

ABC 2020 Motion Procedures

Summary: These procedures for ABC discussion of motions were approved by the ABC AWC Committee on Feb. 8, and by the Board of Trustees on Feb. 20. The goal is to improve the delegate debate experience, and also to better manage limited time, by clarifying how we use Robert's Rules of Order and group conscience tools at the 2020 ABC.

In essence, this process increases the emphasis on group conscience discussion before a motion is introduced, and also creates a path for smaller groups of interested delegates to work out wordsmithing and other detail issues offline, so that the larger group's time is respected.

Instead of jumping straight into introduction and seconding of motions, we will do the following:

- 1) **Limit discussions of each ballot measure to 30 minutes**, beginning with the items that received the highest percentage of fellowship votes.
- 2) **Begin with 10 minutes of open delegate discussion**, so that we can have a sense of the group BEFORE a motion is introduced.
- 3) **Take wordsmithing and other detail debates offline** by tabling motions that need additional work before a final vote. Bring them back for a vote if differences can be resolved by a smaller group of delegates.
- 4) **Authorize the chair to "pause" motions to postpone, table, or call the question** except at designated times within the 30-minute discussion window, as these motions are confusing, time-confusing and tend to shut down discussion. *In response to the Board's vote, change to the Operating Procedures and Policy Manual (OPPM) has been requested to give the ABC chair this authority.*

On a separate topic, time will be designated during the second day to consider new floor motions from delegates, using a process already in the OPPM.

The following is the full proposal, as well as a flow chart for how the discussion process would work. This process should keep each measure to 30 minutes or less, while allowing a maximum of open dialogue and a minimum of Roberts maneuvering.

Set Time Limits and Order of Ballot Measure Discussions

1. In compliance with pages 36 and 37 of the OPPM, ABC chair will set a time limit of 30 minutes of open-floor discussion for each motion. He/she also will announce an OPPM rule limiting each speaker to one opportunity to speak per each round of discussion.
2. Start with ballot measures that got the highest fellowship percentage and debate in descending order of support. This respects the fellowship's feedback.

Initial Group Conscience Discussion

3. After a ballot measure is read and introduced, the chair declares 10 minutes of open discussion on broad issues. Is it a good idea? Bad idea? Are there unintended consequences? At the end of 10 minutes, or when there are no more speakers, the ABC chair asks for a show of hands for three positions: Do you support the motion as written? Oppose it in any form? Is the idea generally good, but needs some significant revision?

Introducing and Debating a Formal Motion

4. Based on the show of hands, ABC chair suggests how Roberts might best be used:
 - a. Where there is a clear majority for support, ABC chair calls for a motion to approve, and sets up to 10 minutes of debate before voting and minority opinion.
 - b. Where a majority favors rejecting, ABC chair declares that the ballot measure is unlikely to receive substantial unanimity (of 60 percent or more) and requests a motion to postpone or remove it from the agenda. 5 minutes of debate, followed by a vote and minority opinion.
 - c. Where there is a strong body of support but also a significant desire for amendments, edits, etc., the ABC chair asks for a motion to table the measure and assign it to a small-group problem-solving discussion. If differences are resolved, it will be brought back to the delegates on Day 2.
 - d. Similarly, if an amendment is introduced that itself causes extensive debate, the ABC chair may recommend a motion to table for small-group discussion.

Problem-Solving Discussion Groups

Where there is a likely path to 60 percent approval but not enough time to parse the issues within 30 minutes, the preferred path is to table an item and invite a group of interested delegates to explore a compromise amendment, during designated breaks in the ABC. This will keep the larger meeting from being bogged down by detail discussions.

Time would be set aside on Day 2 for delegates to consider amended proposals.

Calling the Question/Motion to Postpone or Table

Because there will be a 30-minute time limit on each item, the board voted to permit the chair not to recognize motions to “call the question” or “move to postpone or table.” In previous ABCs, these motions were highly confusing, often thwarted group discussion, and actually burned up extra time for their own debate and vote.

Instead, the chair may resolve requests to “speed debate” informally. For instance, the chair might say, “we’re down to two minutes of debate. Calling the question will take longer, so I’m going to suggest we allow the remaining debate to occur.” Or, “Calling the question requires debate and a vote, so let me just ask for a show of hands: does anyone object to ending debate now?”

Flow Chart: How the Process Would Work

- 1) Secretary or other person designated by chair reads the proposed motion into the record.
- 2) Chair initiates 10 minutes of open discussion, with no motion introduced.
- 3) After 10 minutes, the chair asks for a show of hands to get a “sense of the group,” posing these three questions:
 - a. “If you strongly support this proposal in the form that it is written, please raise your hands (or paddles).”
 - i. If a strong majority raises its hands, the chair says, “I believe this motion has substantial unanimity at this time. I would invite a motion to approve this measure.”
 - ii. 10 minutes for additional debate and vote.
 - iii. If needed, minority opinion and a final vote
 - b. “If you strongly oppose the purpose of this proposal, and are unlikely to support it in any form, please raise your hands.”
 - i. If a majority raises its hands, the chair says, “I believe this motion is unlikely to receive substantial unanimity at this time. I would invite a motion to postpone this item until a future ABC.”
 - ii. Up to 10 minutes for additional debate and vote.
 - iii. If needed, minority opinion and a final vote.
 - c. “If you generally support the purpose of this proposal, but would require amending it before you could vote yes, please raise your hands.”

- i. If an amendment is needed to achieve substantial unanimity, the chair would invite 5 minutes of discussion to identify what amendments are being requested.
- ii. At that time, if issues are not resolved, the chair says, "I believe this proposal requires additional work before presenting it for a final vote. I would invite a motion to table it until later in this ABC, so that interested delegates can try to amend the motion as needed."
- iii. Up to 10 minutes for additional debate and vote.
- iv. If needed, minority opinion and a final vote.
- v. Chair designates a time and place for follow-up small-group discussion on possible amendments.
- vi. At a designated time, the measure is reintroduced if issues can be resolved during small-group discussions.

New Proposals From the Floor

Based on experience from prior ABCs, the OPPM permits delegates to introduce motions from the floor, but delegates will consider them only after finding that the issue is so time-sensitive that it must be voted on during that ABC. This process will be handled in the following way.

1. Inform delegates they may submit written motions to the ABC secretary and chair. Post motions as they are received on an easel.
2. Set a time on Day 2 for delegates to consider whether to add the motions to the ABC calendar, based on OPPM criteria.
3. Seek the delegates' guidance on most urgent motions, that are so time-sensitive they must be voted on immediately. Only proceed on motions that have at least a 60 percent show of support.
4. Where more than one floor motion is considered time-sensitive, seek the delegates' guidance on which should be considered first.
5. The chair will ask for a motion to adjourn at about 5 pm on Day 2. (Delegates have the authority to defeat this motion if a critical item hasn't been considered, so it is important that the most urgent items are considered in a timely manner)

From Page 37 of the OPPM:

Motions may be made from the floor by any Delegate during the ABC according to guidelines provided by the Conference Chair. The Delegates will then determine if any of these motions are of a time sensitive nature and should be discussed and acted upon during the ABC. If any floor motions are not deemed time sensitive, they will be referred to the Board for potential action."