

**ITEM 20 | ORDERS OF THE DAY<sup>1</sup>**

A Call for the Orders of the Day (which, in an ordinary assembly, is a demand that the assembly conform to its program or order of business) can be made at any time when no other privileged [14] motion is pending and the order of business is being varied from, and only then. It requires no second, and is in order when another has the floor, even though it interrupts a speech, as a single member has a right to demand that the order of business be conformed to. It is out of order to call for the orders of the day when there is no variation from the order of business. Thus, the orders of the day cannot be called for when another question is pending, provided there are no special orders made for that time or an earlier time, as general orders cannot interrupt a question actually under consideration. The call must be simply for the orders of the day, and not for a specified one, as the latter has no privilege. When the time has arrived for which a special order has been made, a call for the orders of the day taken precedence of everything except the other privileged motions, namely, those relating to adjournment and recess, and questions of privilege, to which it yields. If there are no special orders a call for the orders of the day cannot interrupt a pending question; but, if made when no question is pending, it is in order even when another has the floor and has made a main motion, provided the chair has not stated the question. Until the time of actually taking up the general orders for consideration this call yields to a motion to reconsider, or to a calling up of a motion to reconsider, previously made. A call for the orders of the day cannot be debated or amended, or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it.

It is the duty of the chair to announce the business to come before the assembly in its proper order, and if he always performs this duty there will be no occasion for calling for the orders of the day. But there are occasions when the chair fails to notice that the time assigned for a special order has arrived, or he thinks that the assembly is so interested in the pending question that it does not wish yet to take up the special order assigned for that time, and therefore delays announcing it. In such a case, as already stated, any member has a right to call for the orders of the day, and thus compel the chair either to announce the order or else put the question, "Will the assembly proceed to the orders of the day?" To refuse to take up the orders at the appointed time is an interference with the order of business similar to suspending the rules and should require the same vote namely, two-thirds. In other words, a two-thirds vote in the negative is necessary to



prevent proceeding to the orders of the day. If the assembly refuses to proceed to the orders of the day the orders cannot be called for again until the pending business is disposed of.

When the orders of the day are announced, or when they are called for, if it is desired to prolong the discussion of the pending question, some one should move that the time for considering the pending question be extended a certain number of minutes. A two-thirds vote is required for the adoption of this motion as it changes the order of business or program. After the order has been announced and the question is actually pending, it is debatable and may be amended or have any other subsidiary motion applied to it the same as any other main motion. The orders of the day in a mass cannot be laid on the table or postponed, but when an order has been actually taken up it may, by a majority vote, be laid on the table, or postponed, or committed, so that, if there is no other order to interfere, the consideration of the question previously pending will be resumed. Whenever the orders of the day are disposed of, the consideration of the interrupted business is taken up at the point where it was interrupted by the call for the orders of the day. By suspending the rules by a two-thirds vote any question may be taken up out of its proper order.

Orders of the Day. When one or more subjects have been assigned to a particular day or hour (by postponing them to, or making them special orders for, that day or hour, or by adopting a program or order of business), they become the orders of the day for that day or hour, and they cannot be considered before that time, except by a two-thirds vote. They are divided into General Orders and Special Orders, the latter always taking precedence of the former.

A General Order is usually made by simply postponing a question to a certain day or hour, or after a certain event. It does not suspend any rule, and therefore cannot interrupt business. But after the appointed hour has arrived it has the preference, when no question is pending, over all other questions except special orders and reconsideration. It cannot be considered before the appointed time except by a reconsideration or by a two-thirds vote. When the order of business provides for orders of the day, questions simply postponed to a meeting, without specifying the hour, come up under that head. If no provision is made for orders of the day, then such postponed questions come up after the disposal of the business pending at the previous adjournment, and after the questions on the calendar that were not disposed of at the previous meeting.



An order of business that specifies the order in which, but not the time when, the business shall be transacted, together with the postponed questions constitutes the general orders. This order cannot be varied from except by general consent or by suspending the rules by a two-thirds vote. If all of this business is not disposed of before adjournment, it becomes "unfinished business," and is treated as unfinished business, as explained in 17 under The Effect Upon Unfinished Business of an Adjournment.

As general orders cannot interrupt the consideration of a pending question, it follows that any general order made for an earlier hour, though made afterwards, by not being disposed of in time may interfere with the general order previously made. Therefore, general orders must take precedence among themselves in the order of the times to which they were postponed, regardless of when the general order was made. If several are appointed for the same time, then they take precedence in the order in which they were made. If several appointed for the same time were made at the same time, then they take precedence in the order in which they were arranged in the motion making the general order.

