

## VFW POST COMMANDER/PRESIDING OFFICERS GUIDE

### HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR A MEETING?

- \*Review minutes of previous meetings to see if there is any old business for the meeting and to provide you with background information.
- \* Know the correct names of all officers, committee chairmen, speakers, or any guest who will be participating in the meeting.
- \* Prepare a timed agenda and stick to it.
- \* Find out all the facts on the announcements you will be making.
- \* Notify everyone who is expected to give reports and clarify what you expect from them and how much time will be allotted for their reports.
- \* If you feel strongly about an issue, line up your supporters. Check out the facts with them ahead of time.
- \* Before the meeting, give a copy of the agenda to the Secretary and Senior Vice-President.
- \* Take a copy of the National By-Laws, Booklet of Instructions, Program Book, Ritual, Hospital Handbook, Demeter's Manual, and any other pertinent information with you and be up-to-date on this information because you are the chief consultant on these facts.
- \* Also be sure you have your gavel; clock, to time each portion of the meeting and speed up some sections, if necessary, so that you will adjourn on time; and a calendar to check future dates.
- \* Get there early in order to test microphones, air conditioning, heat, windows, fans, props, seating arrangements, and anything else necessary to endure the smooth running of your meeting. If you cannot do this, assign someone else to check the arrangements.
- \* Start the meeting as close to the prearranged time as possible. If you start late, people will come to future meetings later and later. Starting on time and ending on time are very important. People appreciate it when you are considerate of their valuable time.

### PARLIAMENTARY LAW AND RULES FOR AN ORDERLY MEETING

Be knowledgeable about Parliamentary Law. You are not expected to know all of the law, but you should know the basic rules. Parliamentary Law is simply common sense and courtesy and it enables the organization to transact business with speed and efficiency while protecting the rights of each individual, and preserving the spirit of harmony in the group.

Remember, the orderly conduct of a meeting is the responsibility of the commander. If you are nervous, excitable, undignified, antagonistic, or unprepared, members will mirror your actions and a turbulent meeting could be the result. But as mentioned earlier, preparation ensures confidence.

BE SURE A QUORUM IS PRESENT AT THE MEETING AS SET FORTH IN THE BY-LAWS AND/OR RULES.

The following are some rules to follow during the meeting to help you run an orderly meeting.

- \* Be courteous, but firm in enforcing decorum. Refrain from raising your voice.
- \* **USE OF GAVEL**--to open meeting, call attention, raise and seat membership, maintain order. At all other times, the gavel is laid on the table or podium.
- \* **WHEN PRESIDING OFFICER SITS OR STANDS**--sit when listening to reports, speakers, etc. Stand to state a motion, put it to a vote, and to announce the vote. Avoid leaning on the desk or podium. Stand erect. Speak slowly and distinctly.
- \* **REMEMBER**, it is the MOTION which is out of order, **not** the PERSON. Never say--"you are out of order"...say..."The motion is out of order." Make it a rule not the person.
- \* Never tell a member to "sit down." Request that he/she "please take his/her seat." BE IMPERSONAL. It is the CHAIR, not "I" who rules, thinks, recognizes, appoints, etc.
- \* the Presiding Officer **never "turns the meeting over" to anyone.** He/she introduces the guest speaker, presents officers and chairmen, and calls upon people for reports or order to be carried out.
- \* Try to be sure that everyone is heard who wants to be heard. Encourage discussion and when necessary summarize what's been said and clarify statements to avoid misunderstandings. However, don't monopolize the meeting, and be sure to keep the discussions on an impersonal level.
- \* Remember that the majority rules, but the minority must be heard.

The rules of order are to facilitate action and justice, not obstruct it.

- \* Be alert to the "nuisance-types" in every group--the Orator, who loves to hear himself/herself talk and monopolizes the meeting. After a suitable time, say, "Excuse me for interrupting, but we're running short of time and several other members have points they want to make."
- \* There is also the Doubting Thomas, who doesn't think it can possibly work; the Be-Littler, who criticizes everything; the Fence-sitter, who never commits until all the votes are in; the Bandwagon Jumper, who wants to be on the winning side; the Mule, who balks and won't give up. Try to turn these destructive forces into constructive results by having your supporters ready to present the positive side to their complaints.
- \* **DO NOT INTRODUCE BUSINESS FROM THE CHAIR.** Your pet projects should be introduced by a member, so have someone prepared to do so.
- \* When you report or debate, call on the Senior Vice Commander to preside. **If you debate a question, the senior vice commander carries the motion to its conclusion.**
- \* A presiding officer never "wisecracks," but should have a sense of humor.

