

July 17, 2010

**Proposed Standing Rules for the 2010 Annual Business Meeting  
of the World Service Organization (WSO) of Recovering Couples Anonymous  
at the 2010 RCA Convention at Niagara Falls, Ontario  
Friday, July 23, 2010**

The Structure Committee reports the following proposed standing rules for the 2010 annual business meeting and recommends their adoption. Adoption of these rules requires a two-thirds majority vote.

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
I. Participation.....	2
II. Voting. ....	2
III. Combining By-Mail Voting with the Voting of Delegates in Attendance (explanation for and background to section IV). ....	2
IV. Voting on Matters for which By-Mail Voting Has Been Provided. ....	4
V. Limitations on Debate. ....	5
VI. Voting on Matters Raised for the First Time at the Business Meeting. ....	6
VII. Delegate and Attendee Badges.....	7
VIII. Non-RCA Attendees. ....	8
IX. Safety Guidelines.....	8
X. Modifications to the Agenda. ....	8
XI. Amendments to these Standing Rules .....	8
XII. Modifications to Parliamentary Procedures. ....	8
XIII. Minutes of the Business Meeting.....	9
XIV. Minority Reports. ....	9

**I. Participation:** While voting at the business meeting is restricted by the bylaws to delegate couples, **all other aspects of participation** at the annual business meeting are open to any member of an RCA member group. These other aspects of participation include, but are not limited to:

1. Speaking for or against any matter under consideration **in accordance with the procedures specified in these Standing Rules.**
2. Making of motions or amendment to motions and raising appropriate objections in accordance with the applicable parliamentary procedures, including the raising of any appropriate parliamentary inquiry or appeal.
3. Raising of any question during any portion of the proceedings during which questions are permitted.

At the 2010 annual business meetings, those RCA members attending the business meeting electronically will not be able to vote on matters considered. But those RCA members participating remotely will be able to participate in all other aspects of meeting, as listed above, as long as both the delegates present at the business meeting and those RCA members participating remotely can all hear each other at the same time.

## **II. Voting:**

**A. Delegate Couple Voting:** All votes taken at the business meeting shall be by delegate couples voting in accordance with the applicable provisions of the bylaws. Each delegate couple has one vote. If a delegate couple holds a proxy, they have two votes, except for proposals included on the by-mail ballot when the group granting the proxy voted by mail, in which case they have only one vote.

### **B. Voting Procedures:**

**1. Show of Hands:** When an exact vote count is not needed and the outcome is clear, the Chair may rely on a vote “by a show of hands.” When voting only one member of a delegate couple shall indicate their vote by the raising of a hand, unless the delegate couple is also casting a proxy vote in which case both members shall indicate their votes by the raising of a hand.

**2. “Rising Vote” with “Counting-Off” by those Voting:** When an exact count is needed or when the outcome is not clear, the Chair shall request a vote by rising and counting off. A delegate not able to rise shall be permitted to vote by the raising of a hand or some other appropriate gesture (please notify the chair in advance, if possible, so that the Chair can accommodate the needs of any delegate unable to rise). Only one member of a delegate couple shall indicate their vote by rising and counting off, unless the delegate couple is also casting a proxy vote in which case both members shall indicate their votes by rising and counting off.

**3. Roll-Call Votes:** Roll-call votes are time-consuming and are not practical for a one-day business meeting. Roll-call votes shall not be permitted.

**III. Combining By-Mail Voting with the Voting of Delegates in Attendance (explanation for and background to section IV) :**

**A. Background:** Expressing a preference for by-mail voting, the bylaws adopted to enable delegate voting envisioned combining by-mail voting with the voting of delegates in attendance at the business meeting. This was intended as part of an overall process to ensure that the decisions made at the annual business meeting are guided by the collective group conscience of the entire membership to the maximum extent possible.

**B. Contrary to the Advice in Robert's Rules of Order:** *Robert's Rules of Order* advises against combining by-mail voting with the voting of delegates in attendance at business meeting:

“An organization should never adopt a bylaw permitting a question to be decided by a voting procedure in which the votes of persons who attend a meeting are counted together with ballots mailed in by absentees. The votes of those present could be affected by debate, by amendments . . . while those absent would be unable to adjust their votes to reflect these factors.”

