

Revision 20.12/Online (December 1, 2020)



Florida Gulf Coast Catholic Forensics League

# STUDENT CONGRESS MANUAL

Legislation templates, tournament materials, and updates to this manual will be posted to the FGCCFL website. Please check regularly! <https://www.fgccfl.net/>

## § 1 About This Manual

The *FGCCFL Student Congress Manual* governs Student Congress at all FGCCFL-sponsored tournaments. It is based on the *NCFL Student Congress Manual* but adapts the national rules to satisfy a one-day, online tournament format.

- 5 **Always consult this manual first.** If a question is not addressed by this manual, consult the *NCFL Student Congress Manual*, then *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. A session that is not in substantial compliance with the rules shall not be considered for qualifying purposes.

The Congress Coordinator and tab staff shall have the authority to issue any rule interpretations or modifications they deem necessary to ensure a fair and efficient tournament.

Significant changes from 20.02 are highlighted. Changes from 20.10 are highlighted in cyan.

# LEGISLATION

## § 2 Subject Matter

- 10 (a) All legislation **MUST** constitute a valid legislative response to a timely and significant issue of national interest. Additionally, legislation should propose a change from the status quo, offer an adequate division of ground, and be comprehensible to an informed audience. Legislation that fails to meet the above criteria or that is poorly written, inadequately researched, biased or prejudiced, vulgar or profane, or otherwise unsuitable for interscholastic debate shall be deemed  
15 *frivolous* and **shall not** be considered.

- (b) Legislation that addresses frequently debated topics must be *especially* timely, significant, and/or novel, such that debate will necessarily focus on the legislation and not the general issue. A list of suspect topics is included in the Appendix. Legislation on a suspect topic that does not meet these standards **or any item that has been presented at a previous tournament** shall be  
20 deemed *stale* and **shall not** be considered.

- (c) **Legislation that has been placed on the docket at an FGCCFL tournament may not be considered again at any subsequent tournament.** However, it is permitted to rewrite a resolution as a bill or vice versa.

## § 3 Template and Format Requirements

- 25 (a) To simplify drafting of legislation and assembly of dockets, FGCCFL requires the use of the templates provided on the FGCCFL website. **Other templates (including NCFL and NSDA) are NOT authorized.** The templates may be edited on any platform, but the finished product must be saved as a Microsoft Word (.docx) file. **Legislation that is not submitted in the approved template, used as directed, WILL NOT be considered at any FGCCFL tournament.**

- 30 **The templates are NOT “examples” to be replicated in a blank document. Their purpose is to let legislators focus on the content rather than formatting.** The proper way to use the templates is to open them in a word processor and *type in the legislation text*. The highlighted guide text will help explain what is required and where it should go. Text that is not highlighted is part of the template and **should not** be changed without very good cause.

(b) Legislation must include a descriptive title, i.e., a title that would allow a casual observer to understand the intent of the legislation, and a “Respectfully submitted” closing block with the name of the sponsoring school. The maximum length of an item of legislation is one side of a U.S. letter-size page **without** any alteration of margins, spacing, or font size.

#### § 4 Content Guidance for Bills

5 A bill proposes a change in public policy and specifies the manner by which the government will implement that change. If enacted, bills carry the force of law. Bills do not explain *why* a course of action is desirable (that’s the purpose of the authorship speech); rather, their focus is *how* the proposed policy should be carried out.

(a) Bills are to be written in the five-section format set forth in the template.

10 (b) Section 1 should states the change to be made or action to be taken in one sentence, or as few sentences as possible. Provisions may not be incorporated by reference unless made explicit elsewhere in the bill. *It should be possible to understand the intent of the bill from this section alone.*

15 (c) Section 2 clarifies terminology **actually used elsewhere in the bill** through definitions and through other provisions not related to the means of enforcement. Only essential provisions should be included; words and phrases used for their plain meaning or otherwise defined in relevant law need not be defined in the bill. **REMEMBER:** Definitions in a bill are *prescriptive* (what X shall mean), not *descriptive* (what others say X means).

20 (d) Section 3 identifies the enforcing agency or agencies and provides a means of enforcement (penalties, funding, resolution of jurisdictional issues, etc.). **Both are required for the bill to have force.** Enforcing agencies **must** be federal agencies, almost always in the Executive Branch and usually at the Cabinet level (enforcement implies rulemaking authority, which is generally vested in the heads of departments).<sup>1</sup>

25 (e) Legislation addressing traditional state or local matters **must** resolve jurisdictional concerns. Some means of exercising federal authority must be specified in the bill; the legitimacy of those means is an issue that may be raised in floor debate.

(f) Section 4 establishes when the bill takes effect: immediately upon passage, a period of time (e.g., 90 days) after passage, or a date certain (e.g., January 1, 2022). **These are the only permissible formats for an effective date, and nothing else may appear in this section.**

30 (g) Section 5 declares that all laws in conflict with the bill are null and void, which is intended to prioritize the new policy over existing law. **This section’s text should not be modified.**

#### § 5 Content Guidance for Resolutions

A resolution expresses a conviction or makes a suggestion about a current issue. Resolutions do not carry the force of law; rather, passage of a resolution means that the Congress endorses the position the resolution takes. In contrast to bills, resolutions explain *why* a position deserves official support, but not *how* the government will implement the proposal.

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<sup>1</sup> *Exceptions:* Independent agencies such as the Social Security Administration or Legislative Branch entities such as the GAO may sometimes be appropriate enforcing bodies. Furthermore, if the bill confers a private right of action (allowing **private parties** to sue in federal court), the entirety of Section 3.A may be replaced by a declaration that “The federal courts shall have jurisdiction over all cases arising under the provisions of this bill” (this is one of the few occasions when non-highlighted text may be replaced).

