

Voting Rights of Chairperson/President

A frequently asked question is whether the chairperson/president of the church assembly or board has voting rights. The most common thought is that the chairperson/president can only vote to break a tie. This is not exactly accurate.

Under *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 10th edition*, a chairperson/president has all the rights as any other member of the church assembly. As stated on page 392:

"If the presiding officer is a member of the assembly, he can vote as any other member when the vote is by ballot."

When voting by ballot, the chairperson/president must cast their ballot at the same time as the assembly. If they fail to cast their ballot at that time, he/she cannot cast their ballot without permission of the assembly.

If the voting is by any other means than by ballot, the chairperson/president may or may not vote. While presiding over the meeting the chairperson/president needs to demonstrate impartiality while presiding over the meeting. However, he/she may still have voting privileges if their vote will "affect the results" of the vote. RONR (10th ed.) on page 392 defines "affect the results" as:

"...he can vote either to break or to cause a tie; or, in case where a two-thirds vote is required, he can vote either to cause or to block the attainment of the necessary two-thirds."

If the chairperson/president decides to participate in a vote, they only have one vote. Sometimes they may try to vote as a member of the assembly and then vote again as the chairperson/president. This is not permitted. Just as with any other assembly member, the chairperson/president only has one vote.

For additional information see:

Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 10th edition, pages 392-393; 400
Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, In Brief pages 69-70; 112-113