



## **Pan American Round Tables of Texas Protocol**

According to Webster, Protocol is the code of ceremonial forms and courtesies, of precedence, accepted as proper and correct in official dealings. For the women members of Pan American Round Table (PART) this definition governs the actions applied in conducting meetings and recognizing and addressing the dignitaries who attend meetings, procedures or the ceremonies of the table. The term as used in most societies includes not only the courtesies but the amenities and rules of etiquette used in the official life of an organization. In observing protocol, honor is accorded the office not the individual. The discussion herein is intended to serve as reference for PART members in carrying out duties or activities of the organization.

One of the cardinal rules in protocol is the observance of the order of precedence at all functions. Failure to recognize the proper rank and precedence of a guest is equivalent to an insult to the official's position. Just as parliamentary procedure indicates the correct way to conduct a business meeting, protocol provides guidelines for the proper etiquette in recognizing and honoring those in positions of leadership. Good protocol leads to orderly procedure and good relations at all levels.

### The Receiving Line

If the event or meeting is held in a public place, the Table Director is at the head of the line. When held in a private home, the hostess is at the head of the line and the Table Director stands next to the hostess. In both instances the State Director or the Alliance Director General's position is next to the Table Director. The individuals in the reception line state the name of the person as she passes to the person next in line. The event chairman is the last person in the line.

### Rank of Officers and Committee Chairs

In order to insure the proper recognition of officers at all levels, the protocol chair needs to remember that the international (Alliance) is above state, state above local, and elected officials before appointed committee chairs. Former State Directors or former Alliance Directors General are recognized and extended courtesies. Should there be room at the head table, they may be asked to sit there. Directors of the day or event chairs should be recognized and thanked publicly.

### Seating at a Regular Business Meeting

At a business meeting the Table's Recording Secretary sits to the left of the Table Director, except when there is a Director of the Day or a featured speaker. The Recording Secretary sits to the left of the speaker. The Parliamentarian who provides advice on the correctness of business procedures sits close to the presiding officer.

Seating of Special Guests or Dignitaries

If the featured speaker is accompanied to the event by a family member or another guest, that individual is escorted to sit with the members. It is a nice courtesy to have a designated member in charge of this task.

When the State Director is present, she sits to the right of the Table Director. The right of the podium is the right of the person looking out at the audience. When the Alliance Director General or her representative is present, she is the guest of the table, of the country or of the state association. The featured speaker sits to the left of the podium after the Director of the Day or event chair.

The seating arrangements should be as follows when facing toward the assembly:

Left of Podium	Right of Podium
Chair of event	Table Director
Honored guest or speaker	State Director
Elected State officer	Director General or her rep.
Appointed State officers	Elected Alliance officer
Locally Elected officer	Appointed Alliance officer

The use of place cards is encouraged at the head table to avoid confusion.

Presentation / Display of Flags

The general guide for displaying flags is to start with the flag of the United States and place additional flags as appropriate. The flags of visiting dignitaries should be displayed, i.e. the flag of the country of the Alliance Director General. In some instances, the Alliance Director General may want her national anthem played. If a Pan American country is the subject of the program, then its flag should be displayed. It is not mandatory to post or retire colors nor is it mandatory to retire colors if they have been posted.

The order of precedence for flags is as follows: first the national flags are presented in alpha order following the U.S. flag. In this country the U.S. flag is always presented first. (State flags are posted next as they entered the Union.) Flags are retired in reverse order from which they were posted. No other flag or pennant should be placed above, or if on the same level, to the right of the U.S. flag. When displayed in an arc, the U.S. flag should be at the center and at the highest point of the group.

The positioning of the flag display is often arbitrary and based primarily on practicality and the best location for the event. When positioning flags, a place of honor should be considered. In addition some thought should be given to the traffic flow of those participating in the ceremony and an audiovisual projection if present. The position of the flags should be considered if they are desired as background for pictures.

