

B-165 -- Electronic Meetings Proposal

Voter Information Guide

I. Purpose: Expand committees' participation options by allowing electronic access to meetings.

II. Text of bylaw change: (New text is underlined.)

<p style="margin: 0;">Article III - Specific Bylaws Bylaw 8 - Committee Procedures</p> <p>G. Electronic Meetings. <u>The Steering Committee, Standing and Ad Hoc Committees may, by a vote of the committee, establish committee rules for electronic meetings provided that:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>A physical location is designated for each meeting;</u>2. <u>Accommodations for electronic attendance allow all participants to participate in discussions and votes;</u>3. <u>Unintentional technical problems that interfere with electronic discussion or voting will not invalidate the meeting nor the votes taken so long as a quorum is able to participate and vote; and</u>4. <u>The minutes state which participants are physically present and which participate electronically.</u>

III. Recommendation by Constitution and Bylaws Committee: (Date of vote: September 21, 2016)

In Favor: 5 Opposed: 0 Absent: 2

IV. Recommendation by Executive Committee: (Date of vote: October 6, 2016)

In Favor: 9 Opposed: 7 Absent: 10

V. Description: This amendment allows small committees to adopt rules permitting their members to participate and vote electronically in some or all committee meetings. It does not require committees to allow electronic participation. Electronic participation is always optional for each member, but would be allowed when a member is otherwise unable to participate. In order for an organization to utilize electronic meetings, Robert's Rules of Order requires authorization in the organization's Bylaws (RONR 11th ed. pg. 97).

VI. Arguments in Favor:

1. Electronic access to meetings can increase committee participation and effectiveness by:
 - a) Reducing travel times, especially for those who live in the farthest reaches of our county;
 - b) Allowing members who are ill or who are required to travel out of town for family reasons or for work to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities to their committee and their constituents;
 - c) Increase member safety during times of inclement weather.

2. Provision 1 of the bylaw requires that a physical location be designated for each meeting so that in-person attendance is always an option for any member(s) who do not wish to participate electronically. This proposal does not require committees to have electronic meetings; it rather allows for the possibility, which does not currently exist in our bylaws.

3. Empowers committees and committee members by allowing them to decide if and how they wish to utilize electronic meetings.

4. Utilizing technology to work and meet electronically is now the norm. Various forms of meeting technologies are widely available. This bylaw helps our committees remain contemporary and nimble. The Utah Republican Party added a similar provision to the state party Bylaws in 2015.
5. Participants are best able to judge and manage their committee's needs, and each committee may create rules to maximize participation and effectiveness, and to minimize problems. Committee rules can adapt as technology changes.

VII. Arguments in Opposition:

1. Electronic meetings may be less effective than physical meetings for several reasons. Non-verbal communication may be limited, and members may be distracted or tempted to multi-task.
2. Technology has limitations and is not reliable. It makes a secret ballot more difficult. A failed connection may not be noticed or reestablished in a timely fashion.
3. Members may feel left out or marginalized. A member may not be comfortable with technology, may not be able to afford the required equipment or may have physical disabilities that make electronic participation more difficult.
4. Member participation can be manipulated. A meeting scheduler may call or cancel an electronic meeting to limit participation or a person may cause someone else's connection to fail.
5. Requiring a committee to create rules could be problematic. Specific rules should be established in the bylaws for all committees.