

Florida State Association of PARLIAMENTARIANS



PROTOCOL AND MORE

by Mary Bearss, PRP Retired, former FSAP President and NAP Parliamentarian



Mary was a founding member of the Florida Alpha Unit. Bearss Avenue in Tampa, FL is named for her family. She was a great mentor who served as parliamentarian for many state and unit presidents. She was also an expert on the subject of protocol. The following is a few of her tips shared in 2005.

Should a parliamentarian have a basic knowledge of protocol?

While it is not a requirement for the parliamentarian, a basic knowledge of protocol, including the placement and use of the flag is useful. Protocol, as related to practices in societies and organizations, can best be described as a code of established and conventional forms, courtesies and requirements as related to social behavior and as observed in matters of ceremony and other formal observances. In recent years it has become evident there is a definite need for guidance on matters of protocol. The specific aim of protocol is to create an atmosphere of friendliness. It governs forms, manners and ceremonies used in the official life of an organization; promotes the orderly procedure reflecting the rules of etiquette. Personal friendships, likes and dislikes, cannot be considered. The president should keep the meeting on schedule, see that the audience is comfortable and that participants on the program receive the courtesies due to them.

Introductions

Brevity is most important in giving an introduction. Give only enough information about the speaker to make the audience wish to listen. Tell them who the speaker is, why they are speaking on this topic at this time. The more important the guest, the shorter the introduction should be. For example, "The President of the United States of America." The manner of thanking a speaker should also be brief. You should decide before the meeting who is to introduce the speaker and who will thank the speaker.

State and national officers are always introduced by the presiding officer, never the program chairman or someone else. When the time arrives for the program to be presented, the presiding officer presents the program chairman, but does not "turn the meeting over to the chairman." The program chairman then introduces the program participants and after thanking the participants, notifies the presiding officer that this concludes the program.

Florida State Association of PARLIAMENTARIANS



A person known to the audience is presented, a stranger is introduced. At all meetings, guests should be introduced according to rank.

Proxy for Installation

A "proxy" or stand-in is not used for an absent officer at an installation. A "proxy" is a legal document authorizing another to act for you as in voting. An installation of officers should be brief. The procedures of installation may be varied but it seems smoother to start with the lowest ranking and proceed to the highest ranking.

Head Table Seating

At business meetings, the parliamentarian is seated on one side of the presiding officer and the recording secretary on the other side. The elected officers should always be seated at the head table during business meetings, and it is well to honor them at all times. Space permitting, committee chairmen who are reporting may be seated at the head table, or very near the head table in reserved seating. Anyone receiving special seating should be informed ahead of time. The notice should include the time, and if necessary, the place to convene for a processional. Unless it is a very large organization, twelve is the largest number to be seated at the head table.

Guest Speakers

A guest may be contacted initially by telephone, but a written invitation should always be sent well in advance of the meeting. If possible, give the guest or speaker two dates to consider. Include the following information in the invitation:

- a. time, place, type of meeting: business, luncheon, dinner, tea, ceremony.
- b. name of president.
- c. appropriate dress: formal, informal, business casual.
- d. if invited to conduct a ceremony, initiation, installation or workshop give complete details and ask if there are any arrangements required
- e. if expected to speak, give amount of time and topic or theme.

Offer overnight accommodations if guest is traveling a great distance and ask if accompanied by anyone. Make advance arrangements on travel, expenses, and other possible obligations.

Arrangements for a speaker include:

1. have someone watching to meet guest on arrival.

Florida State Association of PARLIAMENTARIANS



2. if guest is driving, reserve parking space.
3. give the guest a copy of the agenda for the stay.
4. never allow guests to stand in line for refreshments, either serve them or place them at the head of the line.
5. if the state president (or national officer) is to be the key speaker at a meeting, no other program should be planned.
6. don't forget the "thank you note" written as soon after the visit as possible.

The action which shows the greatest degree of consideration for the officers and visitors and reflects the type of courteous treatment you would most appreciate, is most likely to be the advisable thing to do. No one will complain if you accidentally vary the customary pattern, for warmth of greeting and friendly intent are the most important points of all.

Flag

A frequent question asked is where the Flag should be placed, and where should we look for answers.

The USA Flag Code was originally established by Congress on June 22, 1942. It is a set of guidelines without any penalties for failure to follow them. For your convenience we have also included the Guidelines for Displaying the Flag by the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs.