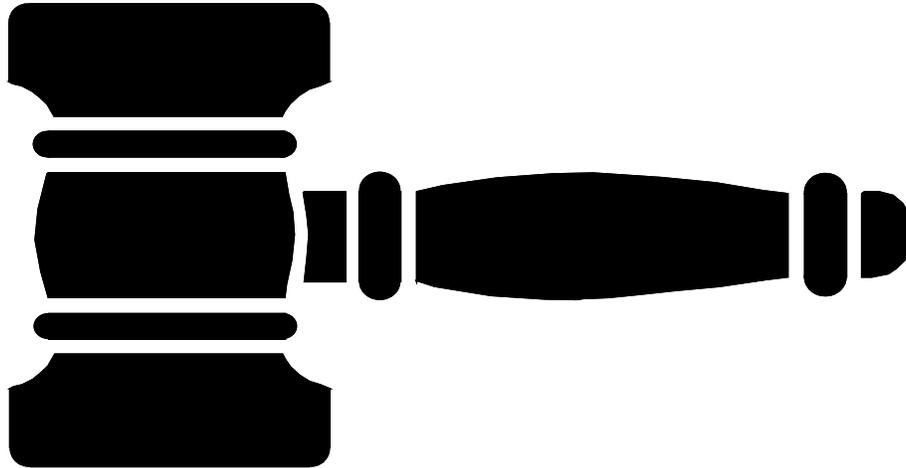


**Pennsylvania High School
Speech League**



**STUDENT
CONGRESS:
HOUSE HANDBOOK**

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FORMS can be found in FORMS SECTION of the PHSSL binder:

- SC: House - Commonwealth House Ballot
- SC: House - State House Ballot
- SC: House - Keystone House Ballot
- SC: House - Super Session Ballot
- SC: House - Presiding Officer Evaluation Form
- SC: House - Speaker Evaluation Form

SECTION I: ORGANIZATION

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

SECTION II: ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Roll call of members.
2. Election of Presiding Officer
3. Establishment of the Orders of the Day
4. Consideration of the calendar
5. Adjournment

SECTION III: BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

1. A bill is an enumeration of specific provisions, listed in “sections,” which if enacted will have the force of law. The debate over a bill will usually explore the merits of the specific provisions it contains.
2. A resolution is simply a generalized statement expressing a conviction. A resolution will usually center debate on the broad principles of the concept. Although they are not necessary, a resolution may have “whereas” clauses.
3. When the bill or resolution is submitted, there should be no student’s name appearing on it, however, the school’s name is to appear. The B/R should be in the proper format: double-spaced, lines numbered, and should not exceed one (1) page.
4. The only legislation to be considered for sessions I and II will be the legislation submitted by the members of that chamber; legislation submitted by a school not present in a chamber is not to be considered for the agenda for that chamber.
5. The Parliamentarian will establish the calendar for each chamber by conducting a blind draw of the pieces of legislation that are available for debate.
6. Legislation for the Super Session will come from outside sources. The calendar for that session will be determined by blind draw by the parliamentarian once the names of the advancing students have been announced.

SECTION IV: ELECTION OF PRESIDING OFFICER

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

SECTION V: DUTIES OF THE PRESIDING OFFICER

1. The Presiding Officer shall preside impartially and shall not vote except in case of a tie vote.
2. Once elected, the presiding officer may not relinquish the chair during that session to enter debate.
3. The Presiding Office shall recognize no student a second time until all other students who seek the floor have been recognized.
4. The Presiding Officer shall not permit a member to speak more than twice on the same bill. The speaker may be limited to one speech unless no one else wishes to speak. The Presiding Officer may refuse to recognize him/her further if the Presiding Officer feels he/she is trying to monopolize debate. This decision may be appealed.
5. The Presiding Office is responsible for keeping debate moving. The Presiding Officer is held responsible for seeing to it that members do not monopolize speaking time by making frequent speeches or amendments. The Presiding Officer will also be held responsible for failing to rule dilatory or obstructionist tactics out of order. As a rule of thumb, if a person has made over three speeches per session or has already tried two apparently dilatory or obstructionist tactics, the Presiding Officer may explain this situation and then permit him/her one more speech or motion. If speaking again will also impede debate, the Presiding Officer may decline to recognize him/her further. This discretionary power is very broad and should be used with care and in consultation with the Parliamentarian. This decision may be appealed.
6. The Presiding Officer may never enter into debate but should be above it.
7. Questions of Procedure not covered by these rules shall be ruled according to Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised 1990.
8. The Presiding Officer, upon request, will read each bill before debate on it is begun.
9. The Presiding Officer will maintain a record of all action taken by the Congress including the specific wording of any amendment which is made and passed.
10. The Presiding Officer will maintain a roster of the authorized Student Congress persons in the chamber. A chart should be maintained to facilitate the recognition of those speakers who have not spoken yet.
11. The Presiding Officer will time each speech. After 3 minutes the Presiding Officer will say "Time." After 3 minutes, 15 seconds, the Presiding Officer will say "Stop" and will gavel the speaker down.

