2027 Mound High Swing

Dear Colleagues:

McKendree University is pleased to invite you to the 19th annual Mound High Swing in person on campus at McKendree University in Lebanon, Illinois, on January 7-10, 2027.

The Mound High Swing will feature 2 complete parliamentary debate tournaments over 4 days with novice, junior varsity, and open divisions offered in each tournament. At the first half, we will offer 5 preliminary rounds, break all winning records, utilize random topics, and make available judge strikes - similar to the NPDA Championship. At the second half, we will offer 5 preliminary rounds, break all winning records, utilize pre-released topics, and make use of mutually preferred judging - similar to the NPTE. Both tournaments will feature two minutes of flex time after the PMC and LOC, as well as one minute of flex time after the MGC and LOR. This time may be used for prep, CX, drinking water, etc. Note that semifinals and finals of BOTH tournaments are scheduled for the final day of competition - January 10.

We hope these tournaments to be some of the most competitive in the nation and hope you will join us for some fantastic competition this January.

Contact Head Debate Coach Brent Nicholson with any questions or concerns about the tournament via his email or phone included below.

Best,

Joe Blasdel * Director of Speech and Debate * McKendree University

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Brent Nicholson * Head Debate Coach * McKendree University

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Tournament Document + Registration now open

Tournament Procedures & Facilitation

Unless otherwise specified, NPDA tournament guidelines will govern the tournament's operating procedures. The tournament directors reserve the right to make any decisions necessary to facilitate the timely and accurate completion of the tournament.

It is the responsibility of every judge to render a decision in round. The tournament will assign a winner and loser to every debate. If a judge, for some reason, is incapable of rendering a decision, then tab will flip a coin and determine the winner and loser.

Additionally, this tournament will use tabroom.com and will set a timer to each ballot. If a judge has not rendered a decision before the allocated time, tab will flip a coin to determine a winner and loser.

A judge that fails to render a decision within the timeframe for more than 3 decisions in a tournament will be dropped from the tournament, and they will be considered an uncovered judge for the purposes of the institution and fees (the swing has two tournaments, so one half of the swing is one full tournament).

Entries & Eligibility

Tournaments are open to any regularly enrolled undergraduate in a two year or four year college or university in good standing with the school's debate team/club. As the tournaments run back-to-back, students may (and are encouraged to) attend both tournaments.

All entries should be submitted via the tabroom website. Please make sure that you enter both halves of the swing, if that is your choice. Entries are due by **December 21st 2026** (12:00 pm CST). This early entry deadline is necessary for ordering food, hiring judges, and ensuring the timely distribution of strike forms. Our campus is closed from Dec 24-Jan 4, so we must have plans made in advance to guarantee access. We will allow drops and changes until a later date, but entries must be made by this date.

Please Note! We request all judges associated with schools have up-to-date philosophies entered via Tabroom by **January 4th, 2027**. This year, schools that have judges absent a paradigm will not receive prefs/strikes for that tournament half. This is new this year. If your judge does not submit a paradigm, you can submit one for them (just shoot an email or text to tab and we'll get it sorted out). This does not need to be super detailed, just a simple "this is our critic, this is their experience" would be sufficient.

Divisions

We will offer a novice and junior varsity division. In order to best protect novice debaters, we will avoid collapsing the novice division unless there are fewer than 6 teams. If there are fewer than 6 novice entries, we will merge novice and junior varsity. If there are still fewer than 6 entries in the new division after that merger, we will merge all novice and junior varsity entries into the open division.

We will offer a breakout final round for any division of debate that is merged into another division.

Hybrid Judges: We will consider using hybrid judges to cover commitments. If we use hybrid judges, we will prioritize hiring judges who intend to be in the judging pool for either the NPDA Championship Tournament or the NPTE. Preference will be given to judges who will judge both tournaments and who have arrangements made for those tournaments.

Awards

Sweepstakes

We are adding a Swing Sweepstakes award for this year's tournament, using a slightly modified version of the NPDA Championship Tournament's sweepstakes formula.

NPDA Formula: "Sweepstakes points will be accumulated from a combination of preliminary and elimination round records from the top four teams from a school during the competition. Ordinarily, the records of the four teams from each school with the highest number of preliminary round wins will be awarded two points for each preliminary round. An additional two points will be awarded per team per elimination round won (including advancement by a bye) by the four teams accumulating the most elimination round points. These may not necessarily be the same four teams that accumulated the most points in preliminary rounds. The National Champion will receive an additional two points for its school in addition to any elimination round points earned."

