

## **Don't Throw Out Your RONR 11<sup>th</sup> Edition Yet!**

The latest *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* has been released!

For organizations that follow *Robert's Rules of Order*, most tend to use the newest edition.

In fact, in many places a state or federal law or the governing documents themselves refer not to a specific numbered edition, but to the latest edition.

One of my favorite parliamentarians (who also happens to be a lawyer) Jim Slaughter from North Carolina says that following: "In states whose non-profit code following the Uniform Law Commission recommendations the following language is usually found: 'meetings of the association and the executive board shall be conducted in accordance with the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.' For HOAs and condos numerous laws and ordinances governing state and local governmental bodies, such as county commissions, city councils, and schoolboards use the same language. The bylaws for associations, churches and unions often have similar language."

Robert' recommends that the following phrasing be used in the governing documents when adopting a parliamentary authority:

### **PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY**

The rules contained in the current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the [Association/Society/Union] in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rules of order the [Association/Society/Union] may adopt. RONR (12thed.) 56:66.

Since 2011, the "latest" edition was *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (11thEdition), but now the new 12<sup>th</sup> edition released on September 1, 2020 is the current edition.

But don't immediately toss out your 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, assuming nothing in it applies anymore. The every-10-years-or-so revisions to Robert's tend to be tweaks, not complete rewrites. For instance, the 2011 edition had about 120 changes, but most were minor. A few significant changes included altering the name of one motion ("Point of Information" to "Request for Information"), additional language about electronic voting, and expanding sections on member and presiding officer misbehavior.

The changes to the new 12<sup>th</sup> Edition are also important, but not likely to significantly change how most meetings are run. I reviewed an early copy of the new book this weekend and note these **general differences** between the two editions:

- ▶ The 11thEdition was 716 pages; the 12thEdition is 714 pages.
- ▶ The paper size for the 12th Edition is slightly larger and has more space/words per page.
- ▶ The number of total sections, 63, is the same.

- ▶ The section names are identical in the two editions.
- ▶ Section 51 (“Reports of Boards and Committees”) has three new subsections:
  - “Form and Reception of Committee Reports in General,”
  - “Disposition of Particular Types of Committee Reports, and
  - “Oral Reports; Partial and Minority Reports”
- ▶ Paragraph and subparagraph numbers have been added to aid in referencing specific provisions (e.g., “RONR (12<sup>th</sup> ed.) 35:10-12”).
- ▶ No motion names have been changed, as occurred in the last edition.
- ▶ The Index has been expanded and has more detail.
- ▶ A new Appendix adds 15 pages of “Sample Rules for Electronic Meetings,” which is certainly a sign of our times. Online resources from the publisher suggest there are 89 changes between the 11th Edition and 12th Edition. The book’s preface states that there are 9 “notable” revisions and 13 “important points” of revision. That would seem to leave 67 other “minor” changes the authors thought should be referenced. (Based on history, there will also be many other editorial/wording changes that don’t get special mention.) Many of the differences are wording clarifications or fine distinctions mostly of concern to professionals, but here are some changes that may be of interest.

**The 12th Edition adds greater detail or clarification as to:**

- ▶ different types of electronic meetings and their rules, including possible wording for “Full-Featured Internet Meeting Services,” “Teleconference with Internet Voting and Document Sharing,” “Some Members Participate by Speakerphone in Otherwise Face-to-Face Meeting,” and “Telephone Meeting Without Internet Support”
- ▶ executive session practices, the secrecy of discussions or decisions from closed sessions, and lifting secrecy
- ▶ the process of correcting and approving minutes
- ▶ the term “ballot” being broadened to include electronic devices
- ▶ debate on nominations
- ▶ the secrecy of ballot votes
- ▶ ratification of actions from an unauthorized electronic meeting
- ▶ when electing a group of individuals to staggered terms, who gets the longest term
- ▶ what should or should not be included in meeting minutes

- ▶ the process for “filling blanks” (related to amending), and “close suggestions” no longer used
- ▶ how subordinate body bylaws must (or need not) conform to those of the superior body
- ▶ the phrase “one year” term of office possibly being more or less than one year
- ▶ the duties of a vice-president
- ▶ when a negative vote is “intrinsically irrelevant” and not needed
- ▶ the adoption of convention standing rules
- ▶ quorum at conventions related to attendance
- ▶ when the Chair can “assume” a motion
- ▶ timeliness requirements for a Point of Order and greater details on what are “continuing violations” Some changes will be written about in greater detail on this site in future articles. For a more comprehensive list of changes in the 12<sup>th</sup> Edition from the authors, visit *What’s New in the 12<sup>th</sup> Edition of Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*.