SECTION VI: CONSIDERATION OF BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

1. Debate on legislation shall be as follows:
 - A. A member representing the school which has submitted the bill or resolution shall be privileged to open debate in the form of an authorship or sponsorship speech. This speech shall be 3 minutes in length and the speaker may not yield his/her time to another member.
 - B. A two-minute mandatory direct questioning period shall follow, with the presiding officer recognizing questioners for a period of no more than 30 seconds. Questioners will be chosen according to a separate questioning recency.
 - C. Debate begins with a speech in the negation of the original bill, followed by a mandatory two-minute direct questioning period.
 - D. Questioning time, other than for the authorship/sponsorship speech, and the first speech in the negation, shall consist of one minute of direct questions with questioners being chosen according to the separate questioning recency.
2. A member shall claim the floor in debate if he/she wishes to oppose the views of the preceding speaker so that debate will alternate. If there are no opposing views then a maximum of three speeches expressing the same view will be permitted before debate automatically stops and the question is voted upon.
3. Any member who has the floor may yield his/her time to another. In either case he/she controls the time yielded and may interrupt the person to whom he/she has yielded at any time to resume use of his/her own time.
4. Decisions on all legislation shall be by standing vote (show of hands).
5. Legislation shall be open to amendments from the floor. Such amendments must be in writing and state exactly the words to be added, deleted, or substituted and may be considered only upon a 1/3 second of the members. The following procedure is to be utilized:
 - A. The amendment is to be written and passed to the Parliamentarian.
 - B. The Presiding Officer will, at his/her discretion, and usually, but not exclusively, after a negative speech, announce that he/she has an amendment on the floor.
 - C. The Parliamentarian will read the amendment (stating the author of the amendment).
 - D. The Presiding Officer will ask for a 1/3 second. If the amendment is seconded, the author of the amendment is then entitled to a 3 minute speech in favor of the amendment. Debate will then alternate pro and con on the amendment until the amendment is disposed. If the amendment does not receive the required second, debate continues with the next appropriate speech.
6. A member may be recognized for debate no more than two times on any one bill or resolution.
7. Do not overwork the motion for Previous Question. As long as anyone has something to say, give the person a chance to say it. When no one wishes to speak, the vote should be taken. Remember that to call out "Question" merely indicates you are ready to vote and is not a motion to call Previous Question.

8. A Division of the House may be demanded by any member on any question in which a vote has been taken. The call for Division of the House must be made before another motion has been placed before the assembly.
9. A motion to suspend the rules concerning the calendar must be passed by a 2/3 majority of the assembly. This procedure is needed when the group wishes to consider a piece of legislation which is not on the official calendar or when altering the order of business.

SECTION VII: INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCOREKEEPERS

1. There will be two scorekeepers per session.
2. Speakers will be scored only for speeches which debate the bills and resolutions and for speeches which present amendments that are accepted for consideration. Speakers shall be scored on:
 - A. Pro and con speeches on bills, resolutions, and amendments.
 - B. Presentation of amendments that are seconded by a 1/3 vote of Congress.

Note: No points shall be given for motions, questions clarifications, etc.

3. Scorekeepers are encouraged to alternate the scoring of speeches. They are encouraged to take notes to assist them in rating each speech on its own merits, using the categories on the ballot.
4. The purpose of parliamentary debate is to reach consensus through advancement of debate, clarification of issues and attempts at compromise solutions. Therefore, there are times when a one-minute speech may be more appropriate than a three-minute one.
5. At the end of each session each scorekeeper shall rank the top eight students in each chamber. Scorekeepers do not have to choose the student with the top score but should weigh the overall impression made throughout the Congress session. At the end of both sessions, the parliamentarian shall rank all the members of the chamber.

