



THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX EPISCOPATE OF AMERICA

The Most Reverend Dr. NATHANIEL Popp, Archbishop

MEETINGS - VOTING: YAYS, NAYS, AND ABSTENTIONS

SUMMARY

In properly conducted votes, only the "Yes" votes are counted and recorded. In most cases, it is not even necessary to count the "No" votes, because the motion passes or fails solely according to the number of "Yes" votes.

It is never proper to ask for abstentions. Members who wish to "abstain" should simply not vote.

DETAILS

The parliamentary authority for all bodies in the Episcopate is Robert's Rules of Order, the same authority used in virtually every deliberative and legislative body in the United States and Canada.

According to Robert's, voting in any meeting is by "Aye/Yay/Yes" or "Nay/No" on the specific motion currently before the body. Passage of a motion requires a majority "Yes" vote, whether simple majority or 2/3, according to the particular motion.

HOW VOTES ARE COUNTED

Normally, when the vote is taken, the chair should only count and record the number of "Yes" votes. Here's why:

If the number of "Yes" votes meets or exceeds the required majority, the number of "No" votes is irrelevant for parliamentary purposes. The important thing is that the motion has passed.

If the number of "Yes" votes is less than the required majority, the number of "No" votes is still irrelevant. The important thing is that the motion has failed.

ABSTENTIONS

The chair should never call for abstentions. This is a common error that chairs often commit.

In Robert's Rules there is no such thing as a vote to "Abstain." Why? Because "abstain" means you abstained from voting. In other words, you did not vote.

AM I REQUIRED TO VOTE "YES" OR "NO"?

Of course, no one can be forced to vote. If a member wishes to abstain from voting, the proper thing to do is to remain silent when the vote is taken. Members cannot be forced to respond when the chair (erroneously) calls for "abstentions."

WHEN DO WE COUNT "NO" VOTES?

"No" votes may be counted if there is a question about the total number of votes being cast. In that case, the "Yes" and "No" votes are added together to yield the total number of votes. Abstentions are never counted in the total number of votes cast, because abstaining means you did not cast a vote.

Even so, many bodies routinely count and record "No" votes. This is not necessary but customary, and a courtesy to the voting members.

EXCEPTION TO THE RULE -- ROLL CALL VOTE

When the vote is taken by roll call, each member is expected to enter a vote and have their vote recorded in the minutes. In that case, a member who does not wish to vote may say "Abstain" or "Present" to indicate that they do not choose to vote. Again, abstentions are never counted in the total number of votes cast.

EFFECT ON REQUIRED MAJORITY

It is important to understand that when a member fails to vote (abstains from voting), the number of total votes is reduced, which then may or may not reduce the number of "Yes" votes required for a majority. If the vote is close, or the number of nonvoters/abstentions is large, the chair should count the total of "Yes" and "No" votes to determine the proper majority.