### VOTING

- \* Make frequent use of GENERAL CONSENT--say, "The minutes stand approved as read, if there is no objection," or, "the motion is withdrawn, if there is no objection." or, "If there is no further business, the meeting is adjourned, if there is no objection."
- \* CALLING FOR THE VOTE--Don't say "vote by the usual sign." Tell the membership how the vote will be taken. To say AYE or NO...to STAND or BE SEATED...to RAISE HANDS, or PUT THEM DOWN.
- \* AFTER A MOTION HAS BEEN MADE, STATE QUESTION THUS: "It has been moved and seconded that we... is there any discussion?"
- \* ANNOUNCE RESULTS: "The Ayes have it and the motion to...is carried -or- "the Nos have it and the motion to...is lost."
- \* In a counted vote, always announce the results in numbers. Remember, a tie vote is a lost motion.
- \* The Presiding Officer may vote if he/she wishes. However, he/she wisely refrains from voting unless his/her vote will change the

outcome such as making or breaking a tie.

- \* **Do not take a "unanimous vote" for granted**, unless you ask the members: "That seemed to be a unanimous vote. Are there any objections to recording it as unanimous?" (Of course, one objection will keep it from being unanimous.)
- \* A motion is not complete until it has been brought to a vote.
- \* Since it is discourteous for members to shout, "Question, Question" when time for discussion on a motion, say "is there any discussion (or debate) on the motion?"

#### DURING THE PRESIDING OFFICER'S TERM

- \* In making decisions, be kind yet firm. Never vacillate. Take time to think things through. If you don't know the answer or if you are in doubt, simply say you will get the information for them. After all, no one knows all the answers. If you do make a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it.
- \* Although there may be a few exceptions, the Presiding Officer **should not appoint the same members to important positions constantly.** All members should have equal opportunities to shine.
- \* Check graciously on committee functioning. If chairmen are not performing assignments properly--relieve them of duties and make new appointments. (The Presiding Officer has the authority to appoint and to remove.)
- \* Seek all the help you can, encourage your members to ask questions and seek assistance from you and other officers.

It is better to ask a "dumb question" than to make a "dumb mistake".

#### AT THE END OF THE PRESIDING OFFICERS TERM

- \* Be sure all required reports are completed and submitted on every level of the organization. Be aware of deadline dates for reports to National Headquarters and be sure to meet them.
- \* Turn over your files and records to the incoming Officer, and see that each Chairman and Officer does the same. It is your duty as the Chief Executive Officer to see that your leaders complete this final responsibility. It is only by passing on this information each year that our Organization can perpetuate the continuity of leadership and service.

#### PERSONAL KEYNOTES FOR PRESIDING OFFICERS

YOU'RE ON PARADE!...not only to your members--but to the community leaders and other organizations. Keep in mind that as Presiding Officer you represent the organizations viewpoint and not your own personal views.

**This means you must be neat and well-groomed at all times.** It doesn't mean you need a whole new wardrobe or lots of clothes. It simply means extra care in seeing that your clothing is clean, clean smelling and that you are dressed appropriately for the event at hand.

BE GRACIOUS TO ALL. Be complimentary. Look for the good points. Be diplomatic when correcting mistakes or errors. Remember, it is not always what is said that hurts, but how it is said.

SMILE. A warm smile, and a firm hand clasp can do a lot to spark interest and create a good impression.

SO, YOU'RE GOING TO GIVE A SPEECH--HERE ARE SOME TIMELY TIPS

**BE PREPARED**

Speak distinctly - be sincere - be logical - be knowledgeable on your subject - be confident - BE ENTHUSIASTIC. Prepare your remarks and study them.

Look your audience in the eye

Speak deliberately - cultivate earnestness

**DON'TS FOR SPEAKERS**

Don't be afraid of your voice

Don't forget your audience can think - DON'T TRY TO BLUFF YOUR WAY THROUGH - (A lot of them are as smart or smarter than you.)

Don't cover too much ground

Don't forget to practice

**FIRST AID FOR SPEAKERS**

Be prepared and don't rely on inspiration

Originality comes from meditation

Have a definite purpose

Don't hurry into your subject

Wait for attention

Begin in a conversational tone, but loud enough to be heard

Don't force gestures

Cultivate the straight-forward open eye

Don't walk about when speaking

Good diction is a passport - recognized by everyone

Let your grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation be the best

Pauses are of great oratorical value

For practice, read aloud any prepared speech several times

THE BEST WAY TO LEARN TO SPEAK IS TO SPEAK

AT THE REQUEST OF MANY, WE ARE  
INCLUDING THIS INFORMATION ON THE CORRECT  
SALUTING OF OUR FLAG!

#### HOW TO SALUTE THE FLAG

All good citizens respect our flag and render it the courtesies to which it is entitled by displaying it properly and saluting it on appropriate occasions. During the ceremony of hoisting or lowering the flag, or when the flag is passing in a parade or in a review, those present in uniform will render the right-hand salute. Men in civilian dress should remove their hats with the right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, **with the hand** over the heart; women should place the right hand over the heart. When you salute your flag--you salute your country--SALUTE YOUR FLAG!!

#### THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The Pledge should be rendered by standing at attention facing the flag with the right hand over the heart. When not in uniform men should remove their hats with the right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, with the right hand over the heart. Persons in uniform should remain silent, face the flag and render the military salute.