- (a) All resolutions must be written in the simple resolution format that is incorporated in the FGCCFL template. This format consists of a series of one-sentence “*whereas*” clauses (at least 3 recommended, except for constitutional amendments) that make a case for the resolution, followed by one or more one-sentence *resolving clauses* that state the conviction or suggestion.
- 5 (b) To be debatable, a resolution **must** state a specific suggestion and **may not** simply call for “reform,” “improvement,” “modification,” or the like without providing a specific change to the status quo. (Calling for *repeal* of an existing law or policy will generally be sufficient.) Moreover, a resolution may not simply call for passage of a particular bill, although it may call for adoption of the bill’s policies (set forth in the resolving clauses).
- 10 (c) Because resolutions do not carry the force of law, they may be directed toward federal, state, local, foreign, corporate, or other entities’ conduct. The propriety of addressing a particular party is a legitimate issue to be raised in floor debate.
- (d) **Constitutional amendments.** Because constitutional amendments do not carry the force of law unless ratified by the states, they are treated as resolutions. FGCCFL provides a special version
- 15 of the simple resolution template for constitutional amendments which incorporates standard amendment language and formatting. In general, legislators need only add the text of their amendment to Section 1 (adding other sections if necessary); they may optionally change the ratification method from legislatures to conventions and/or modify or remove the seven-year ratification window. *Adoption of a constitutional amendment requires a two-thirds vote.*

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## STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

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### § 6 Standards for Legislators

- 20 (a) ***Legislators shall maintain decorum befitting Members of Congress on the floor of the House or Senate and shall treat ALL participants with dignity and respect.*** The FGCCFL Tournament Code of Conduct, NSDA Code of Honor, and NSDA Coaches Code of Ethics are incorporated herein by reference.
- 25 (b) Legislators shall **mute their microphones** when others have the floor, except for interruptions permitted by the rules of procedure (and then only in urgent circumstances). **The public chat and file share features may be used in lieu of passing notes (keep in mind that these features are visible to all legislators, judges, and tab staff).**
- 30 (c) Remarks are directed to the chamber, not to individual members. Legislators are to refer to one another as “Representative (Senator) [last name]” or as “Ms./Mr./Mx. [last name].” The Presiding Officer is referred to (and refers to himself<sup>2</sup>) as “the Chair” and is addressed as “Mister/Madam/Mx. Speaker (President).”
- (d) Legislators **must** attend all sessions in their assigned chambers, **with cameras on**, except for *brief* excursions (on a point of personal privilege) when absolutely necessary. The chamber **may not** suspend the rules to permit free exit and entry (“open chambers”).
- 35 (e) Under no circumstances may legislators argue with the Presiding Officer. The appropriate means of challenging the PO’s decision is a point of order (and an appeal if necessary).

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<sup>2</sup> This manual uses *he/him* to refer to Presiding Officers, *she/her* to refer to other legislators, and *they/them* to refer to judges. All pronouns should be construed inclusively.

(f) Legislators **may not** address or confer with the judges before, during, or after the session. If legislators have concerns about the rules or judging, they should bring those concerns to their coaches, who will decide whether to raise the issue with the Congress Coordinator.

## § 7 The Presiding Officer

- 5 (a) A new Presiding Officer (PO) shall be elected at the start of each session. Only those legislators endorsed by their coaches may stand for election.<sup>3</sup> Nominations shall be taken from the floor; legislators may not self-nominate. After the floor has been closed to further nominations, each candidate may give a statement (not exceeding 30 seconds) of his qualifications. The vote is taken by **show of hands or an external voting platform authorized by the Congress Coordinator**. The sitting PO is entitled to vote.
- 10 A *simple majority* (more than half the votes cast) is required to elect a Presiding Officer. If no candidate has a simple majority, **a runoff is held among those legislators who place first or second (including ties)**.<sup>4,5</sup>
- 15 (b) The PO is expected to be *scrupulously fair* while presiding. He **must not** enter into debate and **may not** relinquish the Chair to speak during the session. Legislators **may not** “approach the Chair” **or address the PO in chat**. A Presiding Officer may serve in only one session.
- (c) The PO is *strictly charged* with the obligation to keep debate moving. He **must** rule dilatory and frivolous motions **out of order**; he **must** deny attempts to monopolize the floor; and he **must** deny repeated or excessive requests to exit the chamber. These rulings are subject to appeal, but such appeals may be preempted by the Parliamentarian.
- 20 (d) The PO **may and should** advise the chamber on matters of procedure not related to the substance of legislation, and he may suggest (“entertain”) motions that will advance business. However, the PO **must not** undertake or permit actions prohibited by the rules.
- (e) ~~As a matter of decorum and leadership, the PO is expected to stand while speaking (except if accessibility needs dictate otherwise).~~

## § 8 Evidence

- 25 All evidence should be marked with a complete MLA or APA bibliographic citation (including URI, DOI, or database information where applicable). If cards are used, the original source should be available in the round, and the card should include appropriate context for the claim.
- 30 Legislators must make evidence available for review at the judges’ request upon a claim of falsification or misrepresentation. Penalties for falsification or misrepresentation of evidence, or for false or unsubstantiated claims of the same, are at the judges’ discretion, up to and including forfeiture of points and nominations in the round, and are not subject to appeal.

## § 9 Electronic Devices

(a) The FGCCFL Policy on Electronic Devices at Online Tournaments is incorporated herein by reference.

