Questions & Answers About Substantial Unanimity

During the July 2026 WAI meeting, members asked questions about what substantial unanimity means, how it works in practice, and what voting threshold will apply to the proposed Standing Rules of Order vote at the August WAI meeting.

To help answer those questions before the meeting, the Bylaws Committee has prepared this informational fact sheet.

How does WAI define substantial unanimity?

In 2024, the WAI fellowship amended the WAI Bylaws to provide that main motions require substantial unanimity. The current bylaw states:

> "Main motions shall be approved by substantial unanimity."

Also in 2024, WAI adopted a Standing Rule of Order defining substantial unanimity for WAI:

> "Unless the Western Area Intergroup votes otherwise before debate begins on a main motion, substantial unanimity, for the purposes of the vote on a main motion, shall be set at two-thirds (2/3)."

Where does substantial unanimity come from?

The principle of substantial unanimity comes from Concept Twelve of the FA Twelve Concepts.

Concept Twelve states that the World Service Conference should:

> *"...reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, substantial unanimity."*

Concept Twelve expresses a guiding spiritual principle rather than prescribing a specific voting percentage for every decision.

What voting threshold applies to adopting the proposed Standing Rules of Order?

Because adoption of the proposed Standing Rules of Order is a main motion, the WAI Bylaws require that it be adopted by substantial unanimity.

Does the wording revision from “two-thirds” to “substantial unanimity" in the proposed Main Motion SRO change WAI's voting requirements?

No. The requirement that main motions be adopted by substantial unanimity was established when the WAI Bylaws were amended in 2024. The definition was also established in the Standing Rules of Order in 2024.

The proposed 2026 Main Motion SRO change from two-thirds to substantial unanimity does not create or expand that requirement.

This proposed revision updates ONLY the Main Motion SRO, making the language consistent with the current WAI Bylaws and SRO defining Substantial Unanimity.

References

- WSI Bylaws, Article VIII, Section 3(G), and The FA 12 Concepts
- WSI Standing Rules of Order, June 2011 and June 2023
- WAI Bylaws, Article VI, Section 2(a)