

CHAPTER

IV

MEETING AND SESSION

§8. MEETING, SESSION, RECESS, ADJOURNMENT 1

Explanation of Terms

In an assembly, as alluded to above on pages 2 and 25, each event of the members' being assembled to transact business constitutes a separate *meeting*; but the complete unit of engagement in proceedings by the assembly is a *session*, which (in the general case covering all types of assemblies) consists of one or more connected meetings. The term *session* is a fundamental concept entering into many important parliamentary rules. 10

In parliamentary law and as understood in this book, the terms defined below have distinct meanings: 15

- A *meeting* of an assembly is a single official gathering of its members in one room or area to transact business for a length of time during which there is no cessation of proceedings and the members do not separate, unless for a

- 1 short *recess*, as defined below. (For modification of the
“one-room-or-area” requirement when the bylaws au-
thorize electronic meetings, see pp. 97–99.) Depending
5 on the business to be transacted, a meeting may last from
a few minutes to several hours.
- A *session* of an assembly, unless otherwise defined by the
bylaws or governing rules of the particular organization
or body, is a meeting or series of connected meetings de-
voted to a single order of business, program, agenda, or
10 announced purpose, in which—when there is more than
one meeting—each succeeding meeting is scheduled with
a view to continuing business at the point where it was
left off at the previous meeting (see also discussion of dis-
tinction between recess and adjournment, p. 85).
 - A *recess*, strictly speaking, is a short intermission or break
15 within a meeting that does not end the meeting or de-
stroy its continuity as a single gathering, and after which
proceedings are immediately resumed at the point where
they were interrupted. During the recess, members may
20 leave the hall or room in which the meeting is being held,
but they are expected to remain nearby. A recess fre-
quently has a purpose connected with the business of the
meeting itself—such as to count ballots, to permit con-
sultation among members, or the like. (For the motion
25 to *Recess*, see 20.)
 - A meeting is said to *stand at ease* if the chair, without ob-
jection, simply permits a brief pause, without a declaration
of recess. In such a case there is technically no interrup-
tion of the meeting, and members remain in their places.
30 Quiet conversation among neighboring members may
take place, but it must cease immediately when the chair
declares the meeting again in order or any member ob-
jects to continuing to stand at ease.
 - An *adjournment* (that is, the act of the assembly’s ad-
35 journeying) terminates a meeting; it may also end the ses-

- 1 In elections, "for" and "against" spaces or boxes should
not be used. They are applicable only with respect to votes
on motions. In an election, a voter can vote against one can-
didate only by voting for another who has been nominated
5 or by writing in the name of another candidate.

- Balloting Procedure.* In balloting in a meeting where the
voting is in the same room as the meeting, the chair appoints
tellers to distribute, collect, and count the ballots, and to re-
port the vote. The number of tellers is dependent on the
10 number of voters, and the number of offices to be filled or
questions to be answered, or the number of candidates. For
a small group, two or three tellers are usually sufficient. The
tellers should be chosen for accuracy and dependability,
should have the confidence of the membership, and should
15 not have a direct personal involvement in the question or in
the result of the vote to an extent that they should refrain
from voting under the principle stated on page 407. Often
their position with regard to the issue involved is well known,
however, and they are frequently chosen to protect the inter-
ests of each opposing side. They normally vote themselves.
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To ensure accuracy and to enable the tellers when unfold-
ing the ballots to detect any error, each ballot should be
folded in a manner announced in advance or stated on the
ballot itself.

- 25 The presiding officer, if a member of the assembly, can
always vote in the case of a ballot at the time other members
do. Should he fail to vote before the polls are closed, he can-
not then do so without the permission of the assembly.

- When the balloting is completed, the chair directs the tell-
ers to collect the ballots. In collecting the ballots, it is the
tellers' responsibility to see that no member votes more than
once—for the assurance of which the assembly should adopt
some reasonable and orderly method. For example: (a) In
meetings where only voters are present, members can remain
35 in their seats and drop their ballots into a receptacle passed