

Parliamentarian Manual

A How To Guide for Beginning VHSL Parliamentarians

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Common Duties of a VHSL Parliamentarian

As a parliamentarian, your main duty is to answer questions of parliamentary procedure based on Robert's Rules of Order. It would be best to look over the list of Frequently Used Motions that is located in the Appendix of this manual. Your second duty as a parliamentarian is to score all members of the chamber using the Parliamentarian's Ballot as well as to keep your own recency charts in order to help the judges in the room score the Presiding Officers using the Presiding Officer's ballot (see Scoring on page of this manual). You are also the overall timekeeper of the session. It is your responsibility to ensure that the sessions start and end on time given to you by the tournament director.

What materials do I need to be a Parliamentarian?

1. Approximately five sheets of paper or a legal pad in order to keep the order of speeches as well as to take notes on the competitors.
2. Blank Seating Chart (Appendix)
3. Blank Precedence Chart (Appendix)
4. List of commonly used motions (Appendix)
5. Packet of Legislation (This should be provided to you by the tournament director. If there is not one provided, please ask for one to be copied for you. If there is an inability to do so, please ask a member of the chamber to borrow theirs. The Presiding Officer of the session should bring his/hers with them and you may use theirs if necessary.)
6. Eraser and chalk and/or dry erase marker to write docket in visible place for competitors. (These should be provided to you by the tournament director to fit the room where you have been placed for the session.)

Typical Session of Student Congress

Before the first session begins at a regional tournament, the Parliamentarian will swear in the members of the chamber as Representatives. The oath is as follows:

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter.

The Parliamentarian will then lead the chamber in the Pledge of Allegiance. Please ask the tournament director for a United States flag if there is not one available to pledge to.

At the state tournament, the Clerk of Congress will swear in the competitors during the competitors' meeting. The Parliamentarian will still lead the competitors (Senators at the state tournament level) in the Pledge of Allegiance before the first session and at the beginning of the second day of the tournament.

The director of the tournament/Clerk of Congress will have each competitor draw random seating before the beginning of the competition. You can choose where seat 1 begins and how to number them from that point forward. A model seating chart is attached that is easy to fill in and use in order to make the room manageable for you.

21	22	23	24	25
16	17	18	19	20
11	12	13	14	15
6	7	8	9	10
1	2	3	4	5

Prior to the beginning of the first session (usually labeled as committee time), the Parliamentarian will call the chamber to order and determine or identify committee chairs. Committees are determined by the topic of the legislation that the competitor wrote or is claiming authorship of. You may allow each committee (Domestic, International, Economic, and Virginia) to elect its own chairs or appoint one. Usual practice is to allow the competitors to select their own committee chairs because it allows them to politic before the sessions. Each Representative/Senator will turn in a copy of his/her legislation to the appropriate committee chair. Committee chairs will determine the docket (the order in which legislation will be debated) by selecting one bill or resolution from each committee and proceeding until all bills or resolutions have been assigned. They will present this packet to the parliamentarian who will then post it on a chalkboard/whiteboard/easel. This legislation must follow the DIEV (Domestic, International, Economic, Virginia) order as it is placed on the docket. (See Amending the Docket in Frequently Asked Questions). Have the committee chairs write the docket on the board or wherever space is provided where the competitors can all see it. As the parliamentarian calls out the number or author of each piece of legislation, that student will provide one copy of his or her legislation to the parliamentarian, presiding officer, each judge and each delegate or senator in the chamber. Competitors should bring enough copies of their legislation to the tournament in order to do so. However, please communicate with your tournament director and if possible, have them make the necessary copies for all those needed in order to speed up the tournament.

Introduce yourself by explaining who you are and provide a little bit of background about yourself. Then establish what a majority ($1/2$ of the numbers of the members of the chamber + 1 ex. In a chamber of 20, a majority would be 11), $1/3$, $2/3$, and $3/4$ of the chamber would be. This is needed in order to determine what is needed for motions that are made.