When a flag from a country other than your own is presented, or when national anthems are sung, it is appropriate to stand at attention. Only the flag or national anthem of your country should be saluted. In this manner, respect for another’s flag is shown but allegiance is pledged only to your country.

## Opening the Meeting

The Table Director heads all Table functions and presides at meetings and official events. She opens the meeting by having the Collect read in English and Spanish, when possible. The Collect may serve as Invocation (a prayer calling for divine assistance) but since many equate the Invocation as the saying of Grace before a meal, the Invocation may be said before the meal by a member of the head table immediately before the meal is served. If a meal is not being served, then the Invocation may be eliminated.

The Collect may be followed by the reciting of the Pan American Pledge and the Pledge of Allegiance. The Pledge of Allegiance may be eliminated if the American flag is not present. Once these features have been satisfied, the Director moves on to official business.

## Introduction of Guests and Dignitaries

The Table Director or the Director of the Day has the responsibility for introducing all guests and dignitaries who are present at the meeting.

In the English language, there is a distinction between introducing and presenting. Persons who are not known to the assembly are introduced and those known to the assembly are presented. Guests of honor should be introduced from the highest ranked to the lowest. The process is reversed when the Alliance Director General serves as speaker. When the Alliance General is present and is introduced, the entire membership should rise in recognition of her office. This courtesy is extended to the State Director as well. When introducing the head table state *those seated at the head table are.....*

## The State Director's Visit

A visit by the State Director to a local Table should be viewed as a special event. As soon after the biennial convention as is possible, the State Director and the Corresponding Secretary should be invited to visit the local Tables. The Associate Director for each area Table should also be invited to visit. Tables should designate various dates that may be considered for a visit. The cost associated with the visit is always an issue and therefore Tables are encouraged to be flexible. The State Director and Associate Directors have many Tables to visit.

If the visit of these officers requires an overnight stay, the host Table assumes the responsibility for providing overnight accommodations. The host Table is responsible for the cost of the dinner or luncheon at the meeting that she attends.

Gifts for the visiting officers, although gracious, are not required.

If the State Director is arriving by air, she should be met at the airport and transportation provided to and from the meeting. If she is driving, complete directions should be provided to the location of the meeting and to her accommodations.

The State Director should be given an opportunity to address the members of the Table. If she is to be the featured speaker, she should be advised of this in advance to give her an opportunity to prepare.

The courtesies extended to the State Director should also be extended to the Area Associate Director.

## The Alliance Director General's Visit

The Alliance of Pan American Round Tables is headed by the Director General. This individual has within her duties a visit to as many Zones as possible. The Zone Director coordinates the plans in the area being visited. The Zone Director should provide the Table with a list of those accompanying the Director General. The hospitality extended to the Director General includes lodging and any cost related to her stay and the cost of transportation. When the Director General arrives at the visitation site, a receiving committee and the Table Director should greet her. While she is in the area, all meals should be provided. A small welcoming reception may be planned and gifts may be exchanged.

If the Zone Director is part of the entourage, she should receive the same courtesies. The Table Director is responsible for all of the details related to the visit. These courtesies should also be extended to a representative of the Director General. This may include the Zone Director, Alliance Board members, or the Pan American Woman.

The highest ranking Alliance official should bring greetings and is allowed to speak at the gathering. The length of time of the address/greeting should be prearranged so that the agenda reflects the length of the address. If flags are posted the Director General's country is also included. These dignitaries are placed at the head table if there is a head table. Alliance members who belong to local Tables are treated as any regular member when attending local Table meetings. Their Alliance appointment should be recognized by the local Table, if the meeting addresses the role this individual fulfills.

It is very importance that each Table and officers at every level follow protocol rules to the best of their ability. It is of particular importance when rank is involved. Individuals holding any special rank in the organization should receive the respect afforded the office.

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References:

Guidelines and Suggestions for Observing Protocol, 1986, PARTT Protocol Committee.

Pan American Round Table of Edinburg, Texas, Handbook, (1998).