

Tarheel Forensic League



Constitution

REVISIONS AS OF JANUARY 2024

The Tarheel Forensic League State Constitution has been modified via amendment.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this organization is to provide structure within which students, guided by their teachers, may become proficient in the communication arts. These arts include the ability to analyze human problems; research varied and complex issues; gather and organize relevant materials; formulate an integrated, consistent and persuasive presentation; master and use the skills of oral communication in a responsible and ethical manner. The ultimate outcome should be ever-growing, learning, involved, productive, citizen-statesmen who have the ability to make logical, sensitive, and informed decisions, who can express and defend their ideas, who are willing to test those ideas in a wide variety of public forums, and who can be held accountable for the ethical and social impact of those ideas.

Article I. Name and Membership

- A. The name of this organization shall be the Tarheel Forensic League (TFL).
- B. Membