

CHAPTER

7

HOW CAN A GROUP CHANGE ITS MIND?**CHAPTER CONTENTS**[A. Correcting Mistakes](#)[B. The Motion to Reconsider](#)[C. The Motions to Rescind or Amend Something Previously Adopted](#)[D. Renewal of Motions](#)**A. CORRECTING MISTAKES**

A meeting might never end if those who were defeated in one vote could repeatedly try to overturn the decision by making the group vote on the same matter over and over. For this reason, it's a rule of parliamentary procedure that once a motion has come up and been disposed of at a meeting, another motion that raises the same question can't be brought up at the same meeting in the normal way.¹ Another important principle is that, as a protection against instability—arising, for example, from such factors as slight variations in attendance—the requirements for changing a previous action are generally greater than those for taking the action in the first place.

But every once in a while—either after reflection or because you learn of new facts—you may come to the conclusion that maybe the group did something it should not have done or should have done differently, or that it made a mistake in choosing not to do something it should have done. There are special procedures for dealing with such cases in meetings.

B. THE MOTION TO RECONSIDER

If a motion has been either adopted or defeated during a meeting, and at least one member who voted on the winning side wants to have the vote reconsidered, such a member may make the motion to *Reconsider*.

This motion can *only* be made by a member who voted on the winning side. That is to say, if the motion was adopted, the motion to *Reconsider* can

be made only by a member who voted in favor of the motion, or if the motion was defeated, then only by a member who voted against it. This makes sense because, if there is no such person, there is virtually no chance that the result of the vote will be any different on the second go-round. This motion can, however, be seconded by any member, no matter how he or she voted.

Another important thing that you must know about *Reconsider* is that there is only a limited period of time within which it can be made. In the usual case, this motion can be made only on the same day on which the vote sought to be reconsidered was taken. The only exception to this rule is in the case of a session (such as a lengthy convention) in which meetings take place over a period of more than one day. In that event, the motion to *Reconsider* can be made on the same day the original vote was taken or on the next succeeding day within the session on which a business meeting is held. By and large, however, the thing for you to keep in mind is that if you change your mind after the meeting is over, in the usual situation you can forget about the motion to *Reconsider*. It will be too late to make such a motion.

Let's assume that, at a meeting, a motion is made to make a contribution of \$500 to some worthy charity. You are concerned that there is not enough money for this purpose, and for that reason you vote against the motion. Other members apparently have similar concerns, because the motion is defeated. Later during the meeting, maybe because of additional information you have received, you change your mind and decide that the contribution

really ought to be made, and you think that perhaps other members may have changed their minds as well.

If so, you may then make a motion to *Reconsider* the vote that defeated the motion to make the contribution. When you make this motion to *Reconsider*, remember to tell the presiding officer that you voted against the adoption of the motion relating to the contribution, so that it will be clear that you are entitled to make a motion to reconsider. You might say something like:

“Madam President, I move to reconsider the vote on the motion relating to the contribution to the XYZ Charity. I voted against that motion.”

If your motion to *Reconsider* is seconded, the chair will then state the question on your motion,² and the assembly will then proceed to consider the question of whether or not the motion concerning the contribution should be reconsidered. After any debate, a vote will be taken on the motion to *Reconsider*. If it is adopted by a majority vote, the motion to make the contribution will be back again before the assembly, just as it was before the original vote on it was taken. If a sufficient number of members have changed their minds after whatever further debate may take place, the motion to make the contribution may well be adopted this time. [RONR (12th ed.) 37:1–45.]

motions, make every effort to give previous notice of your intent to do so. You will then need only a majority vote in order to succeed. [RONR (12th ed.) 35:1–13.]

D. RENEWAL OF MOTIONS

Making a motion again after it has been defeated is called **renewal** of the motion.

As is obvious from the names of the motions to *Rescind* or *Amend Something Previously Adopted*, these motions only relate to things that have been *adopted*. What, however, if the matter concerns a motion that was defeated?

Suppose, for example, a motion to make a contribution of \$500 to a worthy charity is defeated at one of your monthly meetings. You cannot simply make the same motion again at the same meeting. But after the

meeting is over (so that it is too late to move to *Reconsider*), if you feel that the assembly has made the wrong decision and the motion to make the contribution should have been adopted, the solution is very simple. All you need to do is make the same motion again at your next monthly meeting. You can do this regardless of how you voted on the original motion. [RONR (12th ed.) 38:1–3.]

Footnotes to Chapter 7

1. The same is true during a series of connected meetings called a **session**—for example, a convention lasting several days. In an ordinary club each meeting is usually a separate session. RONR (12th ed.) 8:1–16.
2. Unless another motion is pending at the time. See RONR (12th ed.) 37:10(c), 37:15–17.