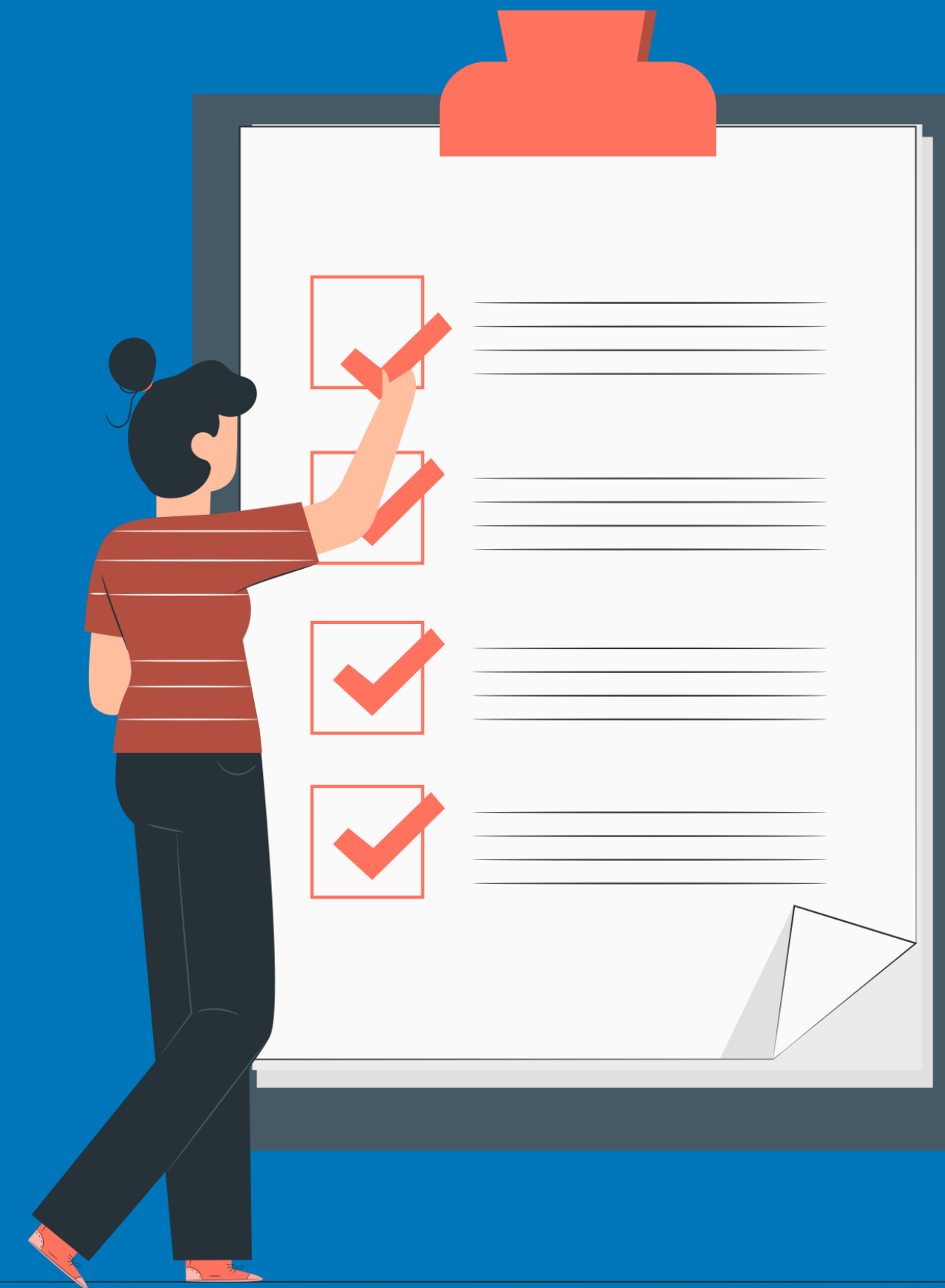


# Voting



# OBJECTIVES

- Understanding majority, two-thirds, and plurality voting
- Abstaining from voting
- How to break a tie
- Understanding different voting methods
- How to determine a quorum



# WHY IS IT IMPORTANT

- Meetings are about making decisions through votes. Whether or not an important resolution is adopted or rejected is based on the votes for and against it. Whether your candidate wins or loses is based on the votes for each nominee
- If a voting is not handled properly, it leads to controversy, disputes, and even lawsuits distracting the organisation from its primary objective: Improving the lives of its deaf members
- It is not always as simple as “the majority wins”



# WHO CAN VOTE?

Generally, members have the following rights:

- To attend the meeting
- To make motions
- To participate in a debate
- To vote

These are fundamental membership rights that cannot be taken from you without disciplinary action that is called due process



# WHO CAN VOTE?

- The right to vote is limited to the members, who are present in a meeting during the time a vote is actually taken
- Rules cannot be suspended to give a right to vote to a non-member
- Cumulative voting is prohibited
- Absentee voting is prohibited
- Only one motion can be considered and voted on at a time



# VOTING AS A DUTY

- It is your duty to vote when you have an opinion about a matter being decided
- If you fail to vote, you allow others to make the decision for you
- Whether you vote or not, you are still responsible in some way for the decision which is being made



# ABSTAINING FROM VOTING

- Although it is your duty to vote when you have an opinion, you cannot be forced to vote
- You have the right to remain neutral
- In fact, some situations demand that you refrain from voting, even if you have a legal right to vote, e.g.
- Conflict of interest
- Direct personal interest



