

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF SACRAMENTO COUNTY

RULES COMMITTEE REPORT

5/14/2020 – DPSC Zoom

The following draft is a proposed Emergency Rules of Order that was discussed and amended by the Rules Committee during its Zoom meetings on the evenings of April 14, April 21, April 28, and May 4. The purpose of this document is to create a carefully-considered framework that enables our Central Committee to authorize and conduct virtual meetings during public emergencies that prevent in-person meetings. Because of the delicate nature of approving this unusual authority, we operated on the basis of unanimous consent for approving each part of this document.

DPSC RULES OF ORDER FOR ELECTRONIC MEETINGS & VOTES DURING PUBLIC EMERGENCIES

1. The Central Committee may adopt these Emergency Rules of Order in order for that body and any of its subsidiary Party organs to hold virtual meetings open to all voting members of a body as a method of meeting and decision-making during the duration of public emergencies as declared by federal, state, or local authorities that prevent in-person meetings, as determined by the Executive Board. The adoption of these Emergency Rules of Order outside of a regular (non-electronic) meeting shall be subject to all requirements set forth herein in order to be valid.
2. The Central Committee may call virtual meetings (via teleconference or video-call) in the same manners as prescribed under the bylaws, which shall be open to participation to all voting members and accessible to any registered Democrat in Sacramento County, in order to:
 - A. Clearly state the questions at hand;
 - B. Discuss motions while avoiding discussion that is not germane; and
 - C. Conduct votes.
 - D. For any virtual meeting, the convener shall designate the medium in which the virtual meeting will be conducted, and shall designate at least two methods for receiving any motions made, at least one of which shall not require internet access.
3. Electronic votes may be conducted during virtual meetings:
 - A. Each voting member shall have the right to be recognized by the Chair during a virtual meeting so that they may address the body for germane reasons during the conduct of business and before an electronic vote is conducted.
 - B. Each voting member shall have the right to make any motions that do not exceed the notice of the virtual meeting, or else the Chair may refer the motion to a relevant Committee.
 - C. Every voting member shall have the right to vote electronically or to make a privileged motion that the body adopt reasonable alterations to the method of voting proposed by the convener.
 - D. Unanimous consent shall be granted only after un-muting all voting members and providing at least ten seconds for them to object.

- E. Before adopting any kind of noticed consent calendar, all voting members shall be un-muted and provided at least ten seconds to request that items be pulled from that consent calendar.
 - F. Objecting to unanimous consent and pulling items from a consent calendar shall be subject to the same conditions required for receiving motions described in section 2, subsection D above.
4. Proper notice of virtual meetings shall be achieved when:
- A. The full text of any agenda items, the means to participate in any electronic votes, and the time of a vote and of the closing of balloting has been delivered to every voting member via electronic means and posted electronically; and
 - B. Seven (7) days have passed since the sending of notice.
 - C. Electronic means of notice shall require a good-faith effort to contact every voting member via the most recent electronic contact information they have provided to the body, such as email, and public posting of notice shall include posting the required information on an official website or social media account maintained by the Party.
5. For the purposes of electronic votes, incidental, subsidiary, and privileged motions shall not be required to meet notice requirements if they would not expand the scope of the required notice. After voting on incidental, subsidiary or privileged motions that failed, any member who did not vote or who voted against the subsidiary motion may reintroduce it, which shall not be treated as a motion to reconsider.
6. When the Chair reaches an agenda item at a duly noticed virtual meeting, the Chair shall:
- A. Restate the motion precisely;
 - B. Allow time for debate; and
 - C. Announce the proper quorum necessary to consider the motion, state how the electronic balloting will be conducted, and state when balloting will close.
7. The Chair shall facilitate electronic debate on motions and seek to ensure that all members who wish to debate are recognized:
- A. The number of speakers during a virtual meeting may be limited to an equitable number of speakers for each position being considered by adoption of a motion for that purpose, but if there are not an equitable number of voting members seeking to speak on behalf of each position then the allotted speakers on behalf of other positions shall still be allowed to speak.
 - B. Each member who is recognized may have two minutes to speak during a virtual meeting, but speaking time may be extended equitably for each speaker on a question by adoption of a motion for that purpose.
 - C. The Chair may set and the voting members may extend by unanimous consent or by adoption of a motion the time allotted for discussion.
 - D. Any member may move to extend the time set to close electronic balloting.
 - E. In the interests of transparency, no motion to extend debate, increase the number of speakers, or extend balloting shall be considered a motion to reconsider something previously adopted.

