

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF 'EX OFFICIO'

Background

The phrase *ex officio* refers to powers that, while not expressly conferred upon an official, are necessarily implied in the office.

An *ex officio* member is a member of a body (a board, committee, council, etc.) who is part of it by virtue of holding another office. The term is Latin, meaning literally "from the office", and the sense intended is "by right of office"; its use dates back to the Roman Republic.

A common misconception is that the participatory rights of *ex officio* members are limited by their status. This is incorrect, although their rights may be indeed limited by the by-laws of a particular body. Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised (10th ed.), clarifies that the term denotes only how one becomes a member of a group, not what one's rights are. It is a method of sitting on a committee, not a class of membership (466-67). Frequently, *ex officio* members will abstain from voting, but unless by-laws constrain their rights, they are afforded the same rights as other members, including debate, making formal motions, and voting (466-67; 480).

In the House of Lords 26 senior bishops of the Anglican church are *ex officio* members of that House and are entitled to vote just as any other member.

A person may be an 'ex officio' member of a PCC.

Churchwardens are not elected as members of the PCC but are elected at a meeting of parishioners held pursuant to the Churchwardens Measure 2001 (No. 1) and become *ex officio* members of the PCC and its standing committee. Likewise, the Church Representation Rules 18.1(b)(2) allow deputy Churchwardens of a District Church Council to be '*ex officio*'.

In both cases they are PCC members by virtue of holding their separately elected office of churchwarden. Their status as *ex officio* PCC members do not limit their ability to act fully as members, however.