



**Senate Rules and
Procedures Manual
2026**

Duty of the President of the Senate

- **Presiding over sessions:** The President presides over all sessions of the Senate, enforcing Senate rules and maintaining order and decorum.
- **Recognizing members:** The President recognizes members wishing to speak and maintains order during debates.
- **Setting the agenda:** The President influences the legislative agenda, determining bill consideration timing.
- **Appointing committee members:** The President appoints senators to committees and designates chairpersons.
- **Recognizing committees:** The President recognizes committee reports and refers bills for committee consideration.
- **Deciding points of order:** The President interprets rules and decides points of order.
- **Ruling on motions:** The President rules on motions and parliamentary inquiries.
- **Managing floor debates:** The President ensures debate rules are followed and decorum maintained.
- **Representing the Senate:** The President represents the Senate in official capacities.
- **Party leadership:** If the Vice President is presiding, they remain impartial. If the President Pro Tempore presides, they may retain party leadership responsibilities.
- **Administer the Oath of Office to new senators:** 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. So help me God.

President of the Senate Election Process

- **Procedure:** The Senate Clerk acts as the presiding officer during the election process.
- **Nomination of candidates:**
 - Any member may nominate a candidate, except themselves.
 - Only one nomination is needed for ballot inclusion.
 - Nomination speeches are limited to one minute.
- **Election:** The Clerk calls the roll.
 - Members vote aloud by stating the candidate's last name or "present."
 - "Present" votes lower the majority threshold.
- **No Majority:** If no candidate achieves a majority:
 - The process repeats.
 - A 2/3 vote may suspend the majority rule for a plurality rule.
- **Majority:** Upon majority election, the new President swears in members and begins the session.

Senate Procedure

- **Main Motions:**
 - Obtain recognition from the President.
 - State the motion clearly.
 - Another member must second the motion.
 - Debate follows, beginning with the motion maker.
 - A simple majority passes the motion.

Senate Rules

- **Opening day:** First day of each session to elect the President, adopt rules, and assign committees.
- **Quorum:** Majority of members (51%) must be present.
- **Order of business:** Set by the President and Majority Leader.
- **Bills and Resolutions:** Introduced in the Senate or received from the House.
- **Establish Committee Chairs and Ranking Members:**

Debate

- Members must be recognized before speaking.
- **Decorum:** No offensive language or personal attacks.
- **Yielding time:** Members may yield time to others.
- **Time limits:** Set by the President, divided equally between proponents and opponents.
- **Motions affecting debate:**
 - Motion to table ends debate.
 - Motion to recommit returns a bill to committee.
 - Division of question allows separate votes on parts.
 - Appeal of ruling may overrule the President.
- **Prohibited activities:** Smoking, food, drink, and electronics (except President and Clerk for duties) are prohibited.

Voting

- Members vote “yea,” “nay,” or “present.”
- **Roll call votes:** Used for major measures.
- **Ties:** The President (Vice President) casts the tie-breaking vote.
- **Closed rule:** No amendments allowed under this rule.
- **Suspension of rules:** Requires a 2/3 vote.
- **Recorded votes:** All votes recorded in the Senate Journal.

Recordkeeping

- The Senate Clerk maintains all legislative records.

Suspension of Rules

- Requires a 2/3 majority to suspend one or more procedural rules.

Motions List

I. Privileged Motions

(Take precedence over all other business)

Motion	Purpose	Second Required	Debatable	Vote Required	Effect	What to Say
Adjourn	Ends the meeting immediately.	Yes	No	Majority	Ends the session.	“Mister/Madam President, I move to adjourn.”
Recess	Takes a short break in proceedings.	Yes	Limited	Majority	Pauses the meeting temporarily.	“Mister/Madam President, I move to recess for [time].”
Question of Privilege	Addresses urgent matters affecting members or Senate integrity.	No	No	President decides	Immediate consideration.	“Mister/Madam President, I rise for a question of privilege.”
Orders of the Day	Returns Senate to scheduled agenda.	No	No	None (mandatory unless 2/3 vote to set aside)	Resumes planned business.	“Mister/Madam President, I call for the orders of the day.”
Lay on the Table	Sets aside an item, ending discussion on it.	Yes	No	Majority	Temporarily disposes of the matter.	“Mister/Madam President, I move to lay the question on the table.”
Previous Question	Ends debate, moves to vote.	Yes	No	Two-thirds	Immediate vote on the matter.	“Mister/Madam President, I move the previous question.”
Limit or Extend Debate	Sets or changes debate time limits.	Yes	No	Two-thirds	Controls discussion length.	“Mister/Madam President, I move to limit/extend debate to/by [time].”

Suspend the Rules	Sets aside normal rules for a specific purpose.	Yes	No	Two-thirds	Allows exceptional procedures.	“Mister/Madam President, I move to suspend the rules for [purpose].”
Take from the Table	Resumes consideration of tabled matter.	Yes	No	Majority	Reopens discussion.	“Mister/Madam President, I move to take from the table [matter].”
Reconsider	Reopens a decided matter for a new vote.	Yes	Limited	Majority (must be made by someone who voted on prevailing side)	Revotes on the matter.	“Mister/Madam President, I move to reconsider the vote on [matter].”

II. Main Motions

Motion	Purpose	Second Required	Debatable	Vote Required	Effect	What to Say
Main Motion	Introduces new bill, resolution, or business item.	Yes	Yes	Majority	Brings new business to the floor.	“Mister/Madam President, I move that [state the motion].”

