

Pennsylvania High School Speech League



STUDENT CONGRESS HANDBOOK

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SECTION I: ORGANIZATION

1. Congress competition at the Pennsylvania High School Speech League State Tournament shall consist of a unicameral Senate and a unicameral House. However, since the goal is to have 15 to 18 students competing in each chamber of congress, the state tournament coordinator and congress event chair will have the final decisions regarding number of chambers, and chamber sizes once registration is completed.
2. In order for a student to participate in the State Senate, a student must have qualified on the district level or have earned a bid, according to the PHSSL Bid System.
3. The District Chair will select legislation to submit to the state office for the Senate. Each bill or resolution must be submitted ELECTRONICALLY as an email attachment to the State secretary no later than 48 hours after the district qualifying tournament. 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. The Senate legislation packet will be sent out at least two weeks in advance of the state tournament with an agenda set at the tournament by random draw.
4. In order for a student to participate in the State House, the student's school's PHSSL dues must be paid. The student participant need not be identified until such time as set by the Executive Director (the Tuesday prior to the State Tournament), but the student's school must be registered for the State House. There is no charge for name changes in Student Congress, but a \$50 nuisance fee will be assessed for drops past the deadline.
5. All member schools are invited to submit legislation to be considered for inclusion in the House legislation packet. Schools may submit multiple pieces of legislation for consideration. Submissions should be emailed to the PHSSL secretary by February 1. A committee representing all state regions will select 12-15 pieces of legislation for the preliminary sessions, 3-5 pieces for the Super Session, and 3-5 pieces of supplemental legislation. The packet will be posted at least two weeks in advance of the state tournament with an agenda set at the tournament by random draw.
6. The Senate and House shall convene for three preliminary sessions and a Super Session at a time and a place determined by the Executive Director.
7. At each legislative session the Senate and House shall elect from its membership a Presiding Officer who shall serve for that session only.

SECTION II: ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Roll call of members.
2. Election of Presiding Officer.
3. Consideration of the calendar.
4. 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 school name will only be published for the Senate; House legislation will be selected anonymously). The B/R should be in the proper format: double- spaced, lines numbered, and should not exceed one (1) page.
4. The only legislation to be considered for sessions I, II and II will be the legislation submitted by participating schools. The chair of the event will determine and distribute that legislation prior to the state competition.
5. The Parliamentarian will establish the calendar for each chamber by conducting a blind draw of the pieces of legislation that are available for debate.
6. Legislation for the Super Session will come from outside sources and submissions from member schools and will be selected by a committee. The calendar for that session will be determined by blind draw by the parliamentarian once the names of the advancing students have been announced.

SECTION IV: ELECTION OF PRESIDING OFFICER

1. Each session will elect from its membership a presiding officer.
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 their 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, they are declared the winner.
6. Prior to each election, those nominees under consideration are to stand and be recognized by the other students in the Senate.

SECTION V: DUTIES OF THE PRESIDING OFFICER

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 Officer shall recognize no student a second time until all other students who seek the floor have been recognized.
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 them further if the Presiding Officer feels they are trying to monopolize debate. This decision may be appealed.
5. The Presiding Officer 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 them one more speech or motion. If speaking again will also impede debate, the Presiding Officer may decline to recognize them 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 the most recent version of Robert's Rules of Order.
8. The Presiding Officer, upon request, will read each bill before debate on it is begun.
9. The Presiding Officer 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 Presiding Officer will maintain a roster of the authorized Student Congress persons in the chamber. A chart should be maintained to facilitate the recognition of those speakers who have not spoken yet.
11. The Presiding Officer will time each speech. After 3 minutes the Presiding Officer will say "Time." After 3 minutes, 15 seconds, the Presiding Officer will say "Stop" and will gavel the speaker down.

