



February 2026

Dear Coaches and Students:

**You are cordially invited to the 2026 KHSSL State Debate Championship, which will be held **March 28 at Atherton High School in Louisville.****

**Please read this invitation thoroughly and carefully.**

### **DEFINITION OF NOVICE**

A novice debater shall be defined as any student in his/her first year of debate. That means if a student competed at Congress one time in a prior year or in any KHSSL-ruled (or similar state organization) debate round one time in a prior year, that student is now a Varsity debater.

There is hope that this year's participation numbers from middle schools will justify opening Middle School – only divisions in all events next year. For this year, students in all grades should follow the definition of Novice to know which division of a particular event to enter. There is no split of Varsity/Novice in Congressional Debate and Extemporaneous Debate this year.

# STATE DEBATE TOURNAMENT INVITATION

<http://khssldebatechampionship.tabroom.com/>

## EVENTS AND REGISTRATION

State contests will be held in the following events.

Congressional Debate / Open	CON
Extemporaneous Debate / Open	XDB
Lincoln-Douglas Debate / Novice	NLD
Lincoln-Douglas Debate / Varsity	VLD
Public Forum Debate / Novice	NPF
Public Forum Debate / Varsity	VPF

In LD and PF and XDB, your school may have **up to three (3) entries** at each level (Novice and Varsity). You may enter **up to 10 students** in Congressional Debate. **No doubling.**

Registration is on Tabroom at <http://khssldebatechampionship.tabroom.com/> and is due by **5 PM Eastern on Wednesday, March 18**. This is a soft deadline – entry names and judge names can be changed after this deadline, but any change in the number provided will incur charges (except for adding more judges, which is always welcome). Monday, March 23 will be the Hard Deadline for name changes. After March 23, drops and adds go through the KHSSL email address ONLY ([khssl@khssl.org](mailto:khssl@khssl.org) -- no texts or calls for changes.) Automatic and increasingly heavy penalties kick in for drops after the initial deadline, so please try to be accurate early. See the 2025-2026 [KHSSL Handbook](#) pages 132-133 for a complete list.

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### ENTRY FEES

**Entry fees** are \$25 per Congress entry, \$25 per Lincoln-Douglas entry (Novice or Varsity), \$25 per Extemporaneous Debate entry, and \$50 per Public Forum (Novice or Varsity) team. If your school is a Wyatt Debate League member school, Wyatt is going to pay your entry fees.

Also, if your school is NOT a Wyatt League school but IS a Title 1 school, we have a fund (donated by the student organization DebateSphere) that will also pay your entry fees. Kindly email KHSSL ([khssl@khssl.org](mailto:khssl@khssl.org)) notifying the office your school is a Title 1 school by the Hard Deadline to compete for free.

Please note that **Wyatt Debate League and Debatesphere funds do NOT pay for judge fees, just student entry fees.** Schools must still provide judges or pay the fees to hire others to do their much-needed judging.



Like this logo? Buy it as a sticker at State Debate!

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## SCHEDULE AND ROUNDS

Congressional Debate will have two 2-hour preliminary sessions and a 3-hour final session of 15-16 debaters.

Extemporaneous Debate and Varsity/Novice Public Forum and Lincoln-Douglas shall compete in 4 preliminary rounds plus a Semifinal (best 4) and Final (winners of Semifinals) unless numbers require larger numbers in outrounds. See chart:

Entries	Break to
7-8	Finals (2)
9-16	Semifinals (4)
17-31	Quarterfinals (8)
33-64	Octofinals (16)
65+	Sextodecimofinals (32)

If there are fewer than 7 entries in a debate event, a Round Robin schedule will be implemented for that event.

A full schedule of expected rounds is at the end of this invitation.



Blyton Bear and mugs on sale at State!

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## JUDGES

### Judge Obligations and Hire Fees

- The judge quota is set at one judge required per five entries or fraction thereof for Congressional Debate.
- The judge quota is set at one judge required per two entries or fraction thereof for Varsity and Novice LD and for Varsity and Novice Public Forum and for Extemporaneous Debate.
- 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.
- It is considered standard operating procedure for the team coach to be one of the judges you bring as this is state tournament, and we want our best people in the judging pool to determine the state winners!
- **Please note** that judges must be available the full day to count for the day, so no “Please no finals” requests. And yes, it’s \$150 for the one day. It’s a really long day. Judges might judge every round of the day, though we seek to avoid that.
- Judges should be prepared to judge all four debate events. If they are new to LD or can serve as a Parliamentarian, **please make that note** in the registration for that judge.
- It is not KHSSL’s norm to publish judge paradigms nor to honor requests for judge blocks without extraordinary circumstances. Contact the Executive Director with concerns.

