In-Round Reminders for ALL EVENTS:

- **Silence all devices before a round starts**
- Sit in a place where all competitors are in front of you but you can still hear everything going on in the round.
- Do not rearrange classroom furniture unless absolutely necessary – if any furniture is moved, please return the room to how you found it before the round's start – nothing on teachers' desks / in containers/cabinets should be disturbed.
- Greet students politely as they enter the room and wish them luck as they exit: beyond that, please keep communication with competitors to a minimum; you are the adult in the room, the umpire/referee in this game, and a part of the educational process, please convey this in your demeanor and attitude at all times.
- Take "roll" in speech/debate rounds: read through the list of codes on the schematic for the group so that you are certain that the right students are in the right place. If there is a question about a certain student, please bring it to the attention of the tabroom. Under no circumstances should you ever ask for the school affiliation of a student. Congress should do a roll call before the start of session.
- All speech judges need to keep time, and provide speakers with time signals – ask "how would you like your time" and follow their requests to the letter. Debate judges should keep official time, even if students are timing themselves. Congress will be timed by the Presiding Officer.
- All ballots are online ballots via tabroom.com. Speak to WK after the morning judges' meeting if you're not sure how to access your online ballots
- We recommend taking your notes in a separate document (e.g. Google Doc, Microsoft Word, or Notes app), then copy and paste your notes into Tabroom later. This will ensure that you don't lose your feedback
- Start on time and end on time: submit win/loss/ranks and speaker points ASAP: you will have time to input more in-depth comments throughout the day!

Speech Events Overview

The following pages outline what each event is and how it should be evaluated. In addition to ranking the speakers, you are also expected to write ballots that both highlight strengths of the performance and its weaknesses. Overall:

What Strong Ballots Do

- Explain ranking decisions, not just performance traits
- Reference event goals (analysis, clarity, interpretation, organization)
- Balance specific praise with actionable critiques
- Focus on performance choices within the student's control
    - Never mention a student's manner of dress, perceived or assumed racial/ethnic/economic background, gender or sex, dis/ability, or any other immutable characteristic
- Use language geared towards learning and growth: you are both referee/umpire and educator, and your language should reflect both of those roles.

See this document for examples of strong ballots, and continue on to review standards of adjudication for each event.

Speaker Points: A Guide

- 95-100: this is the platonic ideal. Almost no critical feedback, this student could be in national elims/state finals
- 90-100: this student does a great job. Some small notes on tech and parts to polish, but this student would almost certainly break at states/could at nationals
- 85-90, this is a good performance. Student has technical components they can sharpen, but largely conveys the message of the text.
- 80-85. This performance needs work – significant technical issues/difficulty conveying the message of the text.
- 70-80: This performance has major issues that need to be addressed before the next tournament. Consult with the tabroom before assigning a score in the 70s.

Extemporaneous Speaking

Extemp is a seven-minute speech event (with a 30-second grace period). Students have 30 minutes to prepare a speech in response to one of three selected questions. During prep, students may consult research they've brought with them; at most tournaments, including this one and the National Tournament, they may also use the internet. Each speech is delivered from memory without notes. Successful Extempers are reflective, focused, and inquisitive. They enjoy research, grasp the connections among global events, and are quick thinkers who can analyze complex issues, structure clear arguments, and support their claims with strong evidence—all under pressure. They tend to be reflective, driven, and deeply interested in how national events shape everyday life. To excel, students must think critically, organize ideas quickly, and deliver with clarity and confidence.

I am evaluating speakers on…	***I am not evaluating speakers on…***
• a clear and well-structured answer to the question • use of logic and evidence to support that answer • persuasive delivery and vocal variety • Platform presence	• my opinion about their answer to the question – I do not need to agree with their answer, nor should I reward a speaker with whom I agree • whether they have 3 points – there is no required structure/number of points • Whether they went 6:30 and not 7:30

Original Oratory

Original Oratory (OO) is a 10-minute speech event (with a 30-second grace period) in which students deliver a self-written speech designed to persuade an audience on a topic of significance. While the speech may incorporate humor and emotional appeals, it must be grounded in evidence, logic, and clear structure. The speech is delivered from memory and competitors are limited in their use of direct quotations. Successful orators are creative, enthusiastic, and thoughtful communicators. Because oratories are often revised and refined throughout the season, students should choose a topic they're genuinely excited to explore, continuously research, and present repeatedly. Strong orators are process-driven, personable, and confident in connecting ideas with impact.

