

NFL DISTRICT CONGRESS

\*\*\*PROPOSED\*\*\* RULE CHANGES

*Remember: BE NICE. PLAY FAIR. KEEP COMPETITION IN PERSPECTIVE.*

**Our goals in these meetings have been the following:**

- 1. To move everyone to a common ground regarding the rules, National Qualification procedures, and the spirit of the event.**
- 2. To establish the future goals and priority of concerns passed on to this committee by our constituents, and forward these to the NFL Executive Council.**

**This committee recommends six actions:**

- 1. A name change for the event from "Student Congress" to Congressional Debate, to promote parallelism with the other three debate events.**
- 2. Adoption of the following Mission Statement & Core Values for the first page of the Congressional Debate manual.**

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*The National Forensic League is committed to the educational development of the individual through the vehicle of Congressional Debate which promotes leadership, life-long learning, ad communication skills, through rigorous debate of issues confronting our democracy.*

**CORE VALUES**

*The activity of Congressional Debate promotes:*

- ▣ Ethics in research and competition.*
- ▣ Respect for both a diversity of ideas and of community.*
- ▣ Seriousness of purpose and demeanor.*
- ▣ Empowerment gained through knowledge.*
- ▣ The tools of effective and ethical leadership.*
- ▣ Active participation in Democratic process.*

- 3. A clarification of selected items in the Congressional Debate Manual.**
- 4. Adoption of a one-year trial period that includes four possible methods to qualify for the National Congress, including current practice, and a formal evaluation to be required of each District providing feedback on the methodology used that year.**
- 5. Separate NFL points for Congressional Debate from Service Points, creating a separate category for point recording purposes. Rationale: Only Congressional Debaters are excluded from earning Service points, which is a gross inequity.**
- 6. This committee reconvene at the 2007 National Tournament to review the results of the trial period and make final recommendations to include, revising the remainder of the SCM and the final procedure for qualifying students for Nationals.**

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**Recommendation 1: The Congress Committee recommends the following changes to the NFL Student Congress Manual for the 2006-2007-competition year regardless of whether any other proposals or recommendations are considered or adopted. Further revisions to the SCM will become necessary as the National Office moves toward a uniform system for National Qualification.**

Replace SCM-5 (2006 ed.) column 2

### **NFL District Congress**

1. Each district may conduct an NFL District Congress, held at a time not conflicting with other NFL District Qualifying events and State League Tournaments. **No student shall exit the chamber to compete in any other event during the congressional session.**
2. The District Congress must be registered in the National Office. The Official Registration Form must be submitted at least 18 days prior to the date of the Congress.
3. Schedule the District Congress to facilitate the attendance of as many chapters as possible.
4. The District Chair will notify the Chapters of the date, place, and time of the Congress. Names and alternates should be submitted to the District Chair or a person designated by the Chair not less than 7 days in advance of the Congress date.
5. A one-day Congress must include five (5) hours of floor debate in addition to time used for elections. A two-day congress must include eight (8) hours to qualify as two legislative days. **Floor debate must be divided evenly among preliminary sessions.**
6. In the District Congress the NFL Student Congress Manual must be followed. The District Chair must send the congress report forms to the National Office within 5 days after the Congress.
7. The National Office will send National Qualifier Plaques for the District Congress. Additional Congress Plaque Awards may be ordered from the NFL Office or online at [www.nflonline.org/store](http://www.nflonline.org/store).

### **District Congress Legislation**

1. Chapters entering the District Congress shall be encouraged to submit 2 bills or resolutions for debate not later than 24 days prior to the scheduled Congress. All bills and resolutions submitted must be in accordance with the rules established by NFL. The District Committee shall attempt to accept at least one bill or resolution from each school submitting bills or resolutions.

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2. At least 14 days before the District Congress Tournament, the District Chair should distribute a copy of not fewer than six bills or resolutions that shall constitute the Calendar for each Chamber per legislative day.
3. Other bills or resolutions not mailed may be considered by a vote to suspend the rules only if the District Committee allows for such suspension.
4. The District Committee may deny legislation considered inappropriate.
5. A District Committee may deny bills or resolutions from being offered from the floor at the District Congress.
6. Legislation shall be the original work of the authoring school. Any challenges should be directed to the Tournament Director.
7. The District Committee shall determine legislation to be debated in each session and the method for obtaining said legislation.

