

Amending The Rules Of Order As They Relate To Decorum At Legislative Session And Legislative Committee Meetings

Referred to: The Laws, Rules and Government Services Committee (Chairman Kovacs and Legislators Gavaris, Hansut, Harmon, Kitchen, Levine, and Uchitelle)

Chair of the Legislature, Peter J. Criswell, and Chairman of the Laws, Rules and Government Services Committee, Jason Kovacs, offer the following:

WHEREAS, the Ulster County Legislature recognizes the essential role that respect, collaboration, and inclusivity play in the effective functioning of the Legislative body and hereby amends the Rules of Order as they relate to decorum at Legislative session and Legislative committee meetings to foster a more constructive and positive environment; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of these changes is to ensure that all legislators, staff, other elected officials, and members of the public who engage with our legislative process feel safe, heard, and valued; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature hereby finds that by establishing clear standards for conduct during Legislative sessions and committee meetings, we aim to enhance the quality of discourse encourage mutual respect, and promote a culture of professionalism and courtesy; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature further finds that maintaining a respectful and inclusive atmosphere is fundamental to achieving our collective goals and serving the needs of our community effectively; and

WHEREAS, these updated rules are designed to support a collaborative environment where every voice can contribute meaningfully to the Legislature's shared values; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Rule 10 Monthly and Special Meetings, Notice; Rules of Order Section (G) Decorum, is hereby amended to read as follows:

"G. Decorum.

1. The Chairperson shall take the chair promptly at the hour specified for the convening of the Legislature and shall preserve order and decorum. In debate, ~~he/she~~ **they** shall ~~prevent personal reflections and limit confine~~ member's **debate** to the questions under discussion. The Chairperson shall decide all questions of order, ~~Those which~~ **decisions** shall be final, unless an appeal is taken to the Legislature and sustained.

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2. The Chairperson, in the absence of the Vice Chairperson at a meeting, may call any other member to take their place in the chair. This presiding officer may call any other member to take their place in the chair. This substitution shall not extend beyond adjournment.

~~3. Any Legislator who engages in personal attacks upon any other member of the Legislature shall yield the floor at the Chairperson's order.~~

3. Respectful Conduct. All members must address one another with respect at all times, including but not limited to sessions and committee meetings, refraining from personal attacks, inflammatory language, or accusatory statements that are not based upon evidence.

4. Relevance to Agenda Items. Members are required to keep their remarks relevant to the matter under discussion during both sessions and committee meetings. Deviating from the topic or using floor time for unrelated matters will not be tolerated.

5. Time Limits on Debate. A strict time limit shall be imposed for each speaker during debates in both session and committee meetings. The Chair will monitor the length of time each speaker utilizes, ensuring that no member exceeds the allotted time (e.g., 5 minutes per speaker).

6. Speaking Only When Recognized. Members must be recognized by the Chairperson before speaking.

7. No Personal Attacks or Baseless Accusations. Members may not make unsubstantiated accusations and/or defamatory remarks against fellow members during sessions or committee meetings.

8. Enforcement by the Chairperson. The Chairperson of the Legislature or Chairperson of a Legislative committee has the authority to maintain order and enforce these rules of decorum at all Legislative sessions and committee meetings. In carrying out this duty, a Chairperson may:

- a. Issue a formal warning to the offending member;
- b. Revoke a member(s) speaking privileges for the duration of the meeting;
- c. Expel a member from the meeting.

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4-9. The Legislature hereby recognizes that Censure is a formal, group recognition that a given Member's conduct runs counter to the Legislature's accepted standards of behavior. Censure is to be utilized as a serious rebuke. In turn, notwithstanding any other Section of these Rules of Order, any Legislator may, at any time, submit a Resolution for consideration of the Legislature seeking to censure another member. Such resolution shall require two sponsors. Such resolution will clearly state the reason for the proposed censure. Such resolution will not be considered in any committee but will be considered by the full body at the next Regular meeting of the Legislature, or a Special Meeting called solely for the purpose of considering the Censure Resolution. A resolution seeking to censure a member requires a majority vote of the members of the Legislature. The resolution is debatable. The resolution is not amendable. The member in question can participate in the debate but cannot cast a vote. In the event that the Chairperson is the subject of the censure, the Vice Chairperson will conduct the meeting during that portion of the agenda. A resolution to censure cannot be postponed or referred and cannot be reconsidered. A member cannot be censured twice for the same offense.

~~5-10.~~ When the conduct subject to censure occurs on the Floor and/or at a meeting, any Legislator may, at any time, make a motion to censure the offending member. Such motion shall be treated as a main motion requiring another member to second the motion. After the Chairperson or Chair states the question on the motion, the motion is debatable, and it shall require a simple majority to pass." and, be it further

RESOLVED, that pursuant to Rule 2, entitled "AMENDMENT OF RULES," of the Rules of Order of the Ulster County Legislature, this resolution and the amendment proposed herein shall be read at two consecutive meetings of the Ulster County Legislature; and, be it further

RESOLVED, that this rule change shall take effect upon an affirmative vote of this body subsequent to two consecutive readings,

and move its adoption.

FIRST READING:

SECOND READING:

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ADOPTED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES:

NOES:

Postponed in Committee: Laws, Rules and Government Services on October 10, 2024
with consent

Passed Committee: Laws, Rules and Government Services on _____.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

\$300.00 – APPROXIMATE ADVERTISING COSTS