

# City of Laredo, Texas Protocol Handbook

Fourth Edition



Judith Zaffirini, PhD

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## **The City of Laredo, Texas Protocol Handbook Development**

When the Mayor of Laredo and the Laredo City Council decided to develop the *City of Laredo Protocol Handbook* they demonstrated not only their interest in effective leadership, but also their commitment to excellence in public service. To expedite the effort, the Mayor appointed the following Ad Hoc Protocol Handbook Committee:

Mayor Elizabeth G. Flores, Chair  
Mayor Pro Tempore Louis H. Bruni  
Council Member John C. Galo  
City Secretary Gustavo Guevara Jr., ex officio member  
Laredo Public Library Director Janice Weber, ex officio member

They participated in four public workshops with Judith Zaffirini, PhD, of Zaffirini Communications, who wrote the Protocol Handbook and submitted drafts for review and feedback. Their collaboration was facilitated by numerous City of Laredo staff members, most notably, Assistant City Manager Larry Dovalina.

All other members of the Laredo City Council either attended at least one workshop or submitted written and/or oral feedback. Their interest in this priority project was evident throughout the process, as was their cooperation in developing the final draft for publication approval before the unofficial deadline of December 31, 1998.

A second printing of the Protocol Handbook in 2000 incorporated technical changes. Copies were forwarded to the Mayor, Council Members and staff members for feedback. Their suggestions and Council directives were incorporated in the second edition developed by the new Protocol, Procedures and Customer Service Standing Committee appointed by the Mayor:

Council Member John C. Galo, Chair  
Mayor Elizabeth G. Flores  
Council Member Louis H. Bruni  
City Secretary Gustavo Guevara Jr., ex officio member  
Laredo Public Library Director Janice Weber, ex officio member

Most helpful to the committee were City Manager Larry Dovalina and Assistant City Manager Cynthia Collazo.

A revised second edition of the Protocol Handbook was discussed and reviewed at three public workshops scheduled by the Council Committee, including two in 2000 and one in 2001. It was adopted unanimously by the Mayor and City Council on Monday, February 20, 2001, effective immediately for 2001-2002.

The latest revision of the Protocol Handbook was discussed and reviewed at a protocol workshop sponsored for local leaders by BBVA Compass. More than fifty persons attended, including the following City of Laredo officials:

Mayor Raul Salinas  
Council Member Cindy Liendo Espinoza  
Council Member Roque Vela  
City Secretary Gustavo Guevara

On Monday, February 3, 2014, the Mayor and Laredo City Council approved the third edition, effective immediately.

In 2016 Mayor Pete Saenz appointed the following committee to work on the fourth edition of the Protocol Handbook:

Mayor Pete Saenz, Chair  
Council Member Roque Vela Jr.  
Council Member George Altgelt  
Library Director Maria Soliz  
Acting City Manager Heriberto Ramirez.

Committee members were assisted by Raul Casso, City Attorney; Cynthia Collazo, Deputy City Manager; and Tiffany Franklin, Deputy City Secretary IV.

This revised edition was approved unanimously by the Mayor and City Council on February 21, 2017.

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## Introduction

Laredo, the Gateway to Mexico, is a bilingual, bicultural community in a binational setting. Proudly patriotic, Laredoans enjoy the rich variety of traditions emanating from the sister cities, sister states, and sister countries on both sides of the vibrant Texas-Mexico border. This international perspective colors our vision as we strive continuously to excel as Laredoans, as Texans, and as Americans in a global arena. Proper protocol is essential to this exciting way of life.

*Protocol* can be defined as the customs, guidelines, and regulations related to formality, precedence, and etiquette in official life and in ceremonies involving governmental officials and their representatives. Its cornerstone is the Order of Precedence that dictates decisions related to formal acts such as introductions, presentations, seating, and use of titles and of forms of address. Although only the President can change the “Protocol Order of Precedence” for the United States, generally the authorities regarding protocol are the U.S. Chief of Protocol and the U.S. Department of State’s Protocol Office. Their work product, however, applies mostly to official life at the national and international levels. Because there is no official protocol or Order of Precedence for cities and states, every city and state is free to adopt its own.

Always mindful of their purpose to promote harmony and goodwill while reflecting the hospitality that is a hallmark of “Los Dos Laredos,” the Mayor of Laredo and the Laredo City Council unanimously adopted the first edition of this *Protocol Handbook* in 1999, the second in 2001, the third in 2014, and the fourth in 2016. Cognizant that mastery of protocol will enhance relationships and decorum in the business, civic, educational, and public service communities, they agreed to make these policies and guidelines available to others. Their actions reflected their belief that correct protocol should result in better customer service for residents and visitors and should enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of those who plan special events, programs, introductions, and other activities involving government officials.

This fourth edition of the Protocol Handbook developed especially for the City of Laredo should ease the burden of all who wonder and worry about related issues. It is intended as a flexible, contemporary, organizational tool that is adaptable depending on the persons, purposes, and events at hand. Topics range from the Protocol Order of Precedence and the use of honorifics and titles to decorum and duties at City-sponsored events. Independent but related sections are in outline format to facilitate references and understanding.



Because there is neither a model nor a bible of protocol for local governments, this handbook offers an original combination of policies and guidelines. It reflects decisions deemed best for Laredoans, even when in conflict with practices espoused by others. The City of Laredo, for example, extends the courtesy title “the Honorable” to all elected officials, though others may prefer to extend it to a mayor, but not to county or other city elected officials.

Every practice identified herein is based on valued local traditions, balanced with common sense and popular preferences. This is a work in progress, intended to evolve through usage and feedback. Most important, this Protocol Handbook is offered not as the only way, but as “the Laredo way,” vintage 1999, with revisions in 2001, 2014, and 2016. It will be particularly useful to anyone who plans events and programs that include introductions, speakers, and seating.

## **Definitions**

Mastering protocol is essential not only for Laredoans who interact as public servants, but also for anyone whose public demeanor impacts his or her success, whether at home, at work, or in the community. To facilitate the ostensibly pleasant task of understanding, implementing, and internalizing the protocol adapted herein, the definitions that follow (Webster, 1996) were reflected throughout:

**Decorum:** Dignified propriety of behavior, speech, dress, etc.; the quality or state of being decorous; orderliness; regularity; usually a requirement of polite society.

**Etiquette:** Conventional requirements as to social behavior; a prescribed or accepted code of usage in ceremonies or formal observances.

**Honorific:** A title or form of respect. Example: “The Honorable” is an honorific or courtesy title used to indicate respect for the stature of elected officials.

**Precedence:** The right to precede in order, rank, or importance, including the right to precede others in ceremonies or social formalities; the order to be observed in ceremonies by persons of different ranks, as in international diplomatic precedence.

**Protocol Order of Precedence:** An adopted order of precedence that applies to persons who are listed for the purposes and at the levels identified. Example: The Protocol Order of Precedence for the United States applies mostly at the national and international levels and is part of the recognized system of international courtesy.

**Protocol:** The customs and regulations dealing with diplomatic formality, precedence, and etiquette (in official life; comparable to etiquette used in social life). Example: Laredo elected officials rank higher than local appointed officials and should be introduced before them.

**Rank:** An official or social position or standing. Example: The President determines the order in which Cabinet Members will be ranked in the federal Protocol Order of Precedence that applies mostly at the national and international levels.

**Seniority:** Priority, precedence, or status obtained as the result of a person's length of service. Example: City Council Members may be ranked in order of seniority for introductions and for privileges such as the order of presentation or introduction; selection of office space, seating, and parking; and presiding or spokesperson responsibilities in the absence of the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore. The Laredo City Council, however, prefers introductions and seating by district number.

**Title:** A descriptive or distinctive appellation typically designated by right of rank, office, or attainment. Example: Mayor of the City of Laredo.

**X:** A journalistic symbol typically used herein to indicate that a specific number is to be substituted. Example: "Council Member, District X," indicates that the Council Member's district number must be substituted, when known, for the "X."

## References

Undaunted by the dearth of publications about protocol and by the consistently contradictory related advice published, Laredo elected officials commissioned the 1999 handbook and its 2001-2002 and 2016 revisions. The 2014 edition was developed on a complimentary basis, simply because of numerous requests for copies since the previous edition was out-of-print.

The richness of the references section portends the challenge of researching the subject for the purpose of collecting and localizing useful policies and guidelines. First published in 1977, *Protocol: The Complete Handbook of Diplomatic, Official and Social Usage* by McCaffree and Innis, for example, remains the most respected book about protocol at the national level, but even its 25<sup>th</sup> edition (2002) offers limited advice for cities and states. *Robert's Rules of Order* may be the parliamentary authority of choice throughout the United States, but even its 11<sup>th</sup> edition, 2011, must be enriched with exceptions and supplementary policies and procedures.

Readers of reference works are cautioned to expect contradictions and to be prepared to make the best judgments possible based on the persons, purposes, and events at hand. Similar precautions are in order for those who attempt to differentiate between business and social etiquette and between etiquette for social ceremonies such as weddings and protocol for official ceremonies such as inaugurations. When all else fails, tradition and common sense must prevail. They are the basis for making exceptions that reflect purpose, not ignorance.

### **Revised Edition**

Suggestions for improving this Protocol Handbook are welcomed and should be submitted to Dr. Judith Zaffirini, Zaffirini Communications, P. O. Box 627, Laredo, Texas 78042.

This work in progress should be instrumental in promoting goodwill and harmony among Laredoans and visitors as we build a better future for our families in our part of the international community.

¡Viva Laredo!

## **I. Protocol Order of Precedence: Generalizations**

Generalizations about the Protocol Order of Precedence reflect the rationale, customs, and guidelines that are its foundation. They define the Mayor of Laredo as the City's official host, and then focus on the Order of Precedence not only for elected and appointed officials and their representatives in a binational setting, but also for honorees and special events, City building plaques, and seating. Just as the President determines the Protocol Order of Precedence for federal officials and others, the Mayor of Laredo and the Laredo City Council may determine it for City officials, whether elected or appointed. Similarly, the Webb County Judge and Commissioners Court may determine the ranking of county elected and appointed officials. Generalizations about guidelines are organized in outline format to facilitate location, reference, and understanding.

