



# Student Assembly

## Resolution 51: Codifying Ginsburg's Rules: A Reform Framework for Fairness and Inclusion in Student Assembly Procedure

**Abstract:** This resolution proposes a new framework—Ginsburg's Rules—inspired by the legacy of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, whose career embodied the principles of dissent, deliberation, and democratic fairness. While Robert's Rules of Order remains the Assembly's parliamentary authority, its formalism often silences rather than empowers. Ginsburg's Rules represent a fix to this approach, amending the Standing Rules and applying a structure centered on accessibility, ethical participation, and amplifying all voices.

**Sponsored by:** Eeshaan Chaudhuri '27

**Type of Action:** Internal Policy

**Originally Presented:** 04/17/2025

**Current Status:** Adopted by the Assembly, 22-0-3, 04/24/2025

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**Whereas,** the Cornell Student Assembly currently operates under Robert's Rules of Order as its parliamentary authority;

**Whereas,** the traditional application of Robert's Rules can be overly formal, slow, and difficult for new members or community participants to engage with;

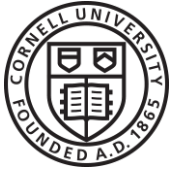
**Whereas,** premature closure of debate through procedural motions has limited the ability of minority viewpoints to be fully heard and considered;

**Whereas,** promoting accessibility, transparency, and inclusivity in student governance aligns with the Assembly's mission and ethical responsibilities;

**Whereas,** the current process for ending debate—via a motion to “call the question”—can be used to prematurely silence minority viewpoints;

**Whereas,** free, open, and balanced discussion is essential to a deliberative body that represents a diverse student body;

**Whereas,** the Student assembly reaffirms section 7, part 4, (lines 153-156) of the Bylaws that “The Parliamentarian shall present a workshop on parliamentary procedure and this charter to the incoming assembly, preferably before the end of the spring semester but no later than the fourth week of the fall semester”



# Student Assembly

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**Be it therefore resolved,** that the Cornell Student Assembly adopts the following reforms as part of a broader procedural framework known as Ginsburg’s Rules, to guide the equitable application of Robert’s Rules, which are as follows:

**Whereas,** the Student Assembly affirms that its Standing Rules supersede Robert’s Rules of Order where they conflict, particularly on matters of participation, debate, and accessibility.

**Be it further resolved,** that the Parliamentarian shall actively monitor the use of procedural rules and notify the Chair when debate is being prematurely closed, minority opinions are excluded, or procedural tools are being used in bad faith;

**Be it further resolved,** that the Student Assembly amend its standing rules to include the following protections against premature closure of debate:

**1. Minimum Debate Period Requirement:**

No motion to close debate (“call the question”) on any main motion shall be entertained until at least **5 minutes of open debate** have elapsed, unless **the Assembly gives unanimous consent**.

**2. Minority Opinion Protection Clause:**

A motion to close debate shall **not be in order** if fewer than **1/3 of the voting members present** have either spoken or signaled an intent to speak on the motion. This threshold may be waived only with **unanimous consent**.

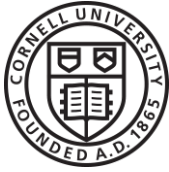
**Be it further resolved,** that the Student Assembly shall conduct an annual Procedural Accessibility Review to assess whether current procedures promote equitable participation, especially for new members and historically underrepresented voices;

**Be it further resolved,** that this review shall be led by the Vice President of Diversity & Inclusion in collaboration with the Parliamentarian and the Director of the Office of Ethics;

**Be it further resolved,** that the review shall include, at minimum:

- A short survey of voting and non-voting members on procedural barriers;
- An assessment of debate equity (e.g., speaking time balance, interruptions)
- Recommendations for improvements to the Standing Rules or trainings;

**Be it further resolved,** that the results of this review shall be presented to the Assembly by the **last regular meeting of the spring semester** and archived publicly.



# Student Assembly

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- 61 **Be it further resolved,** that any voting member of the Assembly shall have the right to move to  
62 suspend the Standing Rules during debate or discussion, provided the motion is seconded;
- 63 **Be it further resolved,** that motions to suspend the rules shall be clearly stated and require a  
64 two-thirds vote of the members present for adoption;
- 65 **Be it further resolved,** that the Parliamentarian shall ensure all members are familiar with their  
66 right to suspend the rules and include a brief explanation of how and when it may be used during  
67 each semester's training.
- 68 **Be it further resolved,** that any resolution or item placed on the Consent Calendar shall include  
69 a brief abstract, written by the sponsor, explaining what the resolution does and why it is  
70 expected not to require debate
- 71 **Be it further resolved,** that this summary shall be included in the meeting materials and visible  
72 to both members and the public prior to the vote;
- 73 **Be it further resolved,** that the Chair and Parliamentarian may act as a resource to assist  
74 sponsors in preparing these summaries and the Chair may remove or delay placement of any  
75 item on the Consent Calendar that lacks a clear explanation.
- 76 **Be it finally resolved,** that the procedural principles outlined in this resolution shall collectively  
77 be known as Ginsburg's Rules, and shall guide the interpretation and application of Robert's  
78 Rules of Order in all future meetings of the Cornell Student Assembly. This document shall be  
79 encapsulated as an amendment to the Standing Rules, acting as a visionary document for the  
80 application of Robert's Rules, as a Special Rule of Order.<sup>1</sup>
- 81 Respectfully Submitted,  
82 Eeshaan Chaudhuri '27  
83 *Brooks School of Public Policy Representative*

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<sup>1</sup> A Special Rule of Order acts as an amendment to the Standing Rules, that naturally supersedes Roberts Rules