The parliamentarian will then ask if there are any motions at this time.¹ The motion should be to open the floor to Presiding Officer nominations. There will be a second and usually a unanimous vote after the second. The competitor who made the motion will then have the first nomination. Then there will be further nominations made by the chamber. After each nomination, the Parliamentarian should ask the competitor nominated if he or she would like to accept the nomination. If the competitor accepts, his or her name goes on the list. Should he or she decline, the name is left off of the list. After all the nominations are made, there will be a motion to close the floor for Presiding Officer nominations. There will be a second and usually a unanimous vote of yes to close the floor. Each person nominated may (and he or she usually will) give a one-minute speech (not scored) to the chamber explaining his/her qualifications and reasons for being presiding officer. The order of speeches of the nominees should start with the last person nominated. The Chamber will then vote by secret ballot to select the first presiding officer. The nominees will leave the room, and the balloting will be done by paper. The winner must have a majority in order to serve as Presiding Officer. If there is no majority on the first balloting, take the top two candidates (three if there is a tie for second) and re-ballot with just those nominees. Students not elected may run again at the start of subsequent sessions. A student may not serve as a presiding officer more than once during the regional tournament and once during the state

¹ The VHSL Debate manual states that, "The parliamentarian will ask for volunteers to serve as presiding officers for the first session." However, this practice has faded over time and the nomination process is now what is standard practice. Per the direction of the Clerk of Congress for the 2012-2013 school year that this manual is being written for, the nomination process is how the Presiding officer should be chosen for the first and all subsequent sessions.

final preliminary rounds. The judges in the round will evaluate the Presiding Officer (See Scoring). In preliminary sessions, the presiding officer's score will be doubled and counted as one speech given by the student. In a super session, the presiding officer's score will be tripled and counted as one speech.

The presiding officer will make a brief opening speech in which he/she sets his/her expectations. This will be the first speech of the session. The judges will take note of this speech and use it accordingly in their judging.

The Presiding officer will pretty much take control of the session at this point in time. Your job is to answer questions of parliamentary procedure, take notes regarding the participants of the chamber in order to fill out the Parliamentarian's ballot, and keep time of the session as a whole (not individual speakers, that is the Presiding Officer's duty).

This speech will be followed by a call for a main motion by the Presiding Officer, then a call for a three-minute authorship speech followed by a mandatory two minutes of questioning.

The Presiding Officer will then call for a three-minute negative speech; time not used by the speaker may be used for questioning. Often after the first negative speech, there will be a motion for a Suspension of the Rules to add one-minute of questioning. See Suspension of the Rules as to how to handle this in the Parliamentary sense. The speaker has the right to refuse to answer questions.

The Presiding Officer will then call for a three-minute affirmative speech; time not used by the speaker may be used for questioning. Often after the first affirmative speech, there will be a motion for a Suspension of the Rules to add one-minute of questioning. See Suspension of the Rules as to how to handle this in the Parliamentary sense. The speaker has the right to refuse to answer questions.

The process will repeat until there is a motion made to end debate on that particular piece of legislation. Once that piece of legislation has been voted on, the process will be repeated with a new piece of legislation and begins again with the call for an authorship speech.

When the allotted time for the session is nearing an end (usually about 5 or 6 minutes before the ending time), you should end the session. Do NOT interrupt a speaker to do so. If there is still a piece of legislation being debated, suggest that it be tabled (See Motions) and it be resumed at the beginning of the next session. Use your judgment on session time and number of speakers. If you think there is not enough time for speakers based on what needs to be done at the end of the session, end the session. Do NOT go over the allotted ending time for the session unless the tournament director/Clerk of Congress gives permission to do so in order to wrap up.

After you declare the end of the session, thank the Presiding Officer for that session and give him or her a round of applause. Then ask him or her to take his or her seat and ask if there are any motions. A competitor should make the motion to open the floor for Presiding Officer nominations for the next session. Follow the same nomination and voting procedure as before.

If it is the final session, instead of Presiding Officer nominations, Outstanding Senator nominations will be held.

