



HOW CAL CITIES POLICY COMMITTEES WORK

Policy Committee Subject Matter

Cal Cities has seven policy committees, each with its own subject matter jurisdiction. Please refer to the ["Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles"](#) booklet to find the subject matter for each committee. This document is updated every two years. Policy in the Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles is used to determine Cal Cities legislative and regulatory positions.

Policy Committee Legislative Agenda Items

Cal Cities policy committees review bills or regulatory proposals on issues for which Cal Cities does not have existing policy, or for which staff members feel a policy discussion needs to occur for greater clarity or background on an issue. Staff will lobby legislation, funding proposals, or regulatory changes where existing policy provides clear direction.

Committee Recommendations

The committee's actions or positions are a recommendation to Cal Cities Board of Directors (Board) for a formal position. Possible committee recommendations can be:

- Support
- Oppose
- Support-if-amended (as appropriate, specific amendments may be requested)
- Oppose-unless-amended (as appropriate, specific amendments may be requested)
- No position
- Neutral

There are nuanced differences between some of these positions. For example, "support-if-amended" sends a very different message than "oppose-unless-amended." Both positions might seek the same change, but the support-if-amended position means that Cal Cities would be listed with the "supporters" of the bill in most legislative analysis. In addition, "no position" and "neutral" have different meanings and require different actions from staff. Selection of one or the other depends in part upon what type of message or political posture Cal Cities needs to take. Staff will advise the committee about the implications of each on a case-by-case basis.

Approval by League Board Needed for All Committee Recommendations

All committee actions are recommendations to the Board, which has the final say on all positions. Under no circumstances are individual committee members or the committee itself authorized to speak on behalf of Cal Cities. When a committee action is supported by a large majority (e.g., 32 to 3), the recommendation is placed on the Board's consent calendar. When the committee vote is split (e.g., 15-13), the item will be presented as an action item for the Board's discussion. Staff will also provide information about the reasons behind the committee's recommendation to the Board.

Often, the Board adopts the recommendation of the policy committee. When the Board adopts a different position, staff will notify the committee members of the reason for the different position. This likely will be done in the next regular communication with the committee.

Some issues cut across more than one committee. When this occurs, staff will coordinate and bring a bill to more than one committee for review and recommendation. The recommendations are then forwarded to the Board and if there is a different recommendation, the Board resolves the difference.

Role of the Committee Chair

The chair's role is to balance the often-competing needs of the membership to have a full and thoughtful discussion on the issues. The chair may limit debate, either in the number of speakers or the amount of time each speaker has, in order to ensure that we can move ahead on our agenda and cover the items included. We ask that when you make comments on issues before the committee that you be brief and concise and that you not repeat what has already been stated. Also, if you have already spoken on an issue, the chair may ask you to hold your comments until after new speakers are able to share their comments.

Committee Schedule and Process

Committees generally meet three times a year with the potential for an abbreviated virtual meeting prior to the Cal Cities Annual Conference to review resolutions, if any are assigned to it.

Agendas/Disseminating Information

An agenda packet is emailed about one week before a meeting. Highlights that summarize committee actions are prepared by staff and emailed to committee members approximately two weeks after the meetings.

We encourage you to visit the [Cal Cities website](#). In addition to containing committee materials, the website contains information on Cal Cities priorities and a link to track individual bills and Cal Cities position on them. You should also subscribe to the Cal Cities electronic newsletter [Cal Cities Advocate](#).

How to Get an Item on the Agenda

Staff prepares background material in advance of the meeting and prepares the agenda in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair. If you wish to have the committee discuss an item, contact staff well in advance of the meeting to determine the feasibility of including it on the agenda. This will allow staff time to prepare the appropriate background material. Because of time constraints and a full work program before the committee, it may not always be possible to respond to such requests.

