

February 2026

Dear Coaches and Students:

You are cordially invited to the 2026 KHSSL Junior State Speech Championship, which will be held February 27-28 at Boone County High School in Florence. We are sponsored/hosted by BCHS Forensics and Head Coach Erin Edwards Tharpe, and we truly appreciate their hospitality.

Please read this invitation thoroughly and carefully.

Can't wait to see you at State!!!

**TOURNAMENT PHONE NUMBER
(Emergency and otherwise)**

KHSSL: 859-927-1100

TOURNAMENT WEBSITE

<http://khssljr.tabroom.com>

REGISTRATION AND ENTRIES

Registration is on Tabroom: <http://khssljr.tabroom.com> . It opens Monday, February 9.

Registration soft deadline:

5 PM Eastern on Wednesday, February 18.

<http://khssljr.tabroom.com>

This is a soft deadline for judges and entries – and does not change even if there is a blizzard or school's not in session for anything else. This will allow the tournament to know how many entries and judges to expect (needed for rooms, sections of limited prep events, judge lounge food orders, etc.) and plan accordingly. T-shirt pre-orders and food pre-orders for Friday night dinner and Saturday lunch are also due at this time.

Coaches will be allowed to change names of entries/judges until 5 PM Monday, February 23, with no financial penalty, so feel free to put in a random judge name knowing you'll put the real one in by Monday, etc. But if you change the number of entries in an event or decrease the number of judges you're bringing, the drop/change fees here (copied and pasted from page 88 of the current Handbook) apply.

- a. Contestant substitutions between the Registration Deadline and the Final deadline = free.
- b. Drops and Adds between the registration deadline and the Final deadline = entry fee plus \$10.
- c. Substitutions after Final deadline through start of tournament = \$10 + entry fee.
- d. Drop/Adds after the Final Deadline and prior to the first day of the tournament = \$25 + entry fee.
- e. Drop/Adds the first day of the tournament = \$50 + entry fee.
- f. Judge Name Changes at any time = free. New judges must be fully qualified as rules require.
- g. Judge drops after registration deadline and before Final Deadline = \$10 fee plus hired judge fees for the shortage.
- h. Judge drops after Final Deadline and prior to the first day of the tournament = \$25 + hired judge fees for the shortage.
- i. Judge drops at the start of or at any time during the days of the tournament = \$100 fee + hired judge fees

Hard Deadline:

Monday, February 23, 5 PM Eastern.

After the hard deadline, changes go through the KHSSL email address ONLY (khssl@khssl.org -- no texts or calls for changes, and you'll be blocked from changes on Tabroom). After this deadline, see the list on the prior page for how the fees work. There are no excuses from fees for illness or family emergencies or anything else as any changes cause considerable time spent adjusting the tournament for KHSSL, no matter what the reason.

Entry fees are \$20 for each individual entry, \$40 for each duo team entry. **All fees are due when schools register. Schools may not compete until all fees are paid including drop fees, t-shirt fees for pre-orders, meal fees for pre-orders, etc.**

The KHSSL Handbook contains extensive information about how the State Tournament is put together and how tabulation is done to determine advancement. Coaches are responsible for understanding these procedures (or for asking for clarifications as needed) and for explaining them to your team and their parents, your judges, etc.

Anyone in the world can access it at the KHSSL website:

<https://www.khssl.org/handbook-and-constitution> Please make sure all coaches have reviewed how State tournament works before you come to campus.

Coaches may ONLY enter as many entries as schools entered and paid for at Regionals (or fewer). Given the special changes made for students this year, any student may compete at State tournament, but schools may not enter more entries in an event at State than they had entered at Regionals. Regional and State entry names do not have to be the same this year. Exempted students are considered to have participated at Regionals for numbers, keeping in mind the most entries any school can enter at State is 3 per event. Reach out via email to Steve with any questions about qualification or entry or numbers.

Entry reminders:

In each speech event, schools may enter up to three (3) entries. Each individual student may enter up to three (3) events. Students must have qualified in an event as noted above.

Remember, **schools may ONLY enter as many entries as the schools entered and paid for at Regionals (or fewer).**

FOOD AND LODGING

Coffee and light snacks **for judges** will be provided on Friday evening with coffee/tea/water only on Saturday morning (plus any leftovers from Friday). All students and judges should pre-order Friday dinner and Saturday lunch as part of the registration process. See below for details.

Students and judges should eat breakfast OFF CAMPUS on Saturday.

Our tournament is being hosted by Boone County Forensics. In exchange for hosting us and giving us use of their building **FOR FREE**, they are using the tournament as a fundraiser by selling concessions throughout the tournament plus coordinating the dinner/lunch orders.

