

The Jackie Foote Award of Excellence in Congressional Debate

This award has been established by the Tarheel Forensic League to honor the congressional competitor who best exemplifies what Congressional Debate stands for. The winner should be a “good person speaking well.” Any student who competes in Congressional Debate Finals at the TFL State Championship Tournament is eligible. The following are the qualities that must be exhibited in the recipient:

Above all else, the winner should demonstrate the highest ideals of character. They should not necessarily be the most popular competitor or the most successful, but must be held in the highest esteem of their fellow congresspersons. The award winner should be known for honesty in speech writing, procedural fairness, and ethical behavior both in debate and in his or her daily life. This honoree should be a suitable example for all students and coaches in North Carolina as a model citizen.

Congress is unique among all the events in that competitors can actively work to help or hurt their teammates through their actions in chamber. The winner should demonstrate leadership among their team. This individual should understand the dynamics of in-chamber strategy and be able to effectively keep team members voting as a single unit on procedural issues to maximize their effectiveness. An ability to negotiate conflicting interests among team members or various participants in a chamber is desirable in the honoree.

The winner should demonstrate a genuine desire to teach novices and a concern for the forensics community at-large. The student who embodies the qualities honored by this award freely shares their experiences and encouragement with any fellow competitor and behaves in a manner that welcomes new teams and students to competition.

As was the award’s namesake during her career, the student honored with this award should be exceptionally devoted to Congressional Debate. That is not to say that the award winner should be the student who has attended the most tournaments during their career, but rather that the award winner should be an individual who has made Congress their primary event and who has a substantial record demonstrating all of the above qualities.

This award is not a popularity contest. The winner should be carefully evaluated by each person casting a vote for each of the qualities named above. The Award of Excellence in Congressional Debate represents TFL’s highest honor for a student legislator and only those with the utmost integrity and ethics should be considered.

The award is modeled after and the equivalent of the Congressional Leadership Bowls offered at tournaments such as Harvard and the NSDA National Championship.

Selection Process:

1. ***The Jackie Foote Award of Excellence in Congressional Debate*** shall be chosen by students who compete in the TFL Congressional Debate Finals.
2. At the beginning of Congress finals, the TFL Chair and/or TFL Clerk of Congress will address the chamber briefly to explain the award, the seriousness of the award and the qualifications an honoree must possess. A handout with the criteria for selection shall be given to each competitor. **It needs to be strongly emphasized that this is NOT a popularity contest.** Students should think about who demonstrates true leadership and meets the other requirements of the award, especially as demonstrated at the TFL State Tournament.
3. At the end of the session, all students will receive a preferential ballot with the names of all finalists. Each competitor will preferentially rank only their top eight choices for the award. The Clerk of Congress will administratively assign a "9" to any student not ranked in the top eight of each ballot. Tabulation will use the same process and rules as the tabulation of judge scores, including the tiebreaking procedure.
4. There will be no speeches given in support of any student. All competitors will immediately begin the secret ballot voting process without discussion at the conclusion of the finals session. The room should remain silent until all ballots have been collected.
5. Under no circumstances will the winner or any candidate being eliminated during the voting process be announced or disclosed until the awards ceremony. The TFL Chair and/or Clerk of Congress will guarantee the secrecy of the honor until the awards ceremony.