<sup>3</sup> The Congress Coordinator may waive the endorsement requirement as they deem appropriate.

<sup>4</sup> This accelerated elimination method is intended to reduce the number of ballots required on an external system.

<sup>5</sup> At any time, the surviving candidates may unanimously agree to cease balloting and decide the election by a method of chance, e.g., a coin toss.

- (b) The use of mobile phones during the session is permitted for purposes of connecting to the tournament, accessing Tabroom messages, notetaking, evidence retrieval, and timekeeping. **All other use is prohibited.** The judges **DO NOT** have authority to grant permission to use a phone for other purposes during the session.
- 5 (c) Internet connectivity is permitted during sessions and recesses, but interactive communication with any person or persons by means other than the tournament’s audiovisual and text chat facilities is **prohibited**. Recording of any kind is **prohibited**. Violation of this rule may result in disqualification from the tournament and/or revocation of League membership.
- (d) Legislators may use permitted devices while speaking or presiding, but not as visual aids. **Screen sharing is not permitted.** Judges may consider the impact of a device on the speaker’s presence and delivery when awarding points and/or making nominations.
- 10 (e) The Parliamentarian may dismiss a legislator until the next recess if she uses her device in a manner that disrupts the session. (This is a less restrictive alternative to the ordinary penalty of disqualification.)
- 15 (f) Rules governing electronic devices are in effect while the Congress is in session or in recess, even if legislators are out of the chamber.

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## PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

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### § 10 General Rules of Floor Debate

- (a) The debate time limit at online tournaments is 40 minutes per bill/resolution (B/R). No extensions of the time limit will be permitted. This may necessitate ordering the previous question even though legislators still wish to speak. **REMEMBER:** No one is entitled to a speech on a particular bill or resolution (B/R) other than the sponsor.
- 20 (b) A legislator who wishes to speak on a B/R must wait until the PO calls for speakers before raising her hand (using the onscreen button) to seek recognition for a speech. Once recognized, she may unmute herself, stand, and state her code and name for the judges.
- (c) Legislators shall seek the floor only to oppose the views of the previous speaker so that debate will alternate pro and con. However, if no one wishes to oppose the previous speaker, *the speaking opportunity is forfeited*, and the PO may recognize another speaker on the same side. If there are no speakers on either side, the PO should ask if the chamber is “ready for the question”; if no one then seeks the floor, he may take a passage vote on the B/R.
- 25 (d) Speeches are limited to 3 minutes; speakers **may not** reserve or yield time. The PO shall time all speeches and provide time signals using cards or hand signs (one finger up at 2 minutes, a “C” shape at 2½ minutes). At 3 minutes, the PO shall allow the speaker to complete her sentence, then unmute, gavel down the speaker, and ask her to relinquish the floor. *There is no grace period or “warning tap.”* The PO shall announce the time of the speech before seeking questioners.
- 30 (e) Legislators are not prohibited *by rule* from speaking on both sides of the same issue. However, the judges may take any apparent inconsistency into account in their scoring/ranking.
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(f) A speaker who is **out of order** (wrong topic, wrong side, breach of decorum) shall be gavelled down once the PO determines that the speaker is in the wrong. Members who believe that a speaker is **out of order** may interrupt the speech to rise to a point of order.

### § 11 Authorship and Sponsorship

5 (a) Legislators from the school that sponsored a B/R, as designated on the docket, shall have the opportunity to deliver the first speech on the B/R (*sponsorship speech*), regardless of other priority considerations. Among multiple speakers from the sponsoring school, the usual rules of priority shall apply.

10 (b) If the sponsoring school's delegation is unwilling or unable to speak when the B/R comes up for debate, or if the B/R is marked as unsponsored or supplemental, the PO shall select a sponsor from the chamber at large to deliver the first speech. However, if the Presiding Officer's B/R comes up for debate, he may entertain a motion to lay the bill on the table or to postpone it until the start of a later session, or he may call for sponsors.

15 (c) If no one wishes to sponsor the B/R, the chamber should lay the item on the table until a sponsor is available. If the chamber exhausts the rest of its agenda and there is still no sponsor, the B/R may be taken from the table and the previous question ordered immediately.

### § 12 Priority System for Speakers

(a) The PO **must** recognize all affirmative, negative, and sponsorship-at-large speakers as follows:

(1) **Number of speeches.** The PO must recognize a legislator who has not yet spoken in the session. If all those standing have spoken, the PO selects the one who has given the fewest speeches in the session.

20 (2) **Recency.** If there is a tie for fewest speeches, the PO recognizes the legislator whose *most recent* speech was given *earliest* in the session.

(3) **Discretion or list.** If multiple legislators rise who have not yet spoken, the PO selects at his discretion, keeping in mind his obligation to be *scrupulously fair*. The PO **must not** consider questions, motions, "standing time," or school affiliation in his decision. The Congress Coordinator may specify that a random priority list generated by the tabulation software shall replace the PO's discretion.

25 Only speeches on legislation and amendments count against priority. A speech is recorded the moment it begins, even if the speaker is later ruled **out of order** and gavelled down. Questions, motions, and speeches on motions (except amendments to B/R) are not recorded.

(b) Each session begins with a clean slate (ZERO SPEECHES).

30 (c) The PO is responsible for keeping accurate priority records. He **must not** pre-plan speaker selections because new people may rise each time. *Systematic errors or bias in recognition over a sustained period is a sufficient basis to reduce the PO's score to the minimum.*

(d) An error in recognition may be challenged on an **immediate** point of order (made before the speech begins) by the person entitled to the speech, stating the accurate precedence and recency. In making future selections, the PO **may not** ignore the priority rules to compensate for an error.