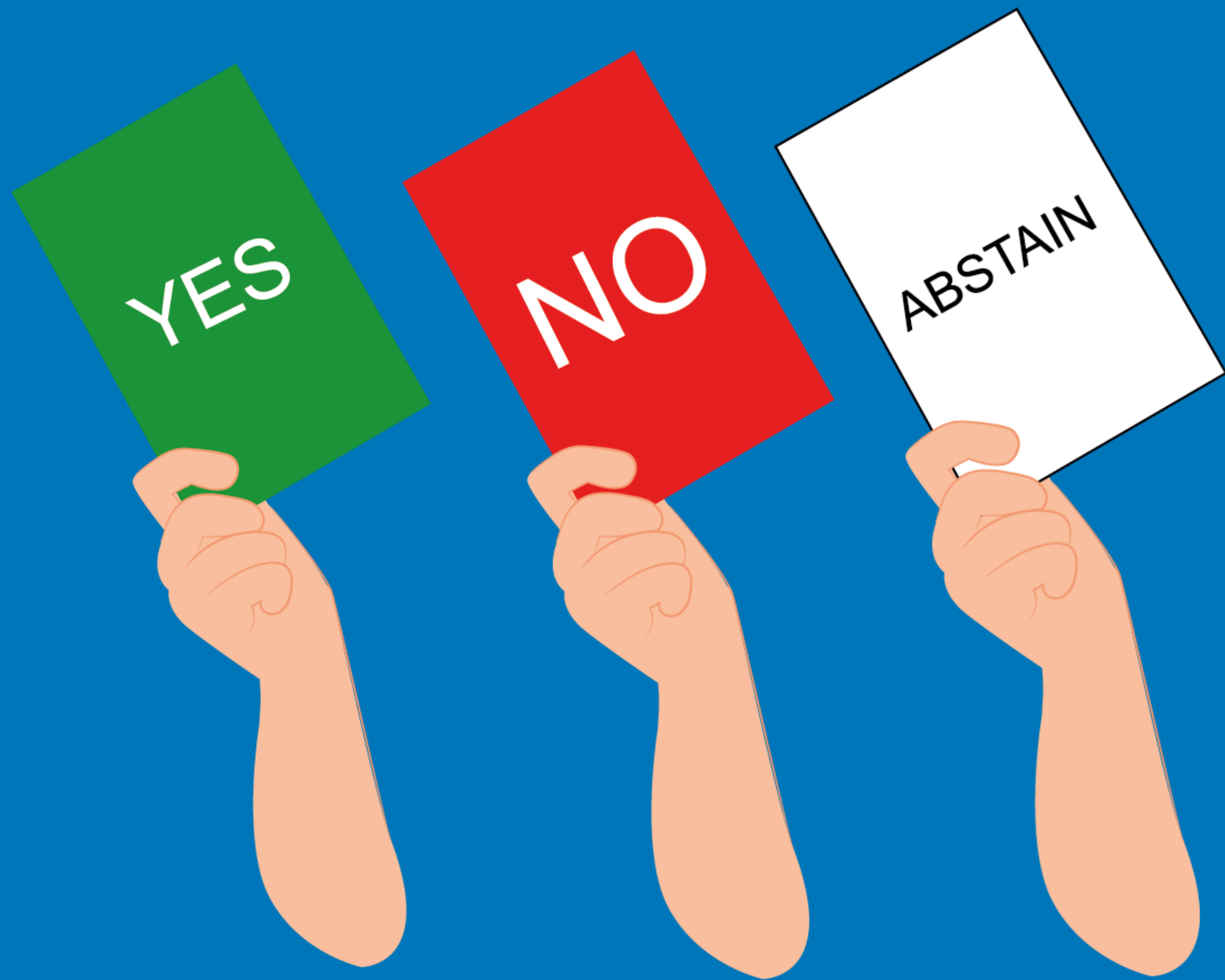
# ABSTAINING FROM VOTING

- Abstentions do not count! If you abstain from voting, you have not voted
- The fact that you were in the room does not make any difference unless the result is based on the numbers of members present
- Figuring abstentions into vote totals or noting them in the record is never correct





# ABSTAINING FROM VOTING



**WRONG**



**RIGHT**

# VOTING FOR YOURSELF

- The rule that you should abstain from voting on matters of direct personal interest to you does not apply if you are nominated for office
- If your status as a member makes you eligible for the office, you are entitled to benefit from a vote as any other member would. So go ahead and vote for yourself, if you want to



# MAKING YOUR VOTE COUNT – ONCE!

- One person, one vote
- Even if you hold more than one position in e.g. a board, you can vote only once
- Exception: Weighted votes based on e.g. number of members in each district association



# DECIDING QUESTIONS OF PROCEDURE

- All questions related to the manner and methods of voting are being dictated by your statutes or bylaws
- If they are silent on a specific situation, the procedures of voting are within the control of your membership, which should be agreed upon before the debate and voting on the proposal takes place



# DETERMINING QUORUM

- Quorum is defined as the minimum number of members who must be present at a meeting for it being able to make decisions
- If your statutes do not define the quorum, Robert's Rules of Order establishes the following quorums:
  - For most boards and committees, quorum is a majority of all the members
  - For general assemblies, quorum is a majority of those who have been registered as attending
- The general rule is that if there are no quorum, the decisions made at the meeting is null and void



# VOTING METHODS

- Unanimous consent
- Rising vote
  - Voting by show of hands
  - Voting by voting cards
- Counted vote
- Roll-call vote
- Vote by ballot



# VOTING BY BALLOT

- If the ballot vote decides a motion, the question is clearly stated by the chair, and you are instructed to mark your ballot “Yes” or “No”.
- If the ballot vote decides an election, you are instructed to write the name of the nominee of your choice on your ballot
- Voting “Yes” or “No” is never in order when electing persons to office. The only way you can vote against a candidate is to vote for another person!



# CONDUCTING THE BALLOT VOTE

- Ballots are usually taking place during a meeting
- The appointed tellers hand out and collect the ballots and are counting the votes
- Tellers must be people known for their integrity
- Some organisations appoint tellers representing each opposing side, to ensure that all sides of the decision have complete confidence in the result





# LIMITING BALLOT ACCESS TO MEMBERS

- Only members entitled to vote are given ballots or are allowed to deposit ballots with a teller or place them in the ballot receptacle
- In meetings where persons who are not entitled to vote are present, take whatever measures are necessary to limit balloting to voting members. In this situation, the tellers distribute the ballots to the members, and the members return their marked ballots to the tellers