SECTION VIII: INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PARLIAMENTARIAN

1. The primary duty of the Parliamentarian is to be available to settle problems that might arise relating to procedure. Ordinarily he/she should remain in the background, but step forward firmly when his/her presence is required. The Parliamentarian should be knowledgeable concerning the PHSSL Congress Procedures and Robert's Rules of Order, revised 1990, and should be available to counsel the Presiding Officer and the assembly about these rules and regulations. The purpose of the Congress is to debate legislation, and it is the Parliamentarian's duty to see that this is done.
2. The Parliamentarian should preside initially in his/her assigned chamber by taking roll call, conducting a blind draw to determine the order of debate, and then conducting the vote for the presiding officer of the session.
3. The Parliamentarian will score the Presiding officer on the ballots provided for this purpose. (See Appendix) A maximum of 12 points per session may be given to the presiding officer.

4. The same person will serve as Parliamentarian for all sessions in order to give the Congress a sense of continuity. In the event of the temporary absence of the Parliamentarian, the Executive Committee member in charge of Student Congress shall assume the duties of the Parliamentarian.
5. The Parliamentarian, as the only person to have observed all the sessions, will rank all the members of the chamber once the second session is finished. These rankings will be turned in to the PHSSL tab room representative in charge of Congress.

SECTION IX: SESSIONS

The houses will meet for debate as follows:

Session I	Friday	3:00 PM	to	6:30 PM
Session II	Friday	7:00 PM	to	7:30 PM
Session II	Saturday	8:00 AM	to	11:00 AM
Super Session	Saturday	12:00 NOON	to	2:00 PM

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

SECTION X: SUPER SESSION

1. After Session II, members of both houses will meet in combined session with the nominated students from each house competing in a Super Session which will consist of parliamentary debate of five to six bills or resolutions set aside and designated for debate in the Super Session ONLY.
2. Entry into the Super Session will be as follows:
 - a. In the event of a bicameral congress, the six top-ranked students in each chamber shall advance to the Super Session.
 - b. In the event to a tri-cameral congress, the four top-ranked students in each chamber shall advance to the Super Session.
3. There shall be two judges in the Super Session.
4. A Parliamentarian shall act as both parliamentarian and presiding officer as the purpose of the Super Session is to promote debate among the contestants.

SECTION XI: CONGRESS HONORS AND AWARDS

1. At the conclusion of the Super Session the parliamentarian, the two scorekeepers and the twelve members of the Super Session shall rank all of the students in the chamber.
1. The student vote will be tallied to determine a collective ranking from the students, and that collective re-ranking will be added to the ranks from the parliamentarian and the scorekeepers.
2. Students with the lowest total ranks will be considered Outstanding, Superior or Merit Speakers.
4. Awards shall be as follows:
 - a. Trophies Outstanding, Superior, and Merit Speakers
 - b. Gavels Presiding Officers
 - c. Certificates Students ranked 7 thru 12

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

SECTION XII: SWEEPSTAKES

1. Students in the Super Session will receive the top twelve set of points that corresponds to their final ranking in the Super Session.
2. All other members of Congress will receive points based on their rankings in the preliminary sessions of Congress in their individual chambers, starting with the 13th set of awarded points and working down to the final set of awarded points.

SECTION XIII: RULES PERTAINING TO A MULTI-CAMERAL CONGRESS

1. When a third House is formed the houses shall be named:
 - a. Commonwealth House
 - b. State House
 - c. Keystone House
2. Students shall be assigned to each House randomly, determined by the computer software.
3. The business of each House shall proceed as outlined in previous sections.
4. Balloting to determine congress honors will proceed as outlined in Section XI.

SECTION XIV: MISCELLANEOUS RULES

1. The results of all votes cast in the House will be based on the number of votes cast (aye or nay). Abstentions shall not be counted.
2. Arguing with the Presiding Officer is not permitted under any circumstances. If it is believed that the Chair has committed a serious error, a member may appeal the decision of the chair. It should always be remembered, however, that the purpose of Congress is to debate legislation not to show off knowledge of procedure.
3. Right of editorial reply will not be recognized in the Congress. However, a previous speaker has the right to question an opposing speaker.
4. Points of Information are permitted for parliamentary business only.
5. In the case of disputes regarding parliamentary procedure, the Parliamentarian shall rule based on his/her knowledge of Robert's Rules or Order, revised 1990, and the PHSSL Congress Procedures. The Parliamentarian's interpretation of these two sets of rules will serve as the final authority.
6. See PHSSL By-Laws Article B19 Disqualifications for information regarding actions concerning disqualification from the contest.