SECTION VI: CONSIDERATION OF BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

1. Debate on legislation shall be as follows:
 - A. Any member of the chamber may open debate in affirmation of the legislation being considered. This speech shall be 3 minutes in length and the speaker may not yield their time to another member.
 - B. A two-minute mandatory direct questioning period shall follow, with the presiding officer recognizing questioners for a period of no more than 30 seconds. Questioners will be chosen according to a separate questioning recency.
 - C. Debate begins with a speech in the negation of the original bill, followed by a mandatory two-minute direct questioning period.
 - D. Questioning time, other than for the first speech in the affirmation, and the first speech in the negation, shall consist of one minute of direct questions with questioners being chosen according to the separate questioning recency.
2. A member shall claim the floor in debate if they wish 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 their time to another. In either case they control the time yielded and may interrupt the person to whom they have yielded at any time to resume use of their 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 their discretion, and usually, but not exclusively, after a negative speech, announce that they have 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 VII: 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 the chamber. 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 rank the top eight students in each chamber. Scorekeepers do not have to choose the student with the top score but should weigh the overall impression made throughout the Congress session. At the end of both sessions, the parliamentarian shall rank all the members of the chamber.

SECTION VIII: INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARIAN

1. The primary duty of the Parliamentarian is to be available to settle problems that might arise relating to procedure. Ordinarily they should remain in the background but step forward firmly when their presence is required. The Parliamentarian should be knowledgeable concerning the PHSSL Congress Procedures and the most recent version of Robert's Rules of Order 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.
2. The Parliamentarian should preside initially, take roll call, conduct a random drawing to determine the calendar and then elect the Presiding Officer for the first session.
3. The Parliamentarian will score the Presiding officer (per Duties of the Presiding Officer in Section V)
4. 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 congress shall assume the duties of the Parliamentarian.

5. The Parliamentarian, as the only person to have observed all the sessions, will rank all the members of the chamber once third session is finished. These rankings will be turned in to the PHSSL tab room representative in charge of Congress.

SECTION IX: SESSIONS

Congress will meet for three 3-hour preliminary sessions and one 3-hour Super Session.

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

Except for the Super Session, the calendar and recency should NOT be reset for each session.

SECTION X: SUPER SESSION

1. After Session III, members of all chambers will meet in combined session with nominated students from each chamber competing in a Super Session which will consist of parliamentary debate of 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. The top ranked scores will advance:
 - (1) In the event of a unicameral Senate, the top eight students shall advance.
 - (2) In the event of a bicameral chamber, the top five, six or seven students from each chamber shall advance, depending upon the number of students in a chamber. For chambers of 14-17, the top five, 18-20, the top six, and 20-28, the top seven.
 - (3) In the event of a tricameral chamber, the four top-ranked students in each chamber shall advance to the Super Session.
 - (3) In the event of a tie which would otherwise cause more than the maximum of students to advance, the parliamentarian's ranks shall be used to break the tie.
3. There shall be four judges and a parliamentarian 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 XI: CONGRESS HONORS AND AWARDS

1. At the conclusion of the Super Session the parliamentarian and the four scorekeepers shall rank all of the students in the chamber.
2. Students with the lowest total ranks will be considered Outstanding, Superior or Merit Speakers.
3. Awards shall be as follows:
 - a. Trophies Outstanding, Superior, and Merit Speakers
 - b. Medals Students ranked 7 thru 12

Rank	Award	Rank	Award
1	Outstanding	4	Merit
2	Superior	5	Merit
3	Merit	6	Merit

A Student Congress Student Award will be awarded to a competitor in each preliminary chamber. Students will vote at the end of the preliminary sessions for the top 6 speakers in the chamber, ranking them 1-6; the remainder of students in the chamber will receive a rank of 7. The students with the lowest total will receive the special award.

SECTION XII: SWEEPSTAKES

1. Students in the Super Session will receive the top set of points that corresponds to their final ranking in the Super Session.
2. All other members of Congress will receive points based on their rankings in the preliminary sessions of Congress in their individual chambers, starting with the next set of awarded points and working down to the final set of awarded points.

SECTION XIII: RULES PERTAINING TO A BI-CAMERAL OR TRI-CAMERAL CHAMBERS

1. When a second Senate is formed the chambers shall be named:
 - a. Ursin Senate
 - b. Stanton Senate
2. When a third House is formed the chambers shall be named:
 - a. Commonwealth House
 - b. State House
 - c. Keystone House
3. Students shall be assigned to each House randomly, determined by the computer software.

4. The business of each House shall proceed as outlined in previous sections.
5. Balloting to determine congress honors will proceed as outlined in previous sections.
6. The procedure to select students advancing to the Super Session is as stated in previous sections.

