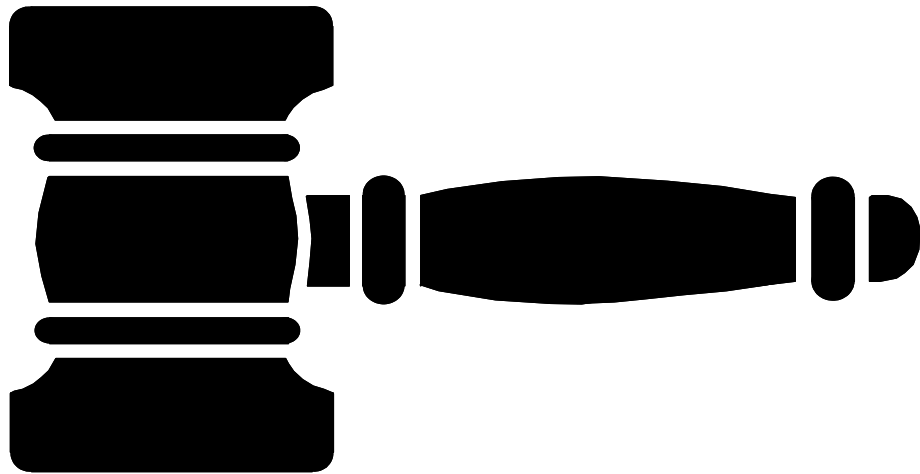


**Pennsylvania High School Speech League**

**STUDENT  
CONGRESS  
HANDBOOK**



**Revised: July, 2009**

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDENT CONGRESS HANDBOOK

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## SECTION I: ORGANIZATION

1. The Pennsylvania High School Speech League Student Congress shall be a unicameral congress. However, if more than 25 students meet the registration requirements; two houses shall be formed (bicameral). If registration exceeds 50 a multi-cameral congress consisting of three houses shall be formed and further houses created as space permits.
2. The Congress shall convene for four sessions at a time and a place determined by the Executive Director. 1. Opening Session and Committee Meetings; 2. Session I; 3. Session II; 4. Super Session.
3. At each legislative session the Congress shall elect from its membership a Presiding Officer and a Clerk who shall serve for that session only.
4. In order for a student to participate in the State Student Congress, his/her school's PHSSL dues must be paid and the school must submit a bill or resolution for consideration. The bill or resolution must be submitted ELECTRONICALLY as an email attachment to the congress coordinator no earlier than **January 1** and no later than **February 1**. The attachment should be typed in Microsoft Word and in the proper form. (See Section III.3.) Refer to notices from the state office or the PHSSL website as to whom the B/R should be sent.
5. Each school may send only one (1) bill or resolution. The student participant need not be identified until such time as set by the Executive Director (the Tuesday prior to the State Tournament), but his/her school must be registered for the State Student Congress. . No charge for name changes in Student Congress. A \$50.00 nuisance fee will be assessed for drops.

## SECTION II: ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Roll call of members.
2. Committee meetings.
3. Election of Presiding Officer.
4. Election of Clerk.
5. Committee reports.
6. Establishment of the Orders of the Day.
7. Consideration of the calendar.
8. Adjournment.

### SECTION III: BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

1. A bill is an enumeration of specific provisions, listed in “sections”, which if enacted will have the force of law. The debate over a bill will usually explore the merits of the specific provisions it contains.
2. A resolution is simply a generalized statement expressing a conviction. A resolution will usually center debate on the broad principles of the concept. Although they are not necessary, a resolution may have “whereas” clauses.
3. When the bill or resolution is submitted, there should be no student’s name appearing on it, however, the school’s name is to appear. The B/R should be in the proper format: double-spaced, lines numbered, and should not exceed one (1) page.
4. Legislation not previously assigned to a House Committee by the Director may not be introduced with the exception of legislation pertaining to the State Tournament.
5. Legislation pertinent to the State Tournament may be considered at the close of the final legislative session.