### **I. Order of Introductions at City-Sponsored and Other Events**

#### **A. Mayor of the City of Laredo at City-Sponsored Events**

1. The Mayor of Laredo is the Official Host for the City of Laredo and is "recognized as the head of the City Government and as the official representative of the City but shall have no administrative duties." (Charter, 13)
  - a. As the official host, the Mayor of Laredo traditionally is introduced first at City-sponsored ceremonies, even in the presence of state and federal appointed and elected officials other than the President or Vice President of the United States.
  - b. The Mayor of Laredo is ranked first among Laredo's elected and appointed officials when in Laredo and when leading an official delegation outside Laredo.
  - c. This highest rank in the order of precedence is limited to the City of Laredo and is not assumed in other cities, except when the Mayor heads a Laredo delegation.
    - (1) Example: In Laredo the Mayor of Laredo would be introduced *before* the U.S. Representative whose district includes Laredo.

- (2) Example: In Austin the Mayor of Laredo would be introduced *after* the U.S. Representative whose district includes Laredo, *unless* the Mayor of Laredo were introduced as the head of a Laredo delegation that included the U.S. Representative.
      - d. The Mayor of Laredo is the highest-ranking City of Laredo official in any locale.
2. The Mayor of Laredo shall be introduced first at all City-sponsored meetings and events, followed by the Mayor Pro Tempore and Council Members.
  - a. Laredo City Council Members prefer to be introduced in numerical order, based on the districts they represent, rather than in seniority order.
  - b. This order of introductions is appropriate for all City-sponsored events, including those sponsored by departments and/or by appointed bodies.
  - c. The Order of Precedence included herein shall be followed at all City-sponsored events, including those sponsored by departments and/or by appointed bodies.

**B. Mayor of the City of Laredo at Events Sponsored by Others**

1. At other local events not sponsored by the City of Laredo, the Mayor should be the first elected official introduced *after* the hosts, honorees, and other appropriate officials and executives. The rationale is simple: VIPs of a sponsoring organization, institution, or agency may be introduced first.
  - a. This includes introducing the Mayor *after* county officials at county events, *after* state officials at a state institution or agency or at an event hosted or organized by a state agency or institution, *after* federal officials at a federal institution or agency or at an event hosted or organized by a federal agency or institution; and *after* executives at their own organization's events.

- (1) Example: County officials should be introduced before the Mayor of Laredo and Council Members at County-sponsored events.
- (2) Example: State officials should be introduced first at State-sponsored events, including at ribbon-cutting and groundbreaking events sponsored by state agencies and institutions and at events honoring state officials such as the Texas Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- (3) Example: Federal officials should be introduced first at federal-sponsored events, including at ribbon-cutting and groundbreaking events sponsored by federal agencies and institutions and at events honoring federal officials such as the President, Vice President, Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives, or U.S. Senator.
- (4) Example: At events honoring dignitaries such as veterans on Veterans Day or survivors of veterans on Memorial Day, hosts and honorees may be introduced first, followed by the Mayor and other elected officials in protocol order.
- (5) Example: Hosts and sponsors may be introduced first at their own events. This includes beginning the introductions with bank executives at bank-sponsored events, hotel executives at hotel-sponsored events, civic organization officials at their organization's events, etc.
- (6) Example: Former Mr. South Texas honorees should be introduced first at the Mr. South Texas Luncheon and announcement.
- (7) Example: Washington's Birthday Celebration Association (WBCA) officials, including officers and honorees such as the Grand Marshal or Mr. South Texas, should precede elected officials in

the international parade. (To repeat, this is because the host organization's internal VIPs may be presented first.)

2. After VIPs related to their respective events are introduced at events not sponsored by the City, the Order of Precedence should be honored, beginning with the Mayor.

**C. Mayor Pro Tempore of the City of Laredo**

1. The Mayor Pro Tempore shall be elected in seniority order from among Council Members who have not held that office.
  - a. The Laredo City Council shall elect the Mayor Pro Tempore by majority vote.
  - b. The Mayor Pro Tempore shall be elected for a one-year term that begins either after the regular City election or one year after that, when that term expires.
2. The Mayor Pro Tempore of the City of Laredo ranks immediately after the Mayor and assumes the rank of Mayor in his or her absence.
  - a. The Mayor's designated staff member shall inform the Mayor Pro Tempore about the Mayor's absences timely so that he or she can make arrangements to assume responsibilities and schedule events.
  - b. Courtesies and privileges ordinarily extended to the Mayor by virtue of position and rank shall be extended to the Mayor Pro Tempore in the Mayor's absence.

**D. Laredo City Council Members**

1. Council Members are ranked in their order of seniority.
  - a. This does not apply, however, to the Council Member who is Mayor Pro Tempore and ranks after the Mayor.

- b. Seniority shall be defined as the cumulative length of service on the Laredo City Council, including non-consecutive terms.
  - c. Council Members elected on the same day in the same election will draw for rank within their class, but those elected in a given election without a runoff will rank higher than those elected in a runoff.
  - d. If Council Members elected to non-consecutive terms report the same length of service, they shall be ranked as follows:
    - (1) If first elected on different dates, in the order in which they were first elected.
    - (2) If first elected on the same date but subsequently elected on different dates, in the order in which they were elected subsequently.
    - (3) If first and subsequently elected on the same dates, they shall draw for rank within their class.
2. Except when the order of Council District numbers is preferred by Council Members, seniority shall be the basis for determining Laredo City Council Members' order of introduction; presentations; representation responsibilities; and selection of office space, seating, and parking.
  3. City elected officials are ranked higher than their appointed officials, including the City Manager, all City of Laredo staff members, and members of City Boards and Commissions.
  4. The Council Member in whose district a City-sponsored event is held may rank after the Mayor Pro Tempore, though only for the event's duration.
    - a. This does not apply to events held at the Laredo City Hall or similar City buildings that are considered of Citywide importance.



- b. It may apply if a Council Member's constituents are the organizers of the event at City Hall or at similar City buildings.

**E. City of Laredo Municipal Court Judge**

1. The City's only other elected official, the Municipal Court Judge, is ranked after the Council Members in the Order of Precedence.
2. The Municipal Court Judge should be introduced before the City Manager.

**II. City of Laredo Appointed Officials**

**A. City Manager, Staff Members**

1. The Mayor and City Council determine the Protocol Order of Precedence of City of Laredo staff members other than the City Manager, who ranks highest.
2. The City Manager may submit recommendations for the Mayor and City Council to consider in determining the Order of Precedence of City staff members.
3. The City of Laredo Protocol Order of Precedence may be limited to specific positions, to a specified number of staff members, or by other criteria adopted or observed by the Mayor and City Council.

**B. Members of Commissions, Boards, and Committees**

1. The Mayor and City Council will determine the Protocol Order of Precedence of Chairs and Members of Boards and Commissions of the City of Laredo.
2. This order may vary according to the purpose of the event so that, for example, the Airport Advisory Board would rank first at a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Laredo International Airport.

3. The Chair and Officers of a Board or Commission always should be introduced before its Members.
4. Because of the numerous City Boards and Commissions, introductions of their Chairs and Members may be limited to those whose activities are related to the event at hand, in which case Members should be introduced in seniority order after the Chair.

### **III. Webb County Officials**

- A. The City's Protocol Order of Precedence includes the Webb County Judge as the highest-ranking County-elected official, followed by other officials elected Countywide, then by Commissioners elected from four precincts.
- B. If the County Judge and Commissioners adopt a protocol order for Webb County, it shall be honored by the City of Laredo and substituted for the order of County officials reflected herein, which is based on government publications.

### **IV. Texas Officials**

#### **A. Statewide, Districtwide Elected Officials**

1. Texas elected and appointed officials shall be introduced as listed in the City of Laredo's Protocol Order of Precedence, unless the Governor adopts a Protocol Order of Precedence for Texas or statute dictates adjustments.
2. Texas state officials elected statewide rank higher than those elected districtwide, whether at the federal or state levels.
  - a. Example: The Lieutenant Governor of Texas, a statewide elected official, ranks higher than a U. S. Representative, who is elected at the district level.
  - b. Example: A Texas Supreme Court Justice ranks higher than a state legislator elected at the district level.

3. The Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives is ranked after the Lieutenant Governor of Texas.

## **B. Appointed Officials**

1. The Texas Secretary of State shall be ranked first after all Texas statewide elected officials.
  - a. This reflects the traditional Order of Precedence for introductions recommended by the Texas Secretary of State (1998).
  - b. Although the Secretary of State is an appointed official and serves at the will of the Governor of Texas, the courtesy is extended because the position is created in the Texas Constitution.
2. Other Texas appointed officials, including commissioners and others with statewide responsibilities, shall be ranked after Texas officials elected from districts.
  - a. Example: Appointed members of statewide boards and commissions shall be ranked after members of the Texas Legislature.
  - b. Example: The Commissioner of Education or a member of a university's Board of Regents shall be ranked after State Representatives.

## **V. Federal, State, Out-of-State Officials**

- A. The only federal officials elected at the national level are the President and Vice President, who out-rank any Texas statewide elected official and the Mayor.
- B. *At state events*, statewide elected officials are ranked before U. S. Senators, who also are elected statewide.
- C. Statewide elected officials are ranked before officials who are elected at the federal district level, who, in turn, are ranked before officials elected at state district levels.