The modifications to this are that the top Novice team for each school will count in addition to four open teams and each tournament champion will receive the champion bonus. Novices counted as a fifth team will be given 1 point instead of two for each

preliminary and elimination round win. Each tournament champion will receive an additional two points in addition to any elimination round points earned.

McKendree will not be eligible for sweepstakes awards.

If a school has fewer than 4 open entries, we will count up to 4 novice entries for sweepstakes instead. Any entries counted this way will count for full sweepstakes points. This should maximize the number of teams counting for sweepstakes while also allowing debaters to compete in appropriate divisions.

Speakers

Top 10 speakers across the weekend will be recognized and given awards.

The top novice speaker across the weekend will be recognized as the Zach Schneider Memorial Top Novice Speaker and given an award.

Advancing Teams

All octofinalists or better at both halves will be recognized and given awards.

I-70 Cup

The I-70 Cup will be awarded at the awards ceremony if it is already decided. If the results of elimination rounds after awards could impact the I-70 Cup standings, it will be awarded at the end of the swing.

I-70 Cup points are accrued at recognized NPDA tournaments along the I-70 corridor. Those tournaments include Missouri Valley University Viking, I-70 Online Swing, and the Mound High Swing. Teams receive 1 point for each parliamentary debate win at these tournaments, including preliminary rounds and elimination rounds.

Parliamentary Debate - BOTH HALVES

Five preliminary rounds of parliamentary debate will be offered followed by elimination rounds. Competition will be administered according to the NPDA rules of Judging and Debating. Time limits are 7 minutes for the 1st government constructive, 8 minutes for all other constructive speeches, 4 minutes for the leader of opposition rebuttal, and 5 minutes for the prime minister rebuttal.

FLEX: Both tournaments will feature two minutes of flex time after the PMC and LOC, as well as one minute of flex time after the MGC, and LOR. This time may be used for prep, CX, drinking water, etc.

ELIMS: At the end of the preliminary rounds, we will advance all teams with a winning record (3-2 and better) to elimination rounds. Teams advance first based on win/loss record, then adjusted speaker points, then total speaker points, then judge variance. Brackets will be broken in elimination rounds.

PREP TIME RULE: Any team that is late to a round will have that time deducted from their team's first speech (the PMC or LOC). When the full speech time has elapsed (7 or 8 minutes), the team in question will be forfeited. In the event both teams are late, both teams will have time deducted from their first speech. A universal timer will be made available at the time of topic announcement. Time deductions and forfeiture rules will be enforced by the judge assigned to the round. There will be 25 minutes of preparation time.

CENTRAL TOPIC ANNOUNCE: Topics, during the tournament, will be released at a centralized announcement site and on a live document. Teams will have 25 minutes before the debates begin. It is imperative that rounds begin on time! Judges should begin their rounds precisely 25 minutes after topic announcement.

JUDGE DISCLOSURE AND FEEDBACK: Disclosure of decisions and other oral commentary may be conducted at the discretion of the judge, but please conduct such commentary after the ballot has been submitted through tabroom. We will be attempting to power-match every round without lagging, so a prompt return ensures that the tournament stays on time.

Elimination Round Procedure: In debates in which teams previously debated in the same half of the tournament in preliminary rounds, sides will be pre-set to the opposite of that preliminary round. In debates in which teams have not previously debated in the same half of the tournament in preliminary rounds, the higher seed will be permitted to call the flip. Each call will be made and a single coin will be flipped for each round.

The NPTE half will use this procedure until semifinals, at which point we will use the NPTE's choice process.

Novice and Junior Varsity Elimination Rounds: We intend to offer as many elimination rounds for Novice and Junior Varsity as possible at both halves. Those rounds will use the same processes as all other rounds. When possible, we will pair 3 judges to those rounds, but we will prioritize a higher number of elimination rounds over larger judge panels. For

instance, if we have 4 winning records, we may choose to have a semifinal with 1 judge in each round to increase the number of rounds novices are having.

Parliamentary Debate- 1st Half (NPDA)

TOPICS: Topics will not be pre-released. All topics will be policy topics with an actor and action.

