

2026 Northern Lights NSDA Speech Qualifier
March 27-28, 2026: Willmar High School - Willmar, MN

Greetings Speech Coaches,

On behalf of the Northern Lights District Committee, it is my pleasure to invite you and your team to the 2026 NSDA District Qualifier in Speech, held this year at [Willmar High School](#) on **Friday, March 27 and Saturday, March 28**. Note that this is one week later than our 'usual' weekend. Please register by logging in to your Tabroom.com account and clicking the green button next to "Northern Lights District - Speech." For example:

ARDMORE HIGH SCHOOL: TOURNAMENTS

Tournaments Competitors Judges Circuits NSDA Settings Access Results Practice

Existing tournament registrations

Dates	Name	Location	Due	
1/13 - 1/14	DC Universe at Deer Creek	Edmond, US	1/10	
1/20 - 1/21	Norman North Mnemosyne	Norman, US	1/17	

National Speech & Debate Tournament

Dates	Name	Location	Due	
2/17	West Oklahoma District Congress	Edmond, OK	2/10	

Important tournament information is listed below. Please let me know if you have any questions.

1. Registration: We are using Tabroom.com as our online host for the NL District Tournament Series. Registration will open on Thursday, January 1 at 8:00 am. Remember that all entries must be submitted no later than March 20 at 8:00 pm.

2. Chapter Dues/Membership Requirements: You will not be able to register on Tabroom.com unless your school has paid its annual chapter dues to the NSDA. Please take care of this promptly so that you have no difficulties in entering. In addition, all students must be on record as members of the NSDA seven days prior to the tournament. These two items are non-negotiable as they are dictated by the national office. Please let me know ASAP if you need help with this.

3. Schedule: Three preliminary rounds will be held in all events. **New in 2024 and continuing this year: A Quarterfinal round consisting of the top 20 entries (up to 24 if ties exist) will be held in events with 40+ entries.** The full schedule is listed below.

Tournament Schedule:

Friday, March 27

Check-in: 10:45 am - 11:30 pm

Judge Meeting: 11:30 am, Room 803 (Judge Lounge)

Round 1A: 12:00 pm

Round 1B: 1:45 pm

Round 2A: 3:00 pm

Round 2B: 4:15 pm

Round 3A: 5:45 pm

Round 3B/*Quarterfinals: 7:00 pm

*(if needed. For events with 40+ entries only)

Elim Round Announcement: ASAP

Saturday, March 28

Check-in: 10:00 am

Semifinal: 10:30 am (all events, section 1)

Semifinal: 12:00 pm (all events, section 2)

Final Round Announcement: 1:15 pm

Final A: 2:00 pm

Final B: 3:30 pm

Awards: 5:00 pm or ASAP

We are planning for a later start time on Friday so teams/judges can opt to travel in the morning if desired.

Event patterns will be announced by Monday, March 23.

4. School Obligations: Participating teams are expected to provide one judge per **SIX** entries or fraction thereof. Judges are obligated for all rounds on Friday; however, teams may enter multiple judges to cover one spot. For example, you may have one judge cover Friday morning rounds and another judge cover afternoon rounds. At least one judge (preferably the head or assistant coach) should be made available to judge elimination rounds on Saturday. Please use the judge notes section on Tabroom to communicate availability.

5. School Fees: There is a \$25 team entry fee. Each individual entry is \$12 (\$24 for Duo). District dues will also be assessed based on team strength. Please ensure that all NSDA balances are paid prior to the tournament.

6. Extemp. Speaking Topic Areas:

Students should prepare for all topic areas. The district committee will select topic areas at random prior to round 1 on Friday.

International

1. Africa
2. Asia
3. Europe
4. Southwest Asia
5. Americas
6. Energy & Environment

United States

1. Politics
2. Business & Economics
3. Supreme Court & Legal Issues
4. Health, Education, & Social Issues
5. Energy & Environment
6. Foreign Policy & National Security

RETURNING THIS YEAR: Districts were given permission (and the Northern Lights Committee approved) piloting the following rule in International and United States Extemporaneous Speaking at the district tournament: **“Competitors may use the front and back of a 4 x 6” or smaller notecard while speaking. The notecard must be prepared during the preparation period; notes may not be pre-written or re-used from round to round.”** Note: This pilot rule will not be used at the 2026 National Tournament in Richmond, VA.

7. Tabbing Rules: **TWO** judges will be used in each prelim round. Each judge's score carries (no composite score) with the worst rank dropped after prelims. **Quarterfinals**/Semifinals use three judges, **finals use 5 judges**. Elim round ranks are **NOT** doubled this year.