“An organization should never adopt a bylaw permitting a question to be decided by a voting procedure in which the votes of persons who attend a meeting are counted together with ballots mailed in by absentees. The votes of those present could be affected by debate, by amendments, and perhaps by the need for repeated balloting, while those absent would be unable to adjust their votes to reflect these factors. Consequently, the absentee ballots would in most cases be on a somewhat different question than that on which those present were voting, leading to confusion, unfairness, and inaccuracy in determining the result.”<sup>1</sup>

**C. Simple solutions are unsatisfactory:** Neither of the simple solutions to dealing with by-mail voting is satisfactory. The first solution is to allow no amendments to be made at the business meeting so that everyone is voting on the same proposal. This solution **discounts the participation of the delegates at the business meeting** as well as the potential value of that participation. The alternate solution is to simply disregard the by-mail ballots if any amendments are made at the business meeting. This alternate solution **discounts the participation of member groups who have voted by mail** and would likely result in little interest or incentive for member groups to vote by-mail in the future. Neither alternative is satisfactory.

**D. A more complex solution:** Permitting amendments to be considered at the business meeting without totally disregarding the participation of those groups voting by mail necessitates some additional complexity in the procedures. The procedures in section IV below attempt to balance these competing interests without introducing excessive complexity in the process.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Robert's Rules of Order*, § 45, page 409, lines 4 to 15 (10th ed. 2000) (in pertinent part).

#### **IV. Voting on Matters for which By-Mail Voting Has Been Provided:**

**A. No Amendment Adopted:** If no amendment is adopted to a motion for which by-mail voting has been provided, the following procedures shall be followed:

The vote of those for and against shall be taken of those delegate couples at the meeting including the proxy votes held by any. Once these votes are tallied, the tally of the by-mail votes received on this matter shall be announced and added to the tally of the votes of those delegate couples present at the meeting, including any proxy votes held by those delegates.

**B. Amendment(s) Adopted:** If any amendment is adopted to a motion for which by-mail voting has been provided, the delegates at the business meeting will need to decide which of the following three procedures shall be used:

**Option 1:** Is this an amendment that can be considered separately from the by-mail proposal and submitted to the entire Fellowship for by-mail voting after the convention and after the vote is taken on the proposal as stated in the by-mail ballot ? By a majority vote, the delegates will decide if option 1 is to be used. If Option 1 is chosen, the delegates shall then vote on the original by-mail proposal in accordance with the procedure defined in section II.2.a. above. If the original proposal is adopted, the proposed amendment shall be submitted to the Fellowship for by-mail voting after the convention. If the original proposal is not adopted, the amended proposal shall also be submitted for by-mail voting after the convention, since the Fellowship as a whole may be in favor of the proposal as amended but not in favor, by the required majority, prior to the amended version.

**Options 2 and 3:** If Option 1 is defeated, the results of the by-mail voting shall be announced in order to assist those in attendance at the business meeting in determining what action to take with respect to Options 2 and 3. Then, the delegates shall determine:

(1) if the matter is urgent and requires immediate action by the Fellowship (thereby excluding any input on the proposal, as amended, from those groups submitting by-mail ballots); or

(2) whether the proposal as amended will be sent out to all member groups after the convention for by-mail voting so that more member groups can participate in the decision, particularly those who had previously submitted by-mail ballots.

To choose between Options 2 and 3, a vote shall be taken by the delegates at whether this is an urgent matter requiring immediate action by Fellowship. If there is a majority vote in favor of dealing with the proposal as an urgent matter, the delegates present at the convention shall proceed to vote on the matter as amended. If there is not a majority vote in favor of dealing with the proposal as an urgent matter, the amended proposal shall be sent out to all member groups after the convention for by-mail voting so that more member groups can participate in the decision.

**C. Limitation on Debate on Options 1 and Options 2 and 3:** See section V.F. below.

**V. Limitations on Debate:**

**A. Debate Under Robert's Rules:** The general rule in Robert's Rules permits each person to speak twice on each matter, with each time limited to ten minutes. This is not a practical rule for an annual business meeting that is limited to eight hours including time for lunch and breaks. For example, if 30 individuals each spoke twice for ten minutes each time, a total of 600 minutes or 10 hours would be required for the discussion of a single matter at the business meeting.