1. Example: The Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives are ranked before a U. S. Representative.
  2. Example: A U. S. Representative is ranked before a State Senator, except at a state institution, state agency, state-sponsored event, or events honoring a state official.
- D. Although every President of the United States determines the rank of American officials included in the Protocol Order of Preference that is used by the White House and State Department and that applies mostly to official life at the national and international levels, there is no official order for states, counties, and cities.
1. The President and the State Department promulgate the federal Protocol Order of Preference only for their own use, but it affords important guidelines that will be honored by the City of Laredo when appropriate.
  2. When local protocol conflicts with the protocol established by the President of the United States or of a foreign country, the President's protocol prevails, though only during the limited occasion at hand.
    - a. This policy applies only when the President or the President's representative will be present, and local protocol will be restored automatically immediately thereafter.
    - b. This policy may be accorded to other visiting dignitaries.
  3. When the City of Laredo hosts state, national, or international dignitaries, the City's designated representative shall direct questions to the U.S. Department of State's Office of Protocol, Ceremonial Section, and/or to the Texas Secretary of State, who serves as Texas' Chief International Protocol Officer, or to the Director of Protocol, Texas Secretary of State's Office.

- E. When visiting dignitaries are officials at the state or federal levels in the United States or in another country, the City of Laredo's designated representative shall secure relevant protocol information developed by the Chief of Protocol for their respective governmental entities.
  
- F. When the Order of Precedence adopted by the City of Laredo conflicts with the order established by the Governor of Texas, the state order shall prevail.
  - 1. This policy applies only when the Governor or the Governor's representative will be present.
  - 2. Local protocol will be restored automatically immediately thereafter.
  - 3. This policy may be accorded other visiting dignitaries.
  
- G. When visiting dignitaries are state officials from other states, they shall be accorded the rank and courtesy designated for their Texas counterparts.
  - 1. After the Governor of Texas, Governors from other states shall be ranked by the order in which their state was admitted into the Union. (McCaffree and Innis, 12-13)
  - 2. When historical data are not available, visiting Governors may be ranked in their order of seniority or geographic proximity to the City.
  
- H. When visiting dignitaries are of the stature of the President or of the Governor, the program format and length should be developed in cooperation with their designated representatives.
  - 1. This precludes offending a dignitary with unexpected delays.
  - 2. It ensures observing their preferred Order of Precedence.

3. It also allows the Master of Ceremonies to make appropriate remarks when the visiting dignitary leaves immediately after speaking.

## **VI. Binational and International Order of Precedence**

A. To reflect the international friendship and goodwill between the City of Laredo and its sister city, Nuevo Laredo, its sister state, Tamaulipas, and its sister country, Mexico, elected and appointed officials from their respective governments who visit Laredo shall be accorded the rank and courtesy designated for their U.S. counterparts and hosts, unless tradition and common sense dictate otherwise.

1. They should be ranked similarly to their U.S. counterparts.

- a. Example: The Mayor of Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico, could immediately follow the Mayor of Laredo, Texas, in the order of precedence.

- b. Example: Except for the Mayor of Nuevo Laredo, however, Mayors of other cities would not be introduced before state or federal officials.

- c. Example: The Governor of Tamaulipas could immediately follow the Governor of Texas.

2. If there is no U.S. counterpart position identical to that of the visiting dignitary, the City's designated representative shall determine the most similar position and appropriate rank.

B Laredo hosts should remember that the entire Western Hemisphere, including Mexico and Latin America, is "America," and its residents are "Americans."

1. Because the use of "American" or "North American" in reference to only a resident of the United States of America may be considered arrogant by Americans from other countries, it is advisable for Laredoans to state simply that they are from the United States or from Laredo or Texas.

2. A Laredo host who speaks Spanish is advised to say, “soy estadounidense,” the translation of “I am from the United States.” (McKinnis and Natella, 66)
- C. Visiting American dignitaries ordinarily are introduced before their foreign counterparts, but it is acceptable under the “courtesy to a stranger” practice to introduce visiting foreign dignitaries before their respective counterparts.
1. This exception should not be made for the President, the Governor of Texas or the Mayor of Laredo.
  2. Such exceptions should be explained when observed, so that witnesses understand them as courteous exceptions, rather than as breaches of protocol.
- D. When the City of Laredo hosts elected and appointed officials from other countries, the City’s designated representative shall seek the advice of the Director of Protocol appointed by the Governor of Texas.

## **VII. Representatives of the President**

### **A. Immediate Family Members, U. S. Cabinet**

1. When the President of the United States is represented by a member of his or her immediate family or by a member of the U. S. Cabinet, the representative shall be accorded the rank and courtesy associated with the Presidency.
  - a. “Immediate family” refers to a spouse, child, parent, or sibling.
  - b. The incumbent President designates the Order of Precedence for U. S. Cabinet members.
2. This courtesy may be extended to other family members and to the families and representatives of Presidents of other countries.

## **B. Other Representatives**

1. When the President of the United States is represented by anyone other than immediate family members or U.S. Cabinet members, including other family members and other government officials, the representatives instead are accorded the rank and courtesy associated with their own respective positions.
  - a. Example: A visiting State Representative representing the President would be introduced at his or her respective rank as a legislator in the Order of Precedence, rather than after the Mayor of Laredo.
  - b. This policy precludes common problems such as introducing a representative who is the President's junior staff member or a campaign volunteer from being introduced before the Governor of Texas.
2. The rank and courtesy extended automatically to immediate family members of the President may be extended to other family members.

## **VIII. Representatives of State or Federal Officials**

- A. When a state or federal elected or appointed official is represented by a member of his or her immediate family, the representative assumes the official's rank in the Order of Precedence.
  1. "Immediate family" refers only to a spouse, child, parent, or sibling.
  2. Example: A spouse representing a statewide elected official would be introduced before the hometown U.S. Representative.
- B. Other representatives, including staff members and family members of other officials, assume their respective position in the Order of Precedence.



1. This policy precludes, for example, introducing an aide who represents a legislator before a Laredo Council Member who is present or introducing an aide who represents a U.S. Senator before a state legislator who is present.
2. Example: A staff member representing a State Representative would be introduced after Laredo City Council Members, not before.

## **IX. Introduction of Elected and Appointed Officials**

- A. The Order of Precedence for the Mayor and other officials at specific events and sites is addressed as part of the “Order of Introductions at City-Sponsored and Other Events” in this chapter:
  1. Example: “Mayor of the City of Laredo at City-Sponsored Events” includes references to introducing the Mayor first at all City-sponsored events, except in the presence of the President or Vice President of the United States.
  2. Example: “Mayor of the City of Laredo at Events Sponsored by Others” describes the appropriateness of introducing VIPs and appropriate elected officials first at their own events and at events sponsored at their respective levels of government.
- B. Generally, when elected and appointed officials *other than* those included in the federal or City of Laredo “Protocol Order of Precedence” are introduced, *elected* officials at the federal, state, county, and local levels should be introduced before *appointed* officials at those levels.
  1. Exceptions are appropriate when the duties of appointed officials are related directly to the event at hand.
  2. When exceptions at specific events are appropriate, elected officials should be introduced before appointed officials at the same level.

- a. Example: Board Members of a state agency should be introduced *after* state officials, but before county officials at a ribbon cutting for the agency's local office.
  - b. Example: The City of Laredo Cable Commission Members could be introduced before state or federal elected officials at a groundbreaking for a Public Access Television Station, but not before Laredo City Council Members.
- C. An honoree who is an elected or appointed official may be introduced at the level of the honoree, rather than at his or her designated position in the City of Laredo's Order of Precedence.
1. Example: An honoree who is a Laredo City Council Member may be introduced before elected and appointed officials at any level.
  2. This policy reinforces the purpose of the festivities and precludes detracting from the honoree's status.

## **X. Honorees and Special Events**

- A. For specific events, honorees, celebrities, and other guests with special status may be placed high in the Order of Precedence for purposes such as introductions, parade order, presentations, and seating, especially on Veterans Day and Memorial Day or at an honor banquet.
1. Example: Program participants who are the ranking representatives of veterans organizations and other veterans should be introduced before elected officials on Veterans Day and Memorial Day.
  2. Example: The honoree at the Distinguished Citizen of the Year banquet could be ranked before elected officials for purposes of the banquet and could be introduced first.

3. Example: State legislators are introduced first at state institutions and at state-sponsored events, and then the Order of Precedence is resumed with the Mayor of Laredo introduced first.
  4. Example: A celebrity entertainer from another state or country could be ranked before elected officials for purposes of a particular event at which he or she will be honored.
- B. The City of Laredo’s Protocol Order of Precedence shall be reflected in introductions, order of presentation, and other courtesies extended at City-sponsored events.
1. The preferred format is to observe the Order of Precedence as written in planning the order of introductions, presentations, and seating.
  2. Although not recommended, occasionally the order of introductions and presentations may be reversed so that the highest ranked officials and/or honorees will be introduced last.
    - a. This may be necessary when a high-ranking official is delayed.
    - b. The practice sometimes is referred to as “save the best for the last,” ensuring a program ends on a high note.
    - c. Protocol order should not be reversed, however, without the consent of the highest-ranked official and honorees who will be impacted.
  3. When a program must begin before a high-ranking official or honoree arrives, it is wise to accommodate him or her by making exceptions to the Order of Precedence.
    - a. Example: If a program must begin at noon, but the Governor is not scheduled to arrive until 12:30 p.m., others may be introduced in protocol order, and the Governor should be introduced upon arrival.

- b. Example: At events such as state receptions expected to last two hours, elected officials can be introduced as they arrive instead of in protocol order.
- c. Example: Elected officials who are not present during scheduled introductions may be introduced later.

## **XI. Seating**

### **A. Laredo City Council Meetings**

- 1. At Laredo City Council meetings the Mayor shall be seated at the center or head of the table, and Council Members, including the Mayor Pro Tempore, shall be seated in numerical order by Council District.
- 2. When the Mayor Pro Tempore or other Council Member presides in the absence of the Mayor, he or she may preside while seated at either the seat designated for the Mayor or at the seat designated for that Council Member's district.

### **B. City-Sponsored Events**

- 1. Generally, the places of honor at meeting tables are as follows:
  - a. Center seat, typically for Mayor.
  - b. Seat to the Mayor's right, observer's left, typically for the highest-ranking guest.
  - c. Seat to the Mayor's left, observer's right, typically for the second highest-ranking guest.
  - d. Other seats ostensibly rank in value in terms of their distance from the center, alternating from the observer's left of center to the observer's right. The seats farthest from the center are considered less visible, though they may be more convenient.

