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Florida Gulf Coast Catholic Forensic 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

**Always consult this manual first.** The *FGCCFL Student Congress Manual* is an adaptation of the *NCFL Student Congress Manual* to meet the needs of local competition. If a question is not addressed by this manual, consult the *NCFL Student Congress Manual*, then *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*.

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. A session that is not in substantial compliance with the rules shall not be considered for qualifying purposes.

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# CONDUCT AND DECORUM

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## § 2 Standards for Legislators

(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.

(b) Legislators shall remain silent when others have the floor, except for interruptions permitted by the rules of procedure (only in urgent circumstances). Contestants **may** pass notes and materials quietly and discreetly, subject to review by the Parliamentarian.

**(Online—Contestants may use the chat and file sharing features of NSDA Campus, but these features are accessible to all participants in the chamber.)**

(c) Speakers' remarks shall be directed to the chamber. Legislators are to refer to one another as "Representative (Senator) [*last name*]" or as "Mr./Ms./Mx. [*last name*]." The Presiding Officer is referred to (and refers to herself<sup>1</sup>) as "the Chair" and is addressed as "Madam/Mr./Mx. Speaker (President)."

(d) Legislators **must** attend all sessions in their assigned chambers, except for **brief** excursions (on a *point of personal privilege*) in cases of dire need. The chamber **may not** suspend the rules to permit free exit and entry ("open chambers").

(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).

(f) Legislators **may not** address or confer with the officials before, during, or after the session. Questions about parliamentary procedure are to be brought to the Presiding Officer on a *point of order* or a *parliamentary inquiry*. Concerns about rules or judging should be brought to coaches, who will decide whether to raise the issue with League staff.

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<sup>1</sup> This manual uses *she/her* pronouns to refer to Presiding Officers, *he/him* to refer to other legislators, and *they/them* to refer to officials. All pronouns should be construed inclusively.

### § 3 The Presiding Officer

(a) A new Presiding Officer (PO) shall be elected at the start of each session. Nominations shall be taken from the floor and may be declined; legislators may not self-nominate. After the floor has been closed to further nominations, each candidate may give a statement (not to exceed 30 seconds) of her qualifications. The vote is taken by secret ballot (**Online—using NSDA Campus online voting, StrawPoll.com, or a show of hands in the chamber, at the Parliamentarian’s discretion**). The sitting PO is entitled to vote.

A **simple majority** (more than half the votes cast) is required to elect a Presiding Officer. If no candidate has a simple majority, the candidate receiving the fewest votes is eliminated and a runoff is held among the survivors. However, if the two lowest-ranked candidates have fewer votes *combined* than the candidate immediately ahead of them, both candidates shall be eliminated. If two candidates are tied for last place, a runoff is held between them to eliminate one of them before the runoff among the survivors.

(b) The PO is expected to be *scrupulously fair* while presiding. She **must not** enter into debate and **may not** relinquish the Chair to speak during the session. Legislators **may not** “approach the Chair” (except with an amendment) or otherwise confer privately with the PO. A Presiding Officer may serve in only one session.

(c) The PO has a duty to keep debate moving. To that end, she **must** rule dilatory and frivolous motions **out of order**, she **must** deny attempts to monopolize the floor, and she **must** deny repeated or excessive requests to exit the chamber. These rulings are subject to appeal, but such appeals may be blocked by the Parliamentarian.

(d) The PO **may and should** advise the chamber on matters of procedure not related to the substance of legislation, and she may suggest (“entertain”) motions that will advance business. However, the PO **must not** undertake, permit, or solicit actions prohibited by the rules, nor may she substitute her own strategy for the ordinary use of parliamentary procedure. *A PO who willfully disregards the rules may be disqualified from the tournament.*

(e) As a matter of decorum and leadership, the PO is expected to stand while speaking except if accessibility needs dictate otherwise. (**Online—The PO may remain seated.**)

### § 4 Evidence

(a) 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.

(b) Legislators must make evidence available for review at the judges’ request upon a claim of falsification or misrepresentation.

(c) 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.