III. Subsidiary Motions

Motion	Purpose	Second Required	Debatable	Vote Required	Effect	What to Say
Amend	Changes wording of a motion.	Yes	Yes (limited)	Majority	Modifies motion.	“Mister/Madam President, I move to amend the motion by [state amendment].”
Postpone Definitely	Delays consideration to specific time.	Yes	Yes	Majority	Defers matter to later.	“Mister/Madam President, I move to postpone the motion until [time].”
Commit or Refer	Sends to committee for review.	Yes	Yes	Majority	Sends motion to committee.	“Mister/Madam President, I move to refer the motion to

						the [committee name].”
Postpone Indefinitely	Kills the motion indirectly without direct vote on it.	Yes	Yes	Majority	Disposes of motion without direct rejection.	“Mister/Madam President, I move to postpone the motion indefinitely.”

IV. Incidental Motions

Motion	Purpose	Second Required	Debatable	Vote Required	Effect	What to Say
Point of Order	Challenges a breach of rules.	No	No	President decides	Corrects procedure.	“Mister/Madam President, I rise to a point of order.”
Appeal	Challenges President’s ruling.	Yes	Yes	Majority	Senate decides ruling validity.	“Mister/Madam President, I appeal from the decision of the chair.”
Parliamentary Inquiry	Asks about procedure.	No	No	None	Clarifies rules for members.	“Mister/Madam President, I rise for a parliamentary inquiry.”
Division of the Question	Divides motion into separate parts for voting.	Yes	No	Majority	Votes separately on parts.	“Mister/Madam President, I move to divide the question.”

Ethics

Senators are bound to the Code of Official Conduct regarding conflicts of interest, gifts, outside employment, and campaign finance. The Senate Ethics Committee enforces these standards.

Suspension of Members

A member may be suspended for misconduct by a 2/3 vote, either for a defined period or the remainder of the session.

PoliticsInAction Senate Floor Process

Step 1: First Reading

The **Majority Leader** rises and says:

“Mister/Madam President, I move that Senate Bill/Resolution ____ be read in its entirety.”

The **Clerk** reads the full text of the bill or resolution aloud.

Step 2: Second Reading

The **Majority Leader** says:

“Mister/Madam President, I move that Senate Bill/Resolution ____ be read a second time.”

The **Clerk** reads the title or a summary of the bill, signaling its formal introduction for debate.

Step 3: Debate Begins

The **President Pro Tempore** opens the floor:

“The floor is now open for debate on Senate Bill/Resolution ____.”

Step 4: Floor Debate

- Senators are granted **unlimited time** for uninterrupted debate unless cloture is invoked.
 - When finished, the Senator concludes by saying:
“Mister/Madam President, I yield my time.”

Once a Senator yields, they may not debate again but may ask questions.

To ask a question, a Senator may say:

“Mister/Madam President, will the Senator yield to a question?”

The **President** defers to the debating Senator, who may respond:

- **“Yes, I yield.”** (The floor goes to the questioner.)
- **“No, I do not yield.”** (The floor remains with the current speaker.)

If the questioner begins making statements instead of asking a question, the **President Pro Tempore** may interject:
“The Senator has not asked a question and thereby yields back to the debating Senator.”

Permissible Motions During Debate

- **To Table the Bill Indefinitely:**
“Mister/Madam President, I move to table the bill indefinitely.”
- **To Return the Bill to Committee:**
“Mister/Madam President, I move that the bill be returned to committee.”
- **To Amend the Bill:**
“Mister/Madam President, I move to amend the bill to...”
 - Must be **seconded** by another Senator: “I second the motion.”
 - Requires a **simple majority vote** to adopt the amendment.

Filibuster and Cloture

A Senator may attempt a **filibuster** to delay or block a vote.
To end the filibuster, another Senator may move to invoke **cloture** by saying:
“Mister/Madam President, I move to invoke cloture.”

- A **roll call vote** is then held.
- **60%** of Senators **present** must vote in favor for debate to be closed.

Step 5: Motion to End Debate

Any Senator (except the presiding officer) may move to end debate by saying:
“Mister/Madam President, I move the previous question.”

Step 6: Vote to Close Debate

The **President Pro Tempore** conducts a voice vote:

- “All those in favor of calling the previous question, say ‘aye.’”
 - “All those opposed, say ‘nay.’”
Then announces:
“In the opinion of the chair, the ____ have it.”
 - If the **ayes** prevail, proceed to Step 7.
- If the **nays** prevail, return to Step 3 and continue debate.

Step 7: Final Vote on the Bill

Option A: Roll Call Vote

The **President Pro Tempore** says:

“The Clerk will now call the roll.”

The **Clerk** calls each Senator by name. Senators respond:

- **“Aye”** to support the bill
 - **“Nay”** to oppose the bill
 - **“Present”** if they abstain from voting
- No more than **50%** of Senators may vote “present.”
 - If more than 50% vote “present,” the bill is rejected and must be reintroduced.

After all names are called, the Clerk announces the result:

- If the **majority votes “aye,”** the bill passes.
- If the **majority votes “nay,”** the bill is defeated and may not be reintroduced in the same form during this session.

Option B: Unanimous Consent Vote

If the chamber appears united, any Senator may rise and say:

“Mister/Madam President, I move to suspend the rules and ask for unanimous consent on this bill.”

- Another Senator must **second** the motion.
- The **President Pro Tempore** then asks:
“There has been a motion to suspend the rules. Are there any objections?”
- If any Senator objects by standing and saying, **“I object,”** proceed to a roll call vote (Step 7a).
- If **no objections** are raised, the bill passes **by unanimous consent**.