8. Advancing Entries:

- Events with 6-12 entries will break straight to finals.
- In events with 13-39 entries, the top 12 will advance to semifinals.
- **In events with 40+ entries, the top 20 (up to 24 with ties) will advance to quarters.**
- Any entry tied for a semifinal spot after prelims will advance (i.e. if seed 12 and 13 have the same rank, both advance to semifinals).
- From semifinals, the top 6 overall advance to finals (not necessarily an even number from each semi). We can and will advance up to 7 to finals if there is a tie.
- If a tie results in 8 or more entries advancing to finals, those students tied for the last spot do not advance (i.e. if 6th-8th are tied after semifinals, only the top 5 would go to finals).

All of this can be found here starting on page 114: [NSDA Rules Manual](#).

Other reminders:

1. Make sure that all competing students are NSDA members at least seven days prior to the tournament. This rule is absolute and exceptions cannot be made. Tabroom will not allow non-members to register.
2. Be sure that you have paid all outstanding membership fees for new members.
3. Use the invoice provided on Tabroom to request a check for entry fees. Remember that all schools are assessed a \$25 team fee in addition to entry fees (\$12 per speaker). Chapter dues are also assessed at this tournament:

Team Member Strength	District Dues
1-30	\$65
31-60	\$75
61-90	\$85
91-120	\$95
121-150	\$105
151-180	\$115
181+	\$125

4. Dues will be manually added to your Tabroom invoice once registration closes. I will try to have this updated ASAP, but if you need to print your invoice with dues included before the deadline, please email me so I can make those updates.
5. All Northern Lights payments should be made to "Northern Lights Speech and Debate" and mailed to Moorhead High School, Attn. Andrew Tichy, 2300 4th Ave. S. Moorhead, MN 56560. All NSDA payments should be mailed to the National Office or paid online through your NSDA account.

9. Judges/Timers: We will panel elimination round judges prior to the tournament using the coach vote. Once hired judges are placed, we will round out panels with HCs and experienced assistant coaches as much as possible. Our goal is to have this set before the tournament so coaches and judges know their Saturday schedule. **Additionally, we would like each team to designate one coach/judge to serve as a timer for semifinals/finals on Saturday.**

10. Tournament qualifiers/Awards: We will qualify THREE entries in each event with 10+ entries; FOUR entries with 50+. Events with nine or fewer entries will have TWO qualifiers.

11. Single Entry Letter of Intent Forms: Coaches of double-entered students must select their event preference prior to the start of the tournament. To do this, click on the "NSDA Forms" tab after logging in to your Tabroom account. Since we are using Tabroom.com, you do not need to print these forms! Remember that students are only allowed to compete in two district series events (Congressional debate does not count toward the double entry policy).

12. Scripts: The Northern Lights District Committee will not collect scripts at registration, but you must have them available during the tournament in case of protest. Manuscripts must meet the standards provided in the NSDA HS Unified Manual.

13. District Award Nominations: The District Committee is seeking nominations for individuals in the following categories: Student of the Year and Coach of the Year. Nomination submissions are done electronically. Information about each award and submission deadlines are below:

- **Northern Lights NSDA Student of the Year - Due: Friday, March 20**

This prestigious award is presented to a graduating senior in each district who best represents the tenets of the Association's Code of Honor: integrity, respect, humility, leadership, and service. Nominees must also have strong academic credentials and a commitment to the speech and debate community. Each year, six students who win the district award are selected as finalists for the William Woods Tate, Jr. National Student of the Year Award. To nominate a deserving senior, please visit <https://www.speechanddebate.org/student-of-the-year-nomination-form/>. Though we usually announce our student of the year award at our District Speech Tournament, this award is open to ANY NSDA senior student in the Northern Lights District, whether or not they are participating in speech.

- **Northern Lights NDSA Coach of the Year - Due: Friday, March 20**

The NSDA's James M. Copeland High School Coach of the Year award annually honors high school coaches who reflect outstanding leadership and commitment to speech and debate activities. To be eligible for nomination, a high school coach must:

- 1. Currently work as a high school speech/debate coach in an NSDA member school.*
- 2. Have completed five consecutive years of experience as a high school speech/debate coach at an NSDA member school (experience need not be in the same school).*
- 3. Plan to continue working as a high school speech/debate coach next year at an NSDA member school.*
- 4. Agree to be nominated.*
- 5. If selected as the winner, be able to participate in the NSDA Tournament and/or be present to accept the award at the National Tournament.*

More information can be found [here](#). To nominate a deserving coach, please visit <https://www.speechanddebate.org/high-school-coach-of-the-year-nomination-form/>.

Thank you,

Andrew Tichy
Northern Lights District Chair