- e. Seating should be arranged, however, to accommodate circumstances such as in the following examples:
  - (1) To allow honorees to be joined by their spouses or escorts who are not staff members.
  - (2) To allow the highest-ranking guests to be seated together.
  - (3) To allow a statewide official to be seated next to the highest-ranking local legislator.
  - (4) To allow federal and/or state elected officials to be seated on one side and city officials to be seated together on the other side.
  
- 2. When the lectern is at the center of the table, the places of honor are as follows:
  - a. Seat to the observer's left of the lectern, typically for the Mayor.
  - b. Seat to the Mayor's right, observer's left, typically for the highest-ranking guest, with the seat to that person's right, observer's left, for the next highest-ranking guest.
  - c. Seat to the observer's right of the lectern, typically for the Master of Ceremonies, unless the role is fulfilled by the Mayor.
  - d. Other seats ostensibly rank in value in terms of their distance from the center, alternating from the observer's left of center to the observer's right. The seats farthest from the center are considered less visible, though they may be more convenient.
  - e. It is acceptable, however, to seat elected officials in protocol order to the observer's left of the lectern and to seat other program participants to the observer's right of the lectern.

3. The Mayor, Council Members, and honor guests may be asked their preferences for seating.
4. Seating arrangements may be adapted to suit the circumstances at all City-sponsored meetings and for meetings of City of Laredo Boards and Commissions.
  - a. Example: Tables and chairs shall be arranged to accommodate officials and/or guests with disabilities.
  - b. Example: A ranking elected official or guest who plans to leave early may be seated close to the departure area to preclude having an empty seat at the center.

## **XII. City Building Plaques**

- A. The City of Laredo's Protocol Order of Preference shall be reflected in all plaques affixed permanently to any building or facility owned and/or constructed by the City of Laredo.
- B. The Mayor and City Council shall approve the names, titles, and other information to be included in building plaques, as well as the design, size, placement, and cost.
  1. This policy is intended to ensure proper protocol is reflected consistently on all plaques throughout the City.
  2. The policy applies even for building plaques that are gifts to the City.

## **II. Protocol Order of Precedence: Master List**

The City of Laredo's Master Protocol Order of Precedence ranks federal, state, district, county, and city officials who live in or visit Laredo regularly and who are most likely to attend City-sponsored events. It reflects the preceding generalizations about the rationale, customs, and guidelines that are its foundation. A related list organizes the same officials by level of government. When the Mayor and Council Members are introduced as hosts at City of Laredo events, Council Members should be introduced immediately after the Mayor in the order reflected in 39-41 of this list. Other officials then should be introduced in the order below.

Just as the President's Protocol Order of Precedence is not imposed on others, neither is the City of Laredo's list intended as a requirement for other governmental bodies or civic/social organizations. It should, however, be a useful tool for all who interact within the realms of Laredo's official life. When another governmental body or an organization sponsors an event, for example, this protocol list could be honored after the order established for the hosts and their honorees. What follows, then, is the Master Protocol Order of Precedence that is intended primarily for use at City-sponsored events:

1. Mayor of the City of Laredo (Official Host for the City of Laredo)
2. Governor of Texas
3. Lieutenant Governor of Texas
4. U.S. Senator from Texas (SENIOR)
5. U.S. Senator from Texas (JUNIOR)
6. Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives
7. Attorney General of Texas
8. Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts
9. Chief Justice, Texas Supreme Court
10. Justices, Texas Supreme Court, in seniority order
11. Presiding Judge, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals
12. Judges, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, in seniority order

13. Texas Land Commissioner
14. Chair, Texas Railroad Commission
15. Members, Texas Railroad Commission, in seniority order
16. Texas Agriculture Commissioner
17. Texas Secretary of State
18. Hometown U.S. Representative
19. Members, U.S. House of Representatives, in order of seniority or geographic proximity to Laredo
20. Hometown Senator
21. Members, Texas Senate, in order of seniority or geographic proximity to Laredo
22. Hometown Representatives in seniority order (DISTRICT 42, DISTRICT 80; Each of Laredo's two state representatives, however, is introduced before the other in his or her own district, regardless of seniority.)
23. Members, House of Representatives, in order of seniority or geographic proximity to Laredo
24. Chief Justice, 4<sup>th</sup> Court of Appeals
25. Justices, 4<sup>th</sup> Court of Appeals, in order of seniority or geographic proximity to Laredo
26. Chair, State Board of Education
27. Member, State Board of Education
28. Webb County Judge
29. District Judges, in seniority order
30. Webb County Courts-at-Law Judges, in seniority order
31. District Attorney for Webb and Zapata Counties
32. Webb County Attorney
33. District Clerk



34. Webb County Clerk
35. Webb County Treasurer
36. Webb County Assessor-Collector
37. Webb County Sheriff
38. Members, Webb County Commissioners Court, in seniority order
- 39. *Mayor Pro Tempore of the City of Laredo (at City of Laredo events, ranks after Mayor)***
- 40. *City Council Member in whose district an event is held (at City of Laredo events, ranks after Mayor Pro Tempore of the City of Laredo)***
- 41. *Members, City Council, in seniority order (at City of Laredo events, rank after Council Member from the district in whose an event is held)***
42. Municipal Court Judge
43. Justices of the Peace, in seniority order
44. Constables, in seniority order
45. President and Officers, Board of Trustees, Laredo Community College
46. Members, Board of Trustees, Laredo Community College, in seniority order
47. President and Officers, Board of Trustees, Laredo Independent School District
48. Members, Board of Trustees, Laredo Independent School District, in seniority order
49. President and Officers, Board of Trustees, United Independent School District
50. Members, Board of Trustees, United Independent School District, in seniority order
51. President and Officers, Board of Trustees, Webb County Consolidated School District
52. Members, Board of Trustees, Webb County Consolidated School District, in seniority order
53. President and Officers, Board of Directors, St. Augustine High School

54. Members, Board of Directors, St. Augustine High School, in seniority order
55. Gubernatorial Appointees to State Boards and Commissions
56. City Manager
57. Deputy City Manager
58. Assistant City Manager
59. City Secretary
60. City Attorney
61. Finance Director
62. Chief of Police
63. Fire Chief
64. Director of the Public Library
65. City Engineer
66. (ADDITIONAL STAFF MEMBERS)
67. (CHAIRS AND MEMBERS, CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS)

### **III. Protocol Order of Precedence: Levels of Government**

While the Master List of Laredo's Protocol Order of Precedence combines elected and appointed officials from all levels of government, the list that follows categorizes them by level. Beginning with statewide elected officials who are preceded by the Mayor of Laredo and followed by the appointed Texas Secretary of State, the list includes the Texas Legislature and district, county, and city elected and appointed officials.

The purpose of this list is to facilitate introducing hosts before honoring the master list. At an event sponsored by the City of Laredo, for example, City of Laredo elected officials could be introduced first, followed by other officials in protocol order. At a State-sponsored event or state institution, however, statewide and districtwide elected officials would be introduced first, and then the master list should be honored, beginning with the Mayor of the City of Laredo. Similarly, at a County-sponsored event, Webb County elected officials would be introduced first, and then the protocol order would be honored, beginning with the Mayor of Laredo.

#### **I. City Elected Officials**

1. Mayor of the City of Laredo
2. Mayor Pro Tempore of the City of Laredo
3. City Council Member in whose district an event is held
4. Members, City Council, in district numerical order
5. Municipal Court Judge

#### **II. Mayor, Statewide Elected Officials, Secretary of State**

1. Mayor of the City of Laredo (Official Host for the City of Laredo)
2. Governor of Texas
3. U.S. Senator from Texas (SENIOR)
4. U.S. Senator from Texas (JUNIOR)

5. Lieutenant Governor of Texas
6. Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives
7. Attorney General of Texas
8. Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts
9. Chief Justice, Texas Supreme Court
10. Justices, Texas Supreme Court, in seniority order
11. Presiding Judge, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals
12. Judges, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, in seniority order
13. Texas Land Commissioner
14. Chair, Texas Railroad Commission
15. Members, Texas Railroad Commission
16. Texas Agriculture Commissioner
17. Texas Secretary of State

### **III. Texas Legislature**

1. Lieutenant Governor
2. Speaker of the House
3. Hometown Senator
4. Members, Texas Senate, in order of seniority or geographic proximity to Laredo
5. Hometown Representative (SENIOR; PRECEDES JUNIOR IN OWN DISTRICT)
6. Hometown Representative (JUNIOR; PRECEDES SENIOR IN OWN DISTRICT)
7. Members, House of Representatives, in order of seniority or geographic proximity to Laredo
8. Secretary of the Texas Senate

9. Parliamentarian of the Texas Senate (OFFICERS OF THE SENATE PRECEDE COUNTERPARTS IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.)
10. Parliamentarian of the Texas House of Representatives
11. (OTHER OFFICIALS DESIGNATED BY THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OR BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES)

#### **IV. District Elected Officials**

1. Hometown U.S. Representative
2. Members, U.S. House of Representatives, in order of seniority or geographic proximity to Laredo
3. Hometown State Senator
4. Members, Texas Senate, in seniority order or geographic proximity to Laredo
5. Hometown State Representative (SENIOR; PRECEDES JUNIOR IN OWN DISTRICT)
6. Hometown State Representative (JUNIOR; PRECEDES SENIOR IN OWN DISTRICT)
7. Members, Texas House of Representatives, in order of seniority or geographic proximity to Laredo
8. Chief Justice, 4<sup>th</sup> Court of Appeals
9. Justices, 4<sup>th</sup> Court of Appeals, in order of seniority
10. Chair, State Board of Education
11. Member, State Board of Education

#### **V. County Elected Officials**

1. County Judge
2. District Judges, in seniority order

3. County Courts-at-Law Judges, in seniority order
4. District Attorney
5. County Attorney
6. District Clerk
7. County Clerk
8. County Treasurer
9. County Assessor-Collector
10. Sheriff
11. Members, Webb County Commissioners Court, in seniority order
12. Justices of the Peace, in seniority order
13. Constables, in seniority order

