

# VENTURING MAGAZINE

LeaderThoughts #28 by Michael Brown

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## Debate

Debate is the discussion on the merits of a pending question [motion] in a deliberative assembly [your organization, such as your crew]. "It is the essential element in the making of rational decisions of consequence by intelligent people." RONR (10<sup>th</sup> ed.), p373.

Debate is NOT a dirty word. Debate in itself is not something to be avoided. It's our chance to voice our views, for or against, the pending matter at hand. Don't confuse debate with argument.



### RULES OF DEBATE

- A motion must be proposed before a matter can be debated. [i.e. Discussed]
- The maker of a motion has the right to speak first in debate. [This is their time to expand upon their motion and explain why others should vote for it. They are "selling" it.]
- A member must be recognized by the chair before speaking in debate.
- Debate is closed and the vote taken when no member rises to claim the floor. [This can be clear if the chair asks for further discussion, and no one steps forward]. The chair may not cut off debate without the permission of the assembly.
- Debate may be closed by the adoption of the motion Previous Question which requires a two-third vote.
- A member may speak for 2 times for a maximum of ten minutes on each pending question. [This is the default]
- The rules of debate may be modified by adopting a special rule of order [such a rule would apply only in the crew, for however long the rule exists], by changing the limits for a single session [i.e. this particular meeting], or by changing the limits on the pending question only.
- The requirement that the presiding officer [the officer serving as chair] remain impartial precludes their exercising their right to debate while presiding.



### DECORUM in Debate

- Remarks must be confined to the merit of the pending question.
- When speaking in debate, a member must refrain from attacking a member's motives and avoid name calling. The motion, not the member, is the subject of debate.
- All remarks should be addressed thru the chair. Members do not address one another directly.
- Do not speak adversely about some prior action of the organization which is not pending.

- The maker of a motion is not permitted to speak against their own motion.
- Permission of the assembly is required to read from any paper or book as part of a speech in debate.
- During debate, during remarks by the presiding officer, during voting, no member should be permitted to disturb the assembly by whispering or any other way.

Compiled by the Plantation Unit of Parliamentarians, with minor edited by Michael Brown.