

ITEM 19 | QUESTIONS OF PRIVILEGE

Questions relating to the rights and privileges of the assembly, or to any of its members, take precedence of all other motions except the three preceding relating to adjournment and recess, to which they yield. If the question is one requiring immediate action it may interrupt a member's speech; as, for example, when, from any cause, a report that is being read cannot be heard in a part of the hall. But if it is not of such urgency it should not interrupt a member after he has commenced his speech. Before a member has commenced speaking, even though he has been assigned the floor, it is in order for another member to raise a question of privilege. When a member rises for this purpose he should not wait to be recognized, but immediately on rising should say, "Mr. Chairman," -- and when he catches the chairman's eye, should add, "I rise to a question of privilege affecting the assembly," or "I rise to a question of personal privilege." The chair directs him to state his question. and then decides whether it is one of privilege or not. From this decision any two members may appeal. The chair may decide it to be a question of privilege, but not of sufficient urgency to justify interrupting the speaker. In such a case the speaker should be allowed to continue, and, when he has finished, the chair should immediately assign the floor to the member who raised the question of privilege to make his motion if one is necessary. Whenever his motion is made and stated, it becomes the immediately pending question and is open to debate and amendment and the application of all the other subsidiary motions just as any main motion. Its high privilege extends only to giving it the right to consideration in preference to any other question except one relating to adjournment or recess, and, in cases of great urgency, the right to interrupt a member while speaking. It cannot interrupt voting or verifying a vote. As soon as the question of privilege is disposed of, the business is resumed exactly where it was interrupted; if a member had the floor at the time the question of privilege was raised, the chair assigns him the floor again.

Questions of privilege may relate to the privileges of the assembly or only of a member, the former having the precedence if the two come into competition. Questions of personal privilege must relate to one as a member of the assembly, or else relate to charges against his character which, if true, would incapacitate him for membership. Questions like the following relate to the privileges of the assembly: those relating to the organization of the assembly; or to the comfort of its members, as the heating,



lighting, ventilation, etc., of the hall, and freedom from noise and other disturbance; or to the conduct of its officers or employees; or to the punishing of a member for disorderly conduct or other offence; or to the conduct of reporters for the press, or to the accuracy of published reports of proceedings.

Privileged questions include, besides questions of privilege, a call for the orders of the day and the privileged motions relating to adjournment and recess. This distinction between privileged questions and questions of privilege should be borne in mind.