## **VI. Members, Elected Boards**

1. Member, State Board of Education
2. President, Board of Trustees, Laredo Community College
3. Members, Board of Trustees, Laredo Community College, in seniority order
4. President, Board of Trustees, Laredo Independent School District
5. Members, Board of Trustees, Laredo Independent School District, in seniority order
6. President, Board of Trustees, United Independent School District
7. Members, Board of Trustees, United Independent School District, in seniority order
8. President, Board of Trustees, Webb County Consolidated School District
9. Members, Board of Trustees, Webb County Consolidated School District, in seniority order
10. President, Board of Directors, St. Augustine High School

11. Members, Board of Directors, St. Augustine High School, in seniority order

## **VII. Appointed Officials (Laredo appointees)**

1. City Manager
2. Deputy City Manager
3. Assistant City Manager
4. City Secretary
5. City Attorney
6. City Finance Director
7. Chief of Police
8. Fire Chief
9. Director of the Laredo Public Library
10. City Engineer
11. (ADDITIONAL STAFF MEMBERS)
12. (CHAIRS AND MEMBERS, CITY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS)

## **IV. Honorifics and Titles for Officials**

The proper use of honorifics such as “The Honorable” and of titles such as “Council Member” facilitates observing the desired decorum in official life. Rules that are appropriate at the federal level, however, may be deemed inappropriate at the local level. The City of Laredo, for example, extends the courtesy title of “The Honorable” to all elected officials, although aware that at the federal level this honorific is not extended to county or to city officials other than the Mayor.

What follows, then, is the City of Laredo’s guidelines for honorifics and titles used for elected, appointed, and religious officials, with a special section about gender-free usage and respectful language for persons with disabilities or illnesses. The latter, for example, warns against referencing a person strictly by a physical or intellectual condition and encourages using “intellectual disability” in lieu of the “R” word.

### **I. Use of “The Honorable” for Elected Officials**

- A. The City of Laredo shall extend the courtesy title, “The Honorable,” to all elected officials at all levels of government.
  - 1. “The Honorable” will be used in addressing, orally and in writing, elected officials at the federal, state, county, and city levels.
  - 2. In extending the honorific to elected officials, the City of Laredo includes those from other countries who are not addressed otherwise.
- B. “The Honorable” is preferred throughout the United States, in stark contrast to honorifics such as “The Right Honorable” in the British Commonwealth and “Excellency” used in other countries.
  - 1. This honorific may be used to address any ranking foreign officials who are not entitled to be addressed as “Excellency” in their respective countries.
  - 2. When high-ranking foreign officials are expected, the City’s designated representative shall study the country’s protocol and secure information developed by the U. S. Department of



State to determine whether they should be addressed as “His Excellency,” “Her Excellency” or, simply, “Excellency.”

- C. High-ranking presidential appointees in office or retired, such as Members of the U. S. Cabinet, also are addressed as “The Honorable.” (McCaffree and Innis, 20-21)
- D. “The Honorable” may be used to address the Texas Secretary of State, but not other appointed officials at the federal, state, county, or city levels.
  - 1. City staff members should not be addressed as “The Honorable,” unless they also hold or have held elected offices.
  - 2. Members of City Boards and Commissions should not be addressed as “The Honorable,” unless they also hold or have held elected offices.
- E. An elected official never should use “The Honorable” to refer to himself or herself, orally, in writing or on letterhead.
- F. Organizations do not have the authority to bestow “The Honorable” on their honorees or officers who are not elected officials.

## **II. Use of “The Honorable” with Names, Not Titles**

- A. “The Honorable” is used before an elected official’s name, not title.
- B. “The Honorable” may be used to address former elected officials, though without their former titles.

## **III. Honorifics and Titles for the Mayor of Laredo**

- A. The Mayor of Laredo may be addressed as follows:
  - 1. In introductions, either as:
    - a. The Honorable (FULL NAME), Mayor of the City of Laredo
    - b. Mayor (FULL NAME)

2. At meetings, forums, and hearings:
  - a. Mr. Mayor or Madam Mayor (FORMAL USAGE)
  - b. Mayor (SURNAME), (INFORMAL USAGE)
  - c. Mayor (INFORMAL USAGE)
  
- B. When addressing the Mayor in public, even friends who are on a first-name basis should use the appropriate title to demonstrate respect for the office and should use “Mayor” rather than gender-specific titles such as Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms.; or professional titles such as Dr.
  
- C. In self-introductions the Mayor should state simply, “I’m (FULL NAME), Mayor of Laredo,” rather than using language such as, “I’m Mayor (FULL NAME).”

#### **IV. Honorifics and Titles for Laredo City Council Members**

- A. Council Members may be addressed as follows:
  1. In introductions, either as:
    - a. The Honorable (FULL NAME), City Council Member, District X
    - b. Council Member (FULL NAME)
  
  2. At meetings, forums, and hearings:
    - a. Mr. Council Member or Madam Council Member (FORMAL USAGE)
    - b. Council Member (SURNAME), (INFORMAL USAGE)
    - c. Council Member (INFORMAL USAGE)

- B. When addressing Council Members in public, even friends on a first-name basis should use their appropriate titles and should use “Council Member” rather than Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms.
- C. In self-introductions Council Members should state simply, “I’m (FULL NAME), Laredo City Council Member,” rather than using language such as, “I’m Council Member (FULL NAME).”

**V. Use of Honorifics and Titles in Public**

- A. When addressing each other and participants at public functions, elected officials should reflect the same level of formality and respect that they expect directed to them.
  - 1. By using titles and surnames to refer to each other and to participants, they set the tone and level of formality not only for participants, but also for observers.
  - 2. They should not refer to each other by first names or by surnames preceded by “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” “Miss,” or “Ms.” instead of by titles.
    - a. Example of proper usage: Council Member (SURNAME)
    - b. Example of improper usage: Mr. (SURNAME)
- B. When addressing elected officials orally at meetings, hearings, forums, or similar activities, participants should use their titles and names, but not “The Honorable.”
  - 1. Examples of *correct* usage:
    - a. “Good afternoon, Madam Mayor and Council Members....”
    - b. “Good morning, Mayor (SURNAME) and Council Members....”
    - c. “Yes, sir.” or “Yes, Ma’am.”

2. Examples of *incorrect* usage:
  - a. “Good afternoon, Honorable Mayor and Council Members....”
  - b. “Good morning, Honorable Mayor (SURNAME) and Council Members....”
  - c. “Good evening, Mrs. (SURNAME), Mr. (SURNAME), Miss (SURNAME) and Ms. (SURNAME).
  - d. “Yes, Madam.” or “No, Mister.”

## **VI. Gender-Free Language**

- A. When addressing elected officials, appointed officials, staff members, or participants at City-sponsored events or referring to them in writing, gender-free language should be used.
  1. “Lady” should not be used before a title, such as in “Lady Mayor” or “Lady Council Member.”
  2. Gender-free titles should be used, such as Mayor, Council Member, firefighter, police officer.
  3. Women should not be referred to by their first names while men of similar elected or professional status are referred to by their titles and surnames.
- B. Generally, men and women should be treated with equal respect and professionalism, including using gender-free language and avoiding sexist nonverbal behaviors such as winking at women.

## **VII. Respectful Language**

- A. Instead of using an illness or condition to describe a person, refer to the person who has that illness or condition.
  1. Example: Say “persons with diabetes,” not “the diabetics.”

2. Example: Say “persons who are blind or visually impaired,” not “blind persons.”
  3. Example: Say “persons who are deaf,” “persons with hearing disabilities,” or “persons who are hearing impaired,” rather than “deaf persons” or “the deaf.”
  4. Example: Say “persons with mental illnesses,” not “the mentally ill.”
  5. Example: Say “persons with physical disabilities,” not “the handicapped” or “the disabled.”
- B. Use “intellectual disabilities” instead of the “R” word. (The Texas Legislature passed a bill to eliminate “retarded” and “mental retardation” from Texas statutes and to substitute “respectful language” such as “persons with intellectual disabilities.”)
- C. Avoid humor and sarcasm at the expense of specific groups.
1. Example: Saying “I had an Alzheimer’s moment.” is disrespectful and not funny to anyone whose loved one suffers from it.
  2. Example: Comments such as “He’s a nut!”, “She’ crazy!” and “Don’t be r\*\*\*\*\*d!” can be hurtful to persons with mental and intellectual disabilities—and their loved ones.
  3. Example: Using terms such as “old people,” especially in the presence of older persons, is insensitive.

### **VIII. Honorifics and Titles for Religious Leaders**

- A. Religious leaders do not use “The Honorable” with their names and titles.
- B. Preferred honorifics for numerous organized religions are listed in many protocol, etiquette, and business communication books, as well as in books about the rich variety of organized religions. (Magida, Matlines)

1. Some Roman Catholic officials use “His Excellency” before their titles and names.
2. The City’s designated representative should ensure correct usage of titles such as “Brother,” “Father,” “Monsignor,” “Pastor,” “Rabbi,” “Reverend,” “Mother,” “Sister,” etc.
3. A Catholic bishop is referred to as “The Most Reverend.”

## **IX. Correct Usage in Correspondence**

- A. When addressing business and social correspondence for elected officials, “The Honorable” should be spelled-out rather than abbreviated (The Hon.), and it always should be placed on a line by itself.
- B. The official’s full name should be on a second line, the title should be on the second or third line, and the spouse’s full name should be placed on the next line, indented.