### SECTION IV: COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

1. The subjects of bills and resolutions submitted will determine committee designations by the director.
2. Each committee shall deal only with those bills and resolutions falling within its jurisdiction.
3. As the first order of business each committee shall elect a chairperson to facilitate discussion and present the order of bills to the chair. This person need not act as spokesperson for committee amendments.
4. A scorekeeper shall be appointed for each committee meeting by the Director. The appointed scorekeeper shall complete one speaker evaluation per member for the entire session. Members who do not participate in committee discussion will not receive points on their evaluation forms.
5. Student placement will be according to the subject matter of the bill/resolution submitted by each school.
6. The function of the standing committees will be to select legislation which the members feel will afford interesting and profitable debate in Congress. Whether the legislation should be passed by the Congress is not for the committee to decide. Any discussion on the merits of the proposal is irrelevant and should be ruled out of order by the Chairperson.
7. The committee may amend or rewrite freely any legislation submitted to it or may combine provisions of several proposals into a new one drafted by the committee.

8. Committees proceed informally as group discussion. The Chairperson may enter into deliberation and should guide the discussion along constructive lines. Members may speak without obtaining formal recognition, just so they do not interrupt another speaker. No one should be permitted to monopolize the time.
9. Formal motions are not used except to achieve such definite actions as accepting a specific amendment or recommending a certain bill as the committee's choice. The committee MUST complete its work on time.
10. Should it become necessary for the committee to reconvene later during the Congress, this can be set at a mutually convenient time, but should not overlap time scheduled for House Sessions.

#### SECTION V: ELECTION OF PRESIDING OFFICER AND CLERK

1. Each session will elect from its membership a presiding officer and a clerk.
2. The Parliamentarian will conduct these elections by taking nominations from the floor for the presiding officer.
3. For each ballot each member will select one name and place it on the ballot.
4. The Parliamentarian and scorekeepers will collect and count the ballots.
5. Names are then selectively eliminated by the following procedure. The one person with the lowest total is eliminated. The person second from the bottom is also eliminated if his/her total, when added to the bottom person's total, adds up to less than half the membership. When a person has received a majority of the votes, he/she is declared the winner.
6. Prior to each election, those nominees under consideration are to stand and be recognized by the other students in the Congress.
7. Once the presiding officer has been elected, he/she shall conduct the election of the Clerk, using the same procedure as described in Items 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of this section.

#### SECTION VI: DUTIES OF THE PRESIDING OFFICER AND CLERK

1. The Presiding Officer shall preside impartially and shall not vote except in case of a tie vote.
2. Once elected, the presiding officer may not relinquish the chair during that session to enter debate.
3. The Presiding Office shall recognize no student a second time until all other students who seek the floor have been recognized.

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4. The Presiding Officer shall not permit a member to speak more than twice on the same bill. The speaker may be limited to one speech unless no one else wishes to speak. The Presiding Officer may refuse to recognize him/her further if the Presiding Officer feels he/she is trying to monopolize debate. This decision may be appealed.
5. The Presiding Office is responsible for keeping debate moving. The Presiding Officer is held responsible for seeing to it that members do not monopolize speaking time by making frequent speeches or amendments. The Presiding Officer will also be held responsible for failing to rule dilatory or obstructionist tactics out of order. As a rule of thumb, if a person has made over three speeches per session or has already tried two apparently dilatory or obstructionist tactics, the Presiding Officer may explain this situation and then permit him/her one more speech or motion. If speaking again will also impede debate, the Presiding Officer may decline to recognize him/her further. This discretionary power is very broad and should be used with care and in consultation with the Parliamentarian. This decision may be appealed.
6. The Presiding Officer may never enter into debate but should be above it.
7. Questions of Procedure not covered by these rules shall be ruled according to Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised 1990.
8. The Clerk, upon request, will read each bill before debate on it is begun.
9. The clerk will maintain a record of all action taken by the Congress including the specific wording of any amendment which is made and passed.
10. The Clerk will maintain a roster of the authorized Student Congress persons and assist the Presiding Officer in recognizing those speakers who have not yet spoken. A chart should be maintained to facilitate this.
11. The Clerk will time each speech. After 3 minutes the Clerk will say "Time." After 3 minutes, 15 seconds, the Clerk will say "Stop" and the Presiding Officer will gavel the speaker down.
12. The Clerk may not enter debate.
13. The Clerk shall conduct a lottery to determine the order of consideration of committee bills for Orders of the Day. The results of the lottery shall be implemented in the following manner. The bills which are recommended by the first committee drawn in the lottery shall take numbers 1, 5, 9, 13, etc. On the Orders of the Day. Those from the second committee drawn shall be 2, 6, 10, 14, etc.; the third committee's bill shall be 3, 7, 11, 15, etc.; and the fourth 4, 8, 12, 16, etc.