### § 13 Questioning Periods (Cross-Examination)

35 (a) Questioning periods are **2 minutes** in length following a sponsorship speech and the first negative speaking opportunity. Questioning periods are **1 minute** in length following all other

speeches. All questioning periods are mandatory. The chamber **may not** suspend the rules to extend questioning, to alter or abolish regular questioning periods, or to adopt “direct questioning.”

(b) The PO shall recognize all questioners unless the chamber suspends the rules to permit speakers to do so themselves. The PO retains the power to cut off a questioner or speaker and to select a new questioner, or to order the speaker to do so; for this reason, he should remain unmuted during the questioning period if possible. There is no formal priority system for questioners (and the PO **should not** attempt to create or enforce one), but no legislator should be permitted to monopolize the floor.

At the end of the questioning period, the PO should gesture for any standing legislators to take their seats. Upon the completion of a brief final response, the PO should tap his gavel to signal the end of the questioning period. If there is a lack of questioners with time remaining, the PO should rise and end the questioning period early.

(c) Questioners shall seek recognition using the “raise hand” button. Upon being recognized, the questioner may unmute, ask a *one sentence* question (there is no “permission to preface”), then mute again. The speaker gives a *brief* response (but **must not** be limited to an unqualified “yes” or “no”), and the next questioner is recognized. Clarifications are permitted at the PO’s discretion. The speaker may refuse to answer a “loaded” question or any other question offered in bad faith.

(d) Personal attacks, repetitive questions (“asked and answered”), irrelevant questions, serial questions, cross-debate (speaker demands a response from the questioner) and requests to engage in prohibited conduct **must** be ruled **out of order**. Additionally, the PO **must** cut off excessive commentary or oration by the questioner or the speaker.<sup>6</sup>

## § 14 Consideration of Parliamentary Motions

(a) Parliamentary procedure is essential to Student Congress. However, time spent considering motions might otherwise be used for substantive debate, so procedure **must not** be used simply to demonstrate one’s knowledge of the rules (or others’ lack thereof). *Parliamentary games and other abuses will be penalized by the officials.*

The Presiding Officer shall rule **out of order** all motions he considers dilatory (intended to waste time) or frivolous (without serious purpose). The PO **may not** reject an appeal or a call for a division (checks on the PO’s power), but the judges may intervene if these motions are abused.

(b) Legislation whose same-school sponsor is willing and able to speak is entitled to an authorship speech and a first negative speaking opportunity before it is voted on or set aside. Otherwise, there are no speech or cycle requirements.

(c) The order of precedence is reflected in the Table of Parliamentary Motions. The chamber disposes of one motion at a time, from highest to lowest precedence. The particular rules governing each motion appear in § 15 of this manual or in *Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. This is the general process for considering motions:

- (1) **Recognition.** A legislator may raise her hand for a motion at any time when the floor is not claimed by a speaker.<sup>7</sup> (The PO **should not** call for motions after speeches; it is the legislators’ responsibility to seek the floor.)

<sup>6</sup> The PO should be especially careful with “friendly” questions and those of the “Are you aware ... / Do you agree ... / Isn’t it true ... ?” variety, as these are often used as vehicles for extended oration.

<sup>7</sup> *Exception:* A motion that permits interruption may be made at any time, even during a speech. However, interrupting a speech or vote is **strongly discouraged** unless there is an emergency or a serious breach of the rules requiring immediate action.



If necessary, the legislator may unmute and speak out (“*Mister/Madam/Mx Speaker (President)!*” or “*Motion!*”) to attract the PO’s attention.

(2) **Statement of the motion.** The PO recognizes the speaker and asks her to state her point. The legislator then states the motion using the appropriate phrasing, and the PO determines whether the motion is in order.

5 (3) **Second.** If a second is required, another legislator must indicate support for the motion (“*Second!*”) for the motion to be in order. If necessary, the PO will call for a second. (By rule, legislation that has been placed on the calendar is considered moved and seconded.)

10 (4) **Debate and amendment.** Debatable motions may be discussed pro and con. Except when the chamber is debating an amendment to a B/R, remarks on motions are delivered from members’ desks (speakers may remain seated), should not exceed 30 seconds, are not scored, and do not count against priority. No legislator should be permitted to monopolize the floor. Amendable motions may be amended with a motion, second, and simple majority; the amendment is debatable only if the motion being amended is itself debatable.

(5) **Vote or decision.** Once debate (if any) is exhausted or closed, the appropriate vote is taken. Certain incidental and privileged motions are decided by the Chair without a vote.

## § 15 Ordinary Motions in Student Congress

15 **NOTE:** These are the motions most likely to be used in Student Congress. In general, Presiding Officers are expected to be able to dispose of these motions without extensive review of the rules.

### PRIVILEGED MOTIONS

(a) **Adjourn.** A motion to adjourn ends the session and dismisses the chamber until the time specified. By rule, it does not affect tabled items but does terminate any suspensions of the rules.  
20 It is not necessary to “reopen the floor” upon returning from an adjournment. At the end of the last session, it is appropriate to move to adjourn *sine die*,<sup>8</sup> which ends the session without providing for the chamber’s reassembly, effectively defeating any items not put to a vote.

(b) **Recess.** A motion to recess allows the chamber to suspend business for a specified period without ending the session. Debate time is paused during a recess. It is not necessary to “reopen the floor” upon returning from a recess. **Due to the short sessions, recesses are strongly discouraged and will be deducted from session time.**

(c) **Point of personal privilege.** This motion allows a legislator to make a personal request during debate (usually to exit or enter the chamber, **to briefly turn off one’s camera**, or to approach the Chair with an amendment). It **may not** be used to address or inquire of the chamber.

