



# *Maryland Student Legislature*

## *Parliamentary Procedure Guide*

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**Note:** This document is not one of the organizations governing documents but is an official parliamentary guide for the Maryland Student Legislature. Its purpose is to assist members with regard to parliamentary procedure, so as to allow them to be active participants in the legislative sessions. All official rules regarding the legislative branch are contained in the Maryland Student Legislature's Standing Rules of Order.

### **Introduction of Acts or Resolutions**

Any member of the Maryland Student Legislature (MSL) may sponsor an Act, a Joint Resolution, a Simple Resolution, or a Constitutional Amendment. By sponsoring an Act or Joint Resolution, members are given the opportunity to discuss and debate that particular issue. Simple Resolutions may address issues specific to the body, or to honor individuals and organizations without the Governor's signature. A Constitutional Amendment addresses issues in the MSL Constitution. All legislation **must** conform to the Writing Manual for Acts and Resolutions. Members **must** submit all legislation to the Attorney General by the Universal Deadline (which is set by the Corporate and Programmatic Calendar) or it is rejected by the Attorney General and can not be introduced until the next session of the General Assembly.

### **First Reading**

Once each piece of legislation is received (as noted above) the Attorney General shall assign it a legislation number and assign it to committee (Environmental Matters, Health and Government Operations, Judiciary, Rules and Executive Nominations, Ways and Means). During the first session of a legislative event the legislation that has been received will be reported to the body and thus will be on First Reading.

### **Committee Debate**

Once on First Reading, the committees will hear testimony on all its assigned legislation, debate each piece and hear any motions that may become necessary. The Committee will vote out each of its assigned pieces either favorably or unfavorably. Favorable legislation is legislation the committee recommends for further discussion by the body.

### **Second Reading**

Upon the report of a committee, an Act or Resolution is considered on Second Reading. The assembly or chamber (House or Senate) will then consider the committee reports presented by the Chairmen or Vice-Chairmen of the committees. Favorable legislation from adopted Committee Reports will be assigned to the Third Reading Calendar. **Overturing committee reports unless there is an exceptional reason is strongly discouraged.**

### **Unfavorable Legislation**

There is a way to place unfavorable legislation onto the Third Reading Calendar even if the committee that heard it did not give the legislation a favorable recommendation. For unfavorable legislation to be placed on the Third Reading Calendar it first needs the signatures of not less than one-half the number of members required for quorum. The petition shall be presented to the Presiding Officer. Once presented, the question will be put before the body. This question requires a two-thirds affirmative vote of members present to be passed.

### **Third Reading**

Third Reading is the time that all favorable legislation is heard before the assembly or a particular chamber (House or Senate). (**Note:** Each Act or Resolution at any bicameral session will be first heard in the chamber (House or Senate) to which the primary sponsor is assigned.) The Presiding Officer will put each piece before the body. "Is the body ready for

the question?" If there is a no, then the body proceeds to debate the particular piece of legislation until time runs out or previous question is adopted. If there is no response, a vote is automatically taken on the legislation.

### **Time Limit on Debate**

Debate on any legislation is limited to a maximum of one hour in length equally divided.

### **Debate Procedure / Use of Floor Leaders**

MSL uses floor leaders for the purpose of debate. In order to speak on the issue at hand, you must have been yielded time by the appropriate floor leader (either affirmative or negative). To have time yielded to you by the floor leaders you must notify them without disturbing the debate in progress such as passing a note to the floor leader, which contains your name and number of minutes you wish to speak.

### **Amendments**

Consideration of an amendment is limited to twenty minutes equally divided. The amendment must be on the issue at hand. An amendment must not be so significant that it changes the original purpose of the legislation. It must also be written and submitted to the clerk prior to introduction.

### **Querying the Speaker**

Queries are used to ask questions of the person speaking. [Example: Query the speaker].

### **Motions**

All motions are addressed in the following form: [I move...]

- *Motion to amend* - used to amend legislation by changing a portion of the legislation under discussion. (**Note:** follow amendment rules above.) [Example: I move that we amend \_\_\_\_\_]
- *Motion to vote upon the previous question* - used to end debate and bring the question at hand to a vote. **Note:** Both sides (pro & con) must speak before this motion is valid. In addition it requires a two-thirds vote to pass. [Example: I move the previous question]
- *Motion to reconsider* - used to reconsider a prior vote. **Note:** person making this motion has to have voted on the prevailing side of the issue. [Example: I move that we reconsider \_\_\_\_\_]
- *Motion to recess* - used to allow the body to take a break from current business. [Example: I move that we take a \_\_\_\_\_ recess]
- *Motion to suspend a rule* - used to suspend a parliamentary rule. **Note:** rules may only be suspended one at a time. (Rules are here for two main reasons: to help the body move forward and allow the body to make an informed decision. As such there should be a good reason when suspending a rule.) [Example: I move that we suspend \_\_\_\_\_]
- *Motion to adjourn* - used to adjourn a particular day of a session. [Example: I move that we adjourn until \_\_\_\_\_](Fill in the day and time. In addition it must respect the agenda adopted by the Council of State and the Yearly Corporate and Programmatic Calendar.)

**Note:** This doesn't cover all the motions that can be made in MSL but covers some of the ones more frequently used.

### **Points**

After stating your particular point you must wait to be recognized by the Presiding Officer and then state your reason, question or concern. All points are addressed in the following form: [Point of]

- *Point of Information* - used to ask the chair a question. [Example: Point of Information.]
- *Point of Personal Privilege* - used to raise a point of personal concern, such as the volume of the microphone or any other issues that negatively impacts the legislative environment for the member. [Example: Point of Personal Privilege.]
- *Point of Parliamentary Inquiry* - used to ask a parliamentary procedure question. [Example: Point of Parliamentary Inquiry.]
- *Point of Order* - used to raise a concern that a parliamentary rule was violated. [Example: Point of Order]

**Note:** This doesn't cover all the points that can be raised in MSL but covers some of the ones more frequently used.

### **Voting**

Most questions before the body require a majority vote to pass. **Note:** exceptions do exist and are delineated in the MSL Constitution and the MSL Standing Rules of Order.

### **Passage**

For legislation to be considered passed by the MSL it must pass the General Assembly (meeting unicameral or bicameral session) and be signed by the Governor, be passed notwithstanding the objections of the Governor (referred to as "overriding the veto"), or be passed without the Governor's signature. (**Note:** consult the MSL Standing Rules of Order for more details regarding veto override procedure.)