

STUDENT CONGRESS REVIEW

ALL STATE STUDENT CONGRESS QUALIFIERS AND COACHES—PLEASE READ!!

As with all other speech events, student congress has guidelines that must be followed to maintain fair competition. Throughout the year, many practice congresses may vary (officially or unofficially) from these guidelines to a greater or lesser extent. The following represent some of the critical regulations regarding student congress that are sometimes misunderstood. The State Congress will use these guidelines as operating procedures.

COACHES/PARLIAMENTARIANS:

1. Please assume that, if you have a student who qualifies to the State Congress, you may be called upon to score or act as parliamentarian. As with any other event, coaches are assumed to be qualified to judge in events in which their own students are participants.
2. It is a major duty of the parliamentarian to intervene if something is not going according to correct procedure. Some coaches feel that a congress may do anything it likes if the body votes that way, but this is not true. Any action that serves to deny a contestant his/her right to speak is not in accordance with correct parliamentary procedure and should be corrected.
3. In general, many recent congresses have become too informal. Contestants are not to be called on a first-name basis, and participants are not to converse among themselves to a large extent. Students speaking to the chair must phrase their comments in the proper motion format or be recognized by the chair first. Informal conversation between the congress and the chair should not be permitted.
4. Scorers and parliamentarians should frequently check the number of speeches for each contestant with each other and with the chair.
5. Nominations should be based primarily on the quality of Aff. And Neg. speeches on bills and resolutions. Questions and parliamentary motions may be used to separate speakers who are close, but should not be used as the main criteria for nomination. An exception to this guideline (actually, more, than one) is that you may rightly choose not to nominate a speaker who has consistently infringed on the rights of others, has broken rules of decorum, or who has been frequently recognized out of turn by the chair.
6. Any mistakes the chair may make that do not affect the fairness of the congress should be dealt with through a note to the chair. It is not necessary to interrupt business for minor transgressions.
7. Personal comments (usually of a negative nature) between speakers either oral or written, should not be allowed. Motions, speeches, amendments, etc. that are disruptive, obviously dilatory, or otherwise hinder the legislative process should be used as a factor in assigning points or granting nominations.
8. Observers must be subject to the same rules of decorum as the members of the congress. Disruptive members of the audience should be asked to leave.

COMPETITORS:

1. Official Agenda.
 - 1.1. Each school with one or more State Student Congress qualifiers may submit up to two bills or resolutions as email attachments to be received by the OSAA by the Thursday prior to the State Speech Tournament Workday.
 - 1.2. At the State Speech Tournament Workday, the Student Congress Subcommittee shall select not fewer than six bills or resolutions to be designated as the Official Agenda for each chamber per legislative day.
 - 1.3. Bills and resolutions selected for the Official Agenda shall be posted on the OSAA website by 4:00 pm on the Monday prior to the State Speech Tournament.
 - 1.4. Bills and resolutions on the Official Agenda shall be prioritized at the preliminary session Friday morning. At the conclusion of the preliminary session, participants shall recess to prepare for the afternoon session.
2. Agenda Items from the Floor.
 - 2.1. Priority. Bills and resolutions not included in the Official Agenda may be considered only after the items on the Official Agenda have been considered.
 - 2.2. Limitations. The Parliamentarian, in consultation with the Official Scorer, may deny bills or resolutions offered from the floor at the State Student Congress.
3. There is no such procedure as saying "Objection". The proper motion is "Objection to the consideration of the motion (or question)," and this motion must be made before the motion in question is seconded. Objection to consideration is to be used only to stop motions that are unworthy of consideration. It is not used to prevent discussion of a B/R already placed on the docket, or to prevent the previous question. Objection to consideration should be used with great care, as it often serves to deny speaking rights to a congress member when used incorrectly.
4. If the author of a B/R has made an error in typing or any error that needs correction, he/she may do so up until the B/R has been placed on the docket. After that, the B/R no longer belongs to the author, but to the assembly, and the author has no special right to clarify what was "meant". The B/R means what it says and, until amended, must be dealt with in that way. The best way to correct errors is simply to write in corrections before copies are passed out.
5. Amendments are not automatically considered by the assembly and the chair does not announce that he has an amendment and ask for a second. Amendments must be sent, in writing, to the chair, then the author of an amendment must wait to be recognized in his/her proper turn. If recognized, the author moves to amend, the amendment is stated, the seconding vote taken, and then either considered or not. The author of an amendment may or may not choose to give an authorship speech on the amendment. It should be noted that authorship speeches on amendments do count for points, but that often they receive fewer points from scorers.
6. Amendments do not have to be made when the chair asks for affirmative discussion only.
7. The purpose of student congress is not to show off knowledge of parliamentary procedure. Any action on your part that is blatantly argumentative, inhibits the ability of the congress to conduct business, or denies rights to other speakers may be used as criteria for lowering points or withholding of nomination.

8. Under no circumstances are you to argue with, or correct your chairperson without correct procedure. Informally doing so can create a negative impact on the assembly. There are several motions (point of order, point of information, appeal the decision of the chair, etc.) that exist for problems that may arise. Be very cautious in using these motions, as many use them to satisfy personal grudges, to show off, etc. (see #6). If you have concerns regarding procedure beyond these motions, it is best to write a note to the chair or the parliamentarian requesting a clarification. Never demand that something be changed.
9. Your parliamentarian is the final authority on all matters of procedure. The decision of this person is final and may not be questioned during the assembly by congress members. As with any other event, problems may be referred to the coordinator of the event by your coach.
10. Discussion should continue as long as there are people who wish to speak who have not spoken on that B/R. Do not overwork the motion for previous question. If discussion tends to be repetitive or of diminishing quality, then the motion is in order. Do not move the previous question if you know there are several others who wish to speak.
11. The assembly should not vote for a questioning period after every speech. These periods do not gain points, so the body only loses discussion time. There is an automatic two-minute questioning after each authorship speech. Speakers who do not use their full speaking time do not have to use the rest for questions; in fact, this practice also reduces discussion time for counting speeches.
12. All bills and/or resolutions should be national in scope.
13. Please review the differences between bills and resolutions and do your best to remember what the pending legislation is as you are speaking.
14. In student congress, as in any other event, the evidence you use may be subject to verification. Many competitors have a tendency to state opinions as facts. If you are going to use statements of fact, make sure you are correct. Technically, other congress members or even the scorer may ask you to verify your statements. This does not necessarily mean you must have sources for everything you say, but be very cautious in your use of information.