SECTION XIV: MISCELLANEOUS RULES

1. The results of all votes cast in the Senate or 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 their knowledge of the most recent version of Robert's Rules or Order and the PHSSL Congress Procedures. The Parliamentarian's interpretation of these two sets of rules will serve as the final authority.
6. The Parliamentarian shall call roll to ensure that all Super Session members are present.
7. See PHSSL By-Laws for information regarding actions that may result in disqualification from the contest.
9. Qualified Congress competitors will add to a school's Individual Event (IE) judge quota.

Congressional Debate

Table of Frequently Used Parliamentary Motions							
Type	Motion	Purpose	Sec ond¹ Req uire d?	Debat able?	Amend able?	Require d Vote²	M ay Inter rupt?
	24. Fix time for reassembling	To arrange time of next meeting.	Yes	Yes-T	Yes-T	Majority	Yes
	23. Adjourn	To dismiss the meeting	Yes	No	Yes-T	Majority	No
	22. To Recess	To dismiss the meeting for a specific length of time	Yes	Yes	Yes-T	Majority	No
	21. Rise to a question of privilege	To make a personal request during debate	No	No	No	Decision of the Chair	Yes
	20. Call for orders of the day	To force consideration of a postponed motion	No	No	No	Decision of the Chair	Yes
	19. Appeal to a decision of the chair	To reverse a decision	Yes	No	No	Majority	Yes
	18. Rise to a point of order or parliamentary procedure	To correct a parliamentary error or ask a question	No	No	No	Decision of the Chair	Yes
	17. Division of the chamber	To verify a voice vote	No	No	No	Decision of the Chair	Yes
	16. Object to the consideration of a question	To suppress action	No	No	No	2/3	Yes
	15. Divide a motion	To consider its parts separately	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	No
	14. Leave to modify or withdraw a motion	To modify or withdraw a motion	No	No	No	Majority	No
	13. Suspend the rules	To take action contrary to standing rules	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
	12. Rescind	To repeal previous action	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3	No
	11. Reconsider	To consider a defeated motion again	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	No
	10. Take from the table	To consider tabled motion	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
	9. Lay on the table	To defer action	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
	8. Previous question	To force an immediate vote	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
	7. Limit or extend debate	To modify freedom of debate	Yes	Yes	Yes-T	2/3	No
	6. Postpone to a certain time	To defer action	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
	5. Refer to a committee*	For further study	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
	4. Amend an amendment ^o	To modify an amendment	1/3	Yes	No	Majority	No
	3. Amend ^o	To modify a motion	1/3	Yes	Yes	Majority	No
	2. Postpone indefinitely	To suppress action	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	No
Main	1. Main motion	To introduce a business	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	No

*No. 5 Should Include:

1. How appointed
2. The number

T=Time

* Nos. 3 and 4 by:

1. Adding (inserting)
2. Striking (deleting)

3. Report when or to what standing committee

3. Substituting

SAMPLE BILL

In The

Pennsylvania High School Speech League

by

Susquehanna High School

1. Be it enacted by the Pennsylvania High School Speech League Student Congress assembled that
2. Section 1. A federal commission will be established to mandate the use of speed governors, set at fifty-five miles per hour, by all motor vehicles in the United States.
3. Section 2. The retrofitting of motor vehicles will be mandated and vehicles will be inspected at time of vehicle licensing.
4. Section 3. New vehicles be fitted at time of manufacture in the United States and at time of importation for foreign vehicles.
5. Section 4. Emergency vehicles will be exempt from this act.
6. Section 5. A \$200 fine and removal of vehicle will be the punishment for driving a vehicle without a governor.
7. Section 6. This act will take effect on June 1, 1998.

SAMPLE RESOLUTION

In The
Pennsylvania High School Speech League
by
Susquehanna High School

1 Whereas, the United States imports 48% of its crude oil from the
2 Persian Gulf area, and

3 Whereas, the United States' Gross National Product is highly
4 dependent on energy, and

5 Whereas, the United States' allies are militarily dependent on Persian
6 Gulf oil, and

7 Whereas, Russia is gradually expanding into the Persian Gulf area,
8 therefore,

9 BE IT RESOLVED by the Pennsylvania High School Speech League

10 Student

11 Congress assembled that the United States should increase its military

12 and economic aid in the Persian Gulf area in order to prevent the

13 domination of the Persian Gulf by the Soviet Union.