### Preparing Legislation

1. Appropriate topics exhibit seriousness of purpose. The action proposed should be feasible, and such that the actual United States Congress would consider. Topics should be debatable
2. Legislation must be typed, double-spaced, and no longer than one page.
3. A specific title should indicate the legislation's intent or action. For example, "A Bill to *Eliminate* Social Security" versus "A Bill *Concerning* Social Security."
  - a. Preparing a bill: The first words of a bill are "Be It Enacted by the NFL Congress here assembled," followed by numbered sections (which may include lettered sub-points) in bills, which delineates the following: Identifies the policy to be enacted; defines key terms and outlines the plan of action; describes the governing agency and enforcement mechanism(s), and penalties; defines the method of funding, if required; and the date of implementation.
  - b. Preparing a resolution: Resolutions may begin with one or more "Whereas" clauses, which state the principal reasons for adoption. Following the final "whereas" clause is a transitional phrase, "Therefore, Be It Resolved by that NFL Congress here assembled that," followed by the resolution's precise purpose. (Include sample legislation.)
4. All lines of text should be numbered, except the title and signature lines.
5. Generally, the author's name and school be included following the last line of the legislation.
6. The Director of Congress may reject bills and/or resolutions that do not conform to these guidelines from consideration for the agenda.

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## Apportionment

1. Only NFL members may be seated in the District Congress. An affiliate school may seat up to four members in this Congress. All students must be NFL members on record 7 days before the convening of the Congress.
2. A District may have no Senate or one or two Senate chambers, and up to four House Chambers as determined by the formula found on the Registration of Official District Congress. Non-qualifying chambers may be held in conjunction with the NFL District Congress as a separate and distinct competition.
3. The number of entries from a chapter school shall be based on the number of active members and degrees on record in the National Office seven (7) days before the Congress. The following apportionment table should be used. No District Committee should limit the number of students entering the District Congress that is in conflict with the Congress Tournament Manual concerning apportionment.
4. Apportioning students from member schools into chambers:
  - a. If a Senate is held, each school may enter zero, one, or two Senators.
  - b. If a school chooses not to enter students in the Senate, the school forfeits those entries. These seats may not be shifted to the House.
  - c. Entries into the House(s) shall be determined by the Apportionment chart in the Student Congress Manual based on Members and Degrees on Record.
  - d. Schools shall determine the grouping of individual students from their schools for consideration of the Tournament Director. The District Committee through a blind draw shall determine assignment of groups from individual schools to the Chambers. (See blind draw method.)
  - e. Chamber assignments shall be made available at registration.
5. Chamber assignments are final. At registration, only alternates on the original registration form may be substituted and must be seated in the chamber to which the missing competitor was assigned.

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**OTHER RULE CHANGES / CONSIDERATIONS**

1. Eliminate the student vote at the National Tournament.

*Justification: The schedule, the politicking, and every other event is adjudicated by adults. Student voting has been eliminated in earlier rounds at the National Tournament.*

2. Mandatory 1-minute cross-examination for all opponent and proponent speeches.

*Justification: We are aware that this is a huge logistical change to the tournament, necessitating more rooms and smaller chambers. However, better flow, clash, and argumentation are achieved when a cross-examination are mandatory. This furthers our intended mission and goals for the event.*

3. We encourage the development of educational materials for Congressional Debate.

*Justification: In order to encourage the development and understanding of the activity within the parameters of our mission and goals, we must create thorough and appropriate educational materials and resources to support schools and coaches in their efforts to teach the event.*

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**Recommendation 2: The NFL Congress Committee proposes the following changes to the process for qualifying students to the National Tournament. We encourage the adoption of these guidelines for one year to be used to develop additional recommendations for final changes to the Tournament Manual. These recommendations supercede any conflicting rules currently in existence in the NFL SCM.**

**PRELIMINARY SELECTION OF NOMINEES**





**Congress Officials**

Each chamber shall contain three official scorers. One scorer must remain in the chamber for all preliminary sessions of a given chamber. The other two scores may also remain for all preliminary sessions, or may be rotated or replaced in-between sessions, at the discretion of the Tournament Director.

A preliminary session is a round of congressional debate, and there may be more than one.

If judges are to be rotated or replaced, then previous question must be called on the legislation currently being debated.

**Role of the official scorers(s):**




-  The judge shall complete a ballot for each competitor, including the Presiding Officer(s), whether the participant spoke or not.
-  Judges may not confer.
-  The judges will rank the best 8 legislators in the chamber, 1<sup>st</sup> -8<sup>th</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> being best. All others shall receive a rank of 9.
-  Lowest cumulative rankings advance.