1. The parliamentarian in each chamber will conduct the election. Senators may verbally nominate any other senator in that chamber, but not themselves.
2. The vote will be a secret ballot with each senator voting for one nominee. The parliamentarian will count the ballots to be witnessed by the judges of that session.
3. After each ballot, unless one candidate has received a majority of the votes cast, the person receiving the fewest votes shall be dropped. If the combined votes of the two lowest candidates do not equal the votes of the next lowest candidate, both shall be eliminated. If there is a tie for the lowest two or three candidates, it is recommended that a vote be taken on the tied candidates and eliminate only one candidate at a time. When one candidate received the majority vote of the chamber, the election is finished.
4. The winner will not be announced in the chamber. The parliamentarian from each chamber will communicate the name of the winner to the Clerk of Congress only, and these winners will be announced during the awards ceremony.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: The session has been going on for quite some time and I feel that there needs to be a break taken. What should I do?

A: If there is a natural break in debate (i.e. between pieces of legislation) and you feel that the chamber needs a break, inform the Presiding Officer, who will then inform the chamber of your thought and they will most likely vote to take a brief recess.

Q: Debate seems to be very slow. There is either a lot of one sided debated (only affirmative or negative speeches on a particular piece of legislation) or many pieces of legislation are having an authorship speech and a negative speech and are then being voted on. What should I do?

A: If you notice that there is slow debate or one sided debate and legislation is only getting one or two speeches (especially when it is occurring with the first few pieces of legislation on the docket), inform the chamber that you believe it is best to recess for approximately 15 minutes of that session in order to have them write speeches in order to be able to debate.

Q: One competitor voted to suspend the rules and make the chamber an open chamber (allowing the competitors to leave and reenter the chamber without permission so long as there is not a speaker speaking). Should I allow this?

A: It is the discretion of the Presiding Officer to entertain the motion and then the chamber votes on that motion. However, if you feel that it is disrespectful or the level of competition is too high (especially at the state level or any Super Session), then you may rule the motion dilatory. You have the authority to overrule the Presiding Officer if you feel he or she has ruled incorrectly.

Q: A competitor has just made the motion to suspend the rules and amend the docket. What does that mean?

A: This means that the competitor wants to rearrange how the docket is ordered. It is treated like a suspension of the rules motion (See Frequently Used Motions). Legislation can never be moved **DOWN** the docket. Legislation can only be moved **UP**. Furthermore, the docket can only be amended **if and only if** there has been a **full** DIEV cycle. If the proposed amendment is accepted, then the docket is changed.

Q: How do I number speeches?

A: Speeches should be numbered as follows:

1. Presiding Officer's 2-minute speech
2. Authorship/First Affirmative speech on Bill/Resolution #1
3. First Negative Speech on Bill/Resolution #2
4. Next speech (whether Affirmative or Negative)

Scoring

Parliamentarian's Score

The parliamentarian's score is based on your judgment. The following information will help guide how you score on each section of the Parliamentarian's Ballot.

Questions and Answers

You should keep track of the number of questions a competitor asks and note if there are any questions or answers that the competitor gave that sparks further debate or seems to be positive in any way. On the other hand, if there is a competitor who is asking questions for the sake of asking questions and hindering debate, use your judgment and feel free to deduct from the score.

Courtesy

Is the competitor sleeping? Attentive? Making gestures? Whispering? Passing notes? Being disruptive? These are all reasons to deduct from this category. This category is usually scored in the high range unless there is an egregious violation.

Participation

Scoring for this category includes making motions that further the chamber's business as well as the competitor's own interest. Is the competitor active and attentive in the session? Furthermore, a speaker may ask for the reflection method of timekeeping, which requires participation from the chamber. If a competitor sees the time signal from the Presiding Officer and fails to reflect it to the speaker, participation points should be deducted. However, if a competitor does not see the signal and fails to reflect it, no points should be deducted.

Procedure

Scoring for this category again involves making good motions and the competitor's knowledge of parliamentary procedure as a whole.

Impression

This is the category where you get to judge a little subjectively. How does the competitor strike you?

