

# call to order

## *Division of the Assembly*

—*J. Michael Blaska, Parliamentarian & Chief of Staff,  
Wisconsin Counties Association*



One of the most common methods of voting is the voice vote. Many governmental bodies are using electronic voting where each member presses a button and the votes are displayed on a board for all to see. In most situations where there are no electronic devices, the voice vote is used or the roll call vote if requested.

Whenever a member doubts the results of a voice vote, the member can ask for a *Division of the Assembly*. It may be because the vote was close or the member feels that not all the members had a chance to vote.

Requesting a *Division of the Assembly* means the vote will be taken again by a different method. *Robert's Rules of Order* suggests that the vote be taken by the members rising. Historically, the members moved to one side of the room – hence the term “division.” The more practical method for resolving a difference of opinion for county boards, is the roll call vote.

A voice vote can be deceiving where it appears the measure was defeated only because the minority was much louder. Alternately, a chair may call the vote based upon the result they favor. Calling for a *Division of the Assembly* allows for a clear, accurate vote count.

When members are ready to vote the chair states, “All those in favor say aye.” The chair then waits for the response and states, “All those opposed say nay.” The chair announces the result of the vote by saying, “The ayes (or nays) have it.” At this point,

a member may call for *Division of the Assembly* before the chair states the effect of the vote, such as “The motion is carried.” In close votes, the chair should allow time for members to request a *Division of the Assembly*. Once the chair states the motion is carried or defeated, it is too late. If the chair feels the vote was too close to call or the vote is unrepresentative, the chair can simply state, “*Division of the Assembly*” and order the roll call vote.

### *A Division of the Assembly:*

- ❑ Takes precedence over any motion on which a vote has been taken. It may be called for from the moment the negative votes have been cast until the announcement of the result is complete.
- ❑ Can be applied to any motion by which the assembly is called upon to vote.
- ❑ Is in order when another has the floor and is called for without obtaining the floor.
- ❑ Does not require a second.
- ❑ Is not debatable.
- ❑ Is not amendable.
- ❑ Does not require a vote, since a single member can demand a division.
- ❑ Cannot be reconsidered.

When the result of a vote is clear, everyone has voted, and there can be no reasonable doubt as to which side prevailed, a call for a *Division of the Assembly* can be ruled as dilatory.\* The chair should not allow requests whose sole purpose is to annoy the membership.

*Roberts Rules of Order* suggests that a motion is needed to request a roll call vote; however, it also states that the method of voting can be decided informally. In county government, the roll call is considered standard practice since citizens have the right to know how their elected members voted.

Remember, any member can call for a *Division of the Assembly*, you need not be recognized and do not

need a second or a vote – simply shout it out. Stay tuned for another parliamentary procedure *shout out* in next month’s edition of *Call to Order*.

\* *Dilatory is defined as a motion or request that seeks to obstruct or thwart the business of the assembly. Any motion or request that is frivolous or absurd or that contains no rational proposition is considered dilatory and should not be allowed.*

*Source: Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 11th Edition*

JAN<sup>25</sup>  
2016



SAVE

— THE —  
DATE



REGISTER  
TODAY  
ONLINE

WWW.WICOUNTIES.ORG

# Educational SEMINAR

## THE COUNTY BOARD ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Holiday Inn Stevens Point Convention Center  
Stevens Point, Wisconsin

After the county board elections this upcoming April, Wisconsin’s county boards are required by statute to meet on the third Tuesday of April to “organize and transact business.” In preparation for this pivotal post-election meeting, the Wisconsin Counties Association will conduct an educational seminar *The County Board Organizational Meeting* on January 25, 2016 in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

The seminar will focus on the general purpose of the Organizational Meeting, which is to elect officers and adopt the rules by which the board will operate for the next two years.

Register today to attend this not-to-be-missed educational seminar at [www.wicounties.org/events](http://www.wicounties.org/events).

### Tentative Agenda

1. Statutory Authority
2. Officers
  - Election
  - Duties and Responsibilities
3. Organization of the Board
  - Establishing Standing Committees, Boards and Commissions
    - Appointment
    - Election of Officers
    - Duties
  - Agendas
    - Who is Responsible?
    - How do Items get on an Agenda?
4. Rules of Decorum
  - Resolutions and Ordinances
    - What is the Purpose of Each?
    - Who is Responsible for Drafting?
    - What is the Proper Format?
    - How are Resolutions and Ordinances Processed?
    - Procedural Rules