

- Two-thirds majority (substantial unanimity) for guideline changes. Not all guidelines require approval by the Area Assembly. See the revision guidelines at the end of each section in the N.I.A. Service Handbook for specific requirements.
- At the discretion of the Chairperson or request by any member, a sense of the Assembly may be taken for specific issues.

Parliamentary Procedure

The business portions of A.A. service meetings are conducted using parliamentary procedure adapted to our needs over many years. While there are no approved A.A. procedures for managing a business meeting, these procedures, or something very like them, are in use at all levels, including the General Service Conference. In many ways, our procedures exist to protect the rights of the minority.

The legitimate rights of the minority are protected by the observance of the Fifth Concept in conducting our Assemblies. A.A.'s nature is such that while the Assembly participants have different opinions on many issues, everyone wants to achieve the group conscience of the Assembly. The most common example of this is the minority opinion.

After a vote is taken it is customary for the Chair to ask, does anyone want to speak for the minority? In some cases after a vote, the Chair may simply pause, giving members of the minority an opportunity to approach the mic. Either way, the minority is allowed to speak if they feel that they didn't get a proper hearing. An explanation of this is given by Bill in his Twelve Concepts for World Service, Concept V, which is in the back of the A.A. Service manual.

But all this does not mean that every losing vote should automatically be challenged. An Assembly should not be regarded as a contest where your side must win at all costs. The restraint shown by the majority in pausing to give the minority a chance to express its position better should also be shown by the minorities in the restraint of frivolous objection.

Recognizing the limits of the group conscience, Bill was concerned with A.A. decision-making and the General Service Conference process. He wrote the Twelve Concepts for World Service to provide guidance in how we could communicate and interact with each other. One of his great concerns was to protect those with the minority view from the tyranny of the majority. One of the things he suggested was that we keep up the discussion of a controversial issue until the minority view had a full and fair hearing, to the end that when voted upon a substantial agreement could be reached.

The Aug., '95 Quarterly Report from G.S.O., The General Sharing Session had these quotes:

Very often the Higher Power is found in the still small voice. Taking the concept of the minority voice and making it into a parliamentary procedure can put it in jeopardy and it can become a tool of manipulation or become institutionalized. If something is nonsense it can be ignored. Our A.A. patience seems mercifully unlimited when it comes to listening to and loving the minority voice. At the Conference level we are asked to bring not our wisdom, but our conscience. Our responsibility is to deliver what we have to share not to convince. We need to resist the temptation to boil everything down to how many voted yes and how many voted no. Winning and losing are not part of the vocabulary of group conscience. It is possible and has been the practice to reach a decision through striving for nothing short of unanimity. This was the practice in years past and is still found to be the rule of thumb in some instances now.

Brief Parliamentary Guide

Go to a microphone and when recognized by the chairperson:

- Give your full name and service title if you have one.
- Speak clearly and as briefly as possible – your remarks must be pertinent to the business at hand or items you wish to bring to the floor.

To do this:	You say:	When another has the floor?	Second required?	Discussion?	Amendable?	Vote
Make a motion	I move that...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Amend a motion*	I move that the motion be amended to read...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Withdraw a motion	I wish to withdraw my motion		No	No	No	Majority
End discussion**	Call the question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Object to an error in procedure	Point of order	Yes	No	No	No	No vote Chair Decides
Table an item	I move we table this...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
Bring back tabled item	I move we take from the table...	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
To nominate	I would like to nominate....	No	No	Yes	No	Majority
To close nominations	I move that nominations be closed for...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
Send to committee	I move we refer this to a committee	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
Point of Information***	Point of Information	Yes	No	No	No	None

In Alcoholics Anonymous once a vote has been taken on a motion, the minority parties in the vote *always* have the opportunity to speak to the floor. If someone in the majority (the winning side) would like to change their vote after the minority has spoken, it becomes a motion to reconsider which needs to have a second. It is then open to further discussion (if the original motion was open to discussion) before a new vote on the original motion is taken. It is not amendable and requires the same type of vote (majority, 2/3, etc.) as the original motion.

