

Welcome Preface

Thank you for choosing to attend the 2026 Cal Invitational. We are excited that you are taking part in Student Congress at one of the largest high school forensics competitions in the country. We are excited to host you in-person at the University of California, Berkeley!

I thank both Jega Vigneshwaran from UC Berkeley and Aleisha Readye, formerly from Dougherty Valley High School, for their work four years ago on drafting these rules for online competition. The rules we are using this year will largely mirror the rules they have written for the Tournament a few years ago.

The following rules are designed to promote consistent parliamentary procedure among the chambers and a high standard of Congressional Debate. Please note, these regulations cannot be altered or ignored by the chamber using a motion to suspend the rules.

Please keep in mind that due to room constraints this year, the High School Division will be held in person at UC Berkeley, while the Middle School Division will be held Online.

For the High School Division, each school is required to provide one judge per every five Congressional Debaters who must be available on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. Depending on judge experience, we may be using Parliamentarians in preliminary chambers. Judges are obligated for all days' rounds, regardless of whether any of their students made it to the elimination round(s) on Monday.

For the Middle School Division, the Tournament shall be held on Saturday and Sunday only. Each school is required to provide one judge per every five Congressional Debaters who must be available on Saturday and Sunday. Depending on judge experience, we may be using Parliamentarians in preliminary chambers. Judges are obligated for all days' rounds, regardless of whether any of their students made it to the elimination round(s) on Sunday.

The Rules of Order reflect the tournament that will be taking place this year. Please review them prior to the tournament and direct any questions you have to the Congress Tabroom Director below.

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GO BEARS!



Rules of Order

Please read through the rules carefully. Rules not explicitly enumerated here will be governed by the most recent edition of the National Speech and Debate Association's (NSDA) High School Unified Manual. *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 12th edition*, shall prevail when the NSDA rules are silent. Please do not hesitate to contact the tournament directors if you have any further questions regarding the rules. Again, good luck and we hope you have a great time!

1. **Recency & Priority:** Before precedence is established, the presiding officer should recognize speakers fairly, consistently, and randomly; the PO should explain their process to the chamber at the beginning of each session. They may not link recognition of speakers to previous recognition of students asking questions, moving motions, or longest standing (standing time). During any session, precedence/recency should not reset, to ensure that all students in the chamber have an equal opportunity to speak and receive evaluation from scorers. When a new session begins, precedence/recency will be reset. Priority for speaker recognition will be governed by the following principles as set by the NSDA:
 1. Primary Principle: students who have not spoken during the session
 2. Secondary Principle: students who have spoken fewer times
 3. Tertiary Principle: students who spoke earlier (least recently)
2. **Debate at the Will of the Chamber:** This tournament does not restrict multiple consecutive speeches on the same side (i.e., two or more consecutive Affirmative or Negative speeches). However, Presiding Officers are strongly encouraged to chastise the chamber should speakers be unprepared to speak on legislation and judges may take this lack of preparation into account when ranking students. Students are also reminded that "dividing the house" as a survey of who wishes to speak on the affirmative and negative is a misuse of the motion, and that there are no minimum "cycles" of debate (all motions are welcome between all speeches). In the unlikely absence of a first affirmative speech, debate may not begin on a new piece of legislation with a negative speech. Students may,

during a recess, prior to the start of a round, or after a round has ended, ask how many people would like to speak on a side of a bill and take an informal tally.

3. **Voting by Unanimous Consent:** When a motion is unlikely to be contested, it is appropriate for a Representative to ask the Chair to proceed with unanimous consent. A Representative should state this motion as follows: “I ask unanimous consent that...”, followed by the motion. The Chair shall then ask for unanimous consent by asking, “are there any objections” before executing the motion. Members may then respond by announcing “I object” to the chamber. This is not an automatic recognition to explain the substance of that objection. Proper expression of your objection is to then vote “Nay” in the subsequent division of the chamber (this prohibition includes explaining that you have a speech you still wish to deliver; the chamber is aware that you’ve been standing thus far and is not obliged to allow every member to deliver every speech they may desire). Presiding Officers will not allow objections to be explained ad nauseam.
4. **Personal Privileges:** Suspension of the rules for the purposes of an open chamber, where members may freely enter and exit between speeches, is **not** permitted for this tournament. Members are reminded that the proper exchange to ask for permission to leave or re-enter the chamber occurs as follows:

Member: “Mr./Mme./Mx. President/Speaker, I rise to a point of personal privilege.”