## § 5 Electronic Devices

- (a) The FGCCFL Policy on Electronic Devices is incorporated herein by reference.
- (b) The use of tablets and laptop computers during the session is permitted for purposes of accessing Tabroom messages (**Online—and NSDA Campus**), notetaking, evidence retrieval, and timekeeping only. Presiding Officers may use their phones for timekeeping if they demonstrate to the Parliamentarian that the phone is silenced and in airplane mode. **All other use is prohibited.** The officials **DO NOT** have authority to waive this rule.
- (c) Devices must be run on battery during sessions and must be silenced. There is no guarantee that contestants will have access to AC power or to internet access.
- (d) Internet or other connectivity for evidence retrieval (via school network or hotspot) is permitted during sessions and recesses, but communication with any person outside the chamber is **prohibited**. Recording of any kind is **prohibited**. *Violation of this rule may result in disqualification from the tournament.*
- (e) Legislators may use permitted devices while speaking or presiding, but not as visual aids. Judges may consider the impact of a device on the legislator’s presence and delivery when awarding points and/or making nominations.
- (f) The Parliamentarian may require a legislator to cease use of his devices if he uses them in a manner that disrupts the session. *This is a less restrictive alternative to the ordinary penalty of disqualification.* (**Online—This provision is inapplicable.**)
- (g) 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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## § 6 General Rules of Floor Debate

- (a) There is no “hard” debate time limit, but the chamber is expected to consider all B/R with a sponsor present (named or alternate). Hence, the chamber should judiciously use motions to order the previous, to table, to postpone, and/or to limit debate. *No one is entitled to a speech on a particular bill or resolution (B/R) other than the sponsor.*
- (b) A legislator who wishes to speak on a B/R must wait until the PO calls for speakers before rising (or raising his hand or placard<sup>2</sup>) to seek recognition for a speech. Once recognized, he may proceed to the rostrum (or other place for speakers) and state his name and code for the judges. (**Online—Speakers may remain seated.**)
- (c) Legislators shall seek the floor only to oppose previous speaker’s views, so that debate alternates pro and con. However, if no one seeks to oppose the previous speaker, *the opportunity is forfeited*, and the PO recognizes another speaker on the same side.

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<sup>2</sup> This is permitted by a suspension of the rules, or automatically if **any** legislator is unable to stand with ease. (**Online—Use the “raise hand” feature of NSDA Campus, or make placards if the Parliamentarian allows.**)

- (d) Speeches are limited to 3 minutes. Speakers **may not** reserve time or yield to another speaker.
- (e) **Gaveling procedures.** The PO shall time all speeches and provide time signals by gaveling (once at **2 minutes**, twice at **2½ minutes**). At **3 minutes**, the PO shall rise, allow the speaker to complete his sentence, then **gavel down the speaker** and ask him to relinquish the floor. *There is no grace period or “warning tap.”* The PO shall announce the time used by the speaker before calling for questioners.
- (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*.
- (g) Legislators are not prohibited *by rule* from speaking on both sides of the same issue or from speaking repeatedly on the same B/R. However, this conduct is discouraged, and the judges may take any apparent inconsistencies or lack of decorum into account in their scoring/ranking.
- (h) 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 for a speech or a motion, she may take a passage vote on the B/R.

## § 7 Authorship and Sponsorship

- (a) The author of the B/R, as published on the docket, shall have the opportunity to deliver the first speech on the B/R (*authorship speech*), regardless of other priority considerations. If the author is not present, a legislator from the author’s school who does not have a B/R of his own may claim this privilege when the calendar is established.
- (b) If no author or same-school sponsor is available, 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 was the intended sponsor, she may entertain a motion to lay the B/R on the table or to postpone it until the start of a later session, or she may call for sponsors.
- (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.

## § 8 Priority System for Speakers

- (a) The PO **must** recognize all speakers, except for authorship speeches, as follows:
- (1) **Number of speeches (precedence).** The PO must recognize a legislator who has not yet spoken. If all those standing have spoken, the PO selects the one who has given the fewest speeches on the day.
  - (2) **Recency.** If there is a tie for fewest speeches, the PO recognizes the legislator whose *most recent* speech was given *earliest* in the day.
  - (3) **Discretion or list.** If multiple legislators rise who have not yet spoken, the PO selects at his discretion, keeping in mind her obligation to be *scrupulously fair*. The PO **must not** consider questions, motions, “standing time,” or school affiliation in her decision. The Congress Coordinator may specify that a priority list (generated by the tabulation software or another random means) shall replace the PO’s discretion.