Issues Should Have Statewide Impact

Although committee members may represent divisions, departments, and caucuses, all should be mindful that Cal Cities must address issues of statewide impact and interest. Thus, while an issue or bill may be of interest to a particular city or region, if it does not have broader, statewide implications, Cal Cities likely will not engage in that policy

discussion or take a position. This should be considered in requesting an item for discussion.

Brown Act and Roberts Rules of Order

Cal Cities complies with the spirit of the Brown Act. Thus, when the committee discusses items not already on the agenda (e.g., supplemental legislative agenda), the Chair will ask for a vote of approval to add that item to the agenda. Cal Cities also follows Roberts Rules of Order and provides a brief overview of key procedural steps in Roberts Rules as they apply to committees.

Staffing for Committee

Each committee has a staff lobbyist assigned to it. This individual is your main point of contact for logistics or questions about the agenda and provides information on legislation during the committee meeting.

Cal Cities Partners and Other Guests

Cal Cities Partners have a non-voting representative assigned to each policy committee and are seated at the table with other committee members. In addition, city officials, other members of Cal Cities Partners Program, and interested members of the public are welcome to attend the meetings. We provide an opportunity for Cal Cities Partners and other members of the public to offer comment on items before the committee during the designated public comment period on the agenda.

Parliamentary Procedure Basics for Policy Committees

(adapted from Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised¹)

Note: This document is designed to provide practical examples of common procedural matters encountered. It strives to provide guidance to foster productive and efficient meetings; it is not meant to be an exhaustive or comprehensive discussion of Robert's Rules. As always, it is the role and discretion of the chair to provide helpful guidance to individuals that may digress from the appropriate form and substance related to the conduct of meetings and the presentation of motions and other procedural matters set forth below.

I. **COMMON MOTIONS**

1. **Main Motions**

Purpose: To introduce items to the committee for their consideration.

Example: "I move to support AB 123."

2. **Motion to Amend**

Purpose: Retains the main motion under discussion but changes it in some way. *Example:* "I move to amend the (presented main) motion to support AB 123 if amended."

2a. "Friendly" Amendments

Purpose: To offer an amendment to the main motion that is still supportive of the main motion.

Example: If there is currently a motion to support AB 123 on the floor and a committee member makes a "friendly" amendment to support AB 123 and also request that staff report back after contacting the sponsor for clarification on specific language.

Note: This is commonly mishandled procedurally. Often the individual that seeks to offer the "friendly" amendment will inquire if the maker of the original motion will "accept" the amendment, and if so the chair will treat the motion as amended. This is not the proper way to handle such an amendment. It is not the discretion of the mover of the original motion (or the chair) to accept or decline the amendment, rather it must be adopted by the committee.

If it appears to the chair that an amendment (or any other motion) is uncontroversial, it is proper for the chair to ask if there is "any objection" to adopting the amendment. If no objection is made, the chair may declare the amendment adopted. If even one member objects, however, the amendment is subject to debate and vote like any other, regardless of whether its proposer calls it "friendly" and regardless of whether the maker of the original motion endorses its adoption.

3. Substitute Motion

Purpose: Removes the motion under discussion and replaces it with a new motion.

Example: When there is a main motion on the floor to support a bill, a substitute motion would be, "I move a substitute motion that the committee oppose AB 123."

Addressing Multiple Motions

The following examples provide guidance relating to how multiple motions are handled, and the impact failed substitute motions have on original (main motions) and any proposed amendments. The last motion presented should be considered first.

Note: Substitute motions commonly occur during meetings, yet Robert's Rules does not make a distinction between motions to amend and substitute motions. However, motions to amend must be considered prior to a main motion. Because the use of "substitute" motions is fairly widespread, the label as it is reflected in practice is used in the examples below. Rosenberg's Rules of Order do reference substitute motions and their impact is also reflected below.

Example 1

Committee Member 1: "I move that we support AB 123."

Committee Member 2: "I move that we support AB 123, if

amended." *Committee Member 3:* "I move a substitute motion that we oppose AB 123."

Characterizing the Motions:

In the above example:

Committee Member 1 has made a (main) motion.

Committee Member 2 has made an *amendment* to Committee Member 1's motion. Committee Member 3 has made a *substitute* motion to Committee Member 1's motion.

Order for Consideration and the Possible Outcomes

Committee Member 3's motion is considered first. If Committee Member 3's motion *fails*, Committee Member 2's motion will be considered next. If Committee Member 2's motion *fails*, Committee Member 1's motion will be considered. If Committee Member 2's motion *passes*, there is no need to consider Committee Member 1's motion.

If Committee Member 3's motion *passes*, there is no need to consider Committee Member 1's motions because Committee Member 3's motion replaces Committee Member 1's original motion. There is also no need to consider Committee Member 2's motion since it is an amendment to Committee Member 1's motion that has been replaced by Committee Member 3's substitute motion.

Example 2

Committee Member 1: "I move that we support AB 123."

Committee Member 2: "I move a substitute motion that we oppose AB

123." Committee Member 3: "I move that we oppose AB 123 unless amended."

Characterizing the Motions

In the above example:

Committee Member 1 has made a (main) motion.

Committee Member 2 has made a substitute motion to Committee Member 1's motion. Committee Member 3 has made an amendment to Committee Member 2's substitute motion (sometimes referred to as a substitute to a substitute motion).

Reviewing the Possible Outcomes

Committee Member 3's motion should be considered first. If the motion *fails*, Committee Member 2's motion is considered.

If Committee Member 2's motion *passes*, it is not necessary to consider Committee Member 1's motion because Committee Member 2's motion substitutes for it.

If Committee Member 3's motion *fails*, Committee Member 2's motion is considered. If Committee Member 2's motion *fails*, the substitute motion for Committee Member 1's motion fails, and Committee Member 1's motion is considered.

If Committee Member 3's motion *passes*, it is not necessary to consider Committee Member 1's motion because Committee Member 3's motion substitutes for it.

Example 3

Committee Member 1: "I move that we support AB 123."

Committee Member 2: "I move a substitute motion that we oppose AB 123." Committee Member 3: "I move a substitute to the substitute

motion that we take no position on AB 123."

Characterizing the Motions

In the above example:

Committee Member 1 has made a (main) motion.

Committee Member 2 has made a substitute motion to Committee

Member 1's motion Committee Member 3 has attempted to make a substitute to Committee Member 2's substitute motion (sometimes referred to as a substitute to a substitute motion).

Reviewing the Possible Outcomes

While procedurally permissible, in an effort to avoid confusion

Committee Member 3's motion should *not* be entertained by the chair until Committee Member 1 and Committee Member 2's motions have been discussed and voted upon.

Committee Member 2's motion should be considered first. If the motion *fails* Committee Member 1's motion is considered. If Committee Member 1's motion *fails*, then Committee Member 3's may make the motion to "take no position on AB 123."

If Committee Member 2's motion *passes*, it is not necessary to consider Committee Member 1's motion because Committee Member 2's motion substitutes for it.

4. Motion to Withdraw

Purpose: To withdraw an item from discussion.

Making the Motion to Reconsider: Only the individual that made the initial motion can make a motion to withdraw an item from discussion. The individual may interrupt a speaker (after being recognized by the chair) to withdraw the motion under discussion at any time.

Note: This type of motion typically occurs following some debate by the committee that may provide additional information that influences the mover to reconsider continued debate on the original motion presented. Another member may subsequently make the same motion after it has been properly withdrawn.

Example: "Madame Chair, I move to withdraw my motion to support AB 123."

5. Motion to Reconsider

Purpose: To revisit discussion of an issue.

Making the Motion to Reconsider: A motion to reconsider must be made by an individual that previously voted in the majority of the

original motion. A motion to reconsider made by an individual that previously voted in the minority must be characterized as out of order.