# COUNTING THE BALLOTS

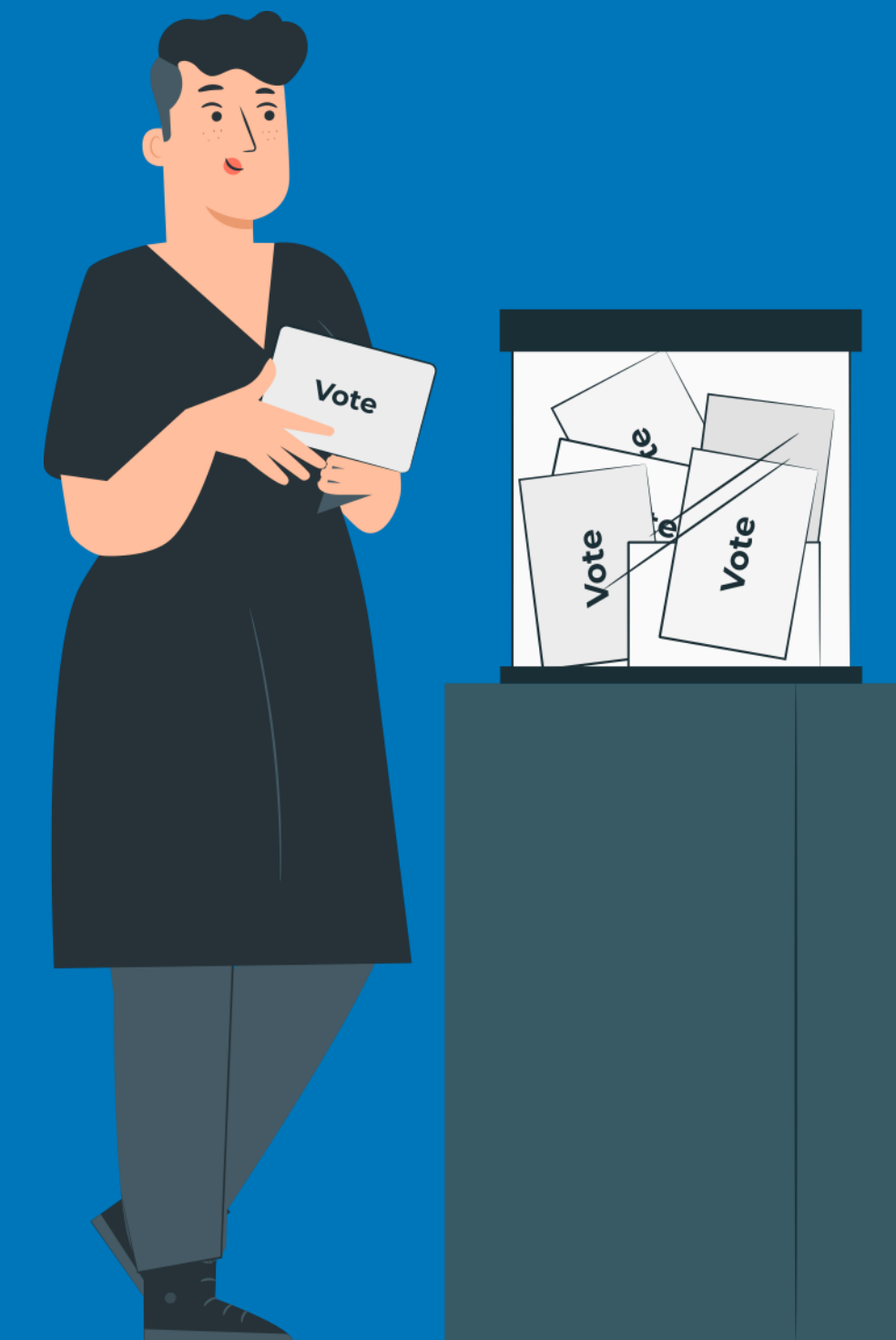
When counting ballots, tellers need to keep a few key points in mind:

1. Blank votes are treated as scrap paper and do not count
2. Illegal votes cast by legal voters count toward the total votes cast, but they do not count for any individual choice or candidate. These votes are illegal votes:
  - a. Unintelligible ballots
  - b. Ballots cast for an unidentifiable candidate
  - c. Ballots cast for an ineligible candidate
  - d. Two or more marked ballots folded together (together they count as only one illegal vote)
3. If a marked ballot is folded together with a blank ballot, the marked ballot counts as a one legal vote, and the blank ballot is considered scrap paper



