



## *Colonial Williamsburg*

# **Revolutionary Rhetoric Congress 2025: Competitor Strategy Guide**

## **Understanding the Unique Format**

This is not your typical Congress tournament. Revolutionary Rhetoric's Congress event is one where every action matters, from the quality of your written legislation to your voting record to your party loyalty. Success in this event requires balancing multiple competing interests: personal achievement, party success, bipartisan cooperation, and legislative productivity.

## **Pre-Tournament Preparation**

### **Writing Your Legislation (25% of Your Final Score)**

Your bill will be judged before you ever set foot in committee. Two judges will independently score it on a 0-25 scale, then average the scores. This means quality matters from the start.

#### **Strategic considerations:**

- You will be assigned to either the Loyalist or Patriot party after legislation is submitted, but before the tournament starts. If your bill conflicts with your party assignment, you can submit an author's amendment in the nature of a substitute under Rule 9.18. This is also discussed in the quick start guide.
- Write legislation that has clear arguments on both sides. Bills that are too one-sided may struggle to generate debate or pass.

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## Understanding Party Dynamics

Loyalists defend the Crown, support British authority, and lean conservative on social/economic issues. Patriots oppose Crown overreach, want colonial autonomy, and lean liberal on social/economic issues. Neither party seeks full independence (that is prohibited).

Your party assignment impacts:

- How you should argue your bill (you may need that author's amendment to keep your bill aligned with your party)
- Which bills you will naturally support or oppose
- Potential scoring bonuses if your party outperforms the other

## Committee Strategy (25% of Your Final Score)

### Your Core Objectives

1. Deliver your authorship speech (counts as 2 speeches)
2. Give at least one additional speech on another bill in your own committee
3. Help pass at least 3 bills (avoid the gridlock penalty)
4. Maximize your party's bill passage (potential +10 point bonus)
5. Show procedural competence (motions, amendments, engagement)

### The Partisan Paradox

Here is the central tension of this event: You want YOUR bills to pass for personal bonuses, and you want more of YOUR PARTY's bills to pass than the opposition's bills to earn party bonuses. But committees are evenly split 50/50 by party, meaning no bill passes without bipartisan support or someone crossing party lines. If not enough bills pass, you get penalized for gridlock.

#### Possible Navigation strategies:

- Build relationships across the aisle early
- Look for bills you can genuinely support from the other party
- Propose "friendly" amendments that make opposition bills more palatable
- Do not be the obstructionist who creates gridlock—everyone loses

### Beware Gridlock

If your committee passes fewer than 3 bills, everyone gets a 50% penalty on their committee scores. This hurts. Even if you gave brilliant speeches, you will lose half your committee score.

#### Risk mitigation:

- Track bill count throughout the session

- If you are approaching the end with fewer than 3 passed, consider voting for bills you would normally oppose
- Use recesses to caucus and negotiate deals: "We will support your infrastructure bill if you support our militia bill."

## **Amendment Tactics**

Amendments are powerful tools:

- Strategic amendments can fix problematic bills or make them passable
- Successful amendment sponsors get +2 points if the amended bill passes in committee (or +1 if it fails but was amended)
- Author amendments let you respond to criticism without waiting for others

But remember: Bills that pass with non-sponsor amendments get fewer points than bills that pass unchanged. If you are the author, you might oppose amendments to maximize your score, unless the amendments are necessary to get the bill passed at all.

## **Time Management**

Each bill gets only 15 minutes total. This includes a 3-minute authorship speech, 2 minutes of questions, all other speeches (2 minutes each), amendments (1 minute each), and debate.

### **Efficiency tips:**

- Keep questions crisp and pointed
- Do not grandstand during an amendment debate
- If you support a bill, call the previous question once you have the votes

## **Chamber Strategy (50% of Your Final Score)**

The preliminary chamber (and potentially final chamber) follows similar rules but with doubled time (30 minutes per bill), doubled bonuses (+20 for party success), and a higher passage threshold (4 bills minimum to avoid gridlock).