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#### Calculation of advancing members

-  If 3 full-time scorers are assigned to an individual chamber, ballots shall be equally weighted.
-  If official scorers are rotated or replaced, those ballots shall be weighted a percentage of the full-time scorer's ballot, based upon the number of preliminary sessions offered. A way of doing this would be to take any full-time scorer judging three sessions and multiply those rankings by 3. Or, if two preliminary sessions are held, by 2. (See **example to be provided at our whim.**)
-  Legislators with the lowest cumulative rankings shall be chosen to either:
  - Advance to the Super Session (see Super Session Rules), or
  - Be the 8 official nominees from which National Qualifiers will be selected (see National Qualifier Selection Guidelines).

#### Super Session Rules

-  A Super Session shall consist of no more than 12 members, advancing an equal number of competitors from each preliminary chamber, based on the number of chambers.
-  The number of students advancing to the National Congress is in direct ratio to the number of preliminary Houses conducted from which the Super Session participants were selected. In the Senate, no more than 2 may advance to the National Tournament.
-  A minimum of 3 scorers must be available for the entirety of the Super Session.
-  A Super Session shall last a minimum of 3 hours.

The judge shall complete a ballot for each competitor, including the Presiding Officer(s), whether the participant spoke or not.

Judges may not confer.

The judges will rank the best 8 legislators in the chamber, 1<sup>st</sup> -8<sup>th</sup>, 1<sup>st</sup> being best. All others shall receive a rank of 9.

Each scorer's ballot shall be equally weighted.

The eight participants with the lowest cumulative ranks, in order, shall be the slate of nominees. (See National Qualifier Selection Guidelines.)

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 **National Qualifier Selection Guidelines**

Choose from one of the following four methods:

**The Florida Plan-- The total judge votes equal the student votes so – judges weight 50% and students’ weight 50%. Each judge, however, votes and is weighted independently; this gives a true panel assessment and a true 50% vote. The accompanying chart enables District Chairs to easily label each ballot with the appropriate weight, depending upon the amount of students in each chamber. Thus, each chamber, and each district across the country would achieve a valid 50% through the same methodology. If the judges concur on their top choice, student vote does become irrelevant. If, however, the judges are divided in their opinions, and the students are not, student vote can override the judges.**

**The benefits of this plan are that it is consistent from chamber to chamber and district to district, it is easy to use- District Chairs merely have to consult a chart, by weighting each judge individually it gives a true 50% division, based on a panel decision, rather than consolidating students’ or judges’ votes.**

**If this plan is implemented, a Tabulation methodology in Excel or any other computer program is an easy option to provide.**

1.

<b># of Students</b>	<b>Judge Votes (Individual)</b>	<b>Judge Votes (Total)</b>
1	0.33	1
2	0.67	2
3	1.00	3
4	1.33	4
5	1.67	5
6	2.00	6
7	2.33	7
8	2.67	8
9	3.00	9
10	3.33	10
11	3.67	11
12	4.00	12
13	4.33	13
14	4.67	14
15	5.00	15
16	5.33	16
17	5.67	17
18	6.00	18

19	6.33	19
20	6.67	20
21	7.00	21
22	7.33	22
23	7.67	23
24	8.00	24
25	8.33	25
26	8.67	26
27	9.00	27
28	9.33	28
29	9.67	29
30	10.00	30
31	10.33	31
32	10.67	32
33	11.00	33
34	11.33	34
35	11.67	35
36	12.00	36
37	12.33	37
38	12.67	38
39	13.00	39
40	13.33	40

2. The Wyoming Plan—

1. General Philosophical Statement

When the “Wyoming Plan” was originally developed it was a result of a compromise among two main groups. The traditionalists felt that Student Congress should be totally in the hands of the students, especially in dealing with the selection of superior members. Any deviation from that system would take away from the spirit of the event, the necessary politicking, as well as the importance of quality, polite argumentation. The second group of coaches had a high level of concern relating to how the event had evolved and was concerned that the student vote could be manipulated in a negative way. A couple of things were happening in chambers. The first was that students were not necessary voting for the best speakers but were using other criteria. The second was that behavior in the chambers was digressing because there was no accountability. Often those items that would put off adult judges were just simply “cool tricks” on the part of the students. This took away form the educational aspect of the learning experience.

In philosophy there are two main concepts that must be followed for this system to be true to its spirit. The first is that there is an even split between the weight of the student vote and the judge vote in the determination of superior members. This can be accomplished by simply taking the number of judges voting and multiplying the student vote by that number to equal out the equation. This 50% judge vote could be construed to temper the student vote – balancing out extremes that may take place. The second is the presence of a parliamentarian for the duration of the competition. This parliamentarian would serve to help keep things running according to established practices and procedures and to make the nominations of who the students in the chamber would be voting on at the end of the final session. The vote of the parliamentarian would not be counted in the final balloting but could be used as a tie breaker. To allow a parlie vote would give too much power into the hands of a single person.

