

# THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY RULES OF DEBATE AND DECORUM

*As of April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010*

## ARTICLE I. PURPOSE AND ORIGINATION

*Section 1.01* This document and the procedures contained herein will be known as the General Assembly Rules of Debate and Decorum. At the second meeting of each session, it shall be the responsibility of the Speaker to present the same set of rules as used in the immediate previous session to be adopted by a two-thirds vote. Any member, at that time, may move to amend the rules to be agreed to at that meeting. Members wishing to revise the rules at any other time during term may propose such amendments to the Committee on Rules and Privileges.

*Section 1.02* These rules provide basic operating procedures for meetings of the Assembly and govern the activities of its committees, members, and all those who would speak before it. The current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* shall govern all meetings of the General Assembly. It is at the discretion of committee chairs to procedure in committee.

*Section 1.03* If, during any meeting of the Assembly, a new set of rules has not been adopted, the rules from the immediate previous session will be enforced.

*Section 1.04* If a member violates the provisions of this document they may be subject to a censure from the Committee on Rules & Privileges, censure may be over-ridden with a two-thirds vote in the Assembly.

*Section 1.05* The Speaker of the General Assembly shall enforce these rules as he or she sees fit.

## ARTICLE II. PROCEDURES ON THE FLOOR

### *Section 2.01 Suspending the Rules*

Subsection 1. These rules may be suspended at a meeting of the General Assembly by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Assembly at any time. They may be reinstated by a majority vote of the Assembly. If not reinstated before, the rules shall be in effect again when the next meeting of the Assembly is called to order.

### *Section 2.02 Addressing the Assembly*

Subsection 1. The Speaker of the Assembly shall serve as presiding officer for all General Assembly Meeting

Subsection 1. The presiding officer shall have the general direction of the Hall of the Assembly and shall be authorized to take such action as necessary to maintain

order, and in case of any disturbance or disorderly conduct order in the gallery, he/she shall have the power to order the area cleared.

Subsection 2. The presiding officer while in the Assembly shall have the right to call on any member of the Assembly to perform the duties of the chair. He/she may reclaim the chair from any other member at any time.

Subsection 3. Members wishing to raise a motion before the Assembly or to ask a question of the Chair or presenter are required to raise their hand to be recognized by the Chair. The Chair will first inquire for what purpose the member wishes to be recognized and then proceed to grant them the floor. Members wishing to ask multiple questions must receive the consent of the Chair.

Subsection 4. When two or more members seek recognition, it shall be the privilege of the Chair to determine the order in which recognition will be granted in a decision that may not be appealed. However, the Chair must grant the floor to the member whose motion takes precedence over any other, according to the *Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*.

Subsection 5. All motions, questions, and presentations are required to be directed to the Chair, particularly during debate. In doing so, the Chair will be addressed as “Mister/Madam Speaker.”

Subsection 6. Members speaking before the Assembly will not be interrupted, save for intervening motions. If questions arise during presentation or debate, the Chair will ask if the presenter will yield for a question. The presenter is under no obligation to yield.

Subsection 7. If any member feels there is not an appropriate level of decorum during such time that they control the floor, they may pause and demand decorum on the floor which is to be enforced by the Chair. Such time used to enforce civility on the floor shall not be counted against a presenter’s time, and the Chair enjoys the right to maintain decorum in whichever way he/she feels adequate and enforce sufficient sanctions against those who would disrespect the rights of any member.

Subsection 8. Delegates are to be addressed by last name only, in such as form as “Delegate Smith”. No derogatory remark reflecting personally upon any member shall be in order upon the floor of the Assembly at any time.

Subsection 9. If a motion of no confidence is properly moved against the Office of the Speaker the Assembly will dissolve into a committee of the whole, chaired by the most senior officer of the Assembly.

Subsection 10. Seniority shall be determined by years in the Student Association, then by current officer holders, then by class, and then by former officer holders who have not been removed.

Subsection 11. A dress code of “business casual” is required for all meetings of the Assembly and functions in which members act in their capacity as elected representatives. The Speaker of the Assembly enjoys the privilege of enforcing this rule.

### *Section 2.03 Speaking and Motion Rights*

Subsection 1. Members enjoy speaking and motion rights. Accordingly, any member may propose a motion, second a motion, speak or question a presenter to the Assembly, and vote on such measures.

Subsection 2. The Director and associate members of SFAB and the Justices of the Student Court also enjoy speaking rights but do not have the right to make or second motions, propose legislation, or vote. The SFAB and the Court does not enjoy speaking rights in the Assembly during the election of the Speaker or Committee Chairs.

Subsection 3. Every undergraduate student who has paid their Student Activity & Club Sports Fee may speak during specifically outlined times before the Assembly at the beginning and/or the conclusion of each meeting, including special sessions. These individuals are not permitted to participate in debate, however.