# COUNTING THE BALLOTS

4. Each question on a multipart ballot is counted as a separate ballot. If a member leaves one part blank, the votes entered on the other questions are not negated
5. If a member votes for more choices than positions to be elected, the vote is considered illegal
6. If a member votes for fewer choices than positions to be elected, the vote is not illegal
7. Small technical errors, such as marking spelling mistakes or marking an X when a check mark is called for, do not make a vote illegal as long as the voter's intent is discernible
8. Votes cast by illegal voters must not be counted or even included in the number of total votes cast. If illegal voters cast enough illegal votes to affect the result, and these votes cannot be identified and removed from the count, the vote is deemed null and must be retaken



# DECLARING THE RESULT

- After the votes are counted, the tellers give the complete report of the vote counts to the presiding officer
- The presiding officer reads aloud the report mentioning the vote count for each option concluding with a formal declaration of the result. For example, he/she may say “... and Mr. John Doe is declared elected as president of the association”
- The minutes of the meeting must include the entire tellers’ report



# DECLARING THE RESULT

- When determining how long to keep these documents before destructing them, your main consideration is the possibility of needing a recount
- After the period during which a recount can be conducted has passed, you no more keep the ballots and tally sheets
- The actual length of time you retain these records is usually set at the meeting, when the vote takes place
- Alternatively, your organisation can adopt a short retention period for ballots and tally sheets as a standing rule



# DETERMINING VOTING RESULTS

“The majority rules”  
but... we should protect the minority against the  
“Tyranny of the majority”

Parliamentary law establishes two fundamental  
voting thresholds

# MAJORITY VOTE

- Except when governed by a specific rule to the contrary, a majority vote is the fundamental requirement to pass a motion
- A majority, simply stated, is more than half. Not 50 % plus one. Not one more than half. Just more than half
- A majority vote refers to more than half of the votes actually cast, not to more than half of the votes that could be cast if everybody voted
- Unless a motion receives a majority vote, the motion is lost. If the vote is tied, it does not receive a majority vote, so it is lost



# TWO-THIRDS VOTE

- As a means of balancing the rights of the entire group with the rights of individuals, some decisions require the affirmative consent of at least twice the number of members as are not in favour
- This vote is called a two-thirds vote and refers to two-thirds of the votes cast. It protects any minority greater than one-third
- As with a majority vote, the measure against which the two-thirds threshold is determined refers only to the number of votes cast, not the number of votes that could be cast if everybody voted





# MAJORITY OR TWO-THIRDS VOTE?

- Two-thirds vote are most commonly required to amend an organisation's statutes and other motions just require a majority vote to pass



# CROSSING VOTING THRESHOLDS

- Majority (or two-thirds) of the members present and voting
- Majority (or two-thirds) of the members present
- Majority of the entire membership
- Plurality
- Cumulative voting



