



# HELPING SOCIETIES IN THE AGE OF PANDEMICS

A Parliamentarian Toolkit

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## Introduction

Emerging from the shutdown from the 2020 Coronavirus outbreak, it is important to look at the lessons that organizations should have learned from the world of the “new normal”. This E-Book goes along with a talk presented at the National Training Conference of the National Association of Parliamentarians in August of 2020, entitled “Helping Societies in the Age of Pandemics”. It is hoped that parliamentarians will find this information useful in working with their clients as society recovers from the craziness of 2020.

### **About the Author:**

After a 37-year career working as an engineer in the high-tech world of semiconductor design and manufacture, Steven has taken up a second career during retirement as a Professional Registered Parliamentarian with the National Association of Parliamentarians.

#### His Work:

- Consulting Parliamentarian for local clubs and organizations.
- Mentoring through the NAP Mentorship program
- Vice-President Martha Knowles Memorial Unit of Parliamentarians, Dallas, Texas
- Vice-chairman of Collin County Parks Foundation Advisory Board
- Member of City of Plano Senior Advisory Board (Research Sub-committee)
- Authoring of two books on Parliamentary Procedure

Outside of his professional work, he is very much dedicated to outdoor exercise, and involvement in politics and church. His company Decisions Consulting was created with the intent to help people and organizations with education, publications and mentoring so that the clients are empowered to make better decisions.



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It started in early March, the first one announced in an email, then another email arrived and another. One meeting after another was being canceled. They said, “Don’t worry, just a temporary hold so missing a meeting here and there was going to be no big deal.” But then the conventions started to be canceled. By the end of March, a reported 620 national conventions had been canceled. By the end of April, it was over 1500 and from there, there was no reason to keep counting. Five months on, we still have clubs and organizations in that temporary hold.

The year 2020 has been a challenge for everyone and in many ways it has felt unique. It has presented a set of challenges which were new to us all. And to those who were trying to organize meetings and keep clubs running, the time has presented additional challenges. With all the changes to how we live our lives, obtain health care, how we work and even how to get dinner. No one is surprised if the challenges of our organizations become just one too many things about which to worry.

**“ Some Organizations have been legally required and legal prohibited from meeting at the same time.**

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Pandemics

EPIDEMIC



Natural Disasters



Man-Made Disasters



The Unexpected



Civil Unrest



The year 2020 has been quite the year. It has been a year where we had learned to always prepare for and expect the unexpected.

Events that can disrupt the plans and schedules of a society can come on many fronts. Pandemics are at the forefront of our minds at the moment, but other things can affect the plans like natural and man-made disasters, and civil unrests. We even need to keep an eye out for the truly unexpected that no one could have anticipated.

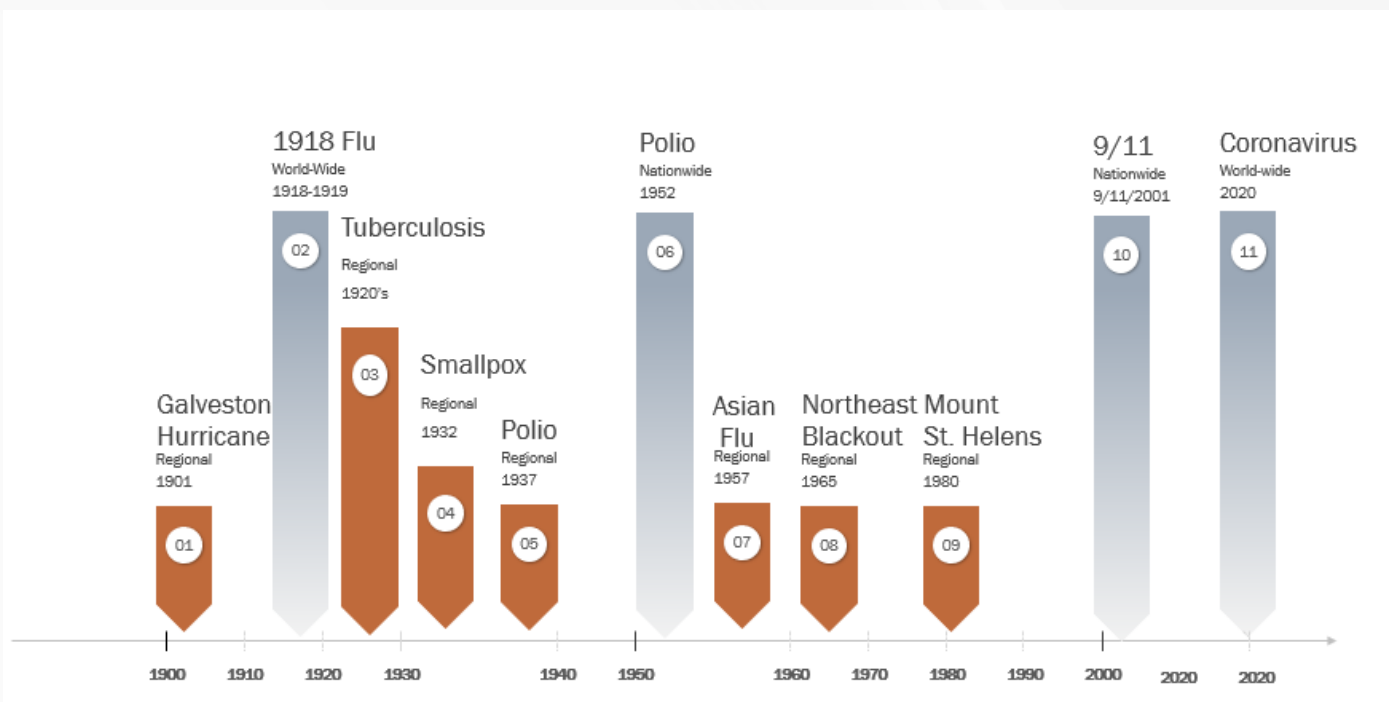
As parliamentarians, we have a role in helping the client organizations with which we work to see the dangers and pitfalls that could lie ahead. By taking preemptive actions in anticipation of these disruptions, we will serve them well when hit by the unexpected.