Subsection 4. The Administration, Faculty, and Staff may notify the office of the Speaker if they wish to address the Assembly and for what purposes. The Speaker will have at his/her discretion the authority to grant them speaking rights. They will be allowed to address the Assembly during specifically outlined times on the agenda. These individual are not permitted to participate in debate, however.

### *Section 2.04 Legislation*

Subsection 1. It is the responsibility of delegates to format all legislation, and official government documents that are to be presented before the Assembly in accordance with the Legislative Style Manual. It is the responsibility of The Committee on Rules and Privileges to create and distribute this manual.

Subsection 2. Members of the Assembly may raise a point of order if legislation or other official documents are not in proper format according to the manual. The Speaker shall be the initial authority on these matters but may be overruled in the Committee on Rules and Privileges.

Subsection 3. The Speaker may suggest legislation but does not enjoy the right to propose it.

Subsection 4. The Speaker is empowered to refuse consideration of legislation if such a proposal provides for action outside the authority of the Student Association, violates University regulation or local, state, or federal law, advocates violation of the same, or is not agreed to by the Assembly as pertinent to the undergraduates of the Catholic University of America.

Subsection 5. Should the Speaker or Committee on Rules and Privileges be obligated through the preceding clauses to strike down legislation, they will make every effort to not only fully articulate said reasons for doing so but also work with the sponsor of the offending legislation to correct any flaw.

Subsection 6. Only members of the Assembly may propose legislation. If the original sponsor of the legislation wishes to recognize additional sponsors after its first reading, a motion to amend will be made on the floor requiring a majority.

### *Section 2.05 Forms of Legislation*

Subsection 1. Bills and directives outlined herein must be signed by the Speaker and Secretary upon passage, dated, and delivered to the Committee on Rules and Privileges for amendment to The Code of Permanent Laws. Once amended to the code, the bill or directive is thereupon recognized as an Act of the Assembly. Referenda and resolutions outlined herein must be signed by the Speaker and Secretary upon passage, dated, and announced at the next General Assembly meeting. Only the Speaker need sign a legislative order.

Subsection 2. The Code of Permanent Laws of the Student Association of the Catholic University of America shall be compilation and codification of the general and permanent acts of the Assembly and the Governing Documents of the Student Association.

Subsection 3. A bill directs the Student Association to take a certain action and can be used to create/dissolve departments within the organization, amend the By-laws, establish organizational policy, and direct the Speaker to advocate for or carry out said policies.

Subsection 4. A directive is made from the floor by any member directing that another member of the Student Association take specific actions. This form of legislation may be used to ask for reports, temporarily direct the Speaker, Secretary or a Committee to perform a task, or authorize a time-/circumstance-limited course of action. Directives may not contradict, augment, or amend any previously established policy or take the place of a bill.

Subsection 5. A referendum authorizes a constitutional referendum before the undergraduate student body which requires a two-thirds vote of the Assembly and an outline of the means by which such a referendum will be held.

Subsection 6. A resolution states the opinion of the members of the Assembly on a specific matter and is non-binding. This type of legislation can be used to reiterate a previously established policy in reaction to a circumstance, express the opinion of the organization on a certain issue, or commend another group within the University that is not affiliated with the Student Government.

Subsection 7. The Speaker may author legislative orders. This form of legislation may be used for any purpose the Speaker deems necessary for the operation of the Assembly, including, but not limited to, the establishment ad-hoc, or special committees, member assignments to committees, and/or the announced clerical policies of the Speaker.

Subsection 8. Identical pieces of legislation, either in form or content, may not be submitted more than once within the same meeting of the Assembly. Members wishing to introduce an identical piece of legislation at any other time in that session may do so, but the legislation must be referred to committee.

### *Section 2.06 Voting*

Subsection 1. All bills, confirmations, directives, and referenda are considered record votes that require a roll call vote. The Secretary will call the roll, recording member's votes and maintain records thereof. By default, all resolutions and amendments to bills before final passage will be voted on by voice vote. If, due to a Member's request or in the opinion of the Chair, any vote is unclear, a call for division will be made such that members will then rise and be counted. The initial election of the Speaker and committee Chairs will be voted on by secret ballot to be overseen by the Chairman of the Board of Elections. Members enjoy the right to move to vote by any method they wish (to be put to a vote).

Subsection 2. During voice votes, the Chair will ask for those in favor of and against the measure; members will verbally respond by saying "yea" or "nay" respectively. The Chair will then announce the result of the vote, allowing for a motion to reconsider. Should the Chair be unable to ascertain the outcome of a vote or should the announced outcome be in doubt, a call for division may be made whereupon members will vote by a show of hands. The Speaker may deem it appropriate or a member may move for a timed roll call vote. The Assembly will thus stand at ease while members individually approach the Chair and register their vote. The Chair will then announce only the final outcome of the vote but after the meeting, the votes become public record.