**B. Role of the Chair of the Business Meeting in Determining the Extent of Debate:** For each matter being addressed, the Chair shall make an assessment of the extent of debate desired by the delegates and other RCA members present by an inquiry to those present and with a request for a show of hands whenever needed to aid in this assessment:

1. If there is no request for debate on a particular matter, the Chair shall proceed to either the taking of a vote or the seeking of approval by unanimous consent by selecting the most appropriate of these two options.
2. Once there is an indication that any delegate or RCA member requests debate on a particular matter, the Chair shall make a determination as to whether those present desire limited debate or extended debate. As is always the case, any ruling made in this regard by the Chair is subject to an appeal by any delegate or RCA member.

**C. Limited Debate:** If only a small number of delegates or RCA members (no more than approximately six) indicate a desire to speak on a matter before the assembly, the following rules shall apply:

1. Each speaker shall be limited to two minutes to present his or her position and may speak only once on the matter.
2. The Chair shall regulate the order of those speaking by alternating between those for or against a proposal to the extent that there are those on both sides of the matter who wish to speak.

**D. Extended Debate and Discussion on a Main Motion:** If the assembly desires extended debate on a particular proposal, the following rules apply.

1. Those in favor and those opposed to the proposal shall be given a short interval to select three speakers in favor of the proposal and three speakers opposed to the proposal.
2. Each speaker shall be given three minutes to present their position.
3. The speakers for or against shall alternate, beginning with a speaker in favor of the

proposal.

**E. Extended debate on an Amendment to a Proposal:** If the assembly desires extended debate on a particular amendment to a proposal the following rules apply:

1. Those in favor and those opposed to the proposal shall be given a short interval to select two speakers in favor of the proposal and two speakers opposed to the amendment.
2. Each speaker shall be given two minutes to present their position.
3. The speakers for or against shall alternate, beginning with a speaker in favor of the proposal.

**F. Limitation on Debate on Options 1 and Options 2 and 3 for Matters for which By-Mailing Voting Has Been Provided:** If the assembly desires debate on the Option 1 decision or on the Option 2 or 3 decision, the following rules apply:

1. Those in favor and those opposed to the proposal shall be given a short interval to select two speakers in favor of the proposal and two speakers opposed to the amendment.
2. Each speaker shall be given two minutes to present their position.
3. The speakers for or against shall alternate, beginning with a speaker in favor of the option being voted on.

**G. Options to Extend Debate:** There are two options available to any delegate or RCA member who desires to extend debate on a particular matter: (1) a request may be made for unanimous consent to speak on a matter; or (2) a motion may be made to extend debate with a two-thirds majority required to approve this non-debatable motion. Delegates and members are requested not to misuse the request for unanimous consent by multiple requests for this privilege. At the option of the Chair, a request for unanimous consent to speak, may be converted to a motion to extend debate. For any particular matter, any individual may make only one request to speak by unanimous consent. A statement made by unanimous consent shall be limited to no more than two minutes.

**VI. Voting on Matters Raised for the First Time at the Business Meeting:** Any matter raised for the first time at the business meeting shall be raised during the time set in the Agenda for “New Business.” The following provisions relate to the subject matter of items raised for the first time at the business meeting:

**A. Changes to the Bylaws:** Under applicable Missouri law, there must be at least 30-days of advance notice given to the membership of a proposed amendment to the bylaws. Thus additional bylaw changes cannot be approved at the business meeting. But the delegates and RCA members in attendance have two other alternatives for dealing with proposals for additional

bylaw amendments: (1) the delegates could vote to send out a by-mail ballot to the entire Fellowship subsequent to the business meeting consistent with the 90-day notice provision of the bylaws; and (2) the delegates could vote to refer the proposal to the Structure Committee for review by that committee and for submission to the Fellowship at the next annual business meeting. The required vote on either of these options is a majority vote. Of course, the final vote on amendments to the bylaws requires a 75 % majority.

**B. Additional Special Rules of Order:** Pursuant to Robert's Rules of Order, the adoption of a special rule of order, requires advance notice and a two-thirds majority vote. Since there would be no advance notice, the delegates and RCA members in attendance have the same two options available for additional special rules of order as they do for additional amendments to the bylaws: (1) subsequent by-mail voting; or (2) referral to the Structure Committee. The required vote on either of these options is a majority vote. Of course, the final vote on special rules of order requires a two-thirds majority.

