



Judging Congressional Debate

This is individual debate in a large group setting. Legislative debaters research and write pieces of Congressional legislation that they feel will better the society in which we live. At a tournament, debaters will then speak on the legislation while using proper parliamentary procedure. Judges score each competitor based on argumentation ability, speaking technique, knowledge of parliamentary procedure, and overall participation.

Congressional Debate – 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

Evaluation

1. 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 speaker between one and six points, with one reserved for the poorest of speeches and six for outstanding speeches. Reserve scores of “2” for students who show little effort, and “1” for students who make egregious errors (speaking on the wrong side, a speech that’s a mockery/not serious, or engaging in personal attacks of other students).
2. At the end of the session, each judge should complete an evaluation of the presiding officer. Score him/her 2-18 points (6 points per hour), the same way you would a speaker. The presiding officer score should be based on how effectively the presiding officer ran the chamber.
3. At the end of the session, judges will independently (without consulting one another) rank the best legislators on the ballot provided:
 - a. Ranking is of *legislators*, not of “speakers,” which means that you weigh the overall impact each individual student had 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?
 - b. 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 was her/his word economy exquisite? Considering the PO’s aggregate 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.
 - c. Quality is more important than quantity. You may nominate the best legislators even if they didn’t give the most speeches.
 - d. A student must have spoken or presided to be ranked.
4. Stay in the background as much as possible. Although congress participants may appeal the decision of the student presiding officer to the judge, these cases are rare. Allow the chamber to remain in student control except for serious infractions.