## SECTION VII: CONSIDERATION OF BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

1. Debate on legislation shall be as follows:
  - A. A member representing the school which has submitted the bill or resolution shall be privileged to open debate in the form of an authorship or sponsorship speech. This speech shall be 3 minutes in length and the speaker may not yield his/her time to another member.
  - B. A one minute mandatory questioning period shall follow, limit of one question by each member.
  - C. If a committee has recommended amendments, a spokesperson for the committee shall be recognized for 3 minutes to present the amendments. These amendments must be in writing.
  - D. Debate shall then be open from the floor, first on the amendments and then on the bill, with a time limit of 3 minutes per speaker.
  - E. Speaking priority shall be given to the students representing the high schools authoring the bills/resolutions which have been combined. Questioning time shall be four (4) minutes and directed to all speakers.
2. A member shall claim the floor in debate if he/she wishes to oppose the views of the preceding speaker so that debate will alternate. If there are no opposing views then a maximum of three speeches expressing the same view will be permitted before debate automatically stops and the question is voted upon.
3. Any member who has the floor may yield his/her time to another or may yield part of it for questions. In either case he/she controls the time yielded and may interrupt the person to whom he/she has yielded at any time to resume use of his/her own time.
4. Decisions on all legislation shall be by standing vote (show of hands).
5. Legislation shall be open to amendments from the floor. Such amendments must be in writing and state exactly the words to be added, deleted, or substituted and may be considered only upon a 1/3 second of the members. The following procedure is to be utilized:
  - A. The amendment is to be written and passed to the Parliamentarian.
  - B. The Presiding Officer will, at his/her discretion, and usually, but not exclusively, after a negative speech, announce that he/she has an amendment on the floor.
  - C. The Parliamentarian will read the amendment (stating the author of the amendment).

- D. The Presiding Officer will ask for a 1/3 second. If the amendment is seconded, the author of the amendment is then entitled to a 3 minute speech in favor of the amendment. Debate will then alternate pro and con on the amendment until the amendment is disposed. If the amendment does not receive the required second, debate continues with the next appropriate speech.
- 6. A member may be recognized for debate no more than two times on any one bill or resolution.
- 7. Do not overwork the motion for Previous Question. As long as anyone has something to say, give the person a chance to say it. When no one wishes to speak, the vote should be taken. Remember that to call out "Question" merely indicates you are ready to vote and is not a motion to call Previous Question.
- 8. A Division of the House may be demanded by any member on any question in which a vote has been taken. The call for Division of the House must be made before another motion has been placed before the assembly.
- 9. A motion to suspend the rules must be passed by a 2/3 majority of the assembly. This procedure is needed when the group wishes to consider a piece of legislation which is not on the official calendar or when altering the order of business.

#### SECTION VIII: INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCOREKEEPERS

- 1. There will be two scorekeepers per session.
  - 2. Speakers will be scored only for speeches which debate the bills and resolutions and for speeches which present amendments that are accepted for consideration. Speakers shall be scored on:
    - A. Pro and con speeches on bills, resolutions, and amendments.
    - B. Presentation of amendments that are seconded by a 1/3 vote of Congress.
- Note: No points shall be given for motions, questions clarifications, etc.
- 3. Scorekeepers are encouraged to alternate the scoring of speeches. They are encouraged to take notes to assist them in rating each speech on its own merits, using the categories on the ballot.
  - 4. The purpose of Parliamentary debate is to reach consensus through advancement of debate, clarification of issues and attempts at compromise solutions. Therefore, there are times when a one-minute speech may be more appropriate than a three-minute one.
  - 5. At the end of each session each scorekeeper shall nominate one student for Outstanding Speaker. Scorekeepers do not have to choose the student with the top score but should weigh the overall impression made throughout the Congress session. Scorekeepers may not nominate students from their own schools. A scorekeeper may suggest such a student to the Parliamentarian. This nomination will be done without consultation with the Parliamentarian and shall be turned in to the PHSSL tab room representative in charge of Congress.