**C. Other proposals:** There is no restriction on other matters to be considered at the convention. But the delegates and RCA members in attendance also have the option of having other matters included in by-mail voting after the business meeting so as to ensure wider participation by the Fellowship in other matters that may arise at the business meeting. Moreover, the option to refer a matter to an appropriate RCA WSO committee is also available.

**VII. Delegate and Attendee Badges:** The following badges shall be provided to attendees at the business meeting at the time of their registration prior to the meeting (late arrivals at the business meeting must register at the registration table set-up in the meeting room and receive their badges prior to participation in the meeting):

1. Delegate Couple
2. Delegate Couple whose RCA group has Voted By-mail.
3. Delegate Couple with a Proxy for a Group that Voted By-mail.
4. Delegate Couple with a Proxy for a Group that Did Not Vote By-mail.
5. RCA member.
6. Visitor (non RCA member) (see section VIII below).

**It shall be the responsibility of a delegate couple voting the proxy from another group to check at the time that they receive their delegate badge to verify whether or not the group that they represent by proxy has submitted a vote by mail. Other delegate couples should check at the same time to verify whether or not their RCA group has submitted a vote by mail.**

**VIII. Non-RCA Attendees:** Visitors who are not members of RCA shall be permitted to attend the business meeting as observers **under the condition that they agree to respect the anonymity of all others in attendance at the business meeting.** Visitors shall not be permitted to participate in the proceedings of the business meeting.

**IX. Safety Guidelines:** The RCA Safety Guidelines apply to all proceedings at the business meeting.

**X. Modifications to the Agenda:** Once the agenda to the business meeting is approved, any modifications to the agenda shall require a two-thirds majority vote.

**XI. Amendments to these Standing Rules:** Once these Standing Rules have been adopted, including any pre-adoption modifications to the proposed rules, any subsequent modifications to or suspension of the Standing Rules shall require a two-thirds majority.

**XII. Modifications to Parliamentary Procedures.**

**A. Background:** In order to simplify parliamentary procedure during the business meeting, certain modifications are made to the procedures contained in *Robert's Rules of Order*. All of these modifications are based on modifications included in *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*, 4th Edition, as revised by the American Institutes of Parliamentarians (2001).<sup>2</sup> (In making these modifications, reliance is placed on the recommendations of the American Institutes of Parliamentarians as stated in the *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure*.)

**B. Modification to Certain Motions:** The following motions are modified as indicated:

1. **Moving the Previous Question:** Because of the confusion this terminology causes, the form of this motion shall be "Move to Close Debate."

2. **Reconsideration:** This motion is simplified to permit anyone to move for reconsideration. Without this modification, only those who vote in favor of a proposal may move for reconsideration. Also, under this revision, the debate on this motion is limited to the reasons for reconsidering the motion in question. If the motion for reconsideration carries, the debate is then opened on the motion that is being reconsidered..

**C. Motions and Procedures Not Permitted.** The following motions and procedures shall not be permitted:

1. Adjourning to an Adjourned Meeting;
2. Call for the Orders of the Day;

---

<sup>2</sup> See *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* (as revised by the American Institutes of Parliamentarians), Chapter 29 at pages 231 to 237 (Fourth Edition 2001). See also *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* (as revised by the American Institutes of Parliamentarians), Chapter 29 at pages 221 to 226 (Third Edition 1993).

3. Committee of the Whole;
4. Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn;
5. Object to Consideration;
6. Postpone Indefinitely;
7. Quasi-Committee of the Whole;
8. Reconsider and Enter on the Minutes.

**XIII. Minutes of the Business Meeting:** The RCA WSO Board of Trustees shall be responsible for the taking and approving of the minutes of the business meeting. When approved the minutes shall be posted on the WSO website.

**XIV. Minority Reports:** There is a long-standing tradition in 12-step organizations to encourage minority reports that are prepared for the good of the Fellowship. Any delegate or RCA member who wishes to prepare a minority report on any matter addressed at the business meeting shall have 20 days after the close of the business meeting to submit a minority report to the Board of Trustees for inclusion with the minutes of the business meeting. Any minority report submitted shall be concise and of reasonable length. The Board of Trustees shall have the authority to reject any minority report of unreasonable length and substitute a reference in the minutes to a source where the rejected minority report may be obtained.