
10. Interrupt pending business if you cannot hear or if there is some other problem related to the atmosphere of the meeting.
11. Request a speaker to clarify a statement through the chair.
12. Withdraw a motion you made before it is stated by the chair.
13. Act to prevent a controversial original main motion from being considered.
14. Be nominated for more than one office and to choose which office to accept if elected to more than one office

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15. If recognized to speak, the chair must protect you from being interrupted, except in cases where interruption of a speaker is permitted.
 16. Ask for help from the chair to frame a motion you wish to make or to ask a parliamentary question on a non-debatable motion.
 17. Right to request to be excused from a duty.
 18. To debate and then move the previous question or any secondary motion in order at the time
 19. Interrupt pending business to give notice.
 20. If you are the maker of a motion, you have preference in recognition to speak first to that motion.
 21. If you do not agree with a committee report, you may refuse to sign it or you may concur with some of the report and note the exceptions.
 22. May present a minority report with the permission of the assembly or may speak against the committee's recommendation.
 23. Ask a question about any pending question.
 24. May call another member to order when that member repeatedly questions motives of other speakers or persists in speaking on irrelevant matters.
 25. May abstain from voting and cannot be compelled to vote.
 26. If a member of a committee and the chairman fails to call a meeting, you and one other member may call a meeting of the committee after notifying all committee members.
 27. You may move to reconsider a vote decided by unanimous consent.
 28. You may call up a motion to reconsider a vote whether you made the motion or not.
 29. You may ask for unanimous consent to extend debate .
- Can you think of other rights members have in meetings?

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