SPECIAL NOTE: It is incredibly kind and gracious of Boone to take us in and host us this year. Thus, YOU ARE HIGHLY STRONGLY DEFINITELY encouraged to pre-order the meals and support them. **Please comply with this request and ask the parents who accompany you to do the same. Uber Eats, Door Dash, and Mama Goin' to Chik-Fil-A don't support the tournament or its hosts.** Last year's hosts dumped us because they didn't make the expected money on food as so many schools didn't support their food sales. Let's not let that happen this year.

Friday evening dinner offerings

- Catered by Drake's (a solid sportbar kind of place with locations in various places around the state)
 - Option 1: Chicken tenders, fries, a vegetable, drink
 - Option 2: Mac & cheese, vegetable, and drink
- Both options are \$7.

Saturday lunch offerings

- Catered by Sub Station II
- Choice of sub, chips, fruit, cookie, and a drink
 - Sub choices – turkey, veggie, ham
- All options are \$7.

Remember that all participants – adults and students – should order both meals. There will be snacks on sale throughout the tournament and free for judges in the lounge, but no meals will be provided free.

You must order these in Tabroom with your registration (see CONCESSIONS) and pay for them at registration by either a separate check or cash OR as part of your registration check.

LODGING

KHSSL is no longer involved in lodging arrangements for state tournaments. As a former coach, my suggestion is to check with the athletic director at the high school you feed into for any special rates your district may have negotiated with hotel chains; your bookkeeper is also a good source of such info. Also, many hotels will give schools what's called the "state rate." AAA and other such organizations also give a decent discount. I did reach out to the NKY Tourism bureau for a list of suggested hotels, but they did not reply, so my suggestion is to seek out a hotel in the Florence area (or nearby – other close towns are Fort Mitchell, Erlanger, Elsmere, Richwood, and Fort Wright).

JUDGES

Judge Obligations:

- The judge quota is set at one judge required per six entries or fraction thereof.
- Teams may hire up to but not more than half your quota for \$150 each if you are bringing other judges, but you **must provide at least half of your judges required** regardless; if you only owe one judge, YOU MUST PROVIDE THAT JUDGE. And we really need your judges.
- **All judges are obligated through the full tournament unless assignments are split between two judges who make up one judge. Please note** that judges must be available the full day to count for the day, so no “Please no finals” requests unless you’re willing to pay the full day’s charge for a judge.
- You may **not** request exemptions from particular events (like “no limited prep.”).
- If you have two judges who wish to share a judging assignment (Boris can come on Friday and Natasha can come on Saturday), please sign up BOTH judges and also email me who’s doing what by the Hard Deadline (5 PM Monday the 23rd) so I can adjust them in the tournament for you. Friday costs \$50 and Saturday costs \$100 if you have judges who can only do one day and have no other portion; the judge must be present all of Saturday to count as a ½ judge in your quota.

Age of Judges:

Remember that all judges at State must be **OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL** – no high school student judges allowed at Regionals/State.

Reality of Judges:

Judges should expect to judge every round of the tournament. They must also bring their own laptop or tablet. Judging on a phone is impossible at this tournament; paper ballots will NOT be available.

Extra Judges:

If you have extra judges who can judge, even if just for one of the two days, we will gladly accept them. You will be doing a huge favor to everyone attending! Thanks!! You're the best! You rock! You're amazing!!!

Judge Training:

The Handbook states that all judges must be trained prior to State tournament. The Board voted to require **anti-bias training** as this training for this year. The link for this training is [here](#) and on the homepage of the KHSSL website, www.khssl.org. Please make sure all judges have completed it no later than the registration deadline. If your judges already completed it for Regionals or in a prior school year, they're good to go (no need to complete it again). You can check who has done so [here](#).

Additionally, the Board passed a requirement that all judges complete [the NFHS judging course](#) this year – even head coaches and experienced judges. It says it gives three hours' credit for inservice completion, but my experience has been it takes about 45 minutes and is quite worthwhile for anyone, even as a review.

A [hodgepodge video](#) of various judge trainings is also available on the KHSSL website and may be of use to rookie judges if coaches wish to use that as additional judge training they provide to their judges (with follow-up for questions, advice, etc.).

A judge's best friend is our [Judge Tips webpage](#). On this page, Judges can see the full (the paper version) ballots for the events, the judging guidelines, and a 3-ish minute video from a KHSSL Coach explaining what they look for when they are judging that event. There are even sample performances of each event on this page if judges have time to see what an event looks like before they go in a round. [A handout](#) with a good review of the judging process and suggestions of comments is also posted at the top of this page.