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 starts with a clean slate (zero speeches).
- (c) The PO is responsible for keeping accurate priority records. She **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 reason for the officials 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.

## § 9 Questioning Periods (Cross-Examination)

(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. 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 rise and gesture for any standing legislators to take their seats. Upon the completion of a brief final response, the PO should tap her 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 rise (or raise their hands) to seek recognition. Upon being recognized, the questioner shall ask a *one sentence* question (there is no "permission to preface") and take his seat. The speaker gives a *brief* response (but **must not** be limited to a simple "yes" or "no"), and the next questioner is recognized. Clarifications are permitted at the PO's discretion. The speaker may refuse to answer a question offered in bad faith.

(d) Personal attacks, repetitive questions ("asked and answered"), irrelevant questions, serial questions, cross-debate (speaker demanding 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>3</sup>

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<sup>3</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.

## § 10 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 (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 she 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 Parliamentarian shall prevent abuse of these motions.

(b) Legislation whose author or same-school sponsor is willing and able to speak is entitled to a sponsorship 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 § 11 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 rise (or raise his hand) for a motion at any time when the floor is not claimed by a speaker.<sup>4</sup> (The PO **should not** call for motions after speeches; it is legislators' responsibility to seek the floor.) If necessary, the legislator may speak out ("*Madam / Mr. / Mx. Speaker (President)!*") or "*Motion!*") to attract the PO's attention.

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

(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.)

(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 itself is 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.

## § 11 Ordinary Motions in Student Congress

**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.

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<sup>4</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.

## 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. 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>5</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. It is **not** necessary to “reopen the floor” upon returning from a recess. Recesses count against 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 or to approach the Chair with an amendment). It **may not** be used to address or inquire of the chamber.

**(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 business is suspended while the chamber considers the orders of the day.

## INCIDENTAL MOTIONS

**(e) Point of order.** A legislator may rise to a point of order to correct a procedural error that affects the interests of members.<sup>6</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 his point, the legislator states what the ruling should have been (citing relevant rules), then takes his seat. The PO determines if the point is “*well taken*” (valid) and either takes corrective action or explains the basis for her 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 (“*Madam / Mr. / Mx. 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* her. 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.

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<sup>5</sup> 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>6</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.

**(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.** See § 13(f).

#### 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, if limited, 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. This motion 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.

## § 12 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 specifying **one** of the following changes:

- (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.

- (b) The amendment must be written out and submitted to the Parliamentarian (via the Presiding Officer) for review before the motion to amend can be in order. The author **may** rise to a point of personal privilege to approach the Chair with an amendment.
- (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 ensure that the amendment is satisfactory, read it 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.
- (d) If the amendment receives the required second, it may be debated. However, the chamber **may** instead move 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 the speech.
- (e) Speeches on 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.
- (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. Debate on the legislation (or the legislation *as amended*) then resumes where it left off.

## § 13 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.”
- (b) A recorded vote (standing or show of hands) is required for all passage votes on legislation and amendments thereto, all appeals, and any question requiring a vote other than a simple majority. Voice votes may be taken on other questions, but the PO should consider taking a recorded vote on any question whose outcome is in doubt. **(Online—Due to the impracticality of taking a voice vote online, all votes in online tournaments must be taken as recorded votes.)**
- (c) Before all votes, the PO shall state the question being considered and the vote required for passage.
- (d) **Recorded votes requiring a simple majority.** The PO calls for legislators in favor to rise (or raise their hands) and counts the votes; she 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, failure to participate in the session may be taken into account by the officials in making their nominations.) If there are more legislators in favor than opposed, the motion passes; otherwise, it fails. A tie vote defeats the question.<sup>7</sup> The result is announced: “By a vote of \_\_\_ in favor to \_\_\_ opposed, the motion/bill/resolution/amendment is adopted/defeated.”

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<sup>7</sup> **Tiebreaking:** The PO may vote if her vote will affect the outcome—either an “aye” vote to break a tie or a “no” vote to create one. In either instance, the PO must announce her vote before stating the result.

