



October Quiz

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised 11th Edition says that bylaws may not be suspended unless they provide for their own suspension or if the rule being suspended is in the form of a procedural rule and not a parliamentary rule. (p.263, II.1-7) So what is the difference between parliamentary rules and procedural rules? In the following examples, an organization has no Standing Rules - only Bylaws.

1. Under the section on Meetings, the bylaws indicate that the group "meets on the last Saturday of each month." If October contains five Saturdays and the last Saturday is the 31st (Halloween), can the group suspend this rule to allow it to meet on the fourth Saturday of October instead?
2. Under the section on Meetings, the bylaws indicate that a quorum is at least 1/4 of authorized members. The meetings have dwindled so much that only a couple of people attend and the group is considering dissolving. Can the group suspend its quorum requirement (which it can never attain) in order to meet and dissolve?
3. Under the section on Officers, the bylaws indicate that officers are elected by ballot. The group has never had more than one nominee for each position for years. Can this rule be suspended to allow election by acclamation at the next meeting and save having to prepare paper ballots?
4. Under the section on Meetings, the bylaws indicate that non-members may not speak on debatable items. The group is considering creating a website and an IT expert has been invited to the meeting. May the rule be suspended to allow this non-member to speak during debate?
5. Under the section on Finances, the bylaws prohibit making monetary donations from the group's treasury to any political campaign. A highly regarded member of the group is running for the local school board and asks the group to make a small donation to help fund a local newspaper ad. May the group suspend the rule to allow a monetary donation to the campaign?

Answers from Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised 11th Edition:

1. *RONR* suggests that this is not a procedural rule but a fixed rule and may not be suspended. *RONR* also suggests that with proper notice, the bylaws could/should be amended to include a phrase such as "unless otherwise ordered . . ." which would allow the bylaw to be suspended. (p. 575, II.21-25)

2. *RONR* suggests consulting an attorney to assist in dissolution under certain conditions. (p. 564) If members take action (such as dissolving the group) without a quorum present, *RONR* says they do so at their own risk. (p. 348, ll.19-21)
3. Such a provision to conduct officer elections by secret ballot may not be suspended unless the bylaws so provide. (p.263, ll.8-11)
4. "The rules may be suspended to allow a nonmember to speak in debate." (p.263, footnote)
5. No. Rules having their application outside of the meeting in progress cannot be suspended. (p.264, l.29 – p. 265, ll.1-6)