

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS AUXILIARY
DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN
PARLIAMENTARIAN'S REPORT

This bulletin was prepared in response to requests for copies of an article I read at the Mid-Winter Question & Answer/Training Session. Those present felt that this information would be helpful to all of our presiding officers.

According to an article by Parliamentarian J. Michael Blaska in the February 2015 issue of *Wisconsin Counties* magazine, the most misused of all motions is when one moves to *Table* an item when they wish to kill or delay indefinitely.

This motion is out of order. The correct motion is to *Lay on the Table*, and the intent is to set the matter aside until later in the same meeting. It could be because someone needs to get information or because someone has another meeting scheduled. When the motion to *Lay on the Table* is made, the chair (president) must know why it is being made. If it is made to kill or delay indefinitely, then the motion must be called out of order by the chair.

The motion to *Lay on the Table* cannot be made when someone else has the floor, it must be seconded, is not debatable or amendable, and it requires a majority vote. These same rules apply when the body is ready to resume discussion on the matter. Then, the proper motion is to *Take from the Table*.

When the intent is to kill or delay the issue indefinitely, the proper motion is to *Postpone Indefinitely*. This motion effectively kills the motion and avoids a direct vote on the matter. It can be used to disposed of poorly written, ill-advised or embarrassing motions that members would rather not be recorded as voting on. I can also be used to test the strength of a proposal. If the motion to *Postpone indefinitely* passes, the matter is dead. If it is defeated, you now know where the votes are and can decide if you wish to make amendments.

The motion to *Postpone indefinitely* is out of order when someone else has the floor, must be seconded, is debatable, is not amendable and it requires a majority vote.

The motion that should be used instead of what most of us called a motion to *Table* is correctly called a motion to *Postpone to a Certain Time*. A motion to just *Postpone* is out of order. The motion must be time specific, such as a definite day, meeting, hour or until after a certain event. Examples of proper motions would be *Postpone* until the next meeting, *Postpone* until after the finance meeting, or *Postpone* until after July 4.

The motion to *Postpone to a Certain Time* cannot be made when someone else has the floor, must be seconded, is debatable and amendable, and it requires a majority vote.

Adopting a motion to *Lay on the Table* when the intent is to kill or delay it deprives the membership of its basic right to debate the matter. Debate is allowed with the motions to *Postpone indefinitely* and *Postpone to a Certain Time*. It also deprives the members of the ability to amend, which is allowed with the motion to *Postpone to a Certain Time*.

This year is the first year that the VFW Auxiliary is governed by *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th edition* rather than Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law and Procedures. Mr. Blaska did use *Robert's Rules of Order* as the source for his article.

While the two sets of rules are very similar in many ways, there are differences. Hopefully I will be able to help with questions that arise during the course of our Auxiliary year. I am not an expert by any means, but hopefully I can help find answers when you have questions.

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