Virginia High School League Student Congress Parliamentarian's Ballot



Round _____ Date _____ Division (circle one): A / AA / AAA Chamber _____

Speaker's Name _____ Speaker's School _____

Parliamentarian's Name _____

Use one ballot for each member. **Please write legibly** and score each member in each category. Please also comment under each area. Additional comments can be made on the reverse.

1A Questioning _____ (24-30)
Does the member participate in questioning, making incisive and thoughtful queries of the speaker?

AND/OR

1B Responsiveness
Does the member respond to questioning with enlightening remarks that promote understanding of the issue?

Courtesy _____ (9-17)
Does the member act in a manner that is respectful and courteous to other members of the house, the presiding officer and others who are present?

Participation _____ (9-17)
Does the member actively engage in the business of the chamber in a way that advances his/her interests?

Procedure _____ (9-17)
Does the member exhibit an understanding of the rules and procedures of the chamber, and is he/she aware of the proceedings?

Impression _____ (9-17)
Does the member create a favorable overall impression?

Presiding Officer's Score

Per a 2014 rule change in the VHSL Debate Rules, the judges in the room will score the Parliamentarian in order to keep scoring consistent throughout all the rounds, more especially the Super Session round. If a judge is unsure as to how to score a Presiding Officer, provide them with the information below about the different categories that are listed on the ballot.

Impression

How does the competitor strike you while he or she is acting as Presiding Officer *only*.

Opening remarks

Take notes on the ballot as to what the Presiding Officer says as to how he or she is going to run the chamber. If the Presiding Officer fails to follow through with something he or she said they were going to do during his or her session as Presiding Officer, then deduct from this section.

Parliamentary Procedure

Does the Presiding Officer know what he or she is doing? Is he or she stumbling when it comes to procedure and the Parliamentarian is correcting them quite a bit? If so, then a deduction should be made. If the competitor has a firm grasp on the nuances of parliamentary procedure, then no deductions should be made. Furthermore, a Presiding Officer should provide or be willing to provide an explanation of why he or she is ruling a particular way. **Note for Parliamentarians: Make sure that the Presiding Officer is adhering to Robert's Rules of Order and following parliamentary procedure. The judges will be consulting with you at the end of each session to determine how many, if any, mistakes a Presiding Officer made in regards to parliamentary procedure. On this note, you should only inform the judges of the number of mistakes and type of mistakes, i.e. not referring to Robert's Rules of Order when unsure how to proceed with a motion, incorrectly proceeding with a motion, etc. YOU ARE NOT TO INFLUENCE THE SCORE IN ANY WAY BY COMMENTING ON THE ERROR(S) OR LACK THEREOF.**

Control

Make sure the Presiding Officer keeps the chamber in order. The Presiding Officer should be willing to strike motions as dilatory if they are not going to serve a purpose that furthers the business of the chamber. The Presiding Officer should also be willing to be firm with members of the chamber if they are out of order.

Precedence

The Parliamentarian will be keeping track of recency through a chart in order to ensure fairness in the chamber. It will allow proper scoring in this category. Please consult with the Parliamentarian at the end of the round if you have any

questions about this score. The Parliamentarian should keep track of questions on his or her seating chart and speaker order sheet in regards to the number of questions and speeches, respectively. **Note for Parliamentarians: Make sure that the Presiding Officer is following recency with both speeches and calling on competitors for questioning. The judges will be consulting with you at the end of each session to determine how many, if any, mistakes a Presiding Officer made when keeping track of recency. On this note, you should only inform the judges of the number of mistakes and type of mistakes, i.e. missing a speaker out of order, calling on someone who has asked 4 questions over someone who has asked none, etc. YOU ARE NOT TO INFLUENCE THE SCORE IN ANY WAY BY COMMENTING ON THE ERROR(S) OR LACK THEREOF.**



Virginia High School League Student Congress Presiding Officer's Ballot



Round _____ Date _____ Division (circle one): A / AA / AAA Chamber _____

Officer's Name _____ Officer's School _____

Parli's Name _____

Rank each presiding officer of your house 12-20 (using no fractions or decimals and 20 being the highest) in each category. **Please write legibly** and comment under each area. Additional comments can be made on the reverse.