To Make a Special Order requires a two-thirds vote, because it suspends all rules that interfere with its consideration at the specific time, except those relating to motions for adjournment or recess, or to questions of privilege or to special orders made before it was made. A pending question is made a special order for a future time by "Postponing it and making it a special order for that time." [See Postpone to a Certain Time, 31, which should be read in connection with this section.] If the question is not pending, the motion to make it a special order for a certain time is a main motion, debatable, amendable, etc. The member desirous of making it a special order should obtain the floor when nothing is pending, and business of that class, or new business, is in order, and say, "I move that the following resolution be made the special order for [specifying the time]," and then reads the resolution and hands it to the chair. Or he may adopt this form: "I offer the following resolution, and move that it be made a special order for the next meeting." Or, in case a committee has been appointed to submit a revision of the constitution, the following resolution may be adopted: "Resolved, That the revision of the constitution be made the special order for Thursday morning and thereafter until it is disposed of." Another way of making special orders is by adopting a program, or order of business, in which is specified the hour for taking up each topic.

Program. It is customary to adopt a program, or order of business, in conventions in session for several days. Since the delegates and invited speakers come from a distance, it is very important that the program be strictly adhered to. No change can be made in it after its adoption by the assembly, except by a two-thirds vote. When the hour assigned to a certain topic arrives, the chair puts to vote any questions pending and announces the topic for the hour. This is done because, under such circumstances, the form of the program implies that the hour, or other time, assigned to each topic is all that can be allowed. But, if any one moves to lay the question on the table, or postpone it to a certain time, or refer it to a committee, the chair should recognize the motion and immediately put it to vote without debate. Should any one move to extend the time allotted the pending question, it should be decided instantly without debate, a two-thirds vote being necessary for the extension. It is seldom that an extension is desirable, as it is unfair to the next topic. When an invited speaker exceeds his time it is extremely discourteous to call for the orders of the day. The chair should have an understanding with invited speakers as to how he will indicate the expiration of their time. This can be done by tapping on a book or a bell. It is usually better to have it understood that the signal will be given one minute before the time expires, or longer if the speaker wishes it, so that he can properly close his address. At the expiration of the time the presiding officer should rise and attract the attention of the speaker still continues speaking, the chair that the time has expired, etc.

A series of special orders made by a single vote is treated the same as a program -- that is, at the hour assigned to a particular subject it interrupts the question assigned to the previous hour. If it is desired to continue the discussion of the pending topic at another time, it can be laid on the table or postponed until after the close of the interrupting question, by a majority vote.

Special Orders made at different times for specified hours. When special orders that have been made at different times come into conflict, the one that was first made takes precedence of all special orders made afterwards, though the latter were made for an earlier hour. No special order can be made so as to interfere with one previously made. By reconsidering the vote making the first special order, they can be arranged in the order desired. Suppose, after a special order has been made for 3 P.M., one is made for 2 P.M., and still later one is made for 4 P.M.; if the 2 P.M. order is pending at 3 P.M., the order for 3 P.M., having been made first,



interrupts it and continues, if not previously disposed of, beyond 4 P.M., regardless of the special order for that hour. When it, the 3 P.M. order, is disposed of, the special order for 2 P.M. is resumed even if it is after 4 o'clock, because the 2 P.M. order was made before the 4 P.M. order. The only exception to this rule is in the case of the hour fixed for recess or adjournment. When that hour arrives the chair announces it and declares the assembly adjourned, or in recess, even though there is a special order pending that was made before the hour for recess or adjournment was fixed. When the chair announces the hour, any one can move to postpone the time for adjournment, or to extend the time for considering the pending question a certain number of minutes. These motions are undebatable, and require a two-thirds vote.

Special Orders when only the day or meeting is specified. Often subjects are made special orders for a meeting without specifying an hour. If the order of business provides for orders of the day, they come up under that head, taking precedence of general orders. If there is no provision for orders of the day, they come up under unfinished business -- that is, before new business. If there is no order of business, then they may be called up at any time after the minutes are disposed of.

The Special Order for a Meeting. Sometimes a subject is made the special order for a meeting, as for Tuesday morning in a convention, in which case it is announced by the chair as the pending business immediately after the disposal of the minutes. This particular form is used when it is desired to devote an entire meeting, or so much of it as is necessary, to considering a special subject, as the revision of the by-laws. This form of a special order should take precedence of the other forms of special orders. It is debatable and amendable.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> While Congress retains the call for the orders of the day in its list of privileged motions, it has abandoned the use of orders of the day, having, instead, a detailed order of business with several calendars. It retains special orders which may be made by a two-thirds vote.