30 (d) **Call for the orders of the day.** This motion compels the chamber to take up scheduled business (so-called general or special orders, established either by rule or by certain motions). It is only required if the PO does not take up the business at the scheduled time. All other debate is suspended while the chamber considers the orders of the day.

### INCIDENTAL MOTIONS

35 (e) **Point of order.** A legislator may rise to a point of order to correct a procedural error that affects the interests of members of the chamber.<sup>9</sup> The motion must be made **immediately** following the error, i.e., before the next speech or vote. The legislator may interrupt the PO (“*Point of order!*”) if necessary. When asked to state her point, the legislator states what the ruling

<sup>8</sup> This is Latin for “without day,” as in “without specifying a day to reassemble.” It’s pronounced *SIGH-nee-DIE-ee*, following the 19<sup>th</sup> century conventions of Law Latin.

<sup>9</sup> A point of order may be used to inquire of the Presiding Officer; this is also known as a parliamentary inquiry. However, such a motion **must not** be used for parliamentary games, nor should it be used to inquire about time remaining, speaker priority, or any other matter that legislators should be tracking themselves.

should have been (citing relevant rules), then takes her seat. The PO determines if the point is “well taken” (valid) and either takes corrective action or explains the basis for the original ruling.

(f) **Appeal.** If a point of order is not resolved to legislators’ satisfaction, they may appeal the PO’s ruling to the full chamber. A motion to appeal (phrased “*I appeal the decision of the Chair*”) must be made **immediately**, interrupting the PO (“*Mister/Madam Speaker (President)!*”) if necessary. It requires a second and is not debatable, though the moving legislator and the PO may *briefly* state the basis for reversing or affirming the ruling, respectively.

The PO takes a recorded vote on the question “*Shall the decision of the Chair stand?*” Those voting to *sustain* the PO are counted first, followed by those voting to *overrule* him. The PO may not vote, but a tie vote sustains the PO. Once the results of the appeal have been announced, the matter is no longer subject to discussion.

(g) **Suspension of the rules.** Suspensions of the rules are permitted *only* for matters either authorized by this manual or not addressed by the FGCCFL and NCFL rules. A motion to suspend the rules must specify the limited purpose for which it is made, e.g., allowing speakers to recognize their own questioners. It requires a second and a two-thirds vote of the members *present*; it expires when the chamber adjourns.

~~(h) **Call for a division of the chamber.** This is a motion to contest a voice vote.~~

#### SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS

(i) **Lay a B/R on the table.** The motion to lay the item under discussion on the table (colloquially, to “table the B/R”) sets the legislation aside *with the intent of returning to it after considering other business*. It requires a second and a simple majority. Legislation **may** be laid on the table **in one session** and taken up again **in a later session**. Debate time is paused while a B/R is tabled.

(j) **Take a B/R from the table.** When no other B/R is on the floor, a motion to take a tabled B/R from the table (colloquially, to “untable the B/R”) and resume consideration is in order. The motion requires a second and a simple majority; if the motion is adopted, debate on the B/R continues where it left off, and debate time continues to run.

(k) **The previous question (close debate).** The previous question is a motion to close debate and vote immediately on the item being considered. The proper phrasing is “*I move the previous question,*” and POs should accept no other phrasing as valid. The previous question requires a second and a two-thirds vote of those *present*. **Legislators should not overuse this motion, but neither should they neglect it.** When debate grows stale or one-sided, it is usually in the chamber’s best interest to close debate and move on to a fresh topic.

(l) **Limit (or extend the limits of) debate.** This motion allows debate on a B/R to be limited to a fixed period of time or a set number of speeches. Because it affects freedom of debate, it requires a second and a two-thirds vote of those *present*. It is not debatable, but it is amendable as to time. This motion **MAY NOT** be used to extend a debate time limit established by rule.

(m) **Postpone to a specific time.** This motion allows the chamber to set a B/R aside until a specified time, such as postponing the PO’s bill to the start of a later session. This is a majority question and requires a second. Once the specified time has come and no B/R is on the floor, debate on the postponed item (a general order) continues where it left off.

## § 16 Amending Process for Legislation

(a) An amendment **must** be germane to the legislation’s subject matter and **must not** alter the legislation’s intent. The amendment is written as a single imperative sentence directing **one** of the following changes:

- 5 (1) **Strike out** one or more occurrences of a word/phrase/passage
- (2) **Insert** one or more occurrences of a word/phrase/passage
- (3) **Substitute** new material for part or all of the existing text

(It is presumed that any required renumbering will be carried out without instruction.) An amendment to legislation may be amended using the same format, but an amendment *to an amendment* **may not** be amended further.

10 (b) The amendment must be submitted (via text chat or file share) to the Parliamentarian for review before the motion to amend can be in order. The author **may** rise to a point of personal privilege to notify the Parliamentarian of his intention to send an amendment.

15 (c) While the B/R to be amended is on the floor, the author of the amendment should seek recognition for a motion and move to amend the legislation. The PO will confirm that the amendment is satisfactory, read the amendment to the chamber, and call for a second by recorded vote. One-third of the members *present* must second the amendment for it to be in order.

20 (d) If the amendment receives the required second, it may be debated. However, the chamber may instead choose to order the previous question immediately and vote on the amendment without debate. Debate, if any, begins with an *affirmative speech*, assigned according to the usual rules of priority. The author of the amendment is not entitled to a speech.

