

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Parliamentary inquiries are addressed to the Chair by Senators who have questions on the procedure to be followed on a particular matter, how the Senate would go about transacting a particular piece of business, what would be the rules and procedure involving the disposition of a particular matter, or any question relating to the rules or procedure of the Senate. Questions addressed to the Chair which do not involve the rules or procedure of the Senate are generally held not to be in the nature of a parliamentary inquiry. For example the Chair refrains from giving answers on legal interpretations, or what a proposed amendment provides; the Chair has no authority to give such answers.

The Chair is not required to answer a parliamentary inquiry if he does not care to. Generally speaking, however, unless such an inquiry involves a decision on a very controversial matter, the Chair obliges the Senate, and as stated on different occasions, if the inquiry involves a matter confronting the Senate for immediate action, the Chair will assist in giving an answer or rule thereon, as the case may require.

Unlike rulings of the Chair, the responses to parliamentary inquiries are not subject to an appeal to the entire Senate, and as a result such responses have often been thought of as not constituting formal precedents of the Senate; however, a response to a parliamentary inquiry, and certainly a series of uniform responses to parliamentary inquiries which address the same issue over a long period of time on which nothing to the contrary has occurred, do guide the Chair in its responses when the identical or similar parliamentary issue arises again. Therefore, it can be said that responses to parliamentary inquiries do constitute precedents of the Senate, albeit precedents of lesser weight than those arising from point of order.

Absence of Quorum, Out of Order:

It is not in order in the absence of a quorum to make a parliamentary inquiry.¹

Appeal From Not in Order:

See "Appeals Not in Order," pp. 147-148.

¹ Oct. 14, 1949, 81-1, *Record*, p. 14505; Sept. 21, 1950, 81-2, *Record*, p. 15345.