Subsection 3. Members may vote for (yea), vote against (nay), or vote present (abstain) on any question.

Subsection 4. The Speaker is permitted to vote whenever his/her vote affects the outcome.

### **ARTICLE III. MEANS FOR THE COSIDERATION OF BUSINESS**

#### *Section 3.01 Requirements*

Subsection 1. Every bill will be seen twice before the Assembly, unless a motion to waive first reading is successful by a two-thirds (2/3) vote. Directives, referenda, and resolutions shall have only one reading before the Assembly.

Subsection 2. Directives, referenda, and resolutions may be sent to a committee for review by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Assembly before the final vote on passage.

Subsection 3. When a piece of legislation or the name of a nominee is submitted to the Speaker, it will be placed on the agenda for the closest regular meeting. At that time, the Secretary will report the legislation by number and title; the topic of the legislation will be announced. The Speaker will assign the legislation to an appropriate committee for consideration. However, any member may propose a piece of legislation during the appropriate time of a meeting.

#### *Section 3.02 Committee Consideration*

Subsection 1. Upon referral, the committee will consider the legislation at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The sponsor will make themselves available for presentation and questioning at this meeting. The consideration of legislation within committee mirrors that of the Assembly as a whole, in that both debate and rules governing it are automatic.

Subsection 2. When debate within the committee has concluded, the committee will vote on a motion to report the legislation or nominee back to the full Assembly with a favorable recommendation. If this vote fails, it will prevent the legislation or nominee from appearing on the Assembly floor, save a two-thirds vote to the contrary.

Subsection 3. Bills will be given a second reading at the next regularly scheduled meeting after its first reading. The committee charged with its consideration must meet and vote on the legislation between those meetings of the full Assembly. When legislation is brought forward for second reading, the Speaker will ask the Chair of that committee to report the committee's vote, concerns of the committee that arose within debate, and amendments offered and agreed to since first reading. The only way to remove a committee amendment on the Assembly floor is through a motion to amend.

Subsection 4. It is the responsibility of the committee Chair to draft and format amendments made to his/her committee's legislation and send them to the Secretary before second reading.

*Section 3.03 Limitations of Debate and Final Consideration*

Subsection 1. Upon moving the adoption of legislation, the sponsor of the legislation shall be entitled to speak on the legislation for a period of up to four minutes, which may be extended. At the conclusion of this speech, the sponsor of the legislation shall be provided four minutes, which may be extended, for the purpose of responding to questions from members and those persons with speaking privileges in the Assembly.

Subsection 2. Upon moving the confirmation of a nominee, the nominee shall be entitled to speak on their nomination for a period of up to four minutes which may be extended. At the conclusion of this speech, the nominee shall be provided four minutes, which may be extended, for the purpose of responding to questions from members and those people with speaking privileges in the Assembly.

Subsection 3. During debate on all debatable motions, no speech shall last more than two minutes, nor shall anyone speak more than two times on the same question. Debate, however, on bills, directives, referenda, resolutions, nominations, impeachment, and motions of no confidence shall be unlimited, and no speech will last more than two minutes. This period of debate may be ended with a two-thirds (2/3) vote.

Subsection 4. The Assembly may adjust these restrictions on debate by a majority vote.

**ARTICLE IV. ELECTION OF ASSEMBLY LEADERSHIP**

*Section 4.01* Under no circumstances shall any election be held in secret.

*Section 4.02* The Chairman of the Board of Elections shall enforce the following rules as he or she sees fit.

*Section 4.03* Nominees may present themselves for a period of four minutes with a period of questioning immediately thereafter for four minutes. Nominees may yield presentation time to questions, and all time may be extended.

*Section 4.04* When all nominees have presented themselves, they shall be asked to leave the room during a period of debate, although they are not required to do so. The Chair will recognize any member to speak on behalf of each nominee for one minute, and only once. After a member has spoken on behalf of each nominee, a period of free debate will consume the duration of the debate time and may be extended indefinitely.

*Section 4.05* When debate has closed, the nominees will return to the floor, and voting by secret ballot will commence.

## **ARTICLE V. PROCEDURES IN COMMITTEE**

*Section 5.01* All undergraduate students are permitted to speak before committees in a manner recognized by the Chair of the respective committee and never during debate. All Delegates of the Assembly enjoy the right to speak and debate in any committee. Members of the committee, however, only hold voting positions on one standing committee save for those on the Committee on Rules and Privileges and the Committee on Allocation Review, unless otherwise stated in the By-Laws. The Committee on Rules and Privileges and the Committee on Allocation Review shall have closed sessions to all non-members at the discretion of the Chair for any purpose. These decisions may not be appealed.