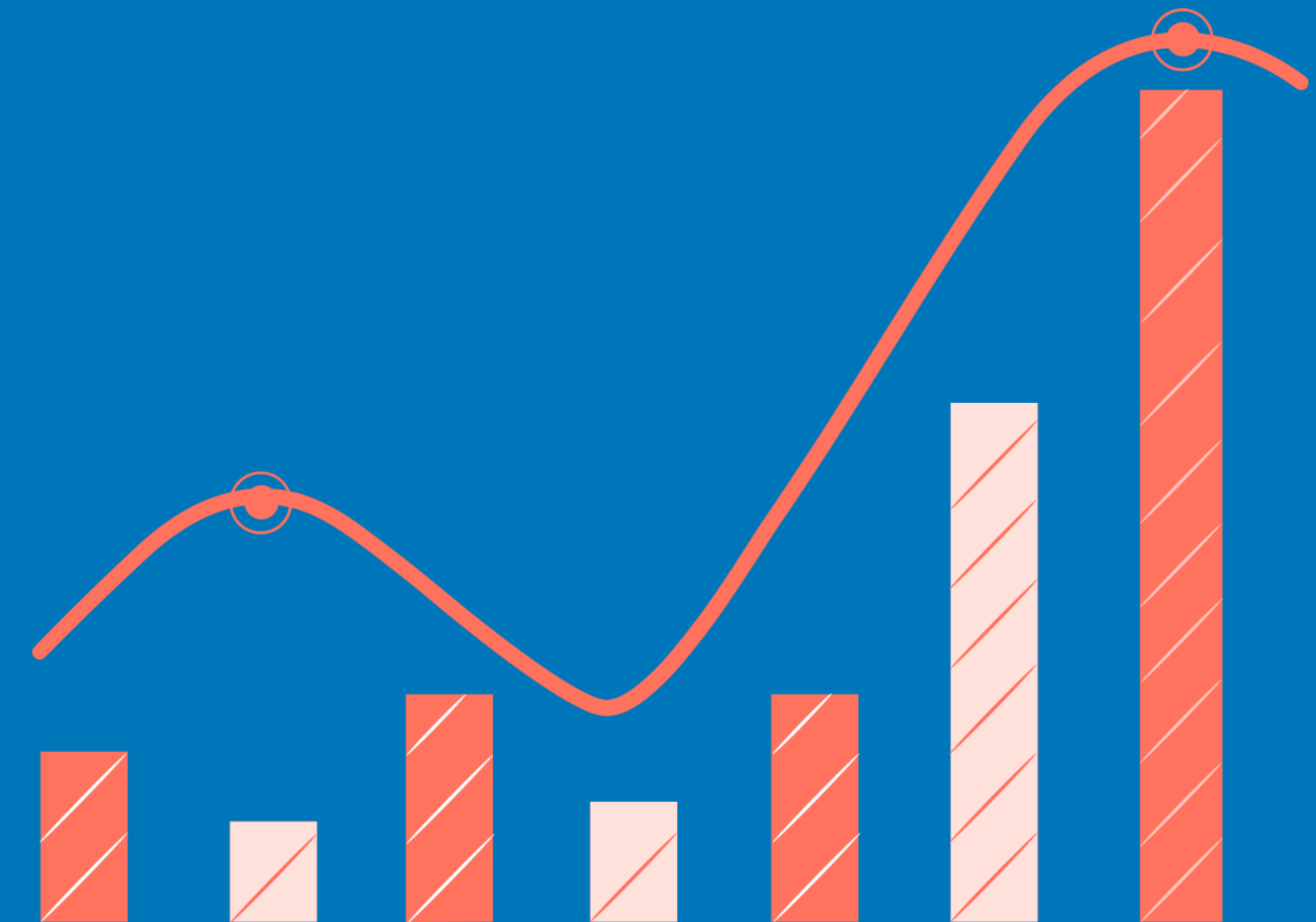
# EXAMPLE: 150 MEMBERS, 100 ATTENDED THE MEETING, 80 CASTED A VOTE

Threshold	Minimum # votes required to pass
Majority of the members present and voting	41
Majority of the members present	51
Majority of the entire membership	76

Threshold	Minimum # votes required to pass
Two-thirds of the members present and voting	54
Two-thirds of the members present	67

