



What's a Snippet? Glad you asked! A Snippet is short article about meetings or parliamentary procedure. New snippets are released on the first day of every month at www.agreatmeeting.com.



Snippet #137 Being a Delegate

Being a delegate is a great opportunity! Being a delegate means influencing the direction of a profession or cause. It can energize you for the rest of the year, and it can be one of the most rewarding aspects of membership in an association.

Delegate assemblies are not popular in some circles – and some of that is the delegates' own fault. Delegate assemblies are expensive to produce. Meeting rooms, A/V, refreshments, paper copies or Internet connections, and staff support require a lot of resources. When association executives see this effort carelessly tossed aside by delegates who haven't done their homework or who want only to complain instead of solve problems, they lose respect for the entire process. Members who want to see this type of governance survive and thrive need to step it up learn how to be an effective delegate.

First, read the bylaws of the organization and understand the structure and flow of authority. Who gets to make which decisions? There should be a balance of power between the board, the staff, and the members. The delegate assembly usually meets only once a year – it can't and certainly shouldn't – try to dictate management decisions. In a sense the association is going on a long journey, with the destination always a bit out of reach. The fundamental purpose is that destination, and the strategic plan is the road map. The rights reserved to delegate assemblies frequently include the power to amend the bylaws, to elect the board of directors and officers, and to adopt statements of the association's opinions, sometimes called position statements, white papers, or resolutions.

Some associations have delegate eligibility criteria, such as membership category or length of membership. Read the directions that come from the association headquarters on registering as a delegate. Complete the registration process early and bring any receipts or confirmations with you. Once on site at the convention facility, look for special registration desks for delegate registration. There you will be given the materials you need for the meeting. This might include a voting card, a special ribbon that admits you to the delegate area of the meeting hall, additional materials, and a card that you exchange for an electronic voting device.

Be in your seat early for the meeting. If you are one of several delegates representing the same chapter or association, you may be expected to sit together. Seating may be assigned or it may be open. Learn the basics of parliamentary procedure. *A Great Meeting Needs Great Members* is now available in the popular ebook format. It will serve as an important resource during the meeting.

Last – and most important – remember that you are there representing other members and it's important that you articulate their views during the meeting, but you must vote with the best interest of the entire association in mind. No one can bind you to vote a certain way; if they could there would be no need to deliberate. Come ready to explain your position, listen to the opinions of others, compare them with the views of your constituency, and cast your vote as you think best for the association as a whole.