(e) Speeches in amendments alternate pro and con, are given from the rostrum, are 3 minutes in duration with a 1 minute questioning period, are scored, and are subject to the priority rules. However, debate is limited to the amendment and its effect on the legislation; speeches on the merits of the underlying legislation are **out of order** while the amendment is on the floor.

25 (f) When debate on the amendment has been exhausted or closed, a recorded vote is taken on the adoption of the amendment. An amendment requires a simple majority. Following the vote, debate on the legislation (or the legislation *as amended*) continues where it left off.

## § 17 Voting Procedures

(a) A vote must be taken on all questions requiring a vote, even if the outcome appears obvious. The PO **must not** simply call for objections or “assume unanimous consent.”

30 (b) A recorded vote (typically show of hands) is required for all questions in an online Congress.

(c) Before all votes, the PO shall state the question being considered and the vote required for passage.

35 (d) **Recorded votes requiring a simple majority.** The PO calls for legislators in favor to **raise their hands (using the onscreen button)** and counts the votes; he then calls for those opposed to do likewise. *The PO should never call for abstentions.* (Legislators are not required to vote, and there is no quorum rule; however, legislators who do not participate may attract the judges’ disfavor.) If there are more in favor than opposed, the motion passes; otherwise, it fails.<sup>10</sup> The result is

<sup>10</sup> **Tiebreaking.** The PO may vote if his vote will affect the outcome—either an “aye” vote to break a tie or a “no” vote to create one. A tie vote defeats the question.

announced: “By a vote of \_\_\_ in favor to \_\_\_ opposed, the motion/bill/resolution/amendment is adopted/defeated.”

(e) **Recorded votes requiring a fraction of members present (2/3, 1/3, or 1/5).** The PO calls for legislators in favor to **raise their hands (using the onscreen button)** and counts the votes; he then determines the total number of legislators in the chamber, excluding himself and anyone who has exited on a point of personal privilege. If the required fraction of this number has voted in favor of the question, it passes; otherwise, it fails. The result is announced: “By a vote of \_\_\_ in favor out of \_\_\_ present, the motion is adopted/defeated.”

(f) **Voice votes.** **Voice votes must not be taken due to technical limitations of NSDA Campus.**

(g) **Roll call votes.** A roll call vote may be ordered by one-fifth of the members *present*. **This is strongly discouraged unless there have been irregularities in a recorded vote.** The PO calls the roll from his seating chart, and each member responds by saying **only** “aye” or “no”; a legislator who does not wish to vote need not speak. Members who do not respond may be called a second time. The vote is announced as above.

## TOURNAMENT OPERATIONS

### § 18 Submission and Review of Legislation

Schools with Congress entries are required to submit at least one (1) satisfactory item of legislation for consideration. **Each school may submit up to two (2) items.** Schools that do not submit satisfactory legislation will not be permitted to enter students in Congress at that tournament. **All legislation must be personally reviewed by coaches and submitted via Tabroom.**

(a) **Optional advance review.** Legislation may be emailed to the Congress Coordinator before 9:00 PM on the **Monday before tournament week** (11 days before the tournament). Legislation must be written using the FGCCFL template in the manner directed in § 3 of this manual and saved in Microsoft Word (.docx) format, one item per document. **This does not submit the legislation for the tournament; this is ONLY for review.** The submitting coach will receive an email within 48 hours detailing necessary repairs and suggested revisions.

(b) **Final submission.** To be considered for the tournament, legislation must be submitted on Tabroom no later than 9:00 PM on the **Thursday before tournament week** (9 days before the tournament). Legislation must be written using the FGCCFL template in the manner directed in § 3 of this manual and saved in Microsoft Word (.docx) format, one item per document.

(c) **Standard of review.** Legislation will be reviewed to ensure that it meets the requirements of §§ 2-5 of this manual. This includes appropriate subject matter, proper use of the template, and the inclusion of all required elements of a bill or resolution. Legislation that does not satisfy these requirements **will not** be deemed satisfactory.

Legislation will not be excluded *solely* because it is unconstitutional, unworkable, or ill-advised. These are legitimate issues to be addressed in floor debate. *The inclusion of an item on the docket does not constitute a “clean bill of health” from the Congress Coordinator!*

(d) **The Congress Coordinator shall select eight (8) items for the docket at their discretion. To the extent possible, the docket shall represent a wide variety of schools and topics and shall include**

legislation of the highest quality. If there are fewer than 8 satisfactory items, the Congress Coordinator shall draft supplemental items as necessary. The Congress Coordinator may additionally draft 1-2 supplemental items, which shall be placed last on the calendar and shall not be guaranteed debate time.

- 5 (e) The docket (in calendar order) will be published on Tabroom and/or the FGCCFL site by 9:00 PM on the Friday before tournament week (8 days before the tournament), or as soon as practicable. Legislation text may be subject to technical corrections, and titles may be edited.

## § 19 Chamber Assignments and Calendars

(a) The number of chambers will be determined based upon the number of legislators registered at the close of registration. The preferred chamber size is 10-12 legislators. Chambers are given a letter or number designation and may operate as Houses or Senates.

(b) The Congress Coordinator will assign legislators to chambers; requests from coaches **will not** be entertained. Initial assignments are made by random draw; legislators are then swapped (anonymously) between chambers until delegations are balanced. Delegations may not be placed in all chambers to facilitate judge assignment.

15 (c) ~~The Congress Coordinator will generate seating charts for each chamber to facilitate priority tracking.~~

(d) The calendar shall be set by random draw and shall be the same in all chambers. Every school with legislation on the docket shall be entitled to present one B/R before any school presents a second item. Supplemental items may only be considered after the chamber has debated and voted on all other B/R.