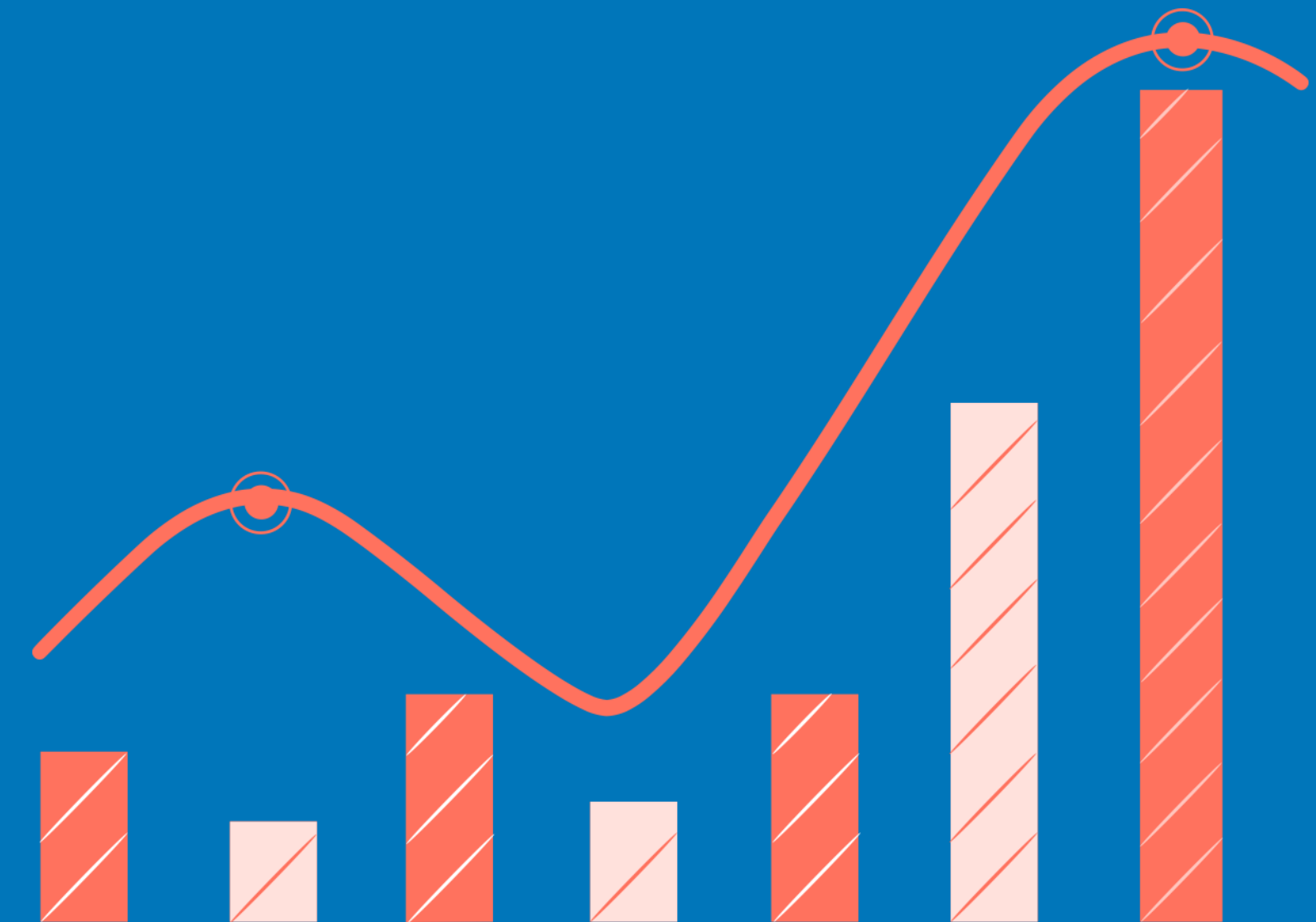
# HANDLING A TIE VOTE

- Some of the people in your organisation may think that the presiding officer must break a tie vote. But the solution is not simple as that. Because a tie vote is not a majority, if your motion requires a majority vote, the motion is lost if it receives a tie vote
- The myth that the presiding officer votes to break a tie is only a partial truth
- If the vote is by ballot, the presiding officer votes with everybody else, and a tie vote is either a lost motion or a failed election
- If you are electing an officer, you must reballot until someone receives a majority



# HANDLING A TIE VOTE

- If the vote is by voice, by rising, or by counted vote, the presiding officer properly casts a vote only after the results are known and if he/she wants his/her vote to affect the outcome. He/she may want to break a tie, causing the motion to pass; or make a tie, causing the motion to fail
- The president's tie-breaking vote should be limited to board and committee meetings only and must be explicitly provided for in the organisation's statutes



# CHALLENGING A VOTE

- If you want to challenge a vote, you generally have to be fast. Any motion to challenge the conduct of the vote must be initiated before any debate on the next item on the agenda has started
- These options are available when the time is right:
  - **Retaking the vote by another method:** Asking the chair or the general assembly to order a counted vote may produce a different result. And if the meeting thinks it would help, it can order that the vote to be retaken by ballot. The goal is to determine without the doubt the will of the meeting
  - **Recounting the vote:** Most of us know how to count, but most of us still make counting mistakes. When you have voted by ballot, the membership can order a recount