- Points for Congress participants will be determined by no more than four speeches per session. This is in the spirit of promoting and forwarding debate. If more than four speeches are given by a student, then the four speeches with the highest point value will be counted.

#### SECTION IX: INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARIAN

- The primary duty of the Parliamentarian is to be available to settle problems that might arise relating to procedure. Ordinarily he/she should remain in the background, but step forward firmly when his/her presence is required. The Parliamentarian should be knowledgeable concerning the PHSSL Congress Procedures and Robert's Rules of Order, revised 1990, and should be available to counsel the Presiding Officer and the assembly about these rules and regulations. The purpose of the Congress is to debate legislation, and it is the Parliamentarian's duty to see that this is done.
- Since the Congress will use committees to set agenda, the Parliamentarian should preside initially, take roll call, and then dismiss the assembly to committee meetings. He/she should be available as a resource person during committee meetings.
- The Parliamentarian will score the Presiding officer and the Clerk on the ballots provided for this purpose. (See Appendix) A maximum of 6 points per session may be given to the clerk; a maximum of 12 points to the presiding officer.
- The same person will serve as Parliamentarian for all sessions in order to give the Congress a sense of continuity. In the event of the temporary absence of the Parliamentarian, the Executive Committee member in charge of Student Congress shall assume the duties of the Parliamentarian.
- The Parliamentarian, as the only person to have observed all the sessions, may in writing, and without consultation, nominate two students for Congress honors. These nominations shall be turned in to the PHSSL tab room representative in charge of Congress. In the event that these students have been previously nominated by a scorekeeper, there shall be no additional names submitted.

#### SECTION X: SESSIONS

The houses will meet for debate as follows:

Committee Meetings	Friday	2:30 PM	to	3:30 PM
Session I	Friday	4:00 PM	to	8:00 PM
Session II	Friday	8:00 PM	to	9:00 PM
Session II	Saturday	8:00 AM	to	11:00 AM
Super Session	Saturday	12:00 NOON	to	2:00 PM

- The house may take a brief recess as appropriate in each session.

## SECTION XI: SUPER SESSION

1. After Session II, members of both houses will meet in combined session with the nominated students from each house competing in a Super Session which will consist of parliamentary debate of five to six bills or resolutions set aside and designated for debate in the Super Session ONLY.
2. Entry into the Super Session will be as follows:
  - a. Nomination by the Score Keepers in each House
  - b. Nomination by the Parliamentarian of each House
    - (1) In the event of a unicameral or bicameral congress the Parliamentarian shall nominate two students for advancement thereby ensuring that there are six students advancing from a unicameral congress and 12 from the bicameral congress.
    - (2) When three or more houses are in session, the Parliamentarian is limited to one nomination.
3. There shall be two judges in the Super Session.
4. A Parliamentarian shall act as both parliamentarian and presiding officer as the purpose of the Super Session is to promote debate among the contestants.

## SECTION XII: CONGRESS HONORS AND AWARDS

1. At the conclusion of the Super Session the parliamentarian assisted by a member of the Executive Board, shall preside at the balloting for Outstanding, Superior, and Merit Speakers.
2. Voting shall be by preferential ballot, with each judge and house member ranking in order of preference the top six speakers. Any ballot which does not rank six speakers will be disallowed.
3. The Parliamentarian shall also vote by preferential ballot with his vote being opened only in the event of a tie.
4. All student ballots will be tallied according to the following procedure:
  - a. Each candidate will have his/her ranks, as voted by the members of the house, counted and totaled on a tally sheet with each rank having its own value:

1 = 6 points  
2 = 5 points  
3 = 4 points  
4 = 3 points  
5 = 2 points  
6 = 1 point

b. Example:

	Ranks	Score	Total	Rank
Student A	1-1-1-2-3-3-3-4-4-5-5-5	18, 5, 12, 6, 6	47	2
Student B	1-1-2-2-2-4-5-6	12, 15, 3, 2, 1	33	5
Student C	1-2-2-2-3-3-3-3-4-4-5-6	6, 15, 16, 6, 2, 1	46	3
Student D	1-1-2-2-3-3-3-4-4-4-6-6	12, 10, 12, 9, 2	45	4
Student E	1-2-3-3-3-5-5-6	6, 5, 12, 4, 1	28	6
Student F	1-1-2-2-2-2-2-3-3-3-3-6	12, 25, 16, 1	54	1
Student G	1-2-3-4-5-6	6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	21	7
Student H	1-5-6	6, 2, 1	9	8

4. The judges will have their ballots counted and ranked in the same way.
5. Outstanding, Superior, and Merit Speakers will be selected as follows:  
 Cumulative Rank of House Members  
 Judge 1  
 Judge 2
6. The order of all Super Session members will be determined by the ascending rank totals with the lowest total being ranked first and the highest total 12.

a. Example:

	House Rank	Judge	Judge	Total	Place	
Student A	2	1	1	4	1	Outstanding
Student B	5	7	5	17	5	Merit
Student C	3	3	4	10	4	Merit
Student D	4	2	3	9	3	Merit
Student E	6	6	7	19	7	
Student F	1	4	2	7	2	Superior
Student G	7	5	6	18	6	Merit
Student H	8	7	7	22	8	

\*Note: All students not ranked by a judge will be given a rank of 7.

7. Awards shall be as follows:
  - a. Trophies Outstanding, Superior, and Merit Speakers
  - b. Gavels Presiding Officers
  - c. Certificates Clerks
  - d. Certificates Students ranked 7 thru 12

Rank	Award	Rank	Award
<b>1</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Merit</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Superior</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Merit</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Merit</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Merit</b>

SECTION XIII: SWEEPSTAKES

1. Sweepstakes points will be awarded to those students advancing to the Super Session according to the order in which they were placed by the balloting of the congress membership and the judges.

Outstanding Speaker	15 points
Superior Speaker	10 points
3rd	8 points
4th	5 points
5th	4 points
6th	3 points
All other Super Session Members	1 point

1. See Article B16.13, PHSSL Bylaws.

SECTION XIV: RULES PERTAINING TO A MULTI-CAMERAL CONGRESS

1. When a third House is formed the houses shall be named:
  - a. Commonwealth House
  - b. State House
  - c. Keystone House
2. When possible, students shall be assigned to each House in a manner which will insure geographical distribution.
3. The business of each House shall proceed as outlined in previous sections.
4. The nominated student will then meet in a unicameral House at a time and place determined by the Congress director. This will be designated as the Super Session.
5. The procedure to select students advancing to the Super Session is as stated in Section X!, Article 2.
6. Balloting to determine congress honors will proceed as outlined in Section XII.

## SECTION XV: MISCELLANEOUS RULES

1. The results of all votes cast in the House will be based on the number of votes cast (aye or nay). Abstentions shall not be counted.
2. Arguing with the Presiding Officer is not permitted under any circumstances. If it is believed that the Chair has committed a serious error, a member may appeal the decision of the chair. It should always be remembered, however, that the purpose of Congress is to debate legislation not to show off knowledge of procedure.
3. Right of editorial reply will not be recognized in the Congress. However, a previous speaker has the right to question an opposing speaker.
4. Points of Information are permitted for parliamentary business only.
5. In the case of disputes regarding parliamentary procedure, the Parliamentarian shall rule based on his/her knowledge of Robert's Rules or Order, revised 1990, and the PHSSL Congress Procedures. The Parliamentarian's interpretation of these two sets of rules will serve as the final authority.
6. One of the clerks shall be elected to serve during the Supersession and shall call roll to ensure that all Super Session members are present.
7. One or more of the clerks shall be elected to read the Congress Resolution at the Awards Assembly.
8. Plagiarism or fabrication of evidence is prohibited and will result in a student being disqualified from the tournament.