Impression _____ (12-20)
Does the member create a positive first impression and a favorable overall impression?

Opening Remarks _____ (12-20)
Did the presiding officer's introduction provide enough information? Did the opening remarks present clear expectations? Did the presiding officer follow through on what he/she said he/she would do?

Knowledge of Parliamentary Procedure _____ (12-20)
Does the presiding officer have an understanding of parliamentary procedure? Does the presiding officer explain motions and his/her actions?

Control _____ (12-20)
Is the presiding officer fair but firm? Is he/she willing to use the gavel as needed? Does he/she rule motions dilatory or do what it takes to advance the business of the house? Did the presiding officer control the session, or did it control him/her?

Precedence _____ (12-20)
Does the presiding officer consistently and accurately keep track of affirmative and negative speeches, motions and questions, making corrections as needed?

TABLE OF MOST FREQUENTLY USED PARLIAMENTARY MOTIONS

Adapted for use in NFL Student Congresses

Type	Motion	Purpose	Second Required?	Debat-able?	Amend-able?	Required Vote	May Interrupt a Speaker
Privileged	24. Fix Time for Reassembling	To arrange time of next meeting	Yes	Yes-T	Yes-T	Majority	Yes
	23. Adjourn	To dismiss the meeting	Yes	No	Yes-T	Majority	No
	22. To Recess	To dismiss the meeting for a specific length of time	Yes	Yes	Yes-T	Majority	No
	21. Rise to a Question of Privilege	To make a personal request during debate	No	No	No	Decision of Chair	Yes
	20. Call for the Orders of the Day	To force consideration of a postponed motion	No	No	No	Decision of Chair	Yes
Incidental	19. Appeal a Decision of the Chair	To reverse the decision of the chairman	Yes	No	No	Majority	Yes
	18. Rise to a Point of Order or Parliamentary Procedure	To correct a parliamentary error or ask a question	No	No	No	Decision of Chair	Yes
	17. Division of the Chamber	To verify a voice vote	No	No	No	Decision of Chair	Yes
	16. Object to the Consideration of a Question	To suppress action	No	No	No	2/3	Yes
	15. To Divide a Motion	To consider its parts separately	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	No
	14. Leave to Modify or Withdraw a Motion	To modify or withdraw a motion	No	No	No	Majority	No
Subsidiary	13. To Suspend the Rules	To take action contrary to standing rules	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
	12. To Rescind	To repeal previous action	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3	No
	11. To Reconsider	To consider a defeated motion again	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	No
	10. To take from the Table	To consider tabled motion	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
	9. To Lay on the Table	To defer action	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
	8. Previous Question	To force an immediate vote	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
	7. To Limit or Extend Debate	To modify freedom of debate	Yes	Yes	Yes-T	2/3	No
	6. To Postpone to a Certain Time	To defer action	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
	5. To Refer to a Committee*	For further study	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
	4. To Amend an Amendment*	To modify an amendment	1/3	Yes	No	Majority	No
	3. To Amend*	To modify a motion	1/3	Yes	Yes	Majority	No
2. To Postpone Indefinitely	To suppress action	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	No	
Main	1. Main Motion	To introduce a business	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	No

*No. 5 Should Include:

1. How Appointed?
 2. The Number
 3. Report When?
- or
- To What Standing Committee

T-Time

*Nos. 3 and 4 by:

1. Adding (Inserting)
2. Striking Out (Deleting)
3. Substituting

[See form for amendments on page SCM-19]

Parliamentary Procedure-Most Common Motions

Before I begin to explain some of the most common motions, I want to talk about dilatory motions. Dilatory motions are motions that do not further debate or are motions that are out of order. You have the power to overrule a Presiding Officer's decision to hear a motion if you believe that it will a) not further debate; b) the Presiding Officer's decision is incorrect, or; c) the motion will take up too much time and the amount of time left in the session or the tournament is minimal and that time would be best spent for actual debate/speeches in order to have everybody achieve the maximum possible score.