## **Speech Requirements**

**If your bill is docketed** (made it through committee to the floor):

- 1 authorship speech (1-50 points, counted as 2 speeches)
- 1 additional speech on another bill (1-25 points)

**If your bill is NOT docketed:**

- 3 speeches on other bills (1-25 points each)

Your top speeches count. Additional speeches beyond the minimum might be dropped if they score lower.

## **The First Negation Speech**

After the authorship speech in the chamber (not in committee), there is a designated "first negation speech" from the opposing party. This speaker also gets up to 3 minutes plus 2 minutes of questions.

### **If you are selected for the first negation:**

- It is counted and scored like a regular speech (not special like authorship)
- But you get the extended time and question period
- It is high-visibility, which can impact the Speaker's ballot, so prepare well

Strategic note: The Speaker tries to alternate pro/con speeches. If one side runs out of speakers, the other can continue. Unlike some tournaments, there's no "frowning upon one-sided debate"—if everyone supports a bill, that's fine.

## **Docket Management**

Only 8 bills maximum reach the chamber floor. If more than 8 pass committee, the Speaker's Office cuts the lowest-scoring bills, trying to balance party legislation at 4-4 when possible.

### **What this means:**

- High-quality legislation scores help your bill survive cuts
- If your party passes 6 bills through committee, but the other party passes only 3, some of yours will be cut
- Your bill could die despite passing the committee, although you will get some bonus points

## **The Four-Bill Threshold to Avoid Gridlock**

Just like in committee, if the chamber passes fewer than 4 bills total across both sessions, everyone gets a 50% penalty. This is devastating to half your total score.

### **Late-session strategy:**

- If you are near adjournment with only 2 bills passed, GET BIPARTISAN
- A passed opposition bill may be better than gridlock, even if it hurts the party's score

## **Voting Records Matter**

Your votes are public (roll call). The Speaker. Who is scoring your overall participation considers:

- Are you furthering your party's goals?
- Are you making good-faith efforts at compromise?
- Are you furthering your personal legislative goals?

### **The balancing act:**

- Too partisan = gridlock = penalties for everyone
- Too bipartisan = your party might lose the party bonus
- Too focused on your own bills = looks self-interested

## **Advanced Tactical Considerations**

### **Motion Strategy**

Motions are tools, not weapons. Use them purposefully:

**Motion to recess (5 minutes):** Call this when your party needs to caucus and coordinate strategy. Limited to 2× per session, so use wisely.

**Motion to call the previous question:** Use when you have the votes and want to prevent further debate that might change minds. Requires a 2/3 majority, so it needs broad support. Do not call it prematurely. It might make you look procedurally aggressive, which may be a negative on the Speaker's ballot.

**Motion to reconsider:** This is a powerful tool if someone stepped out during a vote or if you can flip one vote. Only a member who voted on the prevailing side can make this motion, so if you support a bill that's about to fail but think someone missing from the chamber can change the outcome or that a member may be willing to switch their vote later, consider voting "nay" to preserve reconsideration rights.

**Motion to table:** Use sparingly. Tabled bills can be revived, but they often die. Tabling uses up time and looks obstructionist.

### **Amendment Warfare**

Amendments can kill bills, improve them, or create compromise:

**"Poison pill" amendments:** Add something the other party can not support, killing the bill.

**"Sweetener" amendments:** Add something the other party wants, building a coalition.

**Technical amendments:** Fix genuine problems. It makes you look competent and constructive.

**Germaneness matters:** The Chair can rule amendments out of order if they're not relevant to the bill. Do not waste time on amendments that will be ruled out.

## Questions as Strategy

The questioning periods after authorship (and first negation in the chamber) are not just information-gathering:

**Expose weaknesses:** Ask questions that reveal problems with the bill if you oppose it or plan to amend it. But do not be hostile, as that reflects poorly on you.

**Clarify for allies:** Ask questions that let the author reinforce their strongest points. This helps the bill if you support it.

**Build your case:** Ask questions that set up your own speech. "How will you fund this?" followed by your speech about funding problems.

**Extension motions:** You can move to extend question time by 2 minutes once per authorship/first negation speech. Use this when questions are productive or when you want to eat into the bill's time limit.