- F. The repeated reintroduction of motions previously defeated, or abuse of privileged and subsidiary motions, may be considered dilatory and may be ruled out of order.
8. Debate on a motion shall only be ended if no members seek recognition, if a motion limiting the number of speakers has been adopted and those speakers have spoken, or after a vote to end discussion. Balloting shall not commence until after debate on a motion has ended.
 9. Electronic votes shall be defined and conducted in the following manner:
 - A. Voting conducted by a 'show of hands' over video-call shall be allowed in instances where only voting members are allowed to participate, the proceedings of the meeting are recorded and preserved in the same manner required for ballots under these rules, and voting members without a video connection are allowed to vote in an audible roll call method.
 - B. Voting conducted by roll call during a virtual meeting shall be open to participation of those voting members attending the virtual meeting.
 - C. Voting conducted by absentee ballot outside of a meeting, including but not limited to email ballots, shall be open to participation of all voting members of the body.
 - D. The manner of participating in absentee balloting shall be promulgated to all voting members, simultaneously, in the same manner as allowed for notice of virtual meetings.
 - E. The outcome of a vote shall be determined only on the valid votes cast, which shall be the votes counted after discarding abstentions, blank electronic ballots, and invalid votes.
 - F. In order to pass, a motion must receive a majority of the valid votes cast, unless the body's bylaws require a different threshold for certain kinds of votes.
 10. All electronic votes shall be conducted and recorded in a manner that ensures an inspectable record of:
 - A. Which members voted; and
 - B. How each member voted.
 - C. Such record shall be maintained and open to inspection by voting members until after the next regular (non-electronic) meeting of the body, or as otherwise required under the body's bylaws, whichever timeframe is longer.
 - D. Electronic votes that are not preserved in this manner shall not be considered valid and shall have no effect.
 - E. No secret electronic votes shall be allowed under any circumstances.
 11. Minutes and other records of the body's virtual meetings and electronic votes shall be made available to voting members of that body upon reasonable request or as otherwise required under the body's bylaws, but the Secretary may redact any part of that record not required to be included in regular meeting minutes or not subject to inspection under these Emergency Rules of Order. The results of any absentee balloting shall be recorded in the minutes of the last meeting at which the motion was debated.

12. All other rules, customs, and member protections contained within the body's Bylaws, Standing Rules, and the most current edition of Roberts Rules of Order—including the Sample Rules for Electronic Meetings¹ published by Roberts Rules of Order—that are not inconsistent with these Emergency Rules of Order shall continue to govern the body unless they would be impossible to reasonably uphold outside of a regular (non-electronic) meeting. All reasonable steps shall be taken to translate rules regarding governance of the body and the conduct of regular meetings to the operation of virtual meetings or electronic votes, and the voting members shall retain the right to appeal any rulings of the Chair in these or other regards.

13. After federal, state, or local authorities declare an end to the Public Emergency that prevents in-person meeting, the Executive Board may vote to declare that these Emergency Rules of Order are no longer in effect. At the next regularly scheduled (non-electronic) meeting of the body, all actions taken electronically under these Emergency Rules of Order shall be ratified by the required vote threshold of the motion adopted.

¹ <https://www.robertsrules.com/pdfs/electronic-meeting-sample-rules.pdf>