

ITEM 17 | ADJOURN

The motion to adjourn (when unqualified) is always a privileged motion except when, for lack of provision for a future meeting, as in a mass meeting, or at the last meeting of a convention, its effect, if adopted, would be to dissolve the assembly permanently. In any organized society holding several regular meetings during the year, it is, when unqualified, always a privileged motion. When not privileged it is treated as any other main motion, being debatable and amendable, etc.

The privileged motion to adjourn takes precedence of all others, except the privileged motion "to fix the time to which to adjourn," to which it yields. It is not debatable, nor can it be amended or have any other subsidiary [12] motion applied to it; nor can a vote on it be reconsidered. It may be withdrawn.

The motion to adjourn can be repeated if there has been any intervening business, though it is simply progress in debate. The assembly may decline to adjourn in order to hear one speech or to take one vote, and therefore it must have the privilege of renewing the motion to adjourn when there has been any progress in business or debate. But this high privilege is liable to abuse to the annoyance of the assembly, if the chair does not prevent it by refusing to entertain the motion when evidently made for obstructive purposes, as when the assembly has just voted it down, and nothing has occurred since to show the possibility of the assembly's wishing to adjourn. [See Dilatory Motions, 40.]

The motion to adjourn, like every other motion, cannot be made except by a member who has the floor. When made by one who has not risen and addressed the chair and been recognized, it can be entertained only by general consent. It cannot be made when the assembly is engaged in voting, or verifying the vote, but is in order after the vote has been taken by ballot before it has been announced. In such case the ballot vote should be announced as soon as business is resumed. Where much time will be consumed in counting ballots the assembly may adjourn, having previously appointed a time for the next meeting, or, still better, may take a recess as explained in the next section. No appeal, or question of order, or inquiry, should be entertained after the motion to adjourn has been made, unless it is of such a nature that its decision is necessary before an adjournment, or unless the assembly refuses to adjourn, when it would be in order.



Before putting the motion to adjourn, the chair, in most organizations, should be sure that no important matters have been overlooked. If there are announcements to be made they should be attended to before taking the vote, or at least, before announcing it. If there is something requiring action before adjournment, the fact should be stated and the mover requested to withdraw his motion to adjourn. The fact that the motion to adjourn is undebatable does not prevent the assembly's being informed of business requiring attention before adjournment. Members should not leave their seats until the chair has declared the assembly adjourned.

An adjournment sine die -- that is, without day -- closes the session and if there is no provision for convening the assembly again, of course the adjournment dissolves the assembly. But, if any provision has been made whereby another meeting may be held, its effect is simply to close the session. In an assembly, as a convention, which meets regularly only once during its life, but whose by-laws provide for calling special meetings, an adjournment sine die means only the ending of the regular session of the convention, which, however, may be reconvened as provided in the by-laws. If called to meet again the assembly meets as a body already organized.

When the motion to adjourn is qualified in any way, or when its effect is to dissolve the assembly without any provision being made for holding another meeting of the assembly, it loses its privilege and is a main motion, debatable and amendable and subject to having applied to it any of the subsidiary motions.

In committees where no provision has been made for future meetings, an adjournment is always at the call of the chair unless otherwise specified. When a special committee, or the committee of the whole, has completed the business referred to it, instead of adjourning, it rises and reports, which is equivalent to adjournment without day.

The Effect upon Unfinished Business of an adjournment, unless the assembly has adopted rules to the contrary, is as follows:

- (a) When the adjournment does not close the session [63], the business interrupted by it is the first in order after the reading of the minutes at the next meeting, and is treated the same as if there had been no adjournment, an adjourned meeting being legally the continuation of the meeting of which it is an adjournment.

(b) When the adjournment closes a session¹ in an assembly having regular sessions as often as quarterly, the unfinished business should be taken up, just where it was interrupted at the next succeeding session previous to new business; provided that, in a body elected, either wholly or in part, for a definite time (as a board of directors one-third of whom are elected annually), unfinished business falls to the ground with the expiration of the term for which the board, or any part of it, was elected.

(c) When the adjournment closes a session in an assembly which does not meet as often as quarterly, or when the assembly is an elective body, and this session ends the term of a portion of the members, the adjournment puts an end to all business unfinished at the close of the session. The business may be introduced at the next session, the same as if it had never been before the assembly.

Footnotes

¹ "All business before committees of the House at the end of one session shall be resumed at the commencement of the next session of the same Congress in the same manner as if no adjournment had taken place." H.R. Rule 26. In practice this rule is applied to business before the House as well as to that before committees. But unfinished business does not go over from one Congress to another Congress. When a society meets only once in six months or a year, there is liable to be as great a difference in the personnel of the two consecutive meetings as of two consecutive Congresses, and only trouble would result from allowing unfinished business to hold over to the next yearly meeting.