A recent survey of Americans found that 72% of the respondents expect that life will never return to “normal” again. We even now have a new term for the world in which we now live, “the new normal”.

**“ Disruptive Event: Any event that causes an organization to need take emergency actions and change the course of their plans.**

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### DISRUPTIONS ARE NORMAL WAY OF LIFE

The fact that the world shutdown the schools, shops, pools, water fountains and all non-essential activities in the name of the coronavirus may have felt new and unique to all of us, but the truth is that it isn't all that unique of an episode in the history of the United States. In the past 120 years, we have experienced similar shutdowns for numerous reasons, even beyond the now famous Spanish Flu of 1918/19.

The shutdowns in the summers of 1937 and 1952 due to Polio epidemics looked like what we have recently experienced. In the 1920's, schools were often shut or operated with the windows open due to Tuberculosis outbreaks, especially in the Northeast. In the world of the New Normal, the more recent panics about Zika and Ebola would now result in shutdowns.

But it isn't all pandemics. We have

faced national and regional issues from non-health related shutdowns caused by hurricanes, volcanoes, electrical blackouts and even the fears after 9/11. Disruptions are to be expected!

#### Sample of Disruptions Since 2000:

- 2001: 9/11
- 2003: Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)
- 2004: Indonesian Earthquake / Tsunami
- 2005: Hurricane Katrina
- 2006: Mumps Epidemic in 11 states
- 2007/8: Great Recession
- 2009: Swine Flu
- 2012: Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS)
- 2012: Whooping Cough Epidemic (NW States)
- 2014: Ebola Scare
- 2016: Zika Virus
- 2017: Hurricane Harvey
- 2020: Coronavirus Pandemic

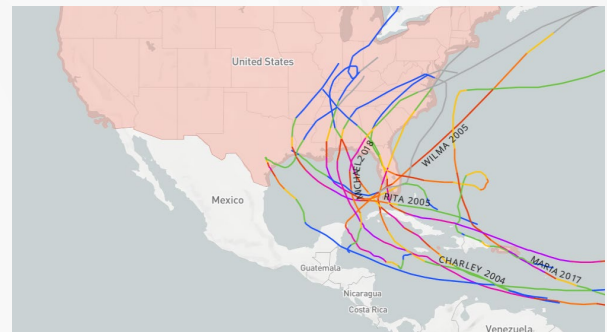
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**No matter where your meetings take place in the United States there are dangers from natural disasters. The impact can range from a delay of days to full cancellation.**

### 1. Atlantic Hurricane Season

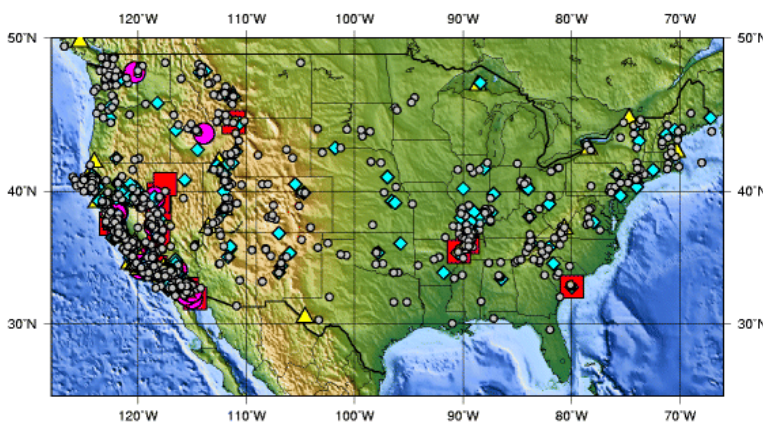
Stretching from June 1 to November 30, the Atlantic hurricane season creates on average 6 hurricanes and 2 major hurricanes each year. There is a risk of meeting disruptions anywhere along the Gulf or Atlantic Coastline. The National Hurricane Center can provide 1-2 weeks notice of the danger, but the damage can take months to years to recover.