JUDGE STRIKES: An appropriate number of judge strikes will be available. Judge strikes need to be submitted by **January 5th, 2027,** 12:00 PM CST.

Parliamentary Debate- 2nd Half (NPTE)

RESOLUTIONS: Pre-released resolutions will be posted on the NPDA's forum and on the Tabroom page for the second half by December 1st, 2026. Topics for this year's tournament will be exclusively policy topics with an actor and action. If you have ideas for what types of policy topics Mound High should use, please contact Brent with those – we are actively considering ways to improve the research process in NPDA, so we're happy to hear your feedback.

JUDGE PREFS: The second tournament uses mutually preferred judging. Judge prefs need to be submitted by **January 6th, 2027,** at 6:00 PM CST.

Elimination Round Procedure: We will use the NPTE's choice system for elimination rounds starting in semifinals. In previous years, the choice process has slowed down day 3 of the tournament, which is our most time crunched and we'd like to avoid that this year.

General Policy for Both Halves

Provision of Food and Nourishment:

The tournament will provide coffee and snacks throughout the day as well as lunch through the school cafeteria each day of the tournament. Teams with folks who have dietary restrictions should contact jeblasdel@mckendree.edu

Fee Structure (per half):

Important change: Fees must be paid prior to competition. Please make plans to pay in advance or come prepared to pay with our Business Office. If you have delays, please reach out to us directly prior to the tournament so we can coordinate a plan.

$110 Per Entry Per Tournament. (This amounts to $220/partnership for both tournaments. Judges/spectators/coaches are free).

$250 Added Per Uncovered Team Per Tournament. (This means one uncovered entry will cost $720 for both halves of the swing). We know this is a high cost for uncovered entries (see note below). But judging is the primary obstacle in hosting this tournament, so we have to compensate our hired judges for time, transport, lodging, meals, and everything else in order to ensure the tournament runs properly.

Our goal with increased prices is three-fold. First, we want to offer better and more awards (including sweepstakes). Second, we need to cover our judging costs and want to increase the budget for bringing in judges for the tournament. Third, we need to make the tournament more financially sustainable so that we can continue hosting it indefinitely.

Checks can be made payable to McKendree University Speech & Debate. Additionally, our business office can accept credit card payments (details forthcoming).

A note on uncovered judging: One judge covers two entries. It's cliché, but we would rather have your judges than your money. The tournament directors reserve the right to refuse entry to teams uncovered by a critic. If you have extra judges attending the tournament, please contact the tournament directors, as we may be able to hire them at a stipend. Our preference is that no team will have more than 2 uncovered entries, though we may allow exceptions.

Judging Obligation: Judges will be expected to judge all preliminary rounds and through the first full elimination round. This means you cannot enter partial commits. If your judges have restrictions on their availability, you must contact us prior to the tournament. After the first elimination round, judges will be expected to judge one round past the elimination of their teams.

A Note on Fees/Judges: We very much want to encourage your participation at this tournament! If the fees are prohibitive, or you are having a hard time finding judges to cover your commitment, please let us know! The tournament will be able to work something out to aid your participation (especially for our student-run programs, community colleges, or any program facing obstacles related to costs and logistics - just talk to us! We can find a way to make it work).

Accessibility:

We strive to make the tournament as accessible as possible - please feel free to contact us so we can ensure provision of all necessary accommodation.

Tentative Schedule

If fewer elimination rounds are needed, we will adjust the Saturday and Sunday schedule accordingly.

Thursday

1:00 Registration & Prep Setup

1:45 NPTE 1

3:30 NPTE 2

5:00 Dinner at Ames

5:45 NPTE 3

7:45 NPTE 4

Friday

8:15 Pairing

8:30 NPDA 1

10:15 NPDA 2

12:00 Lunch

12:45 NPDA 3

2:45 NPDA 4

4:45 NPDA 5

6:15 Pizza Provided

7:00 NPTE 5

Saturday

7:45 Pairing

8:00 NPDA E1

10:00 NPTE E1

12:00 Lunch

12:45 NPDA E2

2:45 NPTE E2

4:45 NPDA E3

6:45 NPTE E3

Sunday

7:45 Pairing

8:00 NPDA E4

10:00 NPTE E4

12:00 Lunch

1:00 Awards

1:45 NPTE E5

3:45 NPDA E5