

Use of Consent Agenda at Girl Scouts of Northern California 2019 Annual Meeting

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In the years which I've served as your parliamentarian, a typical annual meeting has had very few, if any, proposed bylaws amendments. This year we have a wide range of proposals. Some are reflecting current language usage, some address inconsistencies or areas of confusion, some are recommended as best legal practices by our attorneys. A few proposals make changes to how we are organized. Each set of changes covering a different topic must be presented as its own proposal for consideration by the members of the Annual Council Meeting. This is a basic parliamentary concept.

In order to use our limited time more efficiently, we will be using a valuable parliamentary tool called a Consent Agenda (also known as a Consent Calendar.) This relies on a concept called unanimous consent. When any motion is made that the presiding officer feels is non-controversial, she can invoke unanimous consent by saying "If there is no objection, the motion will be passed." If no one says "I object", the valid assumption is that everyone agrees and no vote is required.

For a Consent Agenda, items deemed to be unlikely to be controversial are all placed together as a single agenda item, in this case the Bylaws proposals. When the Consent Agenda comes up in the meeting, any voting member can have an item removed from the Consent Agenda if she/he feels it requires discussion. At our meeting, this will look like the member rising, being recognized by the presiding officer, identifying her/himself and stating "I wish to remove proposal" and give the number and name. Only one person need do this. The presiding officer will then state, "Item number and name" has been removed. Reasons are not given but it is understood that a person doing so wants to have a full discussion on that item. Again, the object is to handle items unlikely to be controversial in an expeditious way.

After members are finished removing items, the presiding officer will have the list of removed proposals read and then state that those remaining on the list are now passed by unanimous consent. No actual vote will be taken since any item to which someone could object should have been removed from the Consent Agenda.

The Presiding Officer will then proceed to take up each of the proposals that have been removed, in the order listed in the workbook, in the usual manner. That is, the chair of the Governance Task Group will read the item and the chair will call for discussion (or as we parliamentarians say "debate.") It is important to know that if the meeting runs out of time, any proposals taken off of the Consent Agenda which are not taken up will automatically have failed.

We will discuss the use of the Consent Agenda on our delegate calls on February 13 and March 28, as well as prior to considering the proposed bylaws amendments at the Annual Meeting on April 13.