1. Examples of correct usage:

- a. The Honorable  
(FULL NAME), (TITLE)  
and Mr. (SURNAME)  
(ADDRESS)
- b. The Honorable  
(FULL NAME)  
(TITLE)  
and Mrs. (SURNAME)  
(ADDRESS)

2. Examples of incorrect usage:

- a. The Hon. and Mrs. (FULL NAME)  
(TITLE)  
(ADDRESS)

- b. The Honorable (TITLE) (FIRST NAME) and Mrs.  
(SURNAME)  
(ADDRESS)

## V. Order of Precedence for City-Sponsored Events

The City of Laredo sponsors countless meetings, ceremonies, and activities throughout the year. Questions ranging from the order of introductions to the content of the program typically are raised and too often are answered with conflicting information. To enhance efficiency in planning and to promote decorum, the guidelines below define the Order of Precedence for typical programs at City-sponsored events, while the next section focuses on the program content, with a special sub-section for program participants, including the Master of Ceremonies. The narrative is presented in a script format that is adaptable for the occasion, persons, and purposes at hand.

This section applies to the protocol for City-sponsored events, which will differ from the protocol described in other sections for events sponsored by other governmental bodies or a multitude of organizations. The key to remember is that *hosts and honorees may be introduced first, along with appropriate elected officials whose positions are related to the event*, followed by honor guests in the Protocol Order of Precedence, beginning with the Mayor.

### I. City of Laredo Hosts

- A. At City-sponsored ceremonies such as ribbon-cuttings and groundbreaking, the Mayor and City Council Members may be introduced as hosts before observing the traditional Protocol Order of Precedence.
  - 1. It is difficult to justify, for example, introducing legislators before City officials at City ceremonies.
  - 2. If officials who were elected *statewide*, particularly the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or U.S. Senator, are present, however, it is wise to introduce them in protocol order, before City officials (other than the Mayor).
- B. Introduce the Mayor and Council Members quickly, with statements such as, “Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome our hosts for the City of Laredo,”
  - 1. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), Mayor of the City of Laredo.



2. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), Mayor Pro Tempore of the City of Laredo.
  3. “The City Council Member who represents District X in which we celebrate this (EVENT) today, the Honorable (FULL NAME).
  4. “In numerical order by their respective districts, other Laredo City Council Members:
    - a. “The Honorable (NAME), District X.
    - b. (CONTINUE INTRODUCING CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS BY HONORIFIC, FULL NAME, AND DISTRICT NUMBER. ALWAYS MENTION THE NAME OF THE ELECTED BODY—SUCH AS “LAREDO CITY COUNCIL”—BEFORE INTRODUCING THE MEMBERS, ELIMINATING THE NEED TO REPEAT THE TITLE FOR EACH MEMBER.)
- C. The only other elected City official should be introduced with words such as, “The Municipal Court Judge for the City of Laredo, the Honorable (FULL NAME).”
- D. The traditional Protocol Order of Precedence then will be observed, beginning with the highest-ranking elected official present, typically a districtwide elected official.

## **II. District Elected Officials**

- A. Typically the highest-ranking officials present at City-sponsored events, district-level elected officials would be introduced after the Mayor of Laredo or, preferably, after the City of Laredo hosts.
- B. District elected officials could be introduced using language such as the following: “We also are honored to be joined today by members of the United State Congress and Texas Legislature,

1. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), United States Representative, District 23, which includes Laredo.
2. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), State Senator, District 21, which includes Laredo.
3. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), State Representative, District 42, which includes part of Laredo. (IF IN DISTRICT 80, REVERSE ORDER OF INTRODUCTIONS FOR TWO REPRESENTATIVES.)
4. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), State Representative, District 80, which includes part of Laredo.”

### **III. Webb County Officials**

- A. County elected officials then will be introduced in the following order: “Representing the County of Webb,
  1. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), Webb County Judge.
  2. “In seniority order, the District Judges of Webb County,
    - a. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), X District Court.”
    - b. (CONTINUE INTRODUCING JUDGES FROM THE DISTRICT COURTS.)
  3. “In seniority order, the Judges of Webb County’s Courts-at-Law,
    - a. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), County Court at Law X.
    - b. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), County Court-at-Law X.”
  4. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), District Attorney for Webb and Zapata Counties.

5. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), County Attorney.
  6. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), District Clerk.
  7. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), County Clerk.
  8. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), County Treasurer.
  9. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), County Assessor- Collector.
  10. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), Sheriff.
  11. “In seniority order, the Members of the Webb County Commissioners Court,
    - a. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), District X.”
    - b. (CONTINUE INTRODUCING COMMISSIONERS.)
  12. “The Webb County Justices of the Peace,
    - a. “The Honorable (NAME), Precinct X.”
    - b. (CONTINUE INTRODUCING JUSTICES OF THE PEACE.)
  13. “The Webb County Constables,
    - a. “The Honorable (NAME), Precinct X.”
    - b. (CONTINUE INTRODUCING CONSTABLES)
- B. If the Webb County Judge and Commissioners Court adopt a protocol order for County officials, the City of Laredo will honor it instead.

## **V. Members, Elected Boards of Education**

- A. Elected officials who serve on elected boards of education then will be introduced with statements such as the following: “Honoring us with their presence are members of:
  - B. “The Board of Trustees of Laredo Community College.
    - 1. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), President of the Board.
    - 2. “And Members,
      - a. “The Honorable (FULL NAME).”
      - b. (CONTINUE INTRODUCING LCC TRUSTEES.)
  - C. “From the Board of Trustees of the Laredo Independent School District,
    - 1. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), President of the Board.
    - 2. “And Members,
      - a. “The Honorable (FULL NAME).”
      - b. (CONTINUE INTRODUCING LISD TRUSTEES.)
  - D. “From the Board of Trustees of the United Independent School District,
    - 1. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), President of the Board.
    - 2. “And Members,
      - a. “The Honorable (FULL NAME).”
      - b. (CONTINUE INTRODUCING UISD TRUSTEES.)
  - E. “From the Board of Trustees of the Webb County Consolidated School District,

1. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), President of the Board.
  2. “And Members....” (FOLLOW FORMAT FOR LISD, UISD.)
- F. “From the Board of Directors of St. Augustine High School,
1. “The Honorable (FULL NAME), President of the Board.
  2. “And Members....” (FOLLOW FORMAT FOR LISD, UISD.)

## **VI. Appointed Officials**

- A. After elected officials are introduced, it is appropriate to introduce appointed officials from the federal, state, county, and city levels.
- B. If federal or state officials are high-ranking and play an important role in the ceremony, they may be moved higher in the Protocol Order of Precedence, but always after the elected officials from the same level of government.
- C. State appointed officials may be introduced with language such as,
  1. “A Laredoan who serves on the Higher Education Coordinating Board, (FULL NAME).
  2. “A Laredoan who serves on the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System, (FULL NAME).”
  3. (CONTINUE INTRODUCING APPOINTEES AND STAFF.)
- D. It is appropriate to introduce City staff members listed in the Protocol Order of Precedence adopted by the Mayor and City Council and those whose work made the ceremony at hand possible.
- E. City staff members may be introduced in the following order with language such as, “The staff of the City of Laredo is largely responsible for our success, especially,

1. “City Manager (FULL NAME).
2. “Deputy City Manager (FULL NAME).
3. “Assistant City Manager (FULL NAME).
4. “City Secretary (FULL NAME).
5. “City Attorney (FULL NAME).
6. “City Finance Director (FULL NAME).
7. “Chief of Police (FULL NAME).
8. “Fire Chief (FULL NAME).
9. “Library Director (FULL NAME).
10. “City Engineer (FULL NAME).”
11. (CONTINUE INTRODUCING APPOINTEES AND STAFF DESIGNATED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL, THOUGH PLACING THEM IN APPROPRIATE ORDER.)

## **VII. Members, City Boards and Commissions**

- A. Members of City Boards and Commissions may be introduced, especially if their duties are related directly to the ceremony at hand.
  1. The Library Advisory Board, for example, could be introduced at the opening of the Laredo Public Library, but not necessarily at a groundbreaking or ribbon cutting for a water plant.
  2. When Board or Commission members are introduced because their duties are related to the ceremony at hand, they should be introduced after Council Members.
- B. The Chairs of Boards or Commissions should be introduced first, and then their respective members in seniority order.

## **VIII. Community Leaders**

- A. When appropriate, introduce community leaders such as the following:
1. The Chair of the Board of Directors of the Laredo Chamber of Commerce, (FULL NAME).
  2. The President of the Laredo Chamber of Commerce, (FULL NAME).
  3. The President of Texas A&M International University, (FULL NAME).
  4. The President of Laredo Community College, (FULL NAME).
  5. The Superintendent of Laredo Independent School District, (FULL NAME).
  6. The Superintendent of United Independent School District, (FULL NAME).
  7. The Superintendent of the Webb County Consolidated School District, (FULL NAME).
  8. The Principal of St. Augustine High School, (FULL NAME).
- B. (THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL MAY ADD OTHERS TO THE LIST OF COMMUNITY LEADERS TO BE INTRODUCED, MAKING DECISIONS BASED ON THE OCCASION AT HAND, NUMBER OF COMMUNITY LEADERS PRESENT, TIME AVAILABLE, AND CONDITIONS SUCH AS WEATHER AND SEATING ARRANGEMENTS.)

## **IX. Project Participants**

- A. It is appropriate to introduce architects, artists, contractors, designers, engineers, and others who played major roles in developing the project related to the ceremony at hand.

- B. Their attendance and correct names, pronunciations, and titles should be confirmed in advance to avoid offending participants.



## **VI. Programs for City-Sponsored Events**

Programs sponsored by the City of Laredo reflect different purposes and participants, but typically require similar elements and participatory roles. Related to the preceding section, “Order of Precedence at City-Sponsored Events,” this section offers an overview of typical program content and participants. Presented in a format that can be adapted easily for varied events, it includes standard pre-program announcements; describes the responsibilities of speakers and presenters; identifies courtesies that should be extended to principals such as the keynote speaker; offers specific precautions that preclude common minor but embarrassing problems; and reviews the importance of decorum, including for City of Laredo personnel who are present but are not program participants. It also highlights the role and responsibilities of the Master of Ceremonies, for his or her performance is critical to any program’s success and enjoyment.

Organizers and planners who adapt this format should consider variables such as the weather and seating arrangements in determining the ideal program length and time limits for speakers and presenters. If the audience is standing outdoors in inclement weather, for example, the program should be brief and time limits implemented.