(*) The Chair is not required to recognize a frivolous motion. When a motion is amended the amendment will be disposed of in the same manner as a normal motion, then the original motion will be considered (as amended if the amendment passes).

(**) When calling the question, you must approach the microphone, be recognized and call the question. You may not first participate in the discussion or ask a question, etc.

(***) Point of Information: a request for information on a specific question, either about process or about the content of a motion.

Area Elections

Area officers, standing committee chairpersons, and all their alternates are elected to two-year terms of service that begin in even numbered years. Elections are held during the Fall Assembly of odd numbered years, immediately preceding the end of the current service rotation.

The Chairperson shall read the portion of The A.A. Service Manual that is applicable to balloting before balloting begins. The rest of the election proceedings are to be facilitated by the most recent past Delegate.

Election of officers, namely the Delegate, Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, Registrar, and their Alternates, except as noted below, shall be in accordance with the Third Legacy procedure as described in The A.A. Service Manual. The order of elections shall be: Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chairperson, Alternate Chairperson, Secretary, Alternate Secretary, Treasurer, Alternate Treasurer, Registrar, and Alternate Registrar. Those eligible to stand for Delegate are: Area Officers (except Delegate), Chairpersons of standing service committees, and D.C.M.s. The elected Delegate shall have only one term of service and shall never again be a candidate for the position.

- Candidates who are eligible and willing to stand are asked to identify themselves.
- Nominations of eligible and willing candidates are accepted.
- Candidates present two minutes service histories.

Following officer elections, standing service committee Chairpersons and their Alternates are elected, either by the Third Legacy procedure or by any other means chosen by the Assembly during the election proceedings. Nominations from the floor shall be accepted.

The Third Legacy Election Procedure

Nomination Procedure

- All members of the Area Committee are eligible to become Delegate.
- The chairperson asks those eligible to stand up giving everyone in attendance an opportunity to see eligible candidates.
- Then the chairperson asks that anyone standing who is unable or unwilling to serve as Delegate be seated.
- The remaining names are posted on a blackboard.
- The chairperson then asks for nominations from the floor.

