



## Demands of One Lone Member

*The majority rules, but why let them?*

When proposing a main motion, the motion maker may not interrupt a speaker (or a pending motion); must be seconded; may be amended; may be debate; and requires a majority vote for adoption. Yet, RONR clearly offers several situations where by demand a lone member can legally frustrate the efforts of a majority of the assembly where not even unanimous consent or a formal vote can defeat a lone member wishes.

### 1. Unanimous Consent

*"In cases where there seems to be no opposition in routine business... time can often be saved by the procedure of unanimous consent .... Action in this manner is in accord with the principle that rules are designed for the protection of the minority." Rules generally "need not be strictly enforced when there is no minority to protect," because the assembly has acquiesced or wishes not to bother to resist.*

In such cases the presiding officer pronounces a parliamentarian's five magic words: *"If there is no objection. .."* If no one objects, the presiding officer handles an issue without a formal motion, without debate, and without a formal vote.

However, one lone member can demand the time-consuming six-step process, against the desire of the majority of the assembly, by simply objecting to unanimous consent. RONR, p. 54-55.

### 2. Consent Calendar

A large number of routine or noncontroversial matters listed on a consent calendar are adopted in gross without debate and without amendment, unless objected to. If one lone member objects to an item on the consent calendar, that item is restored to the ordinary process by being placed in line for consideration on the regular agenda.

Instead of simple consent for approval, the motion will now need a second, must be subjected to amendments and debate, and then risk a voting process that could defeat it.

Even a majority of the assembly cannot prevent this demand. RONR, p. 361.

### 3. Division of the Assembly

After any vote, a lone member is entitled to preference in recognition, and has the right to demand that a voice vote (or even a vote by show of hands) be retaken as a rising vote. Or, if a lone member doubts the presiding officer's announced result of a vote, the lone member can demand that the vote be retaken in a more accurate manner. This demand cannot be challenged by the presiding officer, as long as the demand is not clearly a dilatory effort on the part of the lone member.

The assembly, regardless of the will of its majority, (or the will of even everyone but the lone member), must devote valuable time to taking a rising vote, a counted vote, or a ballot vote. RONR, p. 280.

### 4. Division of a Question

Sometimes a series of independent resolutions relating to completely different subjects is offered by a single main motion. Where the subjects are independent, any resolution in the series must be taken up and voted on separately at the demand of a lone member. Such a demand can be made even when another has the floor, or at any time until the vote has been taken on adopting the series.

The different subjects must be handled separately, and a majority of the assembly cannot prevent this demand. RONR, p. 270.

### 5. Call for the Orders of the Day

Sometimes *"the chair may fail to notice that the time assigned for a general or special order has arrived; or he may skip an item in the order of business by mistake; or he may delay announcing a special order set for that time because he thinks the assembly is so interested in the pending question that it does not yet wish to take up the special order."* A lone member can demand the assembly to conform to its agenda, program, or order of business, or to take up a general or special order that is due to come up at the time.

A majority of the assembly cannot prevent this demand. It would require a two thirds vote of the assembly to stop this action by one lone member. RONR, p. 219.

### 6. Adoption of Convention Standing Rules

The report of the committee on standing rules is presented to the convention immediately after the adoption of the credentials committee report by reading the proposed rules in their entirety. In cases where every delegate has been provided with a copy of the report, and an established custom of the organization permits it, this reading may be omitted.

Serial consideration *"is not applicable because, although the rules may be organized to have the appearance of being a single document, they are, in fact, a group of separate main motions being offered by the committee under one enacting motion."*

By the demand of a lone voting member of the convention, a separate vote can be required on any individual rule. If such a demand is made, the remaining rules are acted on first, and then those separated out are acted on individually.

A majority of the delegates cannot stop this demand. RONR, p. 619.

### **7. Roll Call Voting Procedure**

*"In large conventions, the roll is sometimes called of entire delegations rather than of the individual members. The secretary, in calling for the votes of a delegation, should state the vote entitlement, as: 'Local No. 145: 8 votes.' In such cases, the chairman or spokesman of each delegation. . . responds by giving its vote, as: 'Local No. 145 votes 5 "for" and 3 "against.'" The secretary repeats this for confirmation and calls the next delegation."*

If any lone member of the assembly *"doubts the chairman's announcement of the delegation's vote, he may demand a poll of the delegation, in which case each delegate's name is called by the secretary, and the delegation votes individually. When all delegates have voted, the secretary announces the totals for the delegation, which are then recorded."*

A majority of the delegations cannot prevent this demand. RONR, p. 422.

### **8. Discipline**

In RONR's disciplinary process, if the accused is found guilty, *"the chair announces that the next item of business is the determination of the penalty. One of the managers for the society usually makes a motion for a penalty the managers feel appropriate; this motion is debatable and amendable."* On the demand of a lone member *"both the question of guilt and the question of the penalty must be voted on by ballot."*

A majority of the assembly cannot prevent this demand for a vote by ballot. RONR, p. 667.

### **Conclusion**

Many other motions desired by a lone member do exist, and some do not require the approval of a majority of the assembly. However, these other motions are not treated as demands because the assembly has the power to defeat the lone member's eventual motion (for example, Point of Order/Appeal, Raise a Question of Privilege, Move (not Call) to Reconsider the Vote, Notice to Rescind, etc.).

Robert's Rules of Order is based on the fact that the basic requirement for approval of an action, or choice by a deliberative assembly, is a majority vote, (except where a rule provides otherwise). This means that the power to rule lies entirely on a quantity of votes greater than half of the persons legally entitled to vote at a regularly called meeting, and in the presence of a quorum, ...and not a lone member.

However, these 8 demands illustrate another basic principle of parliamentary procedure, namely the protection of the rights of the individual member. In these few cases, Robert deems it essential to the fairness of the deliberative process to protect an individual's rights over the will of the majority.