

Unanimous Consent – How it Works

Robert's Rules of Order (RONR 12th) provides for a streamlined handling of the motion/voting process on matters of general agreement, since there is no minority to protect. The following is taken from RONR 12th, Sections 4:58 to 4/60, with summary and explanation below:

In cases where there seems to be no opposition in routine business or on questions of little importance, time can often be saved by the procedure of *unanimous consent*, or as it was formerly also called, *general consent*. Action in this manner is in accord with the principle that rules are designed for the protection of the minority and generally need not be strictly enforced when there is no minority to protect. Under these conditions, the method of unanimous consent can be used either to adopt a motion without the steps of stating the question and putting the motion to a formal vote, or it can be used to take action without even the formality of a motion.

To obtain unanimous consent in either case, the chair states that "If there is no objection... [or, "Without objection..."] the action that he mentions will be take; or he may ask, "It there any objection to...?" He then pauses, and if no member calls out, "I object," the chair announces that, "Since there is no objection....," the action is decided upon. If any member objects the chair must state the question on the motion, allow any desired debate... and put the question in the regular manner....

"Unanimous consent" does not necessarily imply that every member present is in favor of the proposed action; it may only mean that the opposition, feeling that it is useless to oppose or discuss the matter, simply acquiesces. ...

Summary & Explanation:

1. Unanimous Consent can be used by the Moderator without a formal motion (or 2nd) by stating the matter for approval and asking for objections. If there are no objections, the matter is approved by unanimous consent. If there is an objection...
2. If a matter is put forth by the Moderator and someone objects then the proper course is for the moderator to call for a motion (with 2nd) and then open discussion prior to vote. The objection does not even need to be to the content of the matter, but can just be to handling the matter without discussion.
3. Minute notation: A proper manner of notation in the minutes would be to state: "It was **APPROVED** by **UNANIMOUS CONSENT** that.... (*Set forth the matter as stated by the Moderator*)."

4. If in doubt, always feel confident about taking a step back and handling the matter like a standard motion. It may take more time, but it will avoid any assertions that the rights of the minority are being disregarded.

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