### **I. Pre-Program Announcements**

- A. At least five, then two, minutes before the program begins, an unseen announcer should announce from afar the starting time with language such as,
  - 1. “Ladies and gentlemen, the program will begin in five minutes. Please be seated.” (DO NOT SAY, “TAKE YOUR SEATS.”)
  - 2. Three minutes later the unseen announcer should state from afar, “Ladies and gentlemen, the program will begin in two minutes. Please be seated.”
  
- B. When the Master of Ceremonies is ready to begin, the unseen announcer should state from afar, “Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome your Master of Ceremonies, (FULL NAME AND TITLE).”

1. If this is handled properly, the Master of Ceremonies will not have to waste time trying to get the audience’s attention or start on a negative note. Too many inexperienced Masters of Ceremonies get frustrated by the difficulty of getting an audience’s attention and resort to rudeness, inappropriate language—or even cowbells!
2. When introduced in this style, the Master of Ceremonies will not have to begin with a self-introduction.
3. “Master of Ceremonies” should be used for men and for women, rather than using “Mistress of Ceremonies” for women.

## **II. Program Format**

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| I. Call to Order   | (MASTER OF CEREMONIES)              |
| II. Invocation   | (RELIGIOUS REPRESENTATIVE)          |
| III. Presentation of Colors,<br>National Anthem<br>and/or Pledge of Allegiance     | (CITY’S DESIGNEES)                  |
| IV. Welcome and Opening Remarks  | Mayor, City of Laredo (OR DESIGNEE) |
| V. Introduction of Honor Guests  | (MASTER OF CEREMONIES)              |
| VI. Speeches and Presentations   | (GUEST SPEAKERS)                    |
| VII. Special Activities<br>(RIBBON-CUTTING,<br>GROUNDBREAKING,<br>UNVEILING, ETC.) | (CITY’S DESIGNEES)                  |
| VIII. Concluding Remarks   | (MASTER OF CEREMONIES)              |

### **III. Program Participants**

#### **A. Master of Ceremonies**

1. Likely candidates to be Master of Ceremonies or to make presentations at City-sponsored events include the following elected officials in the designated order:
  - a. Mayor, City of Laredo
  - b. Mayor Pro Tempore, City of Laredo
  - c. City Council Member in whose district the event is held
  - d. City Council Member most involved in the project, type of activity, issue, and/or celebration at hand
  - e. City Council Member (SELECTED IN SENIORITY ORDER)
2. If a City staff member is to serve as Master of Ceremonies, candidates should be considered in the following order:
  - a. City Manager
  - b. City staff member most involved in the project, type of activity, issue, and/or celebration at hand.
3. Selecting a good Master of Ceremonies is critical to success, especially because he or she must do the following:
  - a. Begin, develop, and end the program efficiently, effectively, and appropriately while reflecting a professional demeanor as the City's representative.
  - b. Understand and accept the responsibility to begin the program timely, ensure smooth transitions between speeches and activities, direct the audience to any secondary locations for special activities such as ribbon-cuttings, and conclude the program.

- c. Avoid improper actions such as delivering a series of speeches throughout the program, providing information that should be articulated by other program participants, and/or offering an egocentric perspective of the program and its participants. (Zaffirini, 22)
  - d. Work within a time frame for the program and ensure that all program participants understand their purposes and time limits, especially for outdoor ceremonies in inclement weather.
4. The City Manager or his or her designee shall ensure that the script and materials for City-sponsored events are consistent with the *City of Laredo Protocol Handbook* and with the *Priority Procedures for the Laredo Mayor and City Council*.
- a. Elected and appointed officials shall be introduced in protocol order, with the Mayor and Council Members introduced first.
  - b. The City Manager shall ensure that a current protocol list is developed and provided for the Master of Ceremonies at City-sponsored events.

**B. Program Participants**

- 1. Program participants must understand their designated purposes and time limits and must be ready to adapt to unforeseen circumstances such as cancellations.
- 2. Those invited “to say a few words” should not upstage principal participants.
  - a. They should secure approval for presentation of gifts, plaques, etc., so as to avoid violating ethics codes and/or upstaging principal participants.
  - b. They should not risk offending hosts or honorees with unexpected, perhaps unwelcomed, presentations or announcements.

2. Participants must be prepared to shorten their presentations in case of bad weather, unexpectedly long program, etc.

C. Introducers of Speakers:

1. Should honor time limits (1-3 minutes; 3-5 minutes for keynote speaker or honoree)
2. Should not oversell speaker's ability or over promise presentation—even for acclaimed persons.
3. Should not dwell on self.
3. Should not read a boring profile.
4. Should develop an interesting introduction that is appropriate for the occasion and audience at hand while reinforcing the suitability of the selected speaker.

D. Keynote Speakers

1. Many keynote speakers prefer to speak first, but they should be given the opportunity to decide whether to speak first or last.
  - a. Their speaking first precludes their having to reorganize their speeches quickly after another speaker uses their content. (It would be even worse to repeat the content.)
  - b. Their speaking first also precludes their addressing an audience that is bored and tired from listening to too many speakers for too long.
  - c. Allowing the keynote speaker to speak last enables him or her, if capable, to build upon the successes and themes of other speakers.
2. No one should be allowed to upstage the keynote speaker or honoree.

## E. Precautions

1. The program format and length should be developed in cooperation with visiting dignitaries and key program participants to preclude offending them with unexpected delays and to honor their preferences.
  - a. To avoid offending or disappointing the audience by announcing that visiting dignitaries have to “speak and leave,” secure time commitments from them in advance—with estimated arrival and departure times.
  - b. When program participants are from out-of-town, consider their travel schedules when planning the time and length of the program.
  - c. Always have “Plan B” ready in case principals are late or fail to honor their commitments.
2. Every speech should be given a time limit. This is important.
3. Guests designated to perform special activities such as cut ribbons or break ground must be informed in advance to ensure their presence and preparedness.
4. Too many speeches and too long a program often doom celebrations, so every effort must be made to ensure that all participants cooperate, fulfill their duties, and do not upstage the keynote speaker, honoree, or other luminaries.

## F. Decorum

1. The Mayor, master of ceremonies, and keynote speaker establish the proper decorum by setting the tone and level of formality.
2. Program participants should use honorifics and titles rather than first names:

- a. Example: “The Honorable (FULL NAME), (TITLE)” on first reference.
  - b. Example: “(TITLE + SURNAME)” in future references.
3. City personnel should consider themselves “on duty,” even if they have no designated responsibilities.
4. They should motivate others to listen to speakers and to participate in activities.
5. They should volunteer to fill any leadership or performance vacuums.
5. They should be alert to potential problems and assume “troubleshooting” responsibilities as necessary in the name of good customer service for constituents.
6. Their behavior and appearance should be appropriate and reflect favorably on the City of Laredo.
7. Designated personnel must be responsible not only for the program and all of its related activities, but also for ensuring that facilities ranging from the restrooms to vending machines and pay telephones are operational.

## VII. Decorum for City-Sponsored Meetings

*“Where there is no law, but every man does what is right in his own eyes, there is the least of real liberty.”* Henry M. Robert, author, *Robert’s Rules of Order*, 1876.

The City of Laredo is proud of its reputation for friendliness and hospitality. Committed to ensuring a professional and courteous environment in which to conduct the public’s business, the Laredo Mayor and City Council prioritize observing the following principles of decorum and of parliamentary procedure at City-sponsored meetings and events.

### I. Principles of Meeting Decorum

- A. Consistent with commitment to excellence in customer service, the basic principles of protocol, decorum, and parliamentary procedure (Robert) shall be reflected by City elected and appointed officials and by City staff at all times, especially during City-sponsored meetings, hearings, events, and other activities:
  - 1. Extend courtesy and justice to everyone.
  - 2. Consider one subject or issue at a time.
  - 3. Respect and consider the rights of the majority; of the minority, especially of a strong minority greater than one-third; of individual members; of absentees; and of all of these cumulatively.
  - 4. Ensure that the minority is heard, although the majority is likely to prevail.
- B. The Presiding Officer shall be responsible for strict adherence to protocol and proper decorum at all times by all participants.
  - 1. All participants must conduct themselves in compliance with all relevant statutory requirements, parliamentary rules, and relevant policies and procedures.



2. Debate, discussion, and presentations shall reflect respect for all participants and the appropriate level of formality.
- C. Members should employ business etiquette at all times.  
(Zaffirini, 16)
1. While social etiquette practices typically are based on criteria such as gender, business etiquette is based on stature, position, and status, particularly in the government and business arenas.
  2. Easily adapted to different work sites, business etiquette relies not only on gender neutrality, but also on common sense, efficiency, kindness, and logic.
    - a. Example: In a social setting, the only woman in a group would be seated first, while in a government or business setting, the highest-ranking member would be.
    - b. Example: In a social setting the only woman in a group to be photographed likely would be placed in the middle, while in a government or business setting, the highest-ranking member would be.
  3. Attire, appearance, and behavior should be appropriate for business environments.
    - a. Major *faux pas* include arriving late or leaving early, treating minorities or women differently, using offensive or disrespectful language, speaking or laughing too loudly, chewing gum, being inattentive, and getting distracted or being distracting.
    - b. Body language should reflect respect, attention, and professionalism at all times, including via appropriate eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and posture.

