

2017 Congress Packet



16th Annual Spartan Invitational

Broad Run High School

A Battle of Minds — A War of Words

Congressional Debate Schedule

Saturday, January 28

8:00 a.m. — 8:30 a.m.	Registration
9:00 a.m. — 9:15 a.m.	Agenda Setting
9:15 a.m. — 12:00 p.m.	Session One
12:00 p.m. — 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 p.m. — 4:00 p.m.	Session Two
5:30 p.m.	Awards

Official Rules

These rules are for clarity and accuracy, and may not be suspended unless otherwise noted.

RULES: Except as stated in this packet, the tournament will use NCFL national rules, then Robert's Rules of Order. No WACFL rules will be used.

AGENDA: The agenda will be set by competitors at the beginning of the day. Competitors should be open and allow everyone to participate in selecting the agenda. Once adopted, the agenda requires a 2/3s vote to amend.

CHOOSING SPEAKERS: NCFL rules require a Presiding Officer (P.O.) to use precedence then recency when choosing speakers. Geography, activity (the number of questions asked), or standing time are permitted by the NCFL, but will not be permitted at the tournament.

SESSIONS: Each three-hour session is a separate legislative day. Speaker precedence and recency reset at the beginning of each new session. The Presiding Officer may not serve during more than one session, and shall serve the entire three-hour session. Competitors may not debate any topic that was debated in a previous session.

VOTING: All votes are determined by the number of competitors present and voting unless otherwise noted. For Suspensions of the Rules and the Previous Question, per NCFL rules, the vote required to pass is based on the number of competitors in the chamber. For all other votes, abstentions do not count as votes cast. Thus, a vote on a bill of 10-9 with 3 abstentions would pass.

QUESTIONS: After the first affirmation and negation speeches, there shall be two minutes of mandatory questioning time. After all other speeches, there shall be one minute of mandatory questioning time. Leftover time after a speech should not be added to questioning time. The P.O. should recognize speakers fairly and equitably — geography should not be used.

To enhance debate, the P.O. will recognize questioners for 30 second blocks of back and forth cross-examination between a single questioner and the speaker, where the questioner may use the time how they wish. The chair may not rule any question out of order that does not violate decorum. No rule regarding questions may be suspended, except to add time.

ELECTIONS: Refer to the section Election of the Presiding Officer in the NCFL manual for procedures on running P.O. elections. The same procedures shall be used to vote for Best Speaker at the end of the day.

AMENDMENTS: The process for this is somewhat complicated; however, amendments provide the opportunity to enhance legislation and open up new arguments in a debate. Refer to NCFL rules for the amendment process.

Competition Format

There shall be a Parliamentarian and two scorers for each chamber. The Parliamentarian shall be the same for all sessions, but the scorers shall change after every session. Scorers will judge and give a critique for each speech, awarding it between 1 and 6 whole points. The average of these two scores will be used to determine the number of NSDA merit points for the speech.

At the end of each session, scorers shall rank the top 8 competitors for *Best Legislator*, giving the best competitor 8 points, the second best 7 points, and so on. Students not ranked receive a score of 0 points. The Presiding Officer can be, and unless they did a particularly bad job, should be ranked. The Parliamentarian shall be responsible for giving the Presiding Officer a score from 1-6, which shall be tripled for their NSDA points. At the end of the tournament the Parliamentarian should rank all students. The Parliamentarian's ballot shall count towards points for the top 8 the same way a scorer's ballot would, resulting in 5 sets of rankings. Both the Parliamentarian and the scorers shall consider speeches, questions, and participation in ranking students.

Once all ballots have been filled out, rankings will be determined by highest total score, with reciprocal ranks, then the Parliamentarian's ballot, used to break all ties.

Rules Clarifications

These are clarifications on commonly misinterpreted rules.

- A piece of legislation requires an authorship to be debated, but there are no minimum cycle rules after that. There does not need to be a first negation for debate to continue.
- Once a motion has been seconded, it can still be withdrawn and or amended by the author. A motion becomes property of the chamber once the chair states the motion or any debate/action is taken on the motion.
- Lay on the Table had a higher precedence than Previous Question. It was created so a chamber could *temporarily* put aside a motion, with the intent of coming back to it. Once debate finished on a topic, the previous question should be moved. Lay on the Table should only be moved when the chamber wishes to come back to it.
- Once the chamber goes through three consecutive speeches on the same side, the chamber DOES NOT automatically move the previous question. The chamber should if debate becomes one-sided, but it is not required.
- There is no motion to open the floor for debate. This is done by the chair without announcement. Same goes for nominations.
- Orders of the Day are not called at the end of a session. An Orders of the Day is a particular item of business set in advance to be taken up. They are called up by the chair when moving to another bill or resolution on the agenda, there is no motion to call for Orders of the Day. An agenda, by definition, is a collection of orders of the day, every time you start debate on another topic, an order of the day is called up.

Scorer Instructions

Judges (Scorers) will fill out a ballot for each speech in the round and give comments and a score (from 1-6) to the speaker. Each ballot sheet can be used for 3 speeches from the same speaker. You may continue comments or notes on the back of the sheet. Please DO NOT score different speakers on a single sheet, even if they are from the same school. Notify the Parliamentarian if you run out of ballots. To avoid confusion, if a competitor gives more than 3 speeches, they should have their score written down on a separate ballot and stapled to the first ballot. In addition, so the Tab Room can verify rankings, scorers should write a student's rank on their ballot, as well as the student ranking sheet.

Speech scores should take into account that Congress is a debate event. There are multiple types of speeches, each having equal weight in a debate. The authorship and first few speeches should explain the problem and the most important reason to vote with them. After that, speeches should be constructive (add new points to the debate), but don't have to explain the problem; instead, they should refute previous speakers as well. The further along in the debate, the more refutation a speech should have. Late in the debate, crystallization speeches should clarify what arguments have been made and refuted, and explain overall why one side won.

Scorers, please reward students who advance debate and engage with prior speakers, and students who move the chamber forward to the next legislation rather than giving a repetitive speech filled with "rehash." Students do not possess the right to speak on every legislation, and students should not be penalized for moving the previous question to end debate on an exhausted topic.

Presiding is equivalent to giving 3 speeches (one each hour). It is not required that you rank the P.O.; the PO should be considered equally along with the other members of the chamber based on their contribution to the quality and fairness of debate. However, unless they did a very poor job, the P.O. generally should be ranked. Some criteria to consider: adherence to parliamentary procedure, smoothness and speed in handling motions, fairness in distribution of questions, adherence to precedence in determining speakers.

Judges should consider the quality of students questions and answers and participation in questioning when ranking contestants at the end of the session. As part of the effort to turn the event into Congressional Debate, speakers are expected to be able to defend their arguments during questioning. How a speaker handles questioning should be part of the score for their speech, as well as part of their overall ranking. Keep in mind that although the questioner holds the floor, an overly aggressive or hostile posture should be discouraged.