(e) Chamber assignments will not be released until the start of the tournament.

## § 20 Session Procedures

(a) Each chamber shall convene for Preliminary Business at the start of Session 1. Attendance shall be taken (all technical issues should be resolved at this time), and the Parliamentarian shall administer the oath of office and lead the chamber electing its PO.

25 (b) Each chamber shall convene for four sessions, each of which shall consist of 90 minutes to be used for the PO election, floor debate, and any special orders. Recesses, if taken, count against session time and must be short and infrequent. The PO may reject a motion to recess as dilatory at his discretion.

30 (c) At the end of Session 4, or when the chamber has voted on all B/R, whichever comes first, the chamber shall vote online for Best Presiding Officer, then adjourn *sine die*.

## § 21 Scoring and Tabulation

(a) Each chamber shall have one Scorer per session, who shall evaluate all speeches and the Presiding Officer. Each chamber shall additionally be assigned a Parliamentarian, who will evaluate both Presiding Officers and advise the chamber on matters of procedure. Parliamentarians generally will not intervene in procedural matters, but they should do so at the PO's request or if a major error has been made that adversely affects the session. Rulings made in the chamber **will not** be overturned by the Congress Coordinator unless clearly erroneous.

(b) Scorers will score each speech on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 6 (outstanding). Scorers and the Parliamentarian shall score the Presiding Officer on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 6 (outstanding). These scores may be averaged and recorded as NSDA merit points. However, speaker/PO points are not a consideration in determining Outstanding Legislators.

5 (c) At the end of the session, each Scorer will select and rank the six (6) legislators they believe contributed the most to the session. At the end of the day, the Parliamentarian will rank **all** of the legislators in the chamber. These are to be holistic assessments, and officials will be advised that they should not simply nominate the students with the most points. The Presiding Officer **is eligible** for selection, and judges will be admonished to consider him. Officials may rank students  
10 from their school in any position. Students not ranked will be assigned a rank of 7.

(d) Finishing order will be determined by low total ranks (with the Parliamentarian's ranks capped at 7), then high total reciprocals, then judge preference, then low total ranks with the worst rank excluded, then the Parliamentarian's preference. **Presiding Officers and the first, second, and third place speakers in each chamber shall receive medals, and the Best Presiding  
15 Officer (determined by online preferential vote) shall receive a gavel.**

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## SMALL CHAMBER OPTION

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### § 22 Generally

The Executive Committee may choose to run Student Congress using the Small Chamber Option if they deem it necessary or desirable due to technical limitations. The docket will be assembled as provided in § 18. On Tournament Day, two items shall be drawn from the docket, without replacement, for each of the four sessions.

### § 23 Small Chamber Session Procedures

20 (a) There shall be a 15 minute Session Zero, which shall not be counted for scoring purposes. Attendance shall be taken (all technical issues should be resolved during this session), and the Congress Coordinator shall administer the oath of office and answer any questions.

(b) Each chamber shall consist of a maximum of 8 legislators. Legislators will be assigned to a different chamber each session and may serve as PO in more than one session. Each session shall be  
25 limited to two items of legislation, to be posted when chamber assignments are published.

(c) Each chamber shall convene for four sessions, each of which shall consist of the following:

- Preliminary business (PO election) – 10 minutes
- Floor debate – 60 minutes
- Special orders and adjournment – 5 minutes

30 Recesses, if taken, count against session time and must be short and infrequent. The PO may reject a motion to recess as dilatory at his discretion.

## § 24 Small Chamber Scoring and Tabulation

- 5 (a) Each chamber shall have one Scorer-Parliamentarian per session, who shall evaluate all speeches and the Presiding Officer. Scorer-Parliamentarians generally will not intervene in procedural matters, but they should do so at the PO's request or if a major error has been made that adversely affects the session. Rulings made in the chamber **will not** be overturned by the Congress Coordinator unless clearly erroneous.
- (b) Scorer-Parliamentarians will score each speech and the PO on a scale from 1 (very poor) to 6 (outstanding). These scores may be recorded as NSDA merit points. However, speaker/PO points are not a consideration in determining Outstanding Legislators.
- 10 (c) At the end of the session, each Scorer-Parliamentarian will rank **all** of the legislators in the chamber. These are to be holistic assessments, and officials will be advised that they should not simply nominate the students with the most points. Officials may rank students from their school in any position.
- 15 (d) Finishing order will be determined by low total ranks, then high total reciprocals, then judge preference, then low total ranks with the worst rank excluded; all extant ties at this point will remain unbroken. The first, second, and third place contestants shall receive medals.

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## GRAND FINALS

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*Procedures for Grand Finals shall be determined in January.*

## Sample Bill

**NOTE: Use of the FGCCFL legislation template is required.  
DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REPRODUCE THIS FORMAT IN A BLANK DOCUMENT.**

### **A Bill to Require Immediate Disclosure of Campaign Contributions**

1 BE IT ENACTED BY THE STUDENT CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:

2 **SECTION 1.** Political committees shall be required to report all contributions received to the  
3 Federal Election Commission and to publish the report online within 72 hours of  
4 receiving the contribution.

5 **SECTION 2.** A. As used herein, “political committees” shall include all political action  
6 committees, campaign committees, and any other type of organization currently in  
7 existence or created in the future whose purpose is to influence the outcome of a  
8 congressional or presidential election.

9 B. The form and method of reporting and publication shall be determined by the  
10 Federal Election Commission, but said report must include, at minimum, the  
11 value of the contribution and the donor’s name and ZIP code.

12 **SECTION 3.** A. The Federal Election Commission shall be responsible for enforcing the  
13 provisions of this bill.

