

Protocol and *Robert's Rules of Order*

An effective combination for attracting and keeping your members satisfied.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines protocol as a code of diplomatic or military etiquette. In Lions parlance we define protocol as a code of correct etiquette or manners and method to maintain decorum and tradition. It is the acceptable procedure and order in all club meetings, so that when expanded for special occasions, guest speakers and visitors will be treated with proper respect and courtesy.

Similarly, yet somewhat different, *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, provides guidance and governs the conduct of meetings when the business of the club is being conducted. In short, it defines how an idea from a club member becomes the action of the group after deliberation and vote, in essence, becoming the action and the policy of the club. Too often Lions will confuse *Roberts Rules of Order* guidance with matters that pertain to constitution and by-laws governance. These are two distinctively different things. Club presidents and those presiding over meetings should be somewhat familiar with *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. The most frequent violations of RRO that I often see is the presiding officer allowing Lions to speak before the presiding officer recognizes them or allowing debate to go on far too long during discussion.

Protocol and courtesy go hand in hand. Guests always appreciate it, and new members who are made welcome will feel comfortable and part of the club at once. Because we are part of the world's largest and most active service club organization, and we only have one opportunity to make a first impression, we must always be concerned about protocol and observe it at all times.

The first and most obvious way that the person conducting a club, zone, district, or multiple district meeting can effectively observe protocol is to use a well-planned agenda. Another practice is to recognize those who ask to speak before they just blurt out comments or suggestions. A third is to limit debate on discussion items to a reasonable number speaking in favor of or against a motion. No rule allows discussion and debate to continue endlessly. We all have heard the expression, "The number one reason former Lions cite as the cause of them leaving is long, boring, endless meetings." This is especially true of those younger parents who value time with their children.

Here are some practical Do's and Don'ts in Lions protocol:

- DO have a speaker's stand with sufficient lighting when you invite a guest speaker.
- DO try to have a public-address system in working order.
- DO introduce and welcome all guests.
- DO plan the seating arrangements of the head table prior to the start of the meeting.
- DO use place cards or name plates at the head table or reserved tables.
- DO schedule a time table for your program and try to stick to it.
- DON'T use the speaker's time with your introduction. A one or two-minute introduction is sufficient.
- DON'T try to review or paraphrase the speaker's remarks after he/she finishes. Thank them and make a remark about one point to show that you were listening.
- USE a well-planned agenda!

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