Chair: “State privilege.”

Member: “Enter/Exit chambers.”

Chair: “Granted.” or “Denied (with brief explanation).”

5. **Proper Phrasing of Motions:** Members of Congress are reminded to avoid the amateurish practice of “making a motion” and using the word “motioning.” Instead, please utilize the verb correctly and state: “I move.” This of course should not result in the phrase “I move to make a motion” but rather should lead to statements such as “I move to the previous question” or “I move to amend.”
6. **Decorum:** This tournament strives to hold its competitors to the highest standards of decorum among attending students. Debate modeling the work of the United States Congress should be enjoyable but also taken seriously. The Presiding Officer is responsible for enforcing proper decorum.
7. **Legislative Day and Speaker Recognition:** As per NSDA rules, each preliminary session constitutes of a new legislative day, meaning that speaking priority resets at the beginning of each round. Semifinals and Finals shall each constitute a new legislative day respectively. The priority system outlined in Rule 1 is the required method for recognizing speakers at this tournament.
8. **Questioning:** A mandatory two-minute direct questioning period follows all first affirmative and first negative speeches. A mandatory one-minute direct questioning period follows all other speeches. Once recognized, Representatives may ask an unlimited number of questions within their respective period of cross-examination. The

Presiding Officer recognizes legislators who wish to ask a question of a speaker; the speaker may not perform this function themselves, nor may a questioner recognize themselves. **The rules may not be suspended to abolish cross-examination or to allow for an extension of the cross-examination period.** The Presiding Officer has an obligation to rule that misleading or irrelevant questions are out-of-order. Representatives are reminded to keep their questions and question prefaces concise. Should a cross-examination period not be claimed by any questioner, the Presiding Officer may absorb the remaining time and proceed to call up the next speech in a cycle.

9. **Agenda Order:** Each preliminary chamber sets its own agenda order for the legislation designated for that preliminary session and may amend the agenda with a majority vote of the chamber. The proposed agenda order must receive approval by a simple majority vote of the chamber before the beginning of each session. No chamber may debate legislation at any time other than during its designated session(s). Legislation marked for “Prelims” may only be debated in the Preliminary Rounds. Legislation marked for “Semis” may only be debated in the Semifinal Round. Legislation marked for “Finals” may only be debated in the Final Round. Speakers should be prepared to debate on all pieces of legislation and should be prepared to debate on both sides of such legislation.
10. **Amendments:** Legislators may submit amendments to the Presiding Officer in writing. A motion to amend is necessary to consider the written amendment; such a motion is in order any time after the first affirmative speech. Once the motion is made, the Presiding Officer – with the assistance of the Parliamentarian – decides if the amendment is germane. If the amendment is deemed not to be germane, the chair rules it out-of-order and the amendment process stops. If the chair rules the amendment germane, they should read the contents of the amendment to the chamber. A 1/3 second of the members present in the chamber is required to debate the amendment. If at least a third of the chamber seconds the motion to debate the amendment, debate on the amendment commences immediately. Legislators may make a motion to table or call the previous question on the amendment at any time. The first speech on the amendment is a sponsorship speech. The chair determines speaker recognition for the sponsorship speech based on priority; **the author of the amendment is not guaranteed the sponsorship speech.** The sponsor accepts responsibility for the mechanics of the amendment and yields to two minutes of questioning. All amendment speeches receive a score and count towards priority. A majority vote is necessary for the chamber to adopt the amendment (this of course after a 2/3 vote has been achieved to call previous question on the amendment).
11. **Authorship Speeches:** If a member of the school that authored the legislation being debated is in the chamber, they may (but are not required to) have the first affirmative speech. The speech should be 3 minutes in length, but the cross-examination period will be extended to 2 minutes. If there are multiple members from the school that authored the legislation, only one member may give the authorship speech, while other members will be chosen to speak based on the priority system described in Rule 1.