Timing: A motion to reconsider must be made at the same meeting where the original motion was discussed, or the next meeting of the body. Motions for reconsideration following the next meeting are out of order.

Example: "I move to reconsider the committee's position to support AB 123."

6. Motion to Table

Purpose: This motion is often used in the attempt to "kill" a motion by setting it aside. The option is always present, however, to "take from the table," for reconsideration by the committee.

Note: This type of motion should be reserved to temporarily set an item aside if agreed upon by a majority of the committee to take up an item of immediate urgency.

However, in practice it is sometimes used as an option to end debate and prevent a vote, and not typically to take up an item of immediate urgency. This is technically improper procedure (or out of order) under Robert's Rules.

Example: "I move that the committee table the motion to support AB 123."

7. Call for the Question

Purpose: To refocus the committee on the agenda in the event there is sentiment that the discussion has drifted. The individual seeking to end debate must first be recognized by the Chair, make the motion and the motion must receive a second. The motion must be adopted by a 2/3 vote or unanimous consent.

Example: "I move the previous question."

8. Motion to Appeal

Purpose: To appeal a ruling made by the chair. A committee member may move to appeal a ruling by the Chair, but it must be seconded and receive a majority vote to be reversed.

Example: "I move to appeal the Chair's ruling that the committee approved support of AB 123."

II. OTHER ITEMS

1. Point of Privilege

Purpose: To draw attention to an item that interferes with the comfort of the meeting.

Example:

Committee Member: "Point of privilege." Chair: "State your point."

Committee Member: "Madame Chair, may we inform the hotel staff that the room is uncomfortably hot and request that the air conditioning be adjusted."

2. Point of Order

Purpose: To draw attention to inappropriate conduct at the meeting.

Example:

Committee Member: "Point of order." Chair: "State your point."

Committee Member: "Madame Chair, the motion was approved without opportunity for debate."

3. Public Comment

In the spirit of the Brown Act an opportunity for public comment is included on all agendas. The chair should exercise discretion in determining the appropriateness and extent of public comment during committee meetings setting reasonable limits as needed.

III. HOW TO PRESENT A MOTION

1. Obtain the floor by raising your voting card and wait to be recognized by the chair.
2. Make your motion.
 - a. Always state a motion affirmatively. For example, "I move that we support AB 123..." rather than, "I move that we do not take a position ...".
 - b. Avoid comments unrelated to the subject of the motion.
 - c. Avoid making any arguments supporting your motion at this time, simply state the motion.
3. Wait for someone to second your motion.
4. If there is no second to your motion it is lost and no vote will be taken by the committee.
5. If there is a second to your motion the chair should re-state the motion.
 - a. The chair will say, "it has been moved and seconded that we ..." This places the motion before the committee for consideration and action.

- b. The committee then either debates the motion or may move directly to a vote.
 - c. Once a motion is presented to the committee by the chair it becomes "committee property," and cannot be changed by the maker of the motion without the consent of the committee.
- 6. At this point the individual making the initial motion (the mover) may elect to expand on the motion. For example, this would be the appropriate time for the mover to present an argument in support of the motion.
- 7. The chair should always recognize the mover first.
 - a. All comments and debate must be directed to the chair.
 - b. Keep to the time limit (if any) for speaking that has been established.
 - c. The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the chair.
- 8. Putting the Question to the Committee
 - a. The chair asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
 - b. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken on the motion.
 - c. If the motion passes, the committee moves on to the next item on the agenda.
 - d. If the motion fails, and no other motion is on the floor, then a new motion is in order.

Note: If a motion to support AB 123 fails, this does not mean that there is opposition to AB 123 by default. A separate motion to oppose AB 123 or some other formal motion must be made and voted on by the committee.

IV. VOTING ON A MOTION

1. Voting is Conducted by Voice

The chair asks those in favor to say, "aye," those opposed to say "no." If the outcome is unclear by voice, a hand vote may be taken. Any member may move for an exact count. Following the vote, the chair should announce the outcome.