**(e) Recorded votes requiring a fraction of members present (2/3, 1/3, or 1/5).**

The PO calls for legislators in favor to rise (or raise their hands) and counts the votes; she then determines the total number of legislators in the chamber, excluding herself 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.** **(Online—Due to the impracticality of taking a voice vote online, this paragraph is inapplicable at online tournaments.)** The PO calls for legislators in favor to say “aye,” then for those in opposition to say “no.” She then uses good judgment to determine which side has prevailed and announces the results: “*In the opinion of the Chair, the ayes/noes have it, and the motion is adopted/defeated.*” If the PO is unable to determine the outcome, she may order a *division of the chamber* and take a recorded vote.

If members disagree with the Chair’s ruling, they may call for a *division of the chamber* (“*Division!*”) **immediately** after the vote. A second is required (this is an NCFL rule).

**(g) Roll call votes.** A roll call vote may be demanded 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 her seating chart, and each member responds by saying **only** “*aye*” or “*no*”; a legislator who does not wish to vote may remain silent or may say “*present*,” which is not recorded. Members not responding may be called a second time. The vote is announced as above.

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## LEGISLATION

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### § 14 Subject Matter

**(a) Threshold requirements.** All legislation **MUST** constitute a valid legislative response to a timely and significant issue of national interest. Legislation must propose a change from the status quo, offer a reasonable division of affirmative and negative ground, and be comprehensible to an informed audience.

**(b)** Legislation that addresses frequently debated topics must be *especially* timely, significant, and/or novel, such that debate will necessarily focus on the particulars of the legislation and not the general issue.

**(c)** Legislation that does not meet the above criteria or that is poorly written, inadequately researched, biased or prejudiced, vulgar or profane, or otherwise unsuitable for interscholastic debate **shall not** be considered at any FGCCFL tournament.

**(d)** Legislation that has been placed on the docket at an FGCCFL tournament **shall not** be entitled to consideration at any subsequent FGCCFL tournament but may be placed on the docket at the Congress Coordinator’s discretion. It is permitted to rewrite a resolution as a bill or vice versa.

## § 15 Template and Format Requirements

- (a) 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 in any application, but the finished product must be saved in Microsoft Word format. Legislation that is not submitted in the approved template, used as directed, **shall not** be considered at any FGCCFL tournament.
- (b) The templates **are not** “examples” to be replicated in a blank document. They have been designed to enable students to focus on the content rather than formatting. The proper way to use the templates is edit them in a word processor. 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 good cause.
- (c) 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 or line with the name of the author and school. The maximum length of an item of legislation is one side of a U.S. letter-size page **without** any changes to the template’s margins, spacing, or formatting.

## § 16 Content Guidance for Bills

- (a) **Overview.** A bill proposes a change in public policy and specifies how the government will implement the change. If enacted, bills carry the force of law. Bills do not explain *why* a course of action is desirable; rather, their focus is *how* the policy will be carried out.
- (b) Bills are to be written in the five-section format set forth in the template.
- (c) **Section 1** states the change to be made or action to be taken in one sentence, or as briefly as possible. Provisions may not be incorporated by reference unless explained elsewhere in the bill. *It should be possible to understand the bill’s intent from this section alone.*
- (d) **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).
- (e) **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.<sup>8,9</sup> The Congress is **not** an enforcing agency.

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<sup>8</sup> *Note:* Independent agencies such as the Social Security Administration or specific legislative branch entities such as the Government Accountability Office may sometimes be appropriate enforcing bodies.

<sup>9</sup> *Exception:* If the bill confers a private right of action (allowing **private parties**, as opposed to a federal agency, 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 the standard text should be changed).

- (f) 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.
- (g) **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, 2023). **These are the only permissible formats for an effective date, and nothing else should appear in this section.**
- (h) Section 5 declares that all laws in conflict with the bill are null and void, which is intended to prioritize the bill over current law. **This section’s text must not be changed.**

## § 17 Content Guidance for Resolutions

- (a) **Overview.** 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 in the resolution. In contrast to bills, resolutions explain *why* a position deserves official support, but not *how* the government will implement the proposal.
- (b) 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 state a basis for the resolution, followed by one or more one-sentence *resolving clauses* that state the conviction or suggestion.
- (c) To be debatable, a resolution **must** state a specific suggestion and **may not** 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).
- (d) 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.
- (e) **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 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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# TOURNAMENT OPERATIONS

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## § 18 Submission and Review of Legislation

Schools **must** submit at least one satisfactory item of legislation to enter students in Congress.<sup>10</sup> All Congress entries are waitlisted in Tabroom until an item of legislation is approved for the school. Schools may submit up to six items, but not more than one item per student. ***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 noon 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, saved in Microsoft Word (.docx) format, and sent as an attachment (**not** as a link to cloud storage). **This does not submit the legislation for the tournament; this is ONLY for review.** The submitting coach will receive an reply within 48 hours detailing necessary repairs and suggested revisions.