I am evaluating speakers on…	***I am not evaluating speakers on…***
• quality, clarity, and development of the speech's main message • effective organization and logical progression • original analysis, insight, and perspective • persuasive delivery, vocal variety, and presence • appropriate and effective use of rhetorical devices / evidence ○ effective integration and citation of sources when used	• alignment with my personal worldview/opinions • topic choice alone: serious v. funny, etc. • whether they have 3 points – there is no required structure/number of points • amount of evidence (while some is nice, it is not a demand of the event)

Declamation

Declamation (DEC) can be considered oratory-on-trainingwheels. Limited to 9th and 10th graders, it is a 10-minute speech event (with a 30-second grace period) in which students deliver a speech previously given in public by someone else. While the speech should try and convey the original speaker's message and intentions, it should not be an impersonation of the origins speaker. The speech is delivered from memory, and often represents a shortened version of a much longer address. Successful declaimers are enthusiastic, clear, and fundamentally sound communicators.

I am evaluating speakers on…	***I am not evaluating speakers on…***
• quality, clarity, and development of the speech's main message • effective organization and logical progression in the cutting • persuasive delivery, vocal variety, and presence • sound public speaking fundamentals •	• alignment with my personal worldview/opinions • speech topic alone: serious v. funny, etc.

Dramatic Interpretation

Dramatic Interpretation (DI) is a 10-minute event (with a 30-second grace period) that challenges students to bring a published piece of serious literature to life using only their voice, facial expressions, and physicality without the use of props, costumes, or sets. While the name suggests high drama, DI is not about melodrama or excessive emotion. Instead, it calls for authentic portrayals of emotionally compelling narratives that connect deeply with the audience. To succeed in Dramatic Interpretation, students must demonstrate emotional control, character depth, and strong internal focus. Successful competitors are able to suspend disbelief and guide audiences through a believable emotional journey. Piece selection is key; students should choose material that aligns with their maturity level and school guidelines.

I am evaluating speakers on…	***I am not evaluating speakers on…***
• depth, consistency, and clarity of character work • emotional authenticity and range • physical and vocal control • clear storytelling, vocally and physically in the space • interpretive choices aligned with the text	• number of characters portrayed • volume alone as a marker of intensity • whether the piece is dark, challenging, or representative of an identity / movement • personal taste in the material ○ "your text is too modern" and "your text is too dated" are equally invalid critiques

Humorous Interpretation

Humorous Interpretation (HI) is a 10-minute event (with a 30-second grace period) that challenges students to entertain and connect with audiences through comedic storytelling. Using published material, performers often portray multiple characters, shifting voices, and physicality to bring dynamic scenes to life, all without props, costumes, or sets. At its core, HI uses humor as a tool to reveal universal truths, create connection, and make people laugh. But humor is complex and subjective; what gets big laughs from one audience might fall flat with another. That's why successful HI competitors think carefully about their material: Is it genuinely funny? Is it appropriate and engaging for a broad audience? Will the story resonate even if a particular joke doesn't land? Students should choose material appropriate for their age, maturity level, and school or team standards, ensuring that the content is both suitable and effective.

I am evaluating speakers on…	***I am not evaluating speakers on…***

• comedic timing, pacing, and clarity
• character consistency and commitment
• interpretive choices aligned with the text
• physical and vocal control
• audience engagement
• clear storytelling through humor
	• the number of characters portrayed
	• joke quantity alone
	• whether I personally find the piece funny
	• conventions of stand-up / sketch comedy
	• personal taste in the material
	  ○ if I find the piece too risque
	  ○ "your text is too modern" and "your text is too dated" are equally invalid critiques