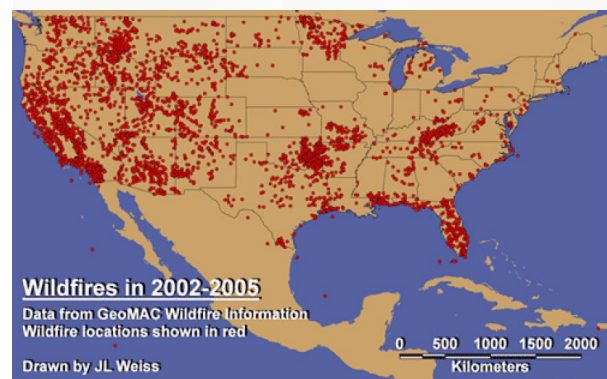
Path of Major Hurricanes 2000-2019

### 2. Dangers of Earthquake.

The west coast of America may be safe from the hurricanes, but you trade that off with a risk of earthquakes. The map of recent earthquake activity below shows that much of the country has a significant risk. Striking without notice, it is difficult to plan around this danger as exhibited by the 1989 World Series in which an earthquake during warm-ups before of a World Series game delayed the series by 10 days.



Major Earthquakes (2000 – 2010)



### 3. Wildfire Danger

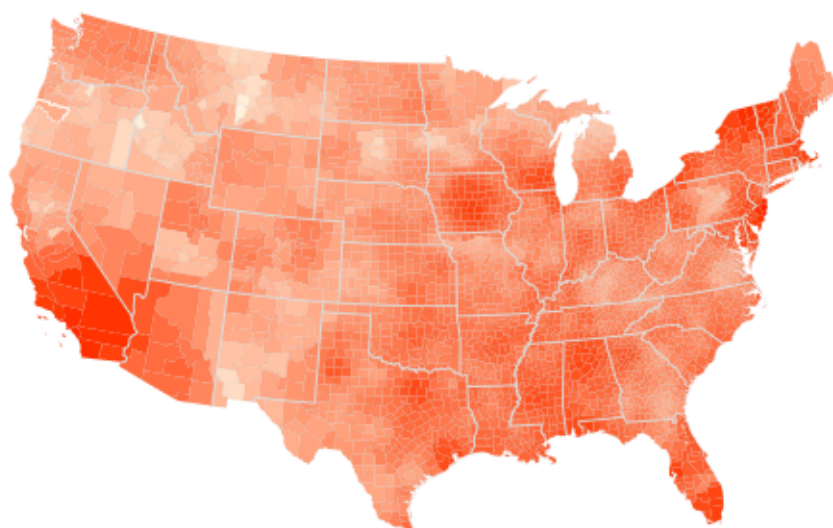
Every summer comes with it a danger of wildfires and in their aftermath, the damage can be extensive, and the region shut off for long periods of time. It has been two years since the Camp Fire destroyed Paradise, CA and rebuilding of the town is just beginning.

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### How Safe Am I From a Natural Disaster, ?

SEARCH COUNTIES



Just where is safe to consider when planning national level meetings within the United States? Well, it turns out everywhere has at least some danger. Unless you planning to meet in South Grass County, MT or Washington County, ID, you need to consider the possible impact of possible disruptions into your plans.

If you look at those resort counties which are typically where national meetings or conventions are held, you will notice the high density of highly dangerous places. Los Angeles, Las Vegas, San Francisco, Houston and Miami are all in the 50 most dangerous counties. Does it mean you will have a problem? No, but the level of risk is higher and the odds of an issue will likewise be higher.

**It is not a matter of “If” meetings will be disrupted but a matter of “When” as the year 2020 isn’t going to be unique**



# HELPING SOCIETIES IN THE AGE OF PANDEMICS

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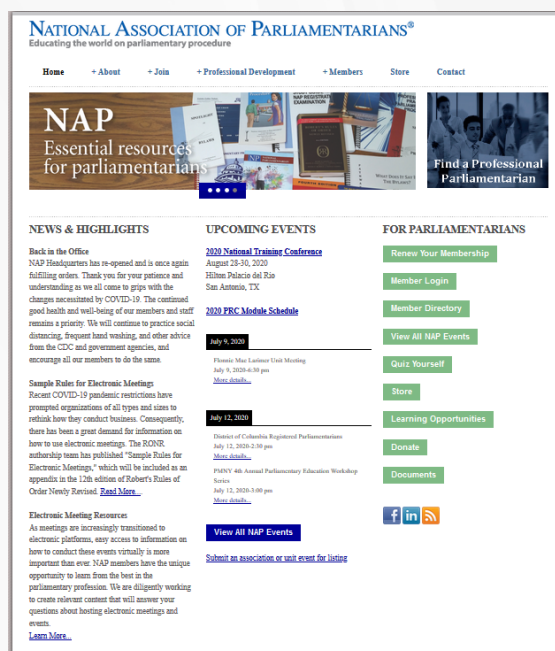
### Deal with Today's Crisis or Prepare for Tomorrow's Crisis

#### The Current Crisis

Parliamentarians have risen to the task and provided many resources to help deal with the current, on-going crisis, having to work within the current set of Robert's Rules of Orders and existing Bylaws. Check out these resources!

