

**UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE**

Committee on University Statutes and Senate Procedures
(Second Reading; Action)

SP.12.06, Revisions to the *Constitution* and the *Bylaws* Regarding Conduct of Senate Meetings and Formulation of Meeting Agendas

BACKGROUND

Last year, upon request, the Senate Committee on University Statutes and Senate Procedures (USSP) conducted a review of the Senate's rules regarding the conduct of meetings and the formulation of the Senate's agenda with the goal of making the Senate's conduct of business more efficient, effective, and open. USSP identified two provisions in the *Constitution* and the *Bylaws* that, if adopted, could enhance the way that the Senate conducts its business.

First, the *Constitution* currently sets the quorum at 100 senators. USSP was asked to consider whether the quorum should be abolished to avoid the recurrence of time-consuming quorum calls that have frustrated the conduct of Senate business. USSP concluded that it was important to maintain the quorum requirement but that the size of the quorum should be adjusted to conform to the guidelines of *Robert's Rules of Order*, which state: "The quorum should be as large a number of members as can reasonably be depended on to be present at any meeting." Upon investigation of attendance at Senate meetings over the past several years, USSP found that a quorum of 75 senators would have been sufficient to conduct critical business at nearly all meetings. USSP therefore recommends that the quorum be fixed at 75 senators.

Second, the USSP concluded that adding new business to the agenda is too cumbersome because the *Bylaws* currently require a two-thirds majority vote. The two-thirds majority requirement ensured that absent senators would not miss the opportunity to vote on new business without the consent of a supermajority. However, because the Open Meetings Act forbids voting on items not in the agenda, USSP believes it appropriate to reduce the threshold for the mere introduction and discussion of new business to a simple majority. Allowing a majority of senators to add new business would provide a more open Senate agenda that is more flexible and responsive to changing events. This change would not affect the requirements of the Open Meetings Act; new business introduced through Section A (3) of the *Bylaws* could only be discussed, and not acted upon. Still, the Senate could discuss the matter in anticipation of final action at a later meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

The Senate Committee on University Statutes and Senate Procedures recommends approval of the following revisions to the *Constitution* and *Bylaws*. Text to be added is underscored, and text to be deleted is indicated in [square brackets].

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PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE *CONSTITUTION*

Article I – Basic Structure

Section 5. A quorum necessary for a Senate meeting shall consist of [100]
75 senators elected and serving.

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE *BYLAWS*

Part A – Meetings

3. An agenda for each regular Senate meeting, extensive enough to be descriptive of the subject matter of each item included, shall be prepared by the Senate Executive Committee and sent to all senators at least five days prior to that meeting. The Clerk of the Senate will release the agenda to the appropriate news media on the same day it is distributed to the Senate. Items of business submitted to the Senate Executive Committee by any senator or Senate committee shall be placed on the agenda, provided that such items are submitted in writing prior to preparation and distribution of the agenda. Matters not included in the agenda may not be presented to the Senate without concurrence of [at least two-thirds] a majority of the members present and voting. Such matters may not be acted upon at the meeting in which they are introduced, according to the requirements of the Open Meetings Act.

UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND SENATE PROCEDURES

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