A tertiary concept, that is not necessary for the system to work but still changed how business was conducted, was to allow groups of three to stay together from the same school. In concept this allows a school entering three kids to

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put them all in one chamber rather than splitting them up among each of the preliminary houses. A table is included that helps to show how this is accomplished. In our state, there is a large differential between large programs and smaller ones. This system allows a better balance of chambers and its voting blocks and gives the smaller programs a greater opportunity to compete on equal footing.

Over the last few years this system has worked exceptionally well at the Wyoming State Speech Tournament and has served to be a good compromise between both sides. The following items have been adapted from the Wyoming High School Forensic Association State Tournament rules and regulations and are the result of a number of contributors over the last 15 years or so. These rules, in concept, can be applied to the District level Senate where there is one chamber and the national qualifiers are chosen from within to the House where there could be a number of preliminary chambers that break to a super session. Then the qualifiers are taken from that final session. In Wyoming we split the competitors into houses of equal numbers and take one from each to nationals.

#### 2. Structure

Experience has demonstrated that a house with too many members will be unmanageable and not provide students the opportunity to fully participate. Conversely, a house with too few students will not offer sufficient interaction to make the competition worthwhile. NFL advises that the optimum membership in a house of a student congress is 20. Whenever possible during the course of the year but particularly during the District Tournament, this rule should be considered as inviolate as practical.

The formula "Base of Three" will be used to determine chamber assignments. Coaches will be able to place up to three of their competitors within a given house, depending on the number of houses needed for student congress. This means that students will be assigned by school in groups of three as close as possible. Please see table (insert correct table number for an example) for how students may be split. The director of forensics from each participating school shall determine which of their kids are to be together and how they are to be split according to the table. However, they will not be allowed to determine which chamber they are to be assigned in. That is left up to the district committee or a representative appointed by them.

#### 3. Organization

Each school entered in Student Congress may submit one, and only one, Bill or Resolution by the due date set by the district committee. The Bill or Resolution must be properly typed on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper. All Bills and Resolutions received on time will be duplicated by the Tournament Director (or his/her staff) to be distributed to all schools entered. The clerk shall ensure the Bills/Resolutions are mailed to all schools at the same time to avoid any inherent advantage, and to do so as soon as possible following the deadline date.

Bills or Resolutions which are submitted after the entry deadline, will not be accepted for duplication or distribution by the Tournament Director. If "late" bills or resolutions are accepted for addition to the agenda order, they may be added only to the bottom of the agenda order, after all the pre-submitted bills have been debated. Sufficient copies of "late" Bills and Resolutions must be provided by each school. The tournament staff will not duplicate "late" Bills or Resolutions at the site of the State Tournament.

Schools who pre-submit Student Congress legislation on time will be guaranteed an sponsorship speech when the legislation comes to the floor, prior to the application of other parliamentary or procedural rules.

#### 6. Parliamentarian's Duties and Obligations

A parliamentarian shall be used in each of the chambers. The Parliamentarian may not have students from his or her school as members of that given house. The parliamentarian will remain assigned to the same chamber for the duration of the competition.

All houses will operate much more effectively and efficiently if the Parliamentarian does not fear to intervene in order to head off potential problems. This should not be construed to mean that the parliamentarian should run the session; rather that he/she should have a firm hand on the reins to avoid a runaway congress. The parliamentarian should not be "rushed" into making a hasty or improper decision. After all, his/her decisions are final and should be made after due deliberation. The parliamentarian's guide should be the NFL Handbook and Robert's Rules of Order, tempered by common sense and a desire to see the session run as an orderly function. When the Parliamentarian is in doubt or the issues are clouded to the degree resolution cannot be attained without undue delay in the proceeding, the issue should be resolved by unrestrained debate of the participants; however, the Parliamentarian shall make this decision at his/her sole discretion and may elect to hear arguments from both sides of the issue for so long as it may take him/her to make a decision. Addresses to the problem by the members to the Parliamentarian shall not be counted as a speech and shall be considered by neither the judges nor the Parliamentarian in ranking the student.

If allowed at the district tournament, each school, which has congress competitors, will be allowed one parliamentarian strike. If not possible to honor all the strikes, the parliamentarian with the fewest strikes shall be used.

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#### 7. Judges Duties and Obligations

One judge will be assigned for each session for each house that has fewer than 14 members. Two judges will be assigned for each session for each house that has 14 or more members

Individual judges will consider the results of one or two rounds as the needs of the congress and the availability of a judging pool dictates. A ballot should be completed by the judge for all members of the given house judged, whether the participants spoke during the session or not. Judges are requested not to confer with others about their decisions, reasons for ranking, individual likes or dislikes, or reasons for decisions with students, coaches, or each other until all rounds of congress have been completed. Completed scoring sheets by the judges will be given only to the congressional monitor to avoid an impression of collusion.

The judges will rank the highest scoring or the best participants. The ranks given will be one through seven (one being first place) at the end of each session. All other members of the session shall receive an eighth place. In the event of a tie after the cumulating of both sets of scores (if two judges are used) both members shall receive the higher rank and the next one will be skipped.

If allowed at the district tournament, each school which has congress competitors will be allowed one Congress judge strike. If it is not possible to honor all these strikes, a preferential system will be used. That is, the judges with the least number of strikes will be used. All student congress judge strike sheets will be held in confidence by the tournament staff.

#### 8. Membership Voting

Following the last session of Congress, the Parliamentarian shall make available, in no particular order, his/her top seven preferences for overall best speaker. The membership will individually rank these selections one through seven. The Parliamentarian and the last session judge, or judges, will tally these preferences. These totals will determine the membership's ranking of these seven students. This membership ranking is then multiplied by the total number of judges used in the chamber, so that the voted ranking of the membership will weigh the same as that of the judges from all preliminary sessions. In the final membership vote all participants not receiving a rank of 1-7 will be ranked 8.

In the event of a tie, the Parliamentarian's preference will be the tie breaker.

The parliamentarian will not reveal his or her ranks to the membership. The ranking ballot used by the parliamentarian should have "Parliamentarian" clearly marked on it. This ranking shall only be used to break a tie.

At the end of all sessions, the judges' rankings from each session will be added together, along with the membership ranking times the number of judges used in the chamber. Final placement will be determined by the lowest total cumulative score receiving first place, etc., on to the highest total receiving last place. In the event of a tie, the parliamentarian's preference will prevail. If one is offered, the top ranked legislators from each chamber will then advance to super congress. If only one chamber is used to determine the national qualifier then the top ranked students qualify. In the event that a district wishes to select the national qualifiers in the house from a super congress, then an equal number from each preliminary chamber shall advance to the super session allowing for a final chamber of as close to 20 individuals as possible.

#### 9. Tab Room

At the end of all preliminary sessions the judges' rankings from each session will be added together, along with the membership ranking times the number of judges used. Final placement will be determined by the lowest total cumulative score receiving first place, etc., on to the highest total receiving last place. These final results will have the tab room staff determine those legislators who advance to super congress. The same procedure will be used to determine the national qualifiers in student congress.

#### 10. Super Congress

- o An even number of the legislators from each of the student congress chambers will advance to Super Congress. The final number should remain as close to twenty (20) as possible.
- o All bills for Super Congress at State would be generated from the previous year's NFL national super congress. Any bills, which had been discussed, that are similar to the NFL national super congress bills, will be eliminated by the tournament director. Bills to be discussed in Super Congress will be mailed with the other "on-time" legislation.
- o A new parliamentarian and three judges will be appointed for Super Congress.

Following the end of the Super Congress sessions, the Parliamentarian shall make available, in no particular order, his/her top seven preferences for overall best speaker. The membership will individually rank these

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preferences one through seven. The Parliamentarian and the Super Congress session judges will tally these preferences. These totals will determine the membership's ranking of these seven students. This membership ranking is then multiplied by three, so that the voted ranking of the membership will weigh the same as that of the judges from the Super Congress session.

In the event of a tie, the Parliamentarian's preference will be the tie breaker.

The parliamentarian will not reveal his or her ranks to the membership. The ranking ballot used by the parliamentarian should have "Parliamentarian" clearly marked on it. This ranking shall be used only to break a tie.

At the end of the Super Congress sessions, the judges' rankings from the session will be added together, along with the membership ranking times three. Final placement will be determined by the lowest total cumulative score receiving first place, etc., on to the highest total receiving last place. In the event of a tie, parliamentarian's preference will prevail.

3. The California Congress Plan— Final rankings according to judge selection are the qualifiers in rank order. Ties shall be broken by judges' preference, and if necessary, reciprocal fractions.
4. The nominees shall be determined by student vote using preferential balloting.

Based on input gathered from member schools, as well as the consensus of this committee, we **STRONGLY** recommend that the judge selection process or the blended system of selection be prioritized above student-only selection of qualifiers or any other system currently used by participating Districts.

**Recommendation 3: That a committee be assembled to review the feedback from the Districts during the 2006-2007 school year in order to make final recommendations for National Qualifying and rule changes in the Tournament Manual.**