

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS

Jointly Adopted by **THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PARLIAMENTARIANS®**
and **American Institute of Parliamentarians™**

Initially Adopted 2001, Revised and Renamed 2020

The National Association of Parliamentarians® and the American Institute of Parliamentarians™ join together in approving and supporting this Joint Code of Professional Responsibility on behalf of the entire parliamentary profession. Members of both organizations recognize the supreme importance of respect for equal justice, the pursuit of truth, and the nurture of democratic principles. We regard as essential to these goals the protection of freedom of speech and the guarantee of equal opportunity through the use of parliamentary law. As guardians of parliamentary procedure, we play a vital role in the preservation of a democratic society. A consequent obligation is to maintain the highest standards of ethical conduct. As such, we adopt this code to guide us in the minimum standard of conduct for our members. Members may be expected to abide by additional organizational standards, such as rules of accreditation. The standards presented here establish the minimum actions which we each expect of ourselves, and of each other; the consciences of all parliamentarians must guide the extent to which their own actions should rise above these rules that bind us all.

1. Aspirational Standards for Parliamentarians*

A parliamentarian should:

- 1.1 Assist in upgrading and improving the profession.
- 1.2 Assist in maintaining the integrity and competence of the profession.
- 1.3 Maintain high professional standards and keep abreast of the latest research in the field.
- 1.4 Promote a spirit of cooperation, professionally responsible practice, and fair dealing with colleagues.
- 1.5 Conduct oneself so as to reflect credit on the profession and inspire the confidence, respect, and trust of clients and the public.
- 1.6 Encourage non-discriminatory standards in all aspects of parliamentary practice.

** Section 1 articulates the "ideals" toward which all parliamentarians should aspire. They are not intended to be subject to discipline.*

2. Professionally Responsible Standards within the Profession

A parliamentarian shall:

- 2.1 Refrain from misrepresentation or other conduct that may reflect adversely on the profession.

The section titles used in this Code are for reference purposes only and are not intended to be used or relied upon in interpreting or enforcing the Code of Professional Responsibility for Parliamentarians. Reference to the "appropriate committee" refer to the Professional Standards Committee of NAP and the Ethics Committee of AIP. "Joint Committee Notes" were agreed to be the committee whose members comprised members of NAP and AIP, and are guides to interpretation and action by the respective parliamentary organizations, but are not adopted by them. Only numbered paragraphs are adopted.

- 2.2 Refrain from knowingly or recklessly making untrue comments about the work, knowledge, fitness, or other qualifying aspect of another parliamentarian.
Joint Committee Note: [2.2 a] *Recklessly* means behavior that is so careless that it is considered an extreme departure from the care a reasonable person would exercise in similar circumstances. (Definition provided by Nolo's Plain-English Law Dictionary).
- 2.3 Immediately report to the committee overseeing enforcement of this code any known violation of this code of professional responsibility that represents a material threat to the perceived integrity of the profession. When requested, the parliamentarian shall provide testimony to the appropriate committee, and shall assist the committee in the fulfillment of its charge.
- 2.4 Refrain from violating or attempting to violate any standard contained herein through the acts of another.
Joint Committee Note: [2.4 a] An isolated act by a third-party alone will be insufficient to show a violation without further evidence.

3. **Professionally Responsible Standards Related to Obtaining Appointments**

A parliamentarian shall:

- 3.1 Not knowingly or recklessly misrepresent parliamentary credentials, education, or experience.
Joint Committee Note: [3.1 a]: Misrepresentation includes not only making false claims, such as claiming to be a Registered Parliamentarian or a Certified Parliamentarian without holding the appropriate credential, but also making misleading claims such as holding out to be a "Credentialed Parliamentarian" without having secured and maintained a widely accepted parliamentary credential.
- 3.2 Refrain from giving anything of more than nominal value to anyone for recommending the parliamentarian's services, except for the reasonable cost of advertising, the usual charges of a referral service, or payment for the purchase of a parliamentary practice.
- 3.3 Decline any appointment that the parliamentarian knows or should know the parliamentarian is not competent to handle.
Joint Committee Note: [3.3 a]: Working with a more experienced parliamentarian or appropriate professional who can cure apparent deficiencies in the knowledge and skills of the parliamentarian is likely to be a defense to a claim under this sub-section.
- 3.4 Decline any appointment in which the parliamentarian is likely to be unduly restricted in the exercise of independent professional judgment.

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4. Professionally Responsible Standards in Relation to Clients

A parliamentarian shall:

4.1 Prepare adequately and act with reasonable diligence and promptness in providing service to a client in accordance with any agreement with the client.

4.2 Advise the client on the proper application of the accepted rules of parliamentary procedure.

Joint Committee Note: [4.2 a]: Parliamentarians are advisors. As such, a client's isolated exercise of improper parliamentary procedure shall not be presumed, without additional evidence, to represent the client having acted on improper advice from the parliamentarian.

4.3 Not accept gratuities or favors that might appear to warp professional opinions.

4.4 Keep in confidence any information obtained in the course of professional service, absent informed consent from the client, except to the extent the parliamentarian reasonably believes the release of such information is reasonably necessary to prevent or report criminal or fraudulent activity, to secure professional advice about compliance with the Code of Professional Responsibility, to establish a claim or defense, including in a matter before the ethics committee, or to respond to allegations in any proceeding concerning the parliamentarian's service to the client, or to comply with law or a court order.

4.5 Maintain a position of objectivity and impartiality, and avoid participating in substantive debate, to the extent required by the role in which the parliamentarian provides service.

Joint Committee Note: [4.5 a]: The scope of this sub-section depends on what role the parliamentarian serves. For example, appropriate conduct for a parliamentarian serving as a professional presiding officer, as a floor parliamentarian, or as an advocate for a specific position or group of members can vary widely.

4.6 Make reasonable efforts to call to the attention of the client significant deviations from the rules that may be harmful to the rights of members of the assembly, as is required by the role of the parliamentarian.

4.7 Not withdraw from employment without reasonable justification without first taking reasonable steps to avoid foreseeable detriment to the client.

Joint Committee Note: [4.7 a]: Whether withdrawal is reasonably justified can depend on whether withdrawal is required by ethical or legal obligations, for example because the client may be engaging in criminal or fraudulent activity or is misstating the positions of the parliamentarian to the detriment of the parliamentarian or the profession. Reasonable justification may also include factors such as the client being unable to provide promised compensation, service to the client unforeseeably exceeding the parliamentarian's competence, or whether an unforeseeable circumstance has prevented the fulfillment of an agreement with the client.

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Joint Committee Note: [4.7 b]: Whether steps taken are reasonable depends on factors such as how much time the client was given, whether the client was provided with client materials exclusively in the possession of the parliamentarian, and whether a referral to another parliamentarian or parliamentary referral service was provided.

Amendment notes:

Revision adopted by American Institute of Parliamentarians Annual Session August 1, 2020

Revision adopted by the National Association of Parliamentarians Board of Directors August 26, 2020

[Return to the Index Page for the New Credentialing System](#)

[SITEMAP: Webpages for New Credentialing System](#)

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