

ITEM 48 | MOTIONS REQUIRING MORE THAN A MAJORITY VOTE

Majority Vote. Any legitimate motion not included among those mentioned below as requiring more than a majority vote, requires for its adoption only a majority; that is, more than half of the votes cast, ignoring blanks, at a legal meeting where a quorum is present, unless a larger vote for its adoption is required by the rules of the assembly.

General Consent or Unanimous Vote. By general, or unanimous, or silent, consent the assembly can do business with little regard for the rules of procedure, as they are made for the protection of the minority, and when there is no minority to protect, there is little use for the restraint of the rules, except such as protect the rights of absent members, or the right to a secret vote. In the former case the consent of the absentees cannot be given, and in the latter case the consent cannot be withheld by the minority without exposing their votes, which they cannot be compelled to do. When the election is not by ballot and there are several candidates one of whom receives a majority vote, sometimes a motion is made to make the vote unanimous. It should never be made except by the candidate with the largest number of votes after the successful one, or his representative, and even then its propriety is doubtful. One negative vote defeats a motion to make a vote unanimous, as a single objection defeats a request for general consent.

By the legitimate use of the principle that the rules are designed for the protection of the minority, and generally need not be strictly enforced when there is no minority to protect, business may be greatly expedited. When there is evidently no opposition, the formality of voting can be avoided by the chair's asking if there is any objection to the proposed action, and if there is none, announcing the result. The action thus taken is said to be done by general consent, or unanimous or silent consent. Thus, after an order has been adopted limiting the speeches to two minutes each, if a speaker is so interesting that when his time has expired there is a general demand for him to go on, the chair, instead of waiting for a motion and taking a vote, could accept it as the will of the assembly that the speaker's time be extended, and would direct him to proceed. Or, he might say that if there is no objection the member's time will be extended two minutes, or some other time. [See also 46:16]

Two-thirds Vote. A two-thirds vote means two-thirds of the votes cast, ignoring blanks which should never be counted. This must not



be confused with a vote of two-thirds of the members present, or two-thirds of the members, terms sometimes used in by-laws. To illustrate the difference: Suppose 14 members vote on a question in a meeting of a society where 20 are present out of a total membership of 70, a two-thirds vote would be 10; a two-thirds vote of the members present would be 14; and a vote of two-thirds of the members would be 47.

There has been established as a compromise between the rights of the individual and the rights of the assembly the principle that a two-thirds vote is required to adopt any motion that suspends or modifies a rule of order previously adopted; or prevents the introduction of a question for consideration; or closes, or limits, or extends the limits of debate; or limits the freedom of nomination or voting; or closes nominations or the polls; or deprives one of membership or office. It will be found that every motion in the following list belongs to one of the classes just mentioned.

Motions Requiring a Two-thirds Vote.¹

Amend (Annul, Repeal, or Rescind) any part of the Constitution, By-laws, or Rules of Order, previously adopted; it also requires previous notice	68
Amend or Rescind a Standing Rule, a Program or Order of Business, or a Resolution, previously adopted, without notice being given at a previous meeting or in the call for the meeting	37
Take up a Question out of its Proper Order	22
Suspend the Rules	22
Make a Special Order	20
Discharge an Order of the Day before it is pending	20
Refuse to Proceed to the Orders of the Day	20
Sustain an Objection to the Consideration of a Question	23
Previous Question	29
Limit, or Extend the Limits, of Debate	30
Extend the Time Appointed for Adjournment or for Taking a Recess	20



Close Nominations [26] or the Polls	25
Limit the Names to be Voted for	
Expel from Membership: it also requires previous notice and trial	75
Depose from Office: it also requires previous notice	
Discharge a Committee when previous notice has not been given	32
Reconsider in Committee when a member of the majority is absent and has not been notified of the proposed reconsideration	36

Footnotes

¹ The U.S. Constitution requires a two-thirds vote of both Houses to pass a resolution proposing an amendment to the Constitution, to pass a vetoed bill, or to remove political disabilities; a two-thirds vote of either House to expel a member; and a vote of two-thirds of the Senators present to ratify a treaty or convict on an impeachment. The House requires a two-thirds vote to suspend the rules, but is obliged to allow a majority to order the previous question or to limit debate, as otherwise its business could never be transacted. Still, a bill cannot be passed without at least forty minutes of debate, as that is allowed after the suspension of the rules or the previous question has been ordered. [See foot note to 44.]