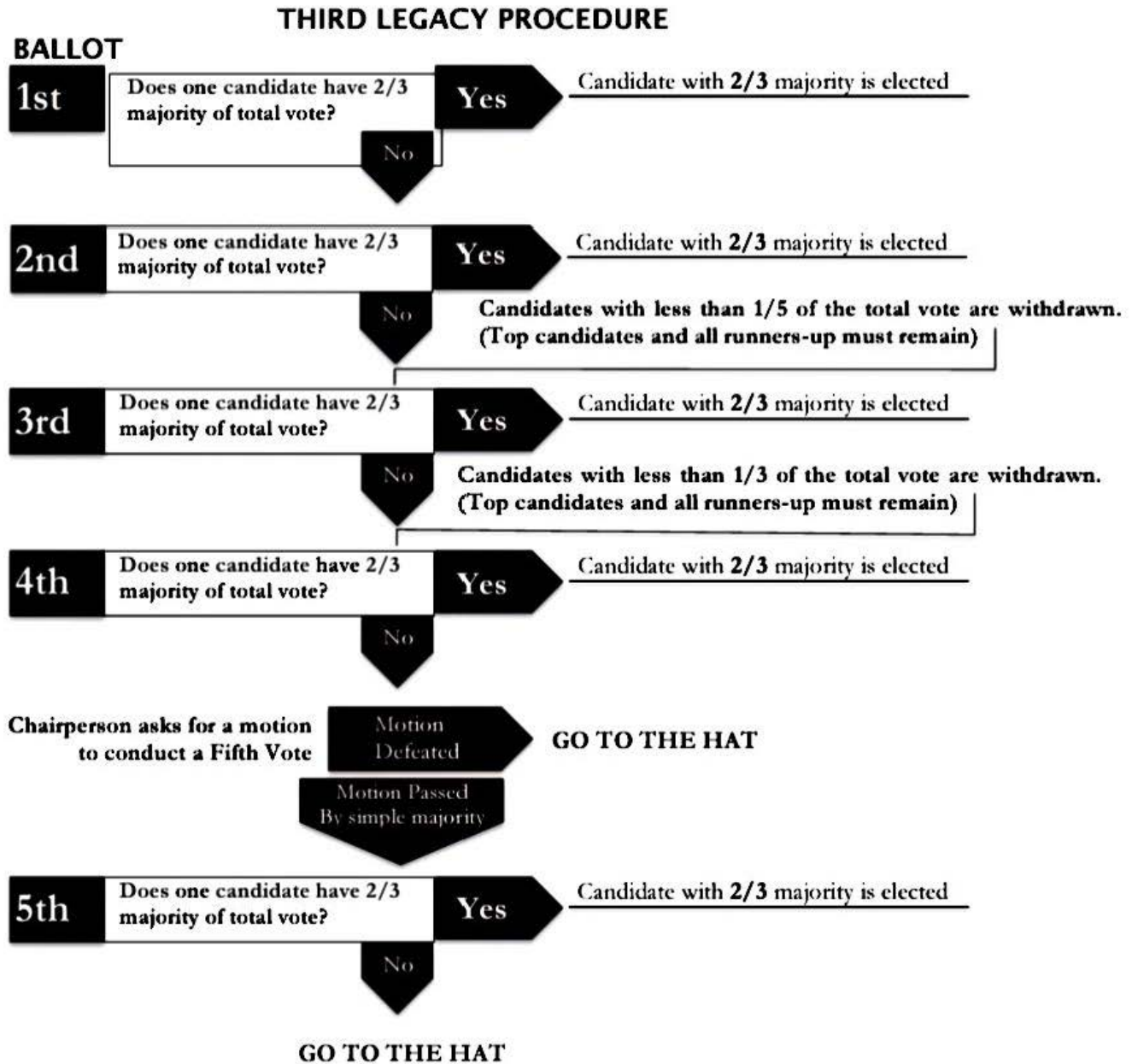
Voting Procedure

- All G.S.R.s and Committee members of the area who are present cast written ballots, one choice to a ballot. The tally for each candidate is posted on the blackboard.
- The first candidate to receive TWO-THIRDS of the total vote is elected. After the second ballot (assuming no candidate receives the necessary two-thirds on the first ballot), any candidate having less than one-fifth of the total vote will be withdrawn. The TWO TOP CANDIDATES remain. (In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and the second place candidates remain.)
- After the third ballot, candidates with less than one-third of the total vote will be withdrawn automatically. The TWO TOP CANDIDATES remain.
- In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and the second place candidates remain.
- A fourth ballot is conducted.
- After the fourth ballot, if no candidate has two-thirds of the total vote, the chairperson asks for a motion, a second, and a majority of hands on conducting a fifth and final ballot.

- (If this motion is defeated, balloting is over and we go to the hat immediately. In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and tied second-place candidates remain. If the motion carries, a fifth and final ballot will be conducted.)
- If no election occurs by this time, the chairperson announces the choice will be made by lot (from the hat). At this point, balloting usually involves only the top two or three candidates.
- Lots are then drawn and the first one out of the hat becomes the Delegate.

Example

An election might proceed in the manner shown below:



Third Legacy procedure is used for the election of the Delegate and Alternate Delegate. For election of officers and alternates, those interested are asked to stand and nominations are accepted from the floor. Candidates are asked to leave the room and voting is by Third Legacy but by a show of hands. The procedure for committee chairs and alternates is the same except voting is simple majority. In all cases, candidates are allowed two minutes to share their service history prior to voting.

The Area Committee

The Area Committee exists to facilitate communication between the group and the Area Assembly, the Delegate and the General Service Conference. The Area Committee is comprised of the following, all of whom have a vote at Committee Meetings: