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MEANING OF VOTES

I frequently get asked to explain the meaning of various votes. Here are the definitions:

Majority – More than half of the votes cast

Two-Thirds – Two times the number of yes votes as no votes (The easy way to figure out if a vote was two-thirds is to multiply the “no” votes by 2 and that is the number of “yes” votes that are needed for their to be a two-thirds vote.

Plurality – A method of voting in which the candidate or proposition receiving the largest number of votes is elected or selected.

Abstain – To refrain from voting

Tie – Same number of votes on each side. Therefore, not a majority and does not pass

Two-Thirds Majority – A frequently used, yet incorrect term that combines two different kinds of votes (majority and two-thirds)

It is important to not only note the vote number needed, but to also determine what is the basis for determining that number. The default is “present and voting”, therefore, if it simply says a majority vote then it means a majority vote of the members present and voting.

When counting votes, the abstentions and blank ballots do not count.

VOTING EXAMPLE		
1,000 members in the organization 100 members present 90 members vote		
Vote	Majority	Two-Thirds
Of the members present	51	67
Of the entire membership	501	667
Of the members present and voting	46	60

Presiding officer votes: You frequently hear the statement that the chair, or presiding officer, only votes to break a tie. That is not correct. When the chair is a voting member of the organization, she does not lose her right to vote, she simply exercises the right to vote in specific instances.

In a ballot vote, the chair votes right along with all of the other members. In a roll call vote, the chair's name is called last. In all other methods of voting other than a ballot vote, the chair *only* votes when his or her vote *affects the results*. Numerical examples would help here.

VOTE REQUIRED	YES VOTES	NO VOTES	CAN THE PRESIDING OFFICER VOTE ?	
			YES	NO
Majority	13	13	Yes – affects results	No - fail without vote
Majority	14	13	No – pass without vote	Yes – affects results
Two Thirds	9	5	Yes – affects results	No - fail without vote
Two Thirds	10	5	No - pass without vote	Yes – affects results