AED / MEDICAL INFORMATION

Destination/Venue: Boone County High School

Venue Address: 7056 Burlington Pk. Florence, Ky 41042

Person or email contacted at venue to discuss EAD: Mrs. Erin Tharpe

Position/Title of person contacted: Forensics Team Coach & English Teacher

Is there an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) on site? YES

If yes, where is it located:

- (1) Entrance to cafeteria/commons
- (2) Main Lobby next to main office
- (3) Freshmen/lower rear hallway outside school resource officer's office
- (4) Mounted outside of Athletic Trainer's office
- (5) Main gymnasium at door leading out to turf

Does the venue have an emergency response team (ERT)? NO

PARKING

More specific information about parking will be posted on the tournament website. Please do not arrive at the school before 4 PM Friday as they are having school that day, and we need them to be gone before you arrive. 😊

SCHOOL ADDRESS –

Boone County High School, 7056 Burlington Pk. Florence, Ky 41042

TOURNAMENT WHEREABOUTSES

All competition rooms are in the same building, BCHS.

Registration:	Cafeteria
Opening Ceremony and Judges' Meeting:	Theatre
Merchandise Sales and Food Sales:	Cafeteria
Advocate:	At Merch Table
Judge Lounge:	Rooms 101 and 102
Tabulation Room:	Room 108
Extemp Draw:	Media Center/Library
Broadcasting Draw for Quarters, Semis, Finals:	Learning Labs (156/157)
Awards Ceremony:	Theatre

ORATORIES

Don't forget that your students' speeches in the Oratory category must be physically available on paper or easily downloadable electronically should a copy be needed.

BREAK ROUND QUOTAS AND PLANS

A Quarterfinal round will take place in ALL EVENTS with 36 or more entries entered as of the Soft Registration deadline; these will be announced via email.

The top 24 students in order will advance to the Quarterfinal round. No adjustments for students from the same school competing in the same section are made. They fall where they fall.

This round will have four sections of six competitors.

- a. The four sections will be seeded as follows:
Section 1—1st, 8th, 9th, 16th, 17th, and 24th
Section 2—2nd, 7th, 10th, 15th, 18th, and 23rd.
Section 3—3rd, 6th, 11th, 14th, 19th, and 22nd
Section 4—4th, 5th, 12th, 13th, 20th, and 21st
- b. Only in the event of an absolute tie shall an additional contestant be advanced to the Quarterfinal round, and such contestant would be placed in a random section.

Advancement to and Pairing of Semifinals. Semifinal rounds are paired as set forth below. No adjustments for students from the same school competing in the same section are made.

- a. *For events with Quarterfinal rounds.* The top-three Quarterfinalists advance out of each Quarterfinal section. Semifinal Section 1 includes advancing Semifinalists from Sections 1 and 4 of Quarterfinals. Semifinal Section 2 includes advancing Semifinalists from Sections 2 and 3 of Quarterfinals.

For events advancing directly to the Semifinal round. The top twelve students after the preliminary rounds advance into two Semifinal sections, paired as follows:

Section 1: 1st, 4th, 5th, 8th, 9th, 12th

Section 2: 2nd, 3rd, 6th, 7th, 10th, 11th

- b. Only in the event of an absolute tie shall an additional contestant be advanced to the Semifinal round, and such contestant would be placed in a random section.

Based on Regional Tournament entries, I anticipate as many as six events (BRO, IMP, IMV, POE, PRO, STO) could have Quarterfinals at 2026 State Tournament. It will depend on the actual numbers that register for State. Stay tuned!

SOUVENIRS FOR SALE AT STATE THIS YEAR

- Blyton Bears in the 2026 color t-shirt (teal ombre) \$25
- NEW: small beanbag-based giraffes named Aff Giraffe \$10
- Enamel pins in black, blue, pink, and purple \$5
- Sunglasses \$5
- Stickers galore – we literally have dozens of options this year -- donated by [You're Awesome Design Machine](#) -- \$1
- Water bottles \$20
- Spiral-bound notebooks \$10
- T-shirts (black) – short sleeve \$12 and long sleeve \$20 (sizes vary) plus some very small gray t-shirts for kids not in adult sizes yet that say State Tournament but no year. These are different from the official 2026 State Tournament shirts (see next page) in teal.
- Magnets \$5
- Mugs \$10
- Pocket Mirrors \$3
- Buttons (large and small sizes) \$2

A flyer with pictures is posted on the Tabroom site and on the KHSSL homepage.



Introducing Aff Giraffe! He's ready to debate AND do Storytelling AND Extemp (he sticks his neck out and tries everything).

