

YOU the SECRETARY

As the person chosen by your organization to serve in the important position of secretary, you should have a good working knowledge of parliamentary procedure. Your secretarial duties are only second in importance to those of the president. The president is the head of the organization and the secretary is its right hand. Unlike the president, the secretary forfeits no rights of membership by holding office. You're free to make motions, debate and vote on all business matters.

Check the bylaws and other rules of the American Legion Auxiliary for specific duties of your office. In general, as secretary, you will be expected to:

- ✓ Keep a careful and authentic record of the proceedings of all business meetings of the organization and of the executive board. These are the legal records of your organization.
- ✓ Send to the president a copy of the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting.
- ✓ Read the minutes for approval by the assembly, when requested by the presiding officer. Stand while reading and project your voice so all can hear.
- ✓ Allow members to examine the minutes on request. Do not allow them to take the original minutes. You are responsible for them.
- ✓ Be at the meeting early. In the absence of the president and vice presidents, call the meeting to order and immediately conduct the election of a chairman pro tern.
- ✓ Have at each meeting the minutes book, standing rules, Auxiliary Handbook, list of members, list of committee members, agenda, ballots, and other supplies that may be needed.
- The custodian of all papers belonging to the organization, not under the charge of any other officer.
- ✓ Maintain the official roll of members and call the roll when requested.
- ✓ Stand while calling the roll and speak clearly so all can hear.
- ✓ Conduct the official correspondence of the organization, except that which naturally falls to other officers and committees. Send out meeting notices.
- ✓ Sign, with the president, all the official acts, orders, and proceedings of the organization.
- ✓ Carry out administrative and executive duties outlined in the bylaws or directed by the president, board or assembly.

MINUTES

A secretary is a valuable asset to an organization and should be chosen with careful consideration. This position should never be used as a reward or favor.

The minutes should never contain remarks made in debate and opinions of the secretary. Minutes should contain mainly what was done, not what was said by the members. They should be comprehensive, and yet as brief as is consistent with accuracy. Each motion made with its disposition should be in a separate paragraph for the sake of easy reference.

Minutes should be prepared in final form before being read and approved since they become the legal evidence of what transpired in the meeting.

The words *respectfully submitted* are no longer used before the signature.

The following additional rules and practices relating to the content of minutes are included to help you properly record the various actions that take place in ordinary business meetings.

- ✓ Write good minutes but avoid high-flown language. Don't try to show off your literary ability.
- ✓ Leave a wide margin on one side of the page in which to make corrections. It's preferable to use red ink for corrections.
- ✓ Make short paragraphs.
- ✓ Ask that a motion be made in writing if it's long or difficult to record.
- ✓ Always report some action or disposition on every motion recorded.
- ✓ Main motions and resolutions should be recorded exactly as adopted. Each adopted amendment need not be shown. The main motion or resolution is recorded, as amended, in its adopted form.
- ✓ When a count has been ordered or a ballot vote taken, the number of votes on each side should be recorded.
- ✓ The names of those elected or appointed to committees should be listed.
- ✓ The secretary should sit near the presiding officer. This enables the secretary to write out motions and hand them to the presiding officer as they're made.
- ✓ The minutes of a board meeting follow the same rules for recording minutes as for any deliberative assembly. Committees generally keep only a memorandum of their meetings.
- ✓ Only the name and maker of the motion is recorded.
- ✓ The name and subject of a guest speaker can be included in the minutes, but not a summary of the remarks.
- ✓ No mention should be made in the minutes of what did not occur in the meeting (e.g., the fact that there was no unfinished business, that a committee had no report, or that there were no announcements is unnecessary).
- ✓ When the minutes are approved, the word "Approved," with the secretary's initials and the date, should be written below the minutes.
- ✓ When corrections are made, the error should be bracketed and the correction written on the facing page or in a wide margin. NEVER ERASE ERRORS corrected in the minutes of the meeting. The minutes of the meeting at which the correction was made merely state that a correction was made without specifying the correction.
- ✓ Minutes can be corrected after they're approved, even years later, if the existence of an error or material omission becomes reasonably certain. Any member may propose a correction even though not present at the meeting in question.

A SECRETARY'S PLEA

Help me do my work well, to have the memory of an elephant and by some miracle to be able to do five things at once.

Never let me lose patience, even when the president has me search the files for hours for data that is later discovered on her desk.

Help me to understand and carry out all instructions without any explanation.

And, when the year ends, please give me the foresight not to throw out records that will be asked for in a few days, even though I was told emphatically, "Destroy these. They're cluttering up the place.

-anonymous