Duo Interpretation

Duo Interpretation (DUO) is a 10-minute event (with a 30-second grace period) that showcases two performers bringing a published script to life. The performance can be dramatic, comedic, or a blend of both. What sets Duo apart is its off-stage focus requirement: partners must perform without making direct eye contact or physical contact with each other, challenging them to build chemistry and connection entirely through performance. Successful Duo teams are balanced, sharing a complementary performance style, work ethic, and level of commitment. On-stage chemistry matters most, and personal rapport doesn't always translate into effective performance synergy. Duo also opens the door to pieces that one performer alone might struggle to bring to life, such as scripts with rich dialogue, dual protagonists, or intricate character dynamics that require two distinct voices. Effective Duo scripts often feature strong contrasts in tone or character, tightly written exchanges, and clear relationships that evolve throughout the performance. A strong Duo performance hinges on equal energy, thoughtful staging, and believable relationships between characters.

I am evaluating speakers on…	***I am not evaluating speakers on…***

• strong and balanced teamwork
• coordinated performance
• clear character relationships
• vocal and physical contrast between characters
• no eye contact (students may position themselves to give the illusion of eye contact)
• no physical contact (students may block their piece to give the illusion of physical contact)
	• number of characters portrayed
	• theatrical standards of scenework / duet acting
	• personal taste in the material
	  ○ if I find the piece too risque
	  ○ "your text is too modern" and "your text is too dated" are equally invalid critiques

Program Oral Interpretation

Program Oral Interpretation (POI) is a ten-minute event (with a 30-second grace period) that challenges students to weave together multiple genres of

literature: prose, poetry, and drama, into a cohesive, theme-driven performance. Each program must include at least two of the three genres, though many students choose to incorporate all three, with the goal of crafting a compelling argument or central message supported by the selected texts. Performers begin with an original introduction written by the student, which frames the theme and identifies the titles and authors of the pieces used. POI highlights both literary analysis and interpretive performance. Students construct their programs by selecting published material that explores a common theme from multiple perspectives. A strong POI blends emotional depth, narrative clarity, and performative range, often incorporating both serious and humorous moments. Students are expected to portray multiple characters, shift tone and style, and maintain a strong throughline, all without the use of props or costumes (except for the required manuscript. For the avoidance of doubt, the manuscript may be used as a prop).

I am evaluating speakers on...	***I am not evaluating speakers on...***
• a clear and intentional unifying theme • quality and clarity of transitions • balance and cohesion among the text selections • interpretive choices that reinforce the theme/message • delivery that supports the overall program.	• number of genres of literature/source material selected alone • prestige or familiarity of sources • an expectation of equal time per selection • personal agreement/alignment with the theme/its advocacy

Congress Overview

NSDA Districts-specific reminders

- You will have multiple judges in each room, as well as a parliamentarian. Please do not start the round without all adult scorers/parliamentarian as listed on the schematic / the righthand side of your ballot page on tabroom.com.
- Parliamentarians are the final say on issues of procedure, they should consult the Committee if there are any concerns.
- Direct Questioning is mandated by the NSDA Unified Manual, p. 45.
- There is no "motion to open the floor for debate" under NSDA rules

NSDA Evidence Standards

- Please review pp. 49-54 of the NSDA Unified Unified Manual to fully understand the evidence standards for this tournament. Parliamentarians will be instructed to closely and fully understand these rules.
- Copies of the NSDA Evidence Challenge form will be distributed to Parliamentarians. (Appendix D of the NSDA Unified Manual).

Types of Speeches

Though the types of speeches in Congress are not explicitly stated, speeches will fall into one or more of the following categories

- Authorship/Sponsorship - 1ST SPEECH ON EVERY BILL
    - Introduces the bill/resolution for debate
    - Should establish that there is an issue that needs solving (inherency) and how the bill solves the issue (solvency)
- 1st Negation - 2ND SPEECH ON EVERY BILL
    - constructs opposition by explaining how attempting to solve/mitigate a problem using this legislation will fail to meet objectives or will make the problem worse
        - "Doesn't do enough," or "actively does harm"
- Rebuttal
    - Directly responds to and refutes arguments made on the other side of the debate with evidence and active analysis/explanation
    - NOT just namedropping other competitors
- Extension
    - Expands and expounds upon a previously made argument with new evidence/analysis
    - NOT just namedropping other competitors and repeating/rehashing

SPEECHES AFTER THE FIRST CYCLE ARE OFTEN A COMBO OF REBUTTAL AND EXTENSION, AND EARLIER ON WILL OFTEN CONSTRUCT NEW ARGUMENTS

- Crystallization
    - summarizing positions of both sides, and weighing the impacts to prove why one side wins over the other. This speech establishes key voting issues in the round. They will be in the last few speeches of the debate.