12. **Overtime Speeches:** The time limit for speeches in all rounds of this tournament is 3 minutes. Any regular floor speech that extends more than ten (10) seconds beyond the maximum speaking time of three minutes may be gavelled down by the Presiding Officer. **The Presiding Officer is required to keep accurate time of each speech and report it to the judges when the speaker has finished.** The judges shall heavily penalize a Presiding Officer for inaccurate timing and/or reporting.
13. **Electronic Device Use:** The use of laptops and electronic devices, including tablets and phones, in chambers is permitted, though it is strongly recommended that students avoid reading notes from laptops when delivering speeches in front of the chamber. Students shall be allowed to use tablet devices when delivering speeches and under no circumstances shall students be penalized for electronic device usage in accordance with these rules. Please be advised that limited power supplies will exist in the classrooms at UC Berkeley and the tournament accepts no responsibility for providing Congressional debaters with a power source or WiFi at any tournament site. This tournament will adopt the NSDA's "CURRENT GUIDELINES for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Congressional Debate" and the NSDA's "Current Guidelines for Use of Internet-Enabled Devices in Debate Events." At no point may a student use the Internet for purposes of gaining help from coaches, other students, or other persons. Failure to follow the rules governing electronic devices may result in disqualification from the Tournament.
14. **Selection of Presiding Officers:** A single presiding officer will serve for each session. A legislator is allowed to serve as Presiding Officer for more than one session, though he or she must be re-elected for each session served. Members of each chamber are encouraged to hold an informal, brief "business meeting" in their chamber before the beginning of each Session to elect a Presiding Officer for the session. A Presiding Officer must always be elected before debate on legislation commences and must also be elected at the beginning of each session. A presiding officer must serve for the entire 120 – 150-minute session and may not deliver a speech during the session. **There is no such thing as "presiding officer privilege" for speech recognition in future sessions.**
15. **Time Signals:** Presiding Officers should disclose to their chamber and to the judges at the start of every Session how they will be signaling to speakers (i.e., gavel taps, hand gestures, etc.) when their time has concluded and how much time has elapsed in each speaker's speech.
16. **Clarification of Voting Standards:** "[Fractional] motions such as previous question, seconding an amendment, or suspending the rules reflect the will of the entire body. Presiding Officers should calculate these numbers upon first taking the Chair. For these votes, 'No' votes are not even required because the number needed is either reached or it's not. However, in all votes requiring a majority, the Presiding Officer needs to take 'Yes' votes, 'No' votes, and 'Abstentions.' Abstentions do not count as a 'No.' In order for such a motion to pass (including the main bill or resolution), the 'Yes' votes must simply outnumber the 'No' votes. Abstentions are not counted, except as a courtesy to

those members who wish to register their desire to avoid voting or those who are undecided on the issue. In theory, all majority votes could be decided by 3 people (2-1) with everyone else abstaining.”¹ The Presiding Officer determines the method of voting on each question that comes before the chamber. All simple majority votes are based upon the number of legislators present and voting in the chamber; consequently, the Presiding Officer does not need to call for or count abstentions. For all votes requiring a fraction of the chamber to agree to a motion or question (2/3, 1/3, or 1/5), the chair determines whether the chamber agrees with the motion/question using the number of legislators present in the chamber at the time of the vote. Because of this system, the Presiding Officer must always track the number of legislators in the chamber. By custom, the Presiding Officer is not included in the count of legislators present and does not vote unless the chamber is equally divided. Notes on voting:

- Final votes on legislation, amendments, and motions to appeal the chair require a counted vote.
- Voice voting is acceptable for all other votes, but a counted vote must be taken if any one legislator calls for a division of the chamber by asking for the Yeas and Nays.

17. **Length of Each Session:** Under no circumstances whatsoever may the round be extended past the end time set at the beginning of each session. Please keep this in mind when choosing which side of the legislation on which to speak, as you may be “shut out” of the round if you are unable to give a speech in the allotted time. The Congressional Debate Tabroom will alert judges when the “hard stop time” is for each Round. The “hard stop time” will be approximately 2.25 hours for Preliminary rounds and 2.5 – 3.25 hours for the Semifinal and Final Round from the start of the first affirmative speech.
18. **Guaranteed Speeches:** No speaker at this tournament is guaranteed a speech during any round. Please be cognizant of the time and realize that if you wish to speak on the same side as the majority of the students in the chamber, you risk the chance of getting “shut out,” or not being able to speak in a round, which almost always results in a rank of 9. The chamber is not responsible for making sure each speaker is able to deliver a speech during a round. Nonetheless, chambers are allowed to break cycle numerous times within a session, though this practice is strongly discouraged.
19. **Parliamentarians:** Parliamentarians may be used in all rounds. Should Parliamentarians be used, the Congress Tournament Director reserves the right to panel speakers from schools with more entries than total panels in all but one or two chambers to ensure their Parliamentarian and judges can be used for the Tournament. Schools should designate one judge as a parliamentarian who will remain in his or her assigned chamber for each preliminary session. The parliamentarian must rank each student in the chamber, without ties. If Parliamentarians are not being used, an odd number of judges will be rotated per chamber.