## The Closing Speech Gambit

Bill sponsors can give an optional, unscored closing speech using any remaining time on their bill's clock. This is powerful when:

- There's time left, and you want to rebut opposition
- You want to make a final appeal before voting
- You need to clarify confusion or respond to amendments

But skip it when:

- Time is nearly expired anyway
- The vote is already decided
- You'd rather save time for potential reconsideration

# Scoring Maximization

## Your Score Components

Let's break down a hypothetical score to see what matters most:

### Legislation (25%):

- Base score: 20/25 (averaged from two judges)
- Committee modifier: +4 (passed with amendments)
- Preliminary chamber modifier: +8 (passed with amendments)
- Final chamber modifier: +16 (passed with amendments)

- **Total: 48 points**

#### **Committee (25%):**

- Chair's ballot: 80/100 (35% weight = 28 points)
- Speech scores: Average of 22/25 for authorship (counted as 2) and 20/25 for additional speech = 21.3 averaged (65% weight = 13.8 points)
- Party bonus: +10 (your party passed 4 bills vs. their 2)
- No gridlock penalty (passed 6 bills total)
- **Total: 51.8 points**

#### **Preliminary Chamber (50%):**

- Speaker's ballot: 85/100 (35% weight = 29.75 points)
- Speech scores: 45/50 for authorship (counted as 2) + 23/25 additional = 34 averaged (65% weight = 22.1 points)
- Party bonus: +20 (your party passed 3 bills vs. their 1)
- No gridlock penalty (passed 8 bills total)
- **Total: 71.85 points**

#### **Final Chamber (50%):**

- Speaker's ballot: 75/100 (35% weight = 26.25 points)
- Speech scores: 45/50 for authorship (counted as 2) + 23/25 additional = 34 averaged (65% weight = 22.1 points)
- Party bonus: +20 (your party passed 3 bills vs. their 2)
- No gridlock penalty (passed 8 bills total)
- **Total: 68.35 points**

**Overall total: 240 points**

### **What Actually Moves the Needle**

#### **High-impact factors:**

1. **Chamber speeches** (32.5% of total score) - Your chamber performance is everything
2. **Party bonuses** (up to 30 points) - Being on the winning party is huge
3. **Avoiding gridlock** (prevents 50% penalties) - This is defensive but critical
4. **Chair/Speaker ballots** (30% of total) - Overall participation and effectiveness

#### **Medium-impact factors:**

5. **Committee speeches** (16.25% of total) - Still important but less than chamber
6. **Legislation quality and outcomes** (25% of total) - Front-loaded; set and forge

#### **Lower-impact factors:**

7. **Amendment bonuses** (up to 4 points per) - Nice but not game-changing
8. **Individual bill outcomes beyond party totals** - Your bill passing helps, but party totals matter more

## The Winning Formula

**Dominate in the chamber.** Give outstanding authorship and additional speeches. Show engagement, ask great questions, make smart motions. This is half your score.

**Help your party pass more bills.** The 10-point committee and 20-point chamber bonuses are massive. Be a team player.

**Prevent gridlock.** That 50% penalty is catastrophic. If it is late in the session and you need one more bill to hit minimums, vote for it even if you hate it.

**Perform solidly in committee.** You need the baseline speeches, but this is "only" 25% of your total. Don't neglect it, but don't over-invest at the expense of chamber prep.

**Write good legislation.** The base score is set pre-tournament. Bill outcomes matter, but they're largely determined by the committee/chamber, not just quality.

## Final Thoughts

Revolutionary Rhetoric Congress rewards:

- **Strategic thinking** over pure speaking talent
- **Collaboration** over individualism (but not at the expense of party loyalty)
- **Adaptability** over rigid planning
- **Engagement** over coasting

You are playing a multi-dimensional game where personal, party, and chamber interests sometimes align and sometimes conflict. The best competitors will:

- Build cross-party relationships early
- Track the big picture (bill counts, party balance, time remaining)
- Deliver when it counts (strong chamber speeches)
- Know when to compromise and when to stand firm

Most importantly: **Have fun with the chaos.** This format is designed to create interesting dilemmas and force tough choices. Embrace the complexity, play the game within the game, and enjoy the simulation of actual legislative politics—where everyone's an individual, but nobody succeeds alone.