4. Workshops focusing on meeting skills, parliamentary procedure, and business etiquette can preclude problems.

## **II. Principles of Parliamentary Procedure**

- A. The parliamentary authority for the Mayor and Laredo City Council and their appointed Boards and Commissions shall be *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2011, by General Henry M. Robert, edited by Sarah Corbin Robert.
  1. Upon publication, the 12<sup>th</sup> edition of Robert's Rules automatically shall replace the 11<sup>th</sup> as the parliamentary authority for the Mayor and City Council. (It is expected in 2021.)
  2. Robert's Rules shall prevail for all matters not addressed in statutes; the Charter of the City of Laredo; ordinances; bylaws; or rules, policies or procedures adopted by the Laredo City Council, including this Protocol Handbook and/or the City of Laredo's Procedures Handbook.
  3. When the parliamentary authority is in conflict with legal authorities, the latter shall prevail.
- B. If bylaws, rules, policies, and/or procedures adopted by City of Laredo Commissions, Boards, and Committees are in conflict with those adopted by the Mayor and City Council, the latter prevail.
- C. The Presiding Officer and participants shall practice time-honored parliamentary principles, including the following:
  1. Debate, discussion, and related voting shall be limited to one subject at a time.
  2. The Presiding Officer shall alternate in assigning the floor to opposing viewpoints expressed by individuals or by groups.
  3. The Presiding Officer must call for the positive and the negative votes.

4. The Presiding Officer may ask if “there is objection” to a motion that is likely to be adopted by “unanimous consent.”
  - a. If there is no objection, the motion is reported adopted by unanimous consent, and all members present are recorded as voting affirmatively.
  - b. If there is objection, the motion shall be voted upon according to standard procedures.
5. A pending question may be divided into its parts for purposes of discussion, debate, and/or voting.
6. Debate and discussion shall focus on issues and merits, not on personalities.
  - a. Name-calling, insults, questions of motives, and other improper conduct or language shall be ruled out-of-order.
  - b. Participants must address the Presiding Officer or address each other through the Presiding Officer.
  - c. Debate shall be confined to the merits of the question pending.
7. The Presiding Officer shall assign the floor to the Council Member or other participant who shall have the exclusive right to be heard at that time.
  - a. Interruptions shall be ruled out of order.
  - b. No one may speak without being assigned the floor by the Presiding Officer, except for very specific, limited, timely purposes such as raising a parliamentary point of order, making a limited parliamentary inquiry, or asking for recognition from the Presiding Officer.

- c. No one should be assigned the floor to address a pending question for the second or subsequent time before another member who has not addressed the question.
- D. All participants must comply with the expectation of decorum and with the rules and procedures adopted for particular City-sponsored events, including witness registration and time limits.
- E. The Presiding Officer, elected and appointed officials, and representatives of the City of Laredo shall extend to all participants and presenters the same courtesy and respect that they expect.

### **III. Expertise in Protocol, Decorum**

- A. The Laredo Mayor and City Council may appoint a Chief or Director of Protocol, a Parliamentarian, a Sergeant-at-Arms, and/or other officials to assist and advise them.
  - 1. These designees shall have or develop expertise through proper study and training.
  - 2. At public meetings their advice shall be channeled via the Mayor or other Presiding Officer, unless asked to respond aloud.
- B. The City of Laredo should sponsor required training in protocol, decorum, parliamentary procedure, presiding and meeting skills, and customer service for its elected and appointed officials, including designated staff members.

## **VIII. Adoption and Amendment**

The *City of Laredo Protocol Handbook* reflects extensive research and consensus and is intended as a work in progress to be amended as necessary by each newly organized administration as soon as possible after the City of Laredo elections in even-numbered years. This section reflects procedures not only for adopting initial and revised editions, but also for amending and suspending them.

The first edition was written in 1998 by Judith Zaffirini, PhD, of Zaffirini Communications and was intended for initial use in 1999. It was discussed at four public workshops scheduled by the Ad Hoc Protocol Handbook Committee appointed by the Mayor. A second printing in 2000 incorporated technical changes.

Intended for 2001-2002, the second edition by Dr. Zaffirini was discussed at three public workshops scheduled by the Council Committee, including two in 2000 and at one in 2001.

The third edition was developed in 2014 and presented at a protocol workshop sponsored by BBVA Compass and attended by more than fifty Laredoans, including the Mayor, two Council Members, and the City Secretary. It was adopted unanimously on February 3, 2014.

This fourth edition was developed in 2016 after and adopted unanimously by the Laredo Mayor and City Council on February 21, 2017.

Voting requirements for adoption and amendment developed for the first edition are identified below. They apply to all revised editions.

### **I. Amendment**

- A. Prior to adoption, protocol policies and procedures may be amended by majority vote of the Council (minimum of five Council Members or four Council Members and the Mayor).
- B. After protocol policies and procedures are adopted, they may be amended by a minimum of six Council Members or five Council Members and the Mayor.

## **II. Adoption**

- A. Although the adopted Protocol Handbook may be amended at any time in accordance with procedures defined herein, it is intended to be reviewed for amendment before being considered anew for adoption by each newly organized administration as soon as possible after the City of Laredo election in even-numbered years.
- B. Sections and subsections may be approved independently by majority vote of the Council (minimum of five Council Members or four Council Members and the Mayor), or
- C. The entire document may be adopted by a minimum of six Council Members or five Council Members and the Mayor.

## **III. Suspension**

- A. Procedures adopted herein may be suspended for specific purposes and periods by a minimum of six Council Members or five Council Members and the Mayor.
- B. Motions to suspend must define the particular procedures to suspend and the specific purpose that will be served by suspension.
- C. Suspensions are neither encouraged nor expected, but are provided for as a precaution, should a justifiable and unforeseen need arise.

## **IV. Record of adoption**

- A. The *City of Laredo Protocol Handbook*, first edition, was adopted unanimously without amendments, but subject to technical corrections defined by the author, at the Laredo City Council Meeting of January 4, 1999, effective immediately.
- B. The second printing of the first edition in January, 2000, incorporated technical corrections.

- C. The second edition was adopted unanimously by the Laredo City Council on Tuesday, February 20, 2001, subject to technical and clarifying corrections defined by the author and consistent with the intent of the Laredo Mayor and City Council, and became effective immediately.
- D. The third edition was adopted unanimously by the Laredo City Council on Monday, February 3, 2014, with minor revisions.
- E. The fourth edition was adopted unanimously on February 21, 2017.

## Conclusion

Mastery of protocol certainly is a strong asset for anyone in public life. Elected and appointed officials and everyone who interacts with them and/or on their behalf may enjoy increased confidence and enhanced professionalism by reflecting proper protocol in the public arena and correct etiquette in social settings. Such knowledge and practices enrich proceedings and ensure the decorum that should be characteristic of leaders known for integrity and intelligence, professionalism and preparedness, and commitment and common sense. What's more, such expertise will strengthen relationships with the community in general and with businesspersons and constituents in particular. Indeed, doing business with the City of Laredo through its elected and appointed officials should be as enjoyable as it is productive.

Because the policies and guidelines defined herein were developed specifically for the City of Laredo, they are not intended as rigid rules for governmental bodies or organizations. They are presented as a flexible, contemporary, organizational tool to adapt according to the persons, purposes, and events at hand and to refine and redefine based on experience and feedback.

The *City of Laredo Protocol Handbook* affords opportunities for anyone interested in protocol to participate in developing this work in progress. It includes sections focusing on the Protocol Order of Preference (generalizations, master list, levels of government) and on protocol and decorum at City-sponsored events and meetings. Cumulatively, they are the foundation from which to develop subsequent editions. Everyone's participation in this important task is requested and welcomed. Feedback may be submitted to Dr. Judith Zaffirini, Zaffirini Communications, P. O. Box 627, Laredo, Texas 78042.

Courtesy, consideration, and common sense are contagious. Coupled with traditions and values, they are the essence of contemporary protocol. Laredoans who empower themselves by mastering the protocol defined herein for the public arena will help make Laredo better by obeying the Golden and Platinum Rules at all times:

Golden Rule: *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*

Platinum Rule: *Do unto others as they would like done unto them.*



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Director of Protocol  
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### **City of Laredo, Texas**

The Mayor and City Council may appoint a Chief or Director of Protocol or may designate a representative to be responsible for protocol for specific events or period.

## Appendix

### 12 Major Protocol Guidelines

Official protocol is as complex as it is challenging, but mastering the basics will simplify the planning process and preclude *faux pas*. Generally, learning the 12 Major Protocol Guidelines that follow will preclude raising the usual questions.

01. The host's internal protocol precedes the Governmental Order of Precedence.

- Introduce the host's VIPs first, *before* the Order of Precedence that begins with the hometown mayor.
  - Include board members, officers, and other internal dignitaries.
  - Include official hosts and sponsors, if any.
  - Include honorees or keynote speaker, if any.
- *If a governmental entity, begin by introducing elected officials at that level.*

02. Follow the Governmental Order of Precedence, beginning with the hometown mayor, after the host's internal protocol order for its own VIPs and elected officials.

- Group introductions to avoid repeating the name of an entity for each of its members.
- Introduce each person *once*, including all appropriate titles.
- Introduce districtwide elected officials in seniority order, but with the hometown official first.
- Honor the preference of Laredo City Council Members (2017) to be introduced (after the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore) in numerical order by district, rather than in seniority order.

03. You cannot outrank a mayor in his or her hometown.

04. Only immediate family members assume the rank of the represented official.

- They are introduced and seated at the official's rank.
- Other representatives are introduced at their own rank, *not* at the rank of the official whom they represent.
- Staff representatives are introduced after all elected officials.

05. Statewide elected officials outrank federal elected officials.

06. Elected officials outrank appointed officials.

07. Elected hometown officials outrank their colleagues and counterparts locally, even if the latter are senior to them.

08. Non-Texans and non-Laredoans assume the status of their local counterparts.

09. The Order of Precedence applies to introductions, order of presentation, seating, and parade assignments.

10. "The observer's left" is the place of honor for the American flag and honorees.

11. "The Honorable" precedes a name, not a title, and is limited to elected officials, members of the U.S. Cabinet, and the Texas Secretary of State.

12. The invocation precedes the posting of the colors, National Anthem, and Pledge of Allegiance.

Above all, remember: Introducing elected and appointed officials appropriately builds goodwill.



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The City of Laredo's *Protocol Handbook* is available online and for review at the Laredo Public Library and at the City Secretary's Office at City Hall. It lists the city's adopted Order of Precedence for Texas elected and appointed officials, with a focus on those who visit Laredo regularly and participate in events such as our Washington's Birthday Celebration.

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