¹ Peters, Tammy. *Most Commonly Misunderstood Points of Parliamentary Procedure*. The Rostrum. February 1997.

20. **Judges:** The judging commitment for Congressional Debate is one judge for every 5 entries. All judges are committed for ALL Congressional Debate Rounds, regardless of if their student made it to the Semifinal or Final Rounds.
21. **Recording:** Recording of any individual within or outside a round is prohibited. Violators of this rule will be removed from the Tournament and their affiliated institution will be fined. Repeat offenders will not be allowed to enter the Tournament.
22. **Online:** We do not anticipate that this Tournament be moved online or to a hybrid format. Speakers unable to join us for in person competition for whatever reason (i.e., illness, time conflicts, etc.) will be dropped from the Tournament. No special accommodation via NSDA Campus will be granted.

The Congress Tournament Director reserves the right to issue any additional special rules for the University of California, Berkeley National Congress as warranted.

Tabulation Rules

1. **Scoring:** In the preliminary sessions, each judge will score every speech on a scale of 1 – 6 points (6 is the best). In addition, at the end of each preliminary session, the judges will independently rank the top eight students who advanced the debate most effectively (1st is best). All unranked students will receive a rank of 9. The Presiding Officer may be ranked in the top eight and should be if they provide outstanding service to the chamber. All judges will be instructed that they must consider the Presiding Officer. These rankings will be included in their entirety (no tie at ninth) in the calculation of which legislators advance from each chamber.
2. **Advancing to the Semifinal Round:** Final placement in the preliminary rounds will be determined by summing the ranks and determining the order based upon the lowest cumulative rank, truncating ranks 10 or greater to a 9. Depending on the size of each chamber and number of chambers sectioned, the top legislators from each preliminary chamber will advance to the semifinal round. We will be advancing an equal number of competitors per chamber. Ties will be broken in the following priorities:
 1. Judges' preference
 2. Reciprocals, truncated to 9
 3. Cumulative rank total, truncated to 9, dropping the best and worst ranks
 4. Reciprocals of cumulative rank total, truncated to 9, dropping the best and worst ranks
 5. Rank by the parliamentarian (should there be one)
 - If used, the parliamentarian will rank the speakers in each chamber from 1 to N, where N is the number of speakers in the chamber. If used, the parliamentarian's rank is summed with the judges' ranks from each round to determine which speakers advance to the semifinal round. For initial tabulation, the Parliamentarian's rank shall be truncated to 9. Should tiebreakers warrant, the Parliamentarian's rank shall not be truncated for this last tiebreaker.
 - If there is an unbreakable tie, all tied competitors shall advance.

3. **Advancing to the Final Round:** The top legislators in each semifinal chamber will advance to the final round using the same methodology described above. We will be advancing an equal number of competitors per chamber. The parliamentarian will also rank the speakers in each chamber from 1 to N, where N is the number of speakers in the chamber. The parliamentarian's rank is summed with the judges' ranks from the semi-final round to determine which speakers advance to the final round. The parliamentarian's rank will be summed with the judge ranks to determine the final placement of speakers after the final round. The Parliamentarian's rank in both rounds will be truncated to 9 for initial tabulation. Should tiebreakers warrant, the Parliamentarian's rank shall not be truncated for the last tiebreaker. If there is an unbreakable tie, all tied competitors shall advance.
4. **Awards:**
 1. **High School Division:** Elimination Round competitors will be recognized at the Awards Ceremony on Monday.
 2. **Middle School Division:** Elimination Round competitors will be recognized in an online Awards Ceremony on Sunday evening.