Amendments

Amendments may be brought from the floor. Amendments must be in writing using the VHSL Amendment Form and state exactly the words to be added or stricken and may be considered only upon a second (by show of hands) of 1/3 of the members PRESENT. Negative 1/3 seconds are never to be taken. This means that there should never be a call for those who are against seconding the motion.

1. Amendment is written using VHSL Amendment Form.
2. Amendment is submitted to parliamentarian.
3. Presiding Officer reads amendment and determines if it is germane.
4. Parliamentarian reads amendment aloud.
5. Presiding Officer asks for a 1/3 second of the members present. If the amendment does not receive the 1/3 second, debate continues with the next appropriate speech. If the amendment receives the 1/3 second...
 - a. Presiding Officer asks for an authorship speech on the amendment. Preference for the amendment's authorship speech shall be based upon the number of speeches given (regular speaking precedence). The person who wrote the amendment does not automatically have the right of authorship; it becomes the property of the chamber.
 - b. Once the first proponent speech is given, no automatic questioning period follows. A con speech on the amendment will be in order.
 - c. Debate will then alternate pro and con on the amendment until the amendment is disposed of in the proper manner.

Note: Any speech on the main motion is out of order if it does not pertain to the amendment while the amendment is on the floor.

Call the Previous Question

- This is the motion that is made in order to end debate on the current piece of legislation or amendment.
- If the motion passes, then the legislation or amendment is voted on.
- If the motion fails, then debate continues.
- Can be a point of contention in the chamber depending upon whether or not there are still a number of speeches to be given on a particular piece of legislation.

Tabling

- Legislation will and should be tabled if there has not been a full cycle of debate.
- The legislation can then be brought back to debate later on.
- Cannot end a session with an active piece of legislation being debated. The legislation must be tabled or the previous question must be called.

Suspension of the rules

- Usually to do something that is not provided for in the rule book.
- Two common suspensions of the rules are:
 - Extending the time period for questioning a speaker
 - If you believe that there is not enough time to have debated extended and the Presiding Officer chooses to entertain the motion, it is within your discretion to rule the motion dilatory.
 - Open chamber
 - Amending the docket
 - Can only be amended after a full DIEV cycle.

Division of the Chamber

- Usually called for after a close oral vote where it is unclear which side won. Participants will stand and be counted in accordance with his or her vote.

Point of Order/Parliamentary Procedure

- Question about what's going on in the chamber or to clarify why something was ruled on the way it was.
- May be to correct a mistake of the Presiding Officer by a member of the chamber.
 - Allow time for this to occur before you correct a Presiding Officer's mistake.

Call orders

- Force all tabled legislation to be voted on.
- Next to last step before motion to adjourn.

Question of privilege

- Allows members to briefly address the chamber about an issue, usually voting on calling the question.

Adjourn

- Last motion of the day

Recess

- Allows chamber to take a break.
- Usually called for at the end of every session except final session.

- Motion made with amount of time to recess for.
- Don't allow longer than necessary recesses.
 - Usually 5 minutes for a break is sufficient.

Glossary

Cycle of Debate: A legislation having an affirmative and negative speech presented on it.

Dilatory motion: Motions that do not further debate or are motions that are out of order.

Gavel method: A way of keeping time for a competitor's speech. The Presiding Officer will provide certain time signals (which he or she should explain what they mean) by tapping the gavel at certain intervals during the speech.

Open chamber: A motion made through a suspension of the rules that allows members of the chamber to leave without permission from the chair.

Precedence: Based on the number of speeches a competitor has given. If two or more competitors rise to speak at the same time, the competitor with the fewest number of speeches given speaks first.

Recency: Based on the speaking order of the competition. If two competitors rise to speak at the same time and have given the same number of speeches, the competitor who has spoken earliest (i.e. Competitor #1 gave the sixth speech and Competitor #2 gave the eighth speech, Competitor #1 would get to speak).

Reflection method: A way of keeping time for a competitor's speech. The Presiding Officer will provide certain time signals (which he or she should explain what they mean) to the chamber who in turn, will reflect those same time signals back to the speaker so the speaker knows his or her time.