*Section 5.02* If the elected Chairs have expressed their interest in a particular issue for their committee during their presentation to be elected, the Speaker will do everything in his/her power to accommodate these requests. The Speaker will also collaborate among the Chairs to finalize committee issue areas. Then, the Speaker will solicit committee requests from the rest of the members and collaborate with the committee Chairs to create assignments. Assignments may not be appealed, but two members may switch their assignment with the Speaker and the Chairmen of the Committee's consent.

*Section 5.03* Motions of No-Confidence against the Chair may be entertained by the Assembly as outlined in the By-laws.

*Section 5.04* The final vote on any motion of no-confidence shall be taken by secret ballot without exception.

*Section 5.05* It is the responsibility of the committee secretary to submit all meeting records and amendments to the Secretary of the Assembly by the next regularly scheduled meeting of the full Assembly. These duties may be transferred to the committee secretary, but the committee must document member's attendance, business discussed, debate had, and amendments agreed to. Roll Call Votes taken in Committees will be a matter of public record, save for votes in the Committee on Rules Privileges in relation to censure, suspension, and impeachment.

## **ARTICLE VI. GENERAL OPERATIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

*Section 6.01 Explanation of the Agenda and its Contents*

Subsection 1. The Speaker enjoys the right to format and arrange the agenda in whatever way he/she wishes. The following sections shall be considered: Call to Order, Roll Call, Public Comment, Adoption of the Agenda, Approval of the Minutes, Reports of Officers, Reports of Committees, Unfinished Business, New Business, Good of the Order, and Adjournment.



Subsection 2. Call to Order, Roll Call, Adoption of the Agenda, and Approval of the Minutes must occur and in that order at all meetings of the General Assembly.

Subsection 3. The Agenda must be made public no less than twelve (12) hours in advance of the convening day and hour of the Assembly Meeting. All bills, referenda, resolutions, directives, and the names of nominees that are on the agenda for second reading must be sent to the Assembly listserv after finalization in Committee.

Subsection 4. The Officers of the Student Association will provide written reports detailing their activities as well as any new initiatives they wish to propose at the first meeting of every month. The Officers are expected to make themselves available at the meeting for questioning.

Subsection 5. The Call to Order will proceed as follows; after the speaker has called the Assembly to order, a member may then commence with the meeting prayer followed by the pledge of allegiance.

Subsection 6. Roll Call will proceed as follows; the secretary shall read the Rolls of Membership and certify the quorum is present by announcing to the Assembly "Quorum is present and achieved with \_\_\_ delegates in attendance." If quorum is not present no business may be conducted. The speaker shall have the power to compel members into attendance in a special session within 48 hours. If a member is not in attendance the member may, save for extraordinary circumstances, be subject to a censure by the Assembly.

Subsection 7. Good of the Order will be a time during which any individual with speaking rights may address the Assembly for the purpose of expressing opinions or making statements designed to improve the Assembly. The Chair will create a list of speakers prior to the start of this portion of the agenda. No individual may speak for more than three minutes. The Chair enjoys the right to enforce an appropriate level of decorum during this time.

Subsection 8. Public Comment will be a time during which any member of the undergraduate student body may address the assembly. He/she may be entitled to speak for a period of two minutes; no one will have the right to speak more than twice during such period. These rules may be adjusted by a majority vote. It shall be the responsibility of the Secretary to create a Guest Handbook informing undergraduate students and other guest to the special procedure for addressing the Assembly with their concerns and questions.

Subsection 9. The Speaker shall serve as the initial authority on meeting procedures, voting requirements, etc. As a non-partisan member of the Student Association, it shall be the responsibility of the Speaker to ensure the Assembly and its members act in accordance with the governing documents. Rulings of the

Speaker may be appealed to the Committee on Rules and Privileges; a majority vote in the Committee is needed to overrule a decision of the speaker or a two-thirds vote on the floor of the Assembly.

*Section 6.02 Public Records Vault and the Journal of Proceedings*

Subsection 1. There shall be established an online public records vault and it will be maintained by the secretary. The governing documents, legislation, agenda and approved minutes, attendance records and other documents necessary for the public good are made available in a timely fashion by the secretary. All documents will be in adobe portable document format

Subsection 2. It is the responsibility of the Secretary to ensure careful minutes are kept of Assembly meetings with attention paid to attendance, content of presentations, questioning, and debate, member's voting records, and Assembly precedence.

Subsection 3. It is the responsibility of the Committee Chairs to ensure careful minutes are kept of Committee meetings in the same manner as prescribed for the secretary.

Subsection 4. The Secretary shall record this information into a document to be published biannually after the final meeting in the fall semester and one week prior to the *sine die* meeting at the end of the legislative session entitled the "Journal of Proceedings." The Journal may be amended but must be approved by the members of the Assembly in the legislative session. This journal shall be for public record, and kept online in a public records vault.