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### Judge Training

#### **REQUIRED ANTI-BIAS TRAINING**

The Handbook states that all judges must complete our anti-bias training. The link for this training is [here](#) and on the homepage of the KHSSL website, [www.khssl.org](http://www.khssl.org). Please make sure all judges have completed it no later than the registration deadline. If your judges already completed it anytime, they're good to go (no need to complete it again). You can check who has done so [here](#).

#### **ADDITIONAL TRAINING**

We strongly encourage judges to take themselves through NSDA's short but mighty judge training courses offered here:

[NSDA Intro to Judging Debate course \(15 minutes\)](#)

[NSDA Intro Judging Congress course \(15 minutes\)](#)

[NSDA Judging Congress course \(Level 2 – 15 minutes\)](#)

[NSDA Judging Lincoln-Douglas Debate course \(Level 2 – 15 minutes\)](#)

[NSDA Judging Public Forum Debate course \(Level 2 – 15 minutes\)](#)

**KHSSL also requires** the following training program for all speech and debate judges (a free training from the National Federation of High Schools that doesn't actually take the three hours it says it does – more like 40 minutes):

<https://nfhslearn.com/courses/adjudicating-speech-and-debate>

- Judges can also greatly benefit from using this set of guidelines co-written by Wyatt Debate League and KHSSL in PF, LD, and XD:  
[https://www.khssl.org/files/ugd/d25b56\\_c7a73cbc53694a1db09644e3b3577323.pdf](https://www.khssl.org/files/ugd/d25b56_c7a73cbc53694a1db09644e3b3577323.pdf)
- Additionally, judges who would like to serve as Parliamentarians are STRONGLY urged to view this one-hour webinar hosted by Mr. Congress, Adam Jacobi: <https://tinyurl.com/congressparli>

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## **STATE DEBATE TOURNAMENT INVITATION**

<http://khssldebatechampionship.tabroom.com/>

### **TABROOM**

New judges should browse [here](#) and [here](#) to establish a Tabroom account. Students without Tabroom accounts should browse [here](#) and follow instructions. All debaters and judges will have to have accounts AND be linked to their school's account to participate in the state tournament. Get this finished early, not near the start of the tournament.

Judges will be judging on Tabroom and will not have the option of paper ballots. They should bring their own tablets or laptops; they may not judge on smartphones.

### **TOURNAMENT RULES AND AWARDS**

[The KHSSL Handbook](#) contains extensive information about how the State Tournament is put together and how tabulation determines advancement. Coaches are responsible for understanding these procedures and for explaining them to your team and their parents, your judges, etc.

Awards will be presented at the end of the day on Saturday. In addition to the winners and high placement honors given in each event, speaker awards will also be given based on preliminary rounds in Debate events. Team trophies and the Sustained Excellence trophy will also be presented at this ceremony.

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### CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE

Preliminary chamber sizes will be no larger than 24 per chamber per [the Handbook](#). They will be divided evenly at the Hard Deadline and announced after Registration on Saturday; if there are drops that make chamber sizes uneven, so be it. The Finals chamber will consist of either 15 or 16 students – 15 (top five advance) if there are 3 prelim chambers, 16 if there are 2 (top eight advance).

Only **NEW legislation** may be submitted for KHSSL Congress; it may not have been debated at a previous KHSSL-school tournament. Schools must **upload legislation through Tabroom** as part of their entry; limit of **three items per school**.

**LEGISLATION DEADLINE IS THE SAME AS THE SOFT ENTRY DEADLINE:  
5 PM EASTERN, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18.**

**Legislation will be shared with schools by Sunday, MARCH 22, hopefully earlier; dockets will be announced at the beginning of prelims** (with the remaining published legislation naturally being reserved for finals, no more than one per school).

Students **MUST use KHSSL's established templates** to write legislation. That includes double-spacing, single page, and line numbers. See this website to download these templates:

[www.khssl.org/congressional-debate](http://www.khssl.org/congressional-debate)

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## MERCHANDISE INFORMATION

Merchandise will be for sale from the beginning of registration through the start of Round 1 / Session 1 ONLY at the State Debate Tournament. See note below about T-shirt Pre-orders. See items that will be for sale [HERE](#).

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

NOTE: 2026 Jade State Tournament T-shirts are ONLY available as pre-orders through the team Head Coach as part of the registration process; they will NOT be available at the Merch Table. Coaches MUST order for their teams by using the Concessions tab that is part of the Tabroom registration process for the tournament; this deadline is EARLIER than all other deadlines. **T-shirts must be ordered online by 5 PM Eastern March 4 (Wednesday)** and will be part of the order with Senior Speech; Debate traditionally orders very few t-shirts (though we'd love to see that change!), so we have to order with Senior Speech.

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These fantastic merch opportunities will be on sale at State Debate until first round begins (in addition to many others). The stickers below, \$1 each, are exclusive to the State Debate tournament only.

The little guy on the left is Aff Giraffe, a celebration of our new Debate event and all things debate. He's \$10 at State while supplies last.

