

John Noonan



# Could a **Professional Registered Parliamentarian** Help Your Business?

**G**ood parliamentary procedure is based on sound democratic principles and respect for the dignity of the individual.

A Professional Registered Parliamentarian (PRP) is a consultant who advises the presiding officer and other officers, committees, and members on matters of parliamentary procedure. He or she will focus on process and recommend appropriate customized procedures for use during a convention or board meeting. Such advisors often help to transform a long, difficult meeting into a short, painless one.

***By advising the organization of appropriate protocols regarding meeting procedures, a parliamentarian becomes a core instrument in running a more succinct and accurate meeting.***

A PRP is an individual who has been registered by the National Association of Parliamentarians on the basis of passing an extensive examination on advanced knowledge of parliamentary law and procedures according to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*.

Specifically, a PRP may assist your association in one or more of the following ways.

- **Convention parliamentarian** to assist officers, boards, committees, and individual members, as requested
- **Consultant** on by-laws, other rules, or parliamentary problems
- **Election consultant** in both process and procedure
- **Instructor** for convention delegates, individuals, classes, or seminars
- **Professional presiding officer and/or**

**meeting facilitator** for conventions, controversial meetings, or other programs

- **Trainer, consultant, and advisor** on *Robert's Rules of Order*

The duties of a parliamentarian arise mainly from the by-laws of the association and its parliamentary authority, i.e., *Robert's Rules of Order*. The PRP's most important work occurs well before the meeting begins, with a careful preconvention review of the governing documents, the minutes from the previous meeting, and the agenda developed for this meeting. The PRP will then meet with the president/chair and other officers in advance of the meeting, to anticipate and review difficulties that might arise during the meeting and develop strategies to meet these challenges.

During an association meeting, the PRP will serve as the principal advisor to

the president, officers, and the committee chairs in managing the actual transaction of business. The PRP will sit next to the presiding officer to provide advice when required and call the chair's attention to any error in the proceedings that may effect the substantive rights of any member or otherwise do harm to the association.

The parliamentarian offers advice to the presiding officer in an unobtrusive manner and does not call attention to small errors unless they infringe upon the rights of the members or are in violation of the by-laws

A PRP offers an opinion or an interpretation, never a ruling, but may cite a specific rule or reference to support an opinion. Only the presiding officer rules, i.e., makes an official decision. A decision made by the presiding officer can still be reversed by the assembly.

If requested to do so, the parliamentarian will speak to the assembly to explain procedural developments, options of the membership, consequences of a motion, rulings of the chair, or results of a vote in question.

An inexperienced presiding officer may ask the parliamentarian to preside over the business portion of a meeting or convention. Sometimes a parliamentary dilemma may be so complex, the presiding officer will vacate the chair and request the parliamentarian to preside until the problem is resolved, or until the pending motion (or series of resolutions) has been decided. Such an action may be taken only with the assembly's permission.

By advising the organization of appropriate protocols regarding meeting procedures, a parliamentarian becomes a core instrument in running a more succinct and accurate meeting. His or her skill set ensures that the rules of good parliamentary procedure are followed and that all members adhere to the "golden rule"—dignity for the individual. ▲

**John F. Noonan**, PRP, ASP, CGA, is a Professional Registered Parliamentarian, presentation skills trainer and coach, and a benefit auctioneer.

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