(b) **Final submission.** To be considered for the tournament, legislation must be uploaded to 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 § 15 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 §§ 14-17 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 assemble a docket of 8-12 items from the approved legislation. If there are fewer than 8 approved items, the Congress Coordinator shall draft additional items as necessary. The Congress Coordinator may additionally draft supplemental items, which shall be placed last on the calendar and shall not be guaranteed consideration.

(e) The docket 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 15-18 legislators.

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<sup>10</sup> The Congress Coordinator may waive this requirement for tournaments early in the season and on a case-by-case basis where schools have failed to submit satisfactory legislation despite demonstrated efforts to do so.

**(Online—Due to technical limitations, online chambers shall have no more than 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 and agendas are balanced. Delegations may not be placed in all chambers to facilitate judge assignment.

**(c)** The Congress Coordinator will generate seating charts for each chamber to facilitate priority tracking. **(Online—This paragraph is inapplicable.)**

**(d)** The calendar shall be finalized by the chamber during Preliminary Business. 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 considered all other B/R.

**(e)** Chamber assignments and seating charts shall be published on Tabroom and/or the FGCCFL site 24 hours after the close of registration, or as soon as practicable.

## § 20 Session Procedures

**(a)** Each chamber shall convene for Preliminary Business before the start of Session 1. Attendance shall be taken, and the Parliamentarian shall lead the chamber in finalizing its calendar and electing its PO. The calendar order shall be sent to the Tab Room before floor debate may begin.

**(b)** Each chamber shall convene for two sessions, each of which shall consist of 3 hours to be used for the PO election, floor debate, special orders, and (at the chamber's discretion) recesses. *At least 2 hours must be used for floor debate for the session to count.* The PO may reject a motion to recess as dilatory at her discretion.

**(c)** At the end of Session 2, or when the chamber has voted on all B/R, whichever comes first, the chamber shall adjourn *sine die*.

## § 21 Scoring and Tabulation

**(a)** Each chamber shall have two Scorers 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. The Parliamentarian 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 4 (very poor) to 12 (outstanding). **(Online—The PO shall receive two ballots on the 1-to-6 scale.)** These scores may be averaged and recorded as NSDA merit points. However, speaker/PO points are not a factor in determining Outstanding Legislators.

(c) At the end of the session, each Scorer will select and rank the eight (8) legislators they believe contributed the most to the session. At the end of the day, the Parliamentarian will rank **all** the legislators in the chamber. These are to be holistic assessments, and Scorers will be advised that they should not simply nominate the students who earned the most points. The Presiding Officer **is eligible** for selection, and officials will be admonished to consider her. Officials may rank students from their school in any position. Students not ranked by a Scorer will be assigned a rank of 9.

(d) If a Scorer neither ranks the PO in their top 8 legislators nor indicates on the Ranking Form that the PO was not worthy of a nomination, the Tab Room will impute a rank and adjust the Scorer's other rankings accordingly. A PO score of 12 will be recorded as a rank of 3; a score of 11 shall be a rank of 4; and so on. A score lower than 7 shall not result in an imputed rank. (NOTE: If the Scorer ranks the PO lower than the imputed rank, e.g., gives the PO 11 points and a rank of 6, the Scorer's rank will stand.)

(e) Finishing order will be determined by low total ranks (with the Parliamentarian's ranks capped at 9), then judge preference, then high total reciprocals, then low total ranks with the best and worst rank excluded, then the Parliamentarian's preference. Presiding Officers shall receive a gavel; and the first, second, and third place speakers in each chamber shall receive trophies.

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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 and publish all contributions  
3 received to the Federal Election Commission within 72 hours of receipt.

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Josh Schneider  
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,*

*Sandy Grenner  
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,*

*Adrian Kanat  
Southgranite High School*

## List of Suspect Legislation Topics

**NOTE:** *This is NOT a list of prohibited topics. It IS an admonition to **be 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.