See items that will be for sale [HERE](#).

Sales end at the start of first round, so shop early.



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## **STATE DEBATE TOURNAMENT INVITATION**

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### **EMERGENCY INFORMATION and PARKING**

The tournament is being hosted at **Atherton High School, 3000 Dundee Road Louisville, KY 40205.**

**\* TOURNAMENT TELEPHONE NUMBER (talk or text):**

KHSSL 859-927-1100

**\*PARKING:**

Park in the lot on the right side of the school (as you face it)  
– the teacher lot. Overflow in the student lot in the back.

**\* LOCATION OF AEDs:**

School cafeteria.

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### LODGING

KHSSL is no longer involved in lodging arrangements for state tournaments. As a former coach, my personal suggestion is to check with your school's athletic director for any special rates your school may have negotiated with hotels in town as that person will know; your bookkeeper is also a good source of such info.

Remember too that many hotels will give schools what's called the "state rate." AAA and other such organizations also can give you a decent discount.



### COACH OF THE YEAR

If you would like to nominate yourself or one of your fellow coaches to be the Kentucky Debate Coach of the Year, please email [khssl@khssl.org](mailto:khssl@khssl.org) with the name and school of your nominee and up to three sentences of support for your candidate. Voting will take place as coaches register at State.

Deadline March 18.

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## **STATE DEBATE TOURNAMENT INVITATION**

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### **FOOD**

Pre-orders are being taken for lunches. Our schedule does not allow time to exit the tournament to eat lunch, so you should pre-order lunches by the soft deadline of March 18. This is for EVERYONE – students and coaches and judges and any chaperones who wish to eat. Lunches are pre-order ONLY.

You order in the Concessions tab in your Tabroom online registration (same place as t-shirts).

Four options for lunch. All come with a drink.

\$10 options: sandwich box with pulled pork sandwich and potato salad and drink

sandwich box with pulled chicken sandwich and pasta salad and drink

\$7 options: two slices cheese pizza, chips, drink

two slices pepperoni pizza, chips, drink

Everyone should eat breakfast OFF CAMPUS before arriving for Registration and the opening ceremony as no food will be available on campus for breakfast beyond the usual snacks for sale.

Coffee and snacks but not meals will be available all day for free for judges.

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## **STATE DEBATE TOURNAMENT INVITATION**

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*From the Executive Director:*

I am grateful to be running this event at Atherton High School this year and salute Coach Rachael Castillo and her squad for hosting us. Thanks too to the Wyatt Debate League for assistance with custodial costs and to JCPS for allowing us to use the facility.

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!

May the words be with you!

*STEVE*

Steve Meadows, Executive Director

Kentucky High School Speech League

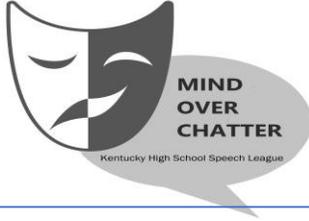
[khssl@khssl.org](mailto:khssl@khssl.org)

859/927-1100 talk or text

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## 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.**

**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.

**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.*

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## STATE DEBATE SCHEDULE 2026

### WEDNESDAY, March 4

- T-shirt pre-orders due in Tabroom by 5 PM Eastern.

### WEDNESDAY, March 18

- Registration Deadline, 5 PM Eastern.
- Food orders due in Tabroom, 5 PM Eastern.
- Congressional Debate Legislation Upload  
Deadline for Congressional Debate 5 PM Eastern (in Tabroom). Legislation released to schools later in the week.

*Over the next five days, coaches can drop/add/sub.*

*Drops/Add pay registration fee plus \$10. Subs are free.*

### MONDAY, March 23 – HARD DEADLINE 5 PM EASTERN

### SATURDAY, MARCH 28 STATE TOURNAMENT AT ATHERTON HIGH SCHOOL

#### Registration 7 AM to 7:45 AM / CAFETERIA

7 – 8:30 AM	Merchandise on sale	CAFETERIA
8 AM	OPENING CEREMONY	
8:30 AM	Round 1	VPF, NPF, VLD, NLD, XDB
8:30-10:30 AM	Session 1	Congress
10:15 AM	Round 2	VPF, NPF, VLD, NLD, XDB
11:30 AM -1:30 PM	Session 2	Congress
12:15 PM	Round 3	VPF, NPF, VLD, NLD, XDB
2 PM	Round 4	VPF, NPF, VLD, NLD, XDB
3 – 6 PM	Finals Session	Congress
3:15 PM	Run-Off Rounds and Quarterfinals if needed; Semis if not	
4:15 PM	SEMIFINALS	VPF, NPF, VLD, NLD, XDB
5:30 PM	FINALS	VPF, NPF, VLD, NLD, XDB
7 PM	AWARDS (earlier if possible)	

*Any Semifinals or Finals that can begin in the prior time slot may be set then.*



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