What makes a good speaker?

- Content: organization, evidence and language; logical arrangement of ideas; depth of thought; support from a variety of credible quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (expert testimony) evidence analyzed to draw conclusions; compelling language; memorable introduction and conclusion; and cohesive transitions to establish speaker's purpose and frame perspective of the issue's significance
- Argument & Refutation: arguments have clear claims, are substantiated with sound, analysis and evidence, and explain the impact on those affected; these ideas are either new/fresh, or clear extensions rather than mere repetition of what has already been said; refutation of opposing arguments actually disproves them, rather than simply listing and saying they're wrong; answers to questions are given in similar structure.
- Delivery: vocal control and physical poise are deliberate, crisp and confident. Delivery should be extemporaneous and engaging others in the room, with few errors in pronunciation. Eye contact is effective and consistent.
- Good Legislator: command of parliamentary procedure; asks questions; makes motions; takes actions that are in service of the chamber; plays the role of Congressperson effectively; respects the chamber and all those in it

So who wins?

- You will rank the top 8 speakers in the room, with 1 being the best and 8 being the furthest from the best. Your ranks will be averaged with the other judges' to determine who advances to the elimination rounds and final placements for the day.

How do I score/rank the PO?

- You are evaluating them on:
    - Speaker Recognition: methods are clearly explained at the beginning of the session and executed consistently. The PO is consistent in recognition (very few errors) and rulings, distributing speeches throughout the room, equally between schools of the same size, and among individuals.

    - Parliamentary Procedure: command of parliamentary procedure (motions) to transparently run a fair and efficient session, seldom consulting written rules and ruling immediately on whether motions pass or fail, but consulting the parliamentarian when necessary to ensure accuracy.
    - Delivery/Presence: dynamically fosters order and trust, and relates to peers well through vocal and physical presence. Word choice is economical and eloquent. The PO does not hesitate to rule abusive or inappropriate motions out of order. they foster trust by peers
- Unless the PO has made a noticeable and dramatic series of mistakes, they should get a rank from you commensurate with their performance in the aforementioned areas.

What should my ballots look like?

You will write a critique and give speaker points (2-6, 2 being barely intelligible and/or offensive and 6 being better than actual Congresspeople) for each speech a student gives. Separate from these critiques for individual speeches, you will also rank the top 8 speakers in the room, with 1 being the best and 8 being the furthest from the best. Your ranks will be averaged with the other judges' to determine who advances to the elimination rounds and final placements for the day. Ranks are on cumulative performance in the session, inclusive of all speeches/activity in that session. To do this, your ballot on tabroom.com will have two tabs: one to record feedback on individual speeches, and the other to input ranks. Please see WK Kay at the conclusion of the session if you are struggling to navigate tabroom.com

A Good Ballot	A Ballot That Needs Improvement
Fracking Aff - Time was 3:02 - Love the intro, but slow it down to make sure we catch the wordplay - Good to go right for the text of the bill and explain the "it's not in the bill" debate that was happening a bit early on - Excellent work of speaking extemporaneously and not relying on your notes - You're doing solid crystallization in a relatively early cycle speech, nicely done - Warrant 'entire towns can perish" more: you don't tell us how that happens	You are a good speaker, you had a good pace and tone. Just be careful with your balance with your notes and eye contact with the chamber. Time 3.03

- Rhetoric is strong in the “harming our constituents” bit of the first point - Investopedia is not as helpful as you think as it is - find what they’re citing from and cite that instead; you wouldn’t cite Wikipedia, don’t cite this - Great clash with Smith, who has the strongest Neg so far - make your gestures stronger: we lose anything you do below the waist - Strong rhetoric in conclusion, just don’t stumble during the wordplay (which was clever!) - Well done in questioning, stood strong especially against Johnson - Great questioning against Jones late in the debate, nice job to re-insert yourself in the debate	