



Congressional Debate Judging Instructions

This is individual debate in a large group setting. Debaters write and research legislation they feel will better our society. At tournaments, debaters speak extemporaneously in favor or against each bill or resolution using proper parliamentary procedure. Judges evaluate contestants for quality of research and analysis of issues, argumentation, skill in asking and answering questions, use of parliamentary procedure, and clarity of delivery.

Evaluation

- When scoring a speaker, offer constructive comments about the speech. If there is questioning involved, the quality of answers by the speaker should factor into the overall speech score. Award each speech between one and six points. You evaluate the quality of arguments, not whether you agree or disagree. Reserve scores of "2" for students who show little effort, and "1" for students who make serious errors (speaking on the wrong side, a speech that's a mockery/not serious, or engaging in personal attacks of other students). See rubric for more guidance, as well as the sample form.

Time Limits – applies to each new legislation	
Sponsor Speech	3 Minutes
Questioning of Sponsor	2 Minutes
First Negative Speech	3 Minutes
Questioning of First Negative	2 Minutes
All subsequent speeches	3 Minutes/each
Questioning of all subsequent speakers	1 Minute/each

- Each judge also should complete an evaluation of the presiding officer (PO), awarding 2-6 points per hour, based on how effectively the presiding officer ran the chamber. See rubric for more guidance, as well as the sample form.

3. **NOTE:** At the National Forensic League **district qualifying tournament**, speakers and POs earn up 2-8 points, and at the **National Tournament**, they earn up 3-9 points. **Excepting those two tournaments, the scale is up to 6 points.**

- When the session ends, judges independently (without consulting one another) rank best legislators on a master ballot:
 - Ranking should take into account students' overall impact during the session. In addition to speaking or presiding effectively, did s/he encourage the legislative problem-solving process in a collaborative manner by asking meaningful questions, useful motions, and showing attentive interest throughout the debate? Could you tell which students actually listened by making specific and accurate references to others' arguments?
 - Ranking the presiding officer (PO) amidst speakers is like comparing apples and oranges. Therefore, consider the overall performance of the PO. Did s/he effectively facilitate debate in an assertive but not aggressive manner? Were motions and votes handled efficiently? Did s/he rely on a number of unnecessary "crutch phrases," or did s/he speak briefly, but effectively? Considering the PO's overall performance, how would it compare to a speaker's performance based on your expectations? Let that be your determining factor in how you might rank the PO among speakers.
 - Quality is more important than quantity. Rank best legislators even if they didn't give the most speeches.
 - A student must have spoken or presided to be ranked.
- Stay in the background as much as possible. Although congress participants may appeal the decision of the student presiding officer to judges, these cases are rare. Allow students to retain control except for serious violations.

Ethics and Evidence Rules *Judges should take adherence to these rules into account when ranking.*

Conduct

- A congressperson shall act with integrity and he/she should never be guilty of intentional harassment. Impeaching/censuring other participants is not allowed.
- Participation in this event demands the seriousness of purpose and maturity possessed by real world policymakers. All adult officials, including scorers, will hold each participant to this standard.
- Congresspersons should have a cooperative nature and if there is a problem, then the student should take any concerns to an adult official.

- Participation in debate is essential. Extended absence from the chamber during a session will affect a contestant's overall impression and performance. The practice of "open chambers" interferes with the parliamentarian's ability to monitor student participation.

Evidence and Use of Electronic Devices

- Computers may be used to retrieve evidence per the League's rules for laptops in debate events.
- Visual aids are permitted in Congressional Debate, provided they do not require electronic retrieval devices in the chamber.