14 B. Failure to disclose a contribution within 72 hours of receipt shall be punishable  
15 by a fine of three times the amount of the undisclosed contribution.

16 **SECTION 4.** The provisions of this bill shall take effect 90 days after passage.

17 **SECTION 5.** All laws in conflict with this legislation are hereby declared null and void.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Pine Meadow High School*



## Sample Resolution

**NOTE: Use of the FGCCFL legislation template is required.  
DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REPRODUCE THIS FORMAT IN A BLANK DOCUMENT.**

### **A Resolution to Abolish the Debt Ceiling**

1 **WHEREAS,** The United States is the only developed nation that imposes an arbitrary  
2 borrowing limit on itself; and

3 **WHEREAS,** The nature of the debt ceiling makes it possible for one faction in the Congress to  
4 hold the rest of the government hostage; and

5 **WHEREAS,** The debt ceiling conflicts with federal spending bills, creating the potential for  
6 recurring crises; and

7 **WHEREAS,** The absence of a debt ceiling would not result in a debt crisis, as is obvious from  
8 the low yields on U.S. Treasury securities; now, therefore, be it

9 **RESOLVED,** That the Student Congress here assembled calls for the federal debt ceiling to be  
10 abolished; and be it

11 **FURTHER RESOLVED,** that any borrowing necessary to execute spending legislation adopted  
12 by the Congress be deemed authorized upon passage of such legislation.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Mercer Academy*

## Sample Constitutional Amendment

**NOTE: Use of the FGCCFL legislation template is required.  
DO NOT ATTEMPT TO REPRODUCE THIS FORMAT IN A BLANK DOCUMENT.**

### **A Resolution to Propose a Constitutional Amendment to Protect the Right to Vote**

1 **WHEREAS,** It is axiomatic that a republican form of government demands zealous protection  
2 of the people's right to choose who exercises power on their behalf; and

3 **WHEREAS,** The right to vote, while presumed by the Constitution, is not explicitly protected  
4 except with respect to race, sex, and age; and

5 **WHEREAS,** Public officials have imposed arbitrary and often discriminatory restrictions on  
6 the right to vote; now, therefore, be it

7 **RESOLVED,** By two-thirds of the Congress here assembled, that the following article is  
8 proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which shall be  
9 valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by  
10 conventions in three-fourths of the several states within seven years from the date  
11 of its submission by the Congress:

12 **ARTICLE --.**

13 SECTION 1: The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years  
14 of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the  
15 United States or by any State.

16 SECTION 2: The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by  
17 appropriate legislation.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Walden High School*

## List of Suspect Legislation Topics

**NOTE:** *This is NOT a list of prohibited topics. It IS an invitation to be creative—**and careful.***

These topics tend to result in low-quality debate or frequent use of canned speeches, so legislation on these topics is held to a higher standard of timeliness, significance, and novelty.

- Legalize marijuana
- Legalize euthanasia/physician assisted suicide
- Legalize prostitution/sex work
- Ban firearms/handguns
- Ban abortion
- Abolish capital punishment
- Eliminate the penny
- Replace dollar bill with coin
- Abolish the Electoral College
- Abolish birthright citizenship
- Raise/lower voting age
- Raise/lower drinking age
- Change school start times (or similar)

### Table of Parliamentary Motions

Class	Name of Motion	Purpose	Interrupt	Second	Debatable	Amendable	Vote
Privileged	18. Fix time for reassembling	To arrange the time of next meeting	Yes	Yes	Time	Time	Majority
	17. Adjourn	To dismiss the meeting	No	Yes	No	Time	Majority
	16. Recess	To dismiss the meeting briefly	No	Yes	Yes	Time	Majority
	15. Point of personal privilege	To make a personal request during debate	Yes	No	No	No	Decision of Chair
	14. Call for the orders of the day	To force consideration of a postponed item	Yes	No	No	No	Decision of Chair
Incidental	13g. Appeal	To reverse the Presiding Officer's ruling	Yes	Yes	No	No	Majority
	13f. Point of order	To correct a procedural error	Yes	No	No	No	Decision of Chair
	13e. Division of the chamber	To verify a voice vote	Yes	Yes	No	No	None
	13d. Object to consideration	To completely suppress action	Yes	No	No	No	2/3 neg.
	13c. Divide a motion	To consider a motion's parts separately	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority
	13b. Modify/withdraw a motion	To modify or withdraw a pending motion	No	No	No	No	Majority
	13a. Suspend the rules	To take action contrary to standing rules	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
Subsidiary	12. Rescind	To repeal previous action	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2/3
	11. Reconsider	To consider a defeated motion again	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
	10. Take from the table	To consider a tabled motion	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
	9. Lay on the table	To defer action	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
	8. Previous question	To close debate and vote immediately	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
	7. Limit or extend the limits of debate	To modify freedom of debate	No	Yes	No	Time	2/3
	6. Postpone to a certain time	To defer action	Yes	Yes	Yes	Time	Majority
	5. Refer to committee	For further study	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
	4. Amend an amendment	To modify an amendment	No	1/3	Yes	No	Majority
	3. Amend	To modify a motion	No	1/3	Yes	Yes	Majority
Main	2. Postpone indefinitely	To suppress action	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
	1. Main motion (B/R)	To introduce business	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

**Notes**

- The shaded motions are generally not applicable to Student Congress and are included for historical reasons.
- The incidental motions have no order of precedence among themselves.
- Legislation placed on the calendar is presumed to have been moved and seconded.
- Consult this manual and *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* (11th ed.) for detailed rules of procedure.