<http://khssljr.tabroom.com>

T-SHIRT PRE-ORDERS

Customer:

Design/Event: Kentucky High School Speech Tournament 2026

WO# AR GD

Screen Print



Center Front
12"w

Shirt: Jade Dome

Ink Color(s)

☐ white

The shirts are short-sleeved cotton t-shirts.

KHSSL is ONLY selling these by pre-order. You can request a number of shirts of each size as part of your registration (see CONCESSIONS) and pay for them at registration by either a separate check or cash OR as part of your registration check.

These shirts will NOT be available for sale at the regular tournament unless there are some folks don't pick up, so pre-order is the way to go. Pre-ordered shirts will be handed to you at Registration as you pay. All other merch is first come first served pay-as-you-buy at the Merch table throughout the tournament.

From the Director

I have high hopes that all coaches and students will have their best experience ever at KHSSL Junior. Our planned schedule is on the penultimate page of this invitation, and I hope you'll also go through

<http://khssljr.tabroom.com>

the “classy” expectations for tournaments with your students (the last page of this invite).

Let’s make it our shared goal that we’ll run efficiently and smoothly. We want our kids to make happy memories. May the words be with you, and may the snow be without us! Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or concerns you have about the event, and good luck to you and yours at the State Tournament!

STEVE

Steve Meadows, Executive Director, Kentucky High School Speech League

khssl@khssl.org 859/927-1100 talk or text www.khssl.org



Sneak preview of some of the new buttons & stickers!

<http://khssljr.tabroom.com>



KHSSL JUNIOR State Speech Tournament February 27 and 28, 2026

Boone County High School is in session on Friday, so please don't plan to arrive before 4 PM.

Friday, February 27:

REGISTRATION:	4 - 5 PM	CAFETERIA
OPENING ASSEMBLY	5:15 PM	THEATRE
EXTEMP DRAW ROUND 1	5:15 PM	MEDIA CENTER
JUDGE MEETING	5:30 PM	THEATRE
ROUND 1	5:45 - 7:15 PM	
EXTEMP DRAW ROUND 2	7 PM	MEDIA CENTER
ROUND 2	7:30 - 9:00 PM	

Saturday, February 28:

EXTEMP DRAW ROUND 3	8 AM	MEDIA CENTER
ROUND 3	8:30 - 10 AM	
AWARDS ROUND 1	11-12:30 PM	
AWARDS ROUND 2	1 - 2:30 PM	
AWARDS ROUND 3	3-4:30 PM	
AWARDS	5-6 PM	

Preordered dinners will be available as students finish Round 1; preordered lunches will be available midday Saturday. Snacks and souvenirs will be on sale throughout the tournament in the cafeteria. <http://khssljr.tabroom.com> for tournament invitation, souvenir flyer, other info.

Tab Room 108

Judge Lounge 101 and 102

Broadcasting draw for Quarters/Semis/Finals 156 & 157



HOW TO BE CLASSY AT A CONTEST

Be a polite audience member – watch your competitors with attention (and laugh and clap when appropriate). This applies for all other contestants – **don't leave anyone out.**

Be sure to **tell your judges if you are doubling or tripling** and need to go early in your room to leave.

If you are doubling/tripling & in extemp or a 3rd round or outround of broadcasting, **go to extemp/broadcasting before you go to other events.** Tell the person running the draw room you are headed to other events as well.

If doubling or tripling in a duo event, **make plans with your partner** about when to meet them at the duo room (before other events or after other events) so you don't leave partners stranded waiting on you.

Don't touch anything in the classrooms other than the desk you sit in and chairs you use for Duo Improv. And avoid using the teacher's desk, even for judges. **Audiences must be at least six feet** from speakers!!!!

Bring the supplies you need with you: index cards, black book, pen/pencil, bottle of water, etc.

Wait quietly in the hallway until the judge arrives and invites you into the room. Once the contest starts, before you enter a room, wait in the hallway and listen carefully to make sure you are not entering a room while someone else is performing. No one wants to be that kid who interrupts.

Make sure your **phones are OFF** and won't vibrate or make noise during a round.

At awards, be happy for everyone, even if you don't win your event. You're on display, after all, for everyone – including other kids' friends, judges who will be evaluating you next tournament, etc. – and we work together to make ourselves better at communication using competition to inspire us, not to beat other people down. Use those acting skills if you are a finalist but don't get the place you want – many others watching would like to be a finalist getting a trophy, after all. Show grace. And go get 'em next time!

Teams stand up for any students on their teams who win awards, but they don't whoop and holler as this is a dignified event, not a rodeo (no offense to rodeos). Also, teams stand up for all 1st place winners as a tournament-wide recognition of the event champions and the overall team champions. It's just classy.

And we always **choose classy** when we have options.

This is the way.