The National Association of Parliamentarians website ([www.parliamentarians.org](http://www.parliamentarians.org))

- Special Rule Postings (12<sup>th</sup> Edition)
- Webinars
  - Rule Interpretation
  - Electronic Meetings
  - Electronic Voting
  - Electronic Meeting Platforms



#### A Future Crisis

Emergency experts stress the need to prepare for any future situation by having a pre-prepared bag of required tools and elements to have at hand. They call this a GO BAG.

A Parliamentarian should have their own bag of tips, tricks and ideas to help organizations prepare for the eventual unexpected and disruptive situation.

### Have you been Proactive or Reactive?

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**“ The object of rules of order is to facilitate the smooth functioning of the assembly and to provide a firm basis for resolving questions of procedure that may arise -- RONR (12<sup>th</sup> Ed) 2:14**

### Designed for Flexibility

General Robert's philosophy was clear throughout his writings. He wanted the rules to be strong enough to provide a firm foundation, a certainty and fairness of procedure in a manner that protect the rights of all the members but he also always wanted them to be flexible enough such that the society was in charge of its own rules and not the other way around. So remember, the goal is to be definitive and abide the fundamental rules while keeping the structure flexible enough to service the interest of our clients. And the simple, obvious cancellation of plans doesn't always serve in our client's best interests.

**“ Before anything else, preparation is the key to success -- Alexander Graham Bell**

### Being Proactive

The quote from Bell should be an awakening. Any steps taken in being ready and prepared before the emergency strikes is just going to make dealing with the emergency so much easier. Therefore, the first section of the Go-Bag needs to contain tools for how to organize and setup systems so all will function when the crisis hits.



### Act Decisively

When the crisis hits, it is time to act decisively and boldly, keeping everything under control.

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**“ If the plan doesn’t work, change the plan but never the goal**

Length of Crisis	Importance of Activity		
	Minimal	Locally	Legally
Short	Cancel	Postpone	Abbreviate
Medium		Alternative	
Long			Alternative

### Tool #1: IN AN EMERGENCY, WHAT TO DO WITH MEETINGS?

The Possible Actions that can be Taken:

- 1) Cancel the Meeting  
If a) short term emergency b) No critical items pending  
Cancelling is quick, easy and simple but final with no recourse.
- 2) Postpone the Meeting  
If a) short term emergency b) Important Items need attention  
Allows important things like elections to be done when you can meet again.
- 3) The Abbreviated Meeting  
If a) Medium term emergency b) subject to legal regulations  
The Abbreviated meeting counts as an official meeting to meet even if there is no quorum. The abbreviated meeting means that the necessary personnel (President / Secretary) shows up at the meeting place, calls it to order, declares no quorum and adjourns. It is possible to set an adjourned meeting for a better date if necessary.
- 4) The Alternative Meeting  
If a) Longer term or open-ended b) The organization wants or needs to stay afloat.  
Find a different place, time or method of meeting (See Tool #2)  
May require notice and permission in the governing documents



#### Consider:

- 1) Are there legal requirements that a meeting be held?
- 2) Does a superior body require a meeting?
- 3) How long will the emergency affect the meetings?
- 4) What activities need to take place in the intervening time?
- 5) Does the organization want to keep meeting and in what way can the meet?

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“ **The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining. -- President John F . Kennedy (Jan 11, 1962 State of the Union Address)**



### **Tool #2: CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE MEETINGS IDEAS**

In any organization, there is a bias towards the status quo, wanting to hold the meetings as the organization has always held the meeting. During the 2020 lockdown, organizations continued to vote to hold meetings in person when clearly the authorities were not going to let that happen.

Many organizations found out during the 2020 crisis that they had no emergency plan. Their Bylaws failed to mention any alternative means of meeting and didn't permit electronic meetings in any manner. This tied their hands when they could no longer meet in person. Even the major political parties found that they had not considered this eventuality. As a parliamentarian, we should assist our clients in setting up plans to move to alternative arrangements when the conditions might require.

By foresight of the Authorship team of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 12<sup>th</sup> edition, the appendix of the new edition will contain ideas for meetings for using telephone for all or some of the members, phone with internet voting and using all internet services. This ideas are quite useful and can be a helpful guide.



#### **Consider:**

- 1) What kinds of alternative meetings can your organization handle? Online? New Location?
- 2) Are your members sufficiently computer savvy and have the required equipment for online meetings?
- 3) Will meetings be fully online or a hybrid?
- 4) Are there alternative time or place which would help your organization meet?

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“ **Change is hard at first, messy in the middle and gorgeous at the end-- Robin Sharma**



## **Tool #3: BUILD FOR EMERGENCIES INTO THE GOVERNING DOCUMENTS**

Once equipped with a list of alternative meetings ideas, then you will need to build those alternatives into your governing documents. It will be required that your bylaws allow for these special meetings but be careful not to put too much detail into the bylaws. Bylaws are classically and purposefully difficult to change and if there is one thing that we all know about how our society works, change comes fast these days, especially in the world of technology. Therefore, potential emergencies must be considered in the creation of Bylaws, but it best to leave the technical details to special or standing rules.

Start by referring to the appendix of the 12th Edition RONR for sample rules but there is a definite shortcoming to those examples. They aren't designed for emergencies but are written for regular electronic board meetings. Clearly, the bylaws would need to be different for one of our Electronic units when every meeting is electronic as compared to our more traditional units. For example, the MKM parliamentarian unit in Dallas Texas typically meet at IHOP but had to go to teleconference during the pandemic.



### **Consider:**

- 1) Are your emergency response authorized by the bylaws?
- 2) Is your response affected by legal or regulatory restrictions (such as open meeting law)?
- 3) What meetings may need to an emergency alternative?
- 4) Where will the meetings details be listed?
- 5) By what means will the alternative meeting be triggered?

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“ **Standing rules ... are rules ... which are related to the details of administration and which can be ... changed ... as any ordinary act of the society”**  
-- RONR (12<sup>th</sup> Ed) 2:23



### Tool #4: CREATE SPECIAL AND STANDING RULES

While the Bylaws contain those elements of the organization which aren't likely to change significantly overtime, it is the special rules and standing rules include the technical rules which are going to frequently change. The fact is that developers are always finding ways to move the world of the Internet ever forward. In recent years, the most popular meeting application has successively gone through Facetime, Skype and most recently Zoom, an application which is already fading to the next generation solutions. Since the specifics on how to use such applications need to change so much, the place for them to reside is within the special and standing rules.

Bylaws are designed to be difficult to change and really require the input of the whole society. Imagine the chaos it would cause to go through that process with the whole society when developing the details of how to use the Zoom application. The best place for those details is in special rules which have a lower bar to get approved.

Special Rules of Order are the place for rules of procedure, the "how to" in how the meeting functions, while the Standing Rules are the policies, the "how to" in how the organization operates



#### Consider:

- 1) What is the typical skill set of the members?
- 2) What equipment is available to most members?  
For Internet based solutions:
- 3) What costs are involved and who will pay
- 4) Who will be responsible for maintaining online accounts
- 5) What training and education will be required?

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“ **The presiding officer of an assembly... should be chosen principally for the ability to preside.**  
-- RONR (12<sup>th</sup> Ed) 47:6



## **Tool #5: CREATE A CRISIS TEAM**

Once the rules for these alternative meetings have been setup, who is going to manage all this? The next tool to consider is does the organization need an additional officer position, a Director of Technology, or some variation as it applies. As General Robert reminds us, we should select the presiding officer based on his ability to preside. In person and electronic meetings are completely different and therefore are likely to require different presiding officers. Experience has shown that in person meetings often requires encouraging the audience to keep things moving, while in electronic meetings it is more a matter of holding them off due to the lower barrier to participation.

The technology officer should be extremely familiar with the electronic platform being used. At a recent on-line convention when the statewide body split into regional caucuses, the time required for the smaller side meetings could vary between 2 to 7 hours largely based on the ability of the presiding officer to handle the computer interface. Along with this new technology officer, a team of technology assistants can be a real benefit. These assistants have two functions, first to intercept the computer issues and keep them out of the main meeting and secondly to act as sort of electronic parliamentarians in keeping things running in the meeting. If the parliamentarian has this skill set, I believe that they will add value to their normal parliamentarian roles.



### **Consider:**

- 1) Will the alternative meeting require a technical background?
- 2) How will the society keep up with the changes in technology?
- 3) Are members who can serve as technical assistants?
- 4) Who knows the technology, the rules and is good with handling people?

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“ **Simple rules are shortcut strategies that save time and effort by focusing our attention and simplifying the way we process information.**  
- **Simple Rules, Sull & Eisenhardt**



### **Tool #6: AUTOMATIC ACTIVATION**

Since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic, too many organizations have struggled to make decisions on how to manage their functions and meetings. These times of turmoil are stressful on both the organizational and personal fronts for those individuals who are trying to run disrupted clubs. There have been too many emergency meetings of stressed out individuals finding it difficult to make the necessary decisions. In some cases, the decisions were difficult because the bylaws gave them no options. While other places found that no plan existed, so they hesitated. They hoped the times would pass and the decisions wouldn't be needed. Recently, a group voted with a 2/3 majority to hold an in-person event even after the venue was closed by order of the state government.

This part of the toolkit is to create a means for automatic activation of the emergency plans. Too often we can describe when we wouldn't be able to meet and need to find alternative arrangements, such as the governor declaring a state of emergency, shutdown of the transportation systems or National Weather System Alerts. The special rules should include a set of simple rules which indicate who make decisions and a list of ways the decision is automatically made.



#### **Consider:**

- 1) Who will be able to activate the emergency meeting methods?
- 2) What Government actions will trigger the emergency?
- 3) How will the emergency be cleared?
- 4) How will the organization be notified?
- 5) Does our solution require an emergency meeting to setup?



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### “ Herding Cats: It’s easier than it sounds



#### Tool #7: KEEPING VIRTUAL CONTROL

It is always a challenge to keep a large meeting in control in person but when it comes to on-line meetings that multiplies, sometimes feeling much like herding cats. The reason is that there is a low barrier to participation. In a typical meeting of any significant size, there is a hesitation of many to enter the conversation. Even at the NAP conventions, with so many people comfortable with speaking in front of groups, there is rarely more than 4-5 people at a microphone. Yet, we all know that there is a freedom that comes from hiding behind a computer screen and this applies to on-line conventions at well. At a recent convention, while only a handful would ever go to the microphone when held in person, the chairman of the online version was getting 60-100 requests per minute. In real life, people won't hold their hand up for more than a couple of minutes, they are more than willing to press that raised hand icon on the screen for hours.

It is vital to over communicate during an electronic meeting and to try treat the electronic meeting as close to an in-person meeting as possible. For example, during an in-person meeting, recognition and speaking queues are reset at the completion of each item of business. Such must also be true on-line; therefore, it is critical to clear the raised hands and mute all the microphones at the end of each item of business.

Further, everyone needs to know who everyone else is. So, it is necessary to really watch the logins. In many of the applications, you get a lot of logins which are something like "iPhone". Important to get those changed to the name of the real person, especially before any voting.



#### Consider:

- 1) Is your tool capable of clearing any settings of the users?
- 2) Have you implemented a separate path for technology / tool questions from the parliamentary questions?
- 3) How is the low barrier to participation being addressed?

# HELPING SOCIETIES IN THE AGE OF PANDEMICS

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### Voting Integrity

There have been a lot of questions about maintaining voting integrity while doing electronic meetings. It takes more than just liking a post to be properly voting. Can the members trust the results of a vote?

For vote certainty, you need to know who is voting and that each member who is voting has fair access to the voting method. A classic issue is what do you do with couples who are accessing via a single computer interface. The use of polls or raising hands on zoom results just one vote per connection, which disenfranchises some members, but do you really want to be forced to roll call votes for every vote? If you have a handful of members roll calls are okay but as the size of the group grows, it can waste large amounts of time going through everyone's names and has the undesired effect of removing secrecy in voting.

There is a real need to collect a different email address for each voting member. That will help you know who is voting and get to one vote per member. I have seen suggestions of using the passwords to keep non-voters out of zoom calls which will work if 1) no one gives the password out and 2) people limit themselves to one connection. When the meeting is small enough, it is possible to monitor who is logged onto a call but as that number grows, the harder it is to monitor. I know that within a typical home, there are at least 5-7 devices which could be used to participate, and I have at least 3-5 email address to use, so, an unscrupulous person could get as many votes while others only get a fraction of a vote. There shouldn't be an inequity in voting due to device ownership.

Above all, save yourself a lot of headaches and use unanimous consent as much as possible to avoid the voting altogether.



### Consider:

- 1) A unique email for each attendee?
- 2) Are unique passwords for each attendee needed?
- 3) Assure that non-voters are not voting?
- 4) Assure that each member gets exactly one vote?
- 5) Attendees have confidence and trust in the system
- 6) Using unanimous consent where possible?

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**“ Neglect means disaster. No machine runs itself. - Joseph Robert “Primer of Parliamentary Law”**



### **Tool #8: TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION**

Too often, at the beginning of electronic meetings it is left to the presiding officer to train the attendees on how to use the system. However, no organization selects presiding officers upon the basis of their ability to provide training. Some professions, such as parliamentarians, put a lot of emphasis on learning the techniques of training as it isn't simple or an obvious thing to do. As organizations try these new manners of meeting, many individuals will need have access to training on how to make it all work. It is a common experience to meet the self-described expert parliamentarian who might have once read a book on it in high school, so we have self-described experts in using technology who aren't going to be successful without help. Too often, members learn by examples and once a bad example is successful at getting the chairman's attention, it is repeated. At a recent convention, once the chairman acknowledged a Point of Order, every motion, complaint or statement became a Point of Order.

A biggest key for success is that development of the training must wait until you have completed a test run of the system. It is frustrating if the reality of the meeting doesn't match the training, which is worse than no training at all. Make sure what you are going to do is going to work, then develop training and then presented by a qualified trainer.



#### **Consider:**

- 1) Who is qualified to do proper training?
- 2) Are you training with the final software setups?
- 3) Can you provide written or posted instructions during the meetings?
- 4) Is the training and instructions available at a sufficient time before the meeting?
- 5) Are instructions posted to the screen during the electronic meeting?

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“ **An assembly can ratify only such actions... as it would have had the right to authorize in advanced**  
-- RONR (12<sup>th</sup> Ed) 10:55



### Tool #9: USE RATIFICATIONS AND RE-ADOPTIONS

General Robert foresaw such special circumstances and included in the rules the concept of ratification. When used wisely it can be a powerful tool in your Go-bag to be pulled out in times of trouble. It can be frequent in emergency situations where there is an issue with getting a quorum to be present in meetings. This leaves a dilemma, put off decisions and actions until the group gets back together again or be wise and slightly brave such that those present push on with those actions which are required for the good of the organization. As the saying goes, sometimes it is better to seek forgiveness than ask permission. There needs to be an organization for everyone to return to therefore, keeping the society going by making those key decisions and then asking the society to ratify or readopt the actions at a later date is a good strategy. As parliamentarians, it is important to not discourage our clients when short of quorums and keep them aware of this option.

In section 10 of the RONR, makes it clear that the motion to ratify applies to action which have already taken place. Any action or decision which has not occurred, requires that the assembly re-adopt the motion. Example: Ratify the Plumber's repair and Re-adopt the new upcoming plumbing project.



#### Consider:

- 1) Are the organization's officers trained in the use of the ratify motion?
- 2) What type of issues does the organization consider important enough to invoke ratification?
- 3) What actions need to be taken in the best interest of the organization and its members?

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“ **When it comes to innovation you’ve got to be ahead of the pack, but not too far**  
-- **Victor Pisapia**



## **Tool #10: DARE TO BE INNOVATIVE**

It is likely there has been no time in the history of your organization when the membership will be more receptive to innovative ideas. As President Theodore Roosevelt said, “Don’t let perfect be the enemy of good”.

Now, some organizations are subject to limitations due to legal requirements and rules from superior bodies, but outside of those restrictions, what restrictions is the organization placing on itself. Dare to be bold and don’t be afraid to try the new, the innovative. Remember, General Robert wanted the rules to serve the organization and not the organization to serve the rules. The rules are meant to help, not to hinder.

Now is the time for suggestions! Consider suggesting to your organizations to try those things which would be resisted at other times. When the routine is already upset, is the time to strike out with new ideas, new places to meet, new service ideas, new activities and new ways to outreach to others. There is no better time to be daring.



### **Consider:**

- 1) Are you letting the rules place unnecessary limits on the organization?
- 2) Are there alternative meeting places that could be used, such as parks or restaurants?
- 3) Are there new activities or purposes for meeting which the organization could be doing instead of a typical meeting?

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“ **Crisis cause organizations to succeed or fail quickly.**

<b>Planning Questions</b>	<b>Done?</b>
<b>Alternative Meeting Planning</b>	
Is the organization affect by Legal requirements?	
Is the organization subject to rules from a superior body?	
What level of computer skills do the members have?	
What level of equipment do the members have?	
Under what circumstances will the membership feel unsafe?	
Are there alternative places to meet (office space vs restaurants)	
Are there alternative service activities the organization could do?	
What meeting types need to be planned for?	
<b>Regular Business Meetings</b>	
<b>Executive Board Meetings</b>	
<b>Annual Membership Meetings</b>	
<b>National Convention?</b>	
<b>Governing Documents</b>	
Are the bylaws updated to allow alternative meeting methods in case of an emergency?	
Are all the different meetings handled?	
Is the right balance of rules between Bylaws and Special / Standing rules achieved?	
<b>Technology Planning</b>	
What equipment does the organization have available for use for electronic meetings?	
What subscription / application purchase will be required?	
What subscription / application costs will be incurred by the organization?	
Is the meeting subscription / application costs in the budget and manageable by the organization?	
Is the organization depending on a particular member to be present to have a meeting? [i.e. if any member not being present prevents the meeting from happening.]	
Who has the passwords to the subscription / application?	
Who is available that has expertise on running the subscription / application?	
Which officer will be assigned the role of maintaining the subscription / application login and login security?	
Is the subscription / application skill requirements compatable with the membership of the organization?	
Specifically, is it compatable with the least skill of the members?	
Is there an alternative path to handle technology questions out of the flow of the meeting?	
Does the technology allow for the authentication of any vote coming a qualified voter?	
Does the technology allow the presiding officer to override the settings such as raised hands and votes of the users for purposes of reset the setup?	
<b>Crisis Team</b>	
Who has the expertise to run the meeting in electronic mode and also has the expertise in running meetings?	
Who is available as technology assistants?	
How will the organization keep up with existing technology?	
Which officer is responsible to keeping the special / standing rules up to date with the technology?	
<b>Automatic Activation</b>	
Who can activate the emergency plan? President? Board of Directors? Simple Rules?	
What Simple Rules exist to automatically activate the emergency plan?	
What actions by governing bodies would affect the ability to have a meeting?	
What method will be used to return to the normal, non-emergency condition?	
<b>Training and Instruction</b>	
Is the workload of training and instruction allocated to someone who can accomplish the task?	

# HELPING SOCIETIES IN THE AGE OF PANDEMICS

## A PARLIAMENTARIAN TOOLKIT

“ **Crisis cause organizations to succeed or fail quickly.**

<b>Execution Questions</b>	<b>Done?</b>
<b>Alternative Meeting Planning</b>	
How long will the emergency affect the ability to hold a meeting?	
Are any time sensitive items pending on the agendas?	
Are elections coming up?	
Are bylaw or budget changes coming up?	
How will the organization be notified of the alternative meeting plans?	
Where will the meeting details be listed?	
<b>Elections</b>	
Are elections coming up?	
Can your officers serve until replacements are made?	
Can you authenticate the members to assure proper voting?	
Assure one and only one vote per voting member?	
Assure that non-voting members and non-members cannot vote?	
<b>Training and Instructions</b>	
What training and education will be required?	
Who is qualified to do proper training?	
Are you training with the final software setups?	
Can you provide written or posted instructions during the meetings?	
Is there a path for the untrained to ask questions outside the main meeting flow?	
<b>Ratify</b>	
Are the organization's officers trained in the use of the ratify motion?	
What actions are in the best interest of the organization that could be ratified at a later date?	
<b>Dare to Innovative</b>	
Are you letting the rules place unnecessary limits on the organization?	
Are there alternative meeting places that could be used, such as parks or restaurants?	
Are there new activities or purposes for meeting which the organization could be doing instead of a typical meeting?	

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### **Wording Ideas:**

Based on the rules from Appendix of 12<sup>th</sup> Edition RONR as republished by the Authorship Team, this modification for emergency purposes is designed as a starting point to be thinking about how to build new Bylaw sections.

### **Bylaws:**

Section 4. Emergency Meetings Held Electronically.

In the event of a stated emergency, all meetings of the society, including General Business and Board meetings, may be conducted at alternative in-person arrangements or through use of Internet meeting services.

a) An emergency can be declared or retracted by any of the following:

- i) The President
- ii) The vote of the majority of the board
- iii) Per conditions specified in the Special Rules of Order as to Emergency Meetings.

b) The President shall notify the membership of the declaration or retraction of any Emergency prior to at least 3 days of the next scheduled meeting.

c) The Internet meeting services shall be specified by the Special Rules of Order as to Emergency meetings such that it supports anonymous voting and support visible displays identifying those participating, identifying those seeking recognition to speak, showing (or permitting the retrieval of) the text of pending motions, and showing the results of votes.

d) These electronic meetings shall be subject to all rules adopted by the Board, or by the Society, to govern them. Any such rules adopted shall supersede any conflicting rules in the parliamentary authority but may not otherwise conflict with or alter any rule or decision of the Society. An anonymous vote conducted through the designated Internet meeting service shall be deemed a ballot vote, fulfilling any requirement in the bylaws or rules that a vote be conducted by ballot.



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### **Additions to Special Rules:**

#### Special Rules as to Emergency Meetings

1. An emergency meeting is automatically activated when any of the following occur affecting the location of a pending meeting.
  - a) Governor enacted State of Emergency
  - b) Government travel restrictions such that more than 50% of members would not be able to attend
  - c) Closure of the meeting facility
2. A secure authentication system for each voting member shall be provided to assure the identification of each voter and their voting rights when voting using the Internet meeting service.

# HELPING SOCIETIES IN THE AGE OF PANDEMICS

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### “ **By Failing to Prepare, You are Preparing to Fail** -- Benjamin Franklin

Possibly the biggest lesson that the Coronavirus crisis of 2020 has taught organizations, is that they failed to properly prepare for emergencies. Recent years have been a time of relative stability so organizations functioned perfectly without too many disruptions, nothing significant enough to force a full-scale change of plans. However, it is likely that society has entered a New Normal where disruptions will become more common and frequent. As a society, technology and its users have adapted to the situation, developing the necessary techniques to work and meet from home. All of this will likely lead to bigger and more frequent governmental reactions to crises in the future. Why risk it, if it can be done remotely?

The time is now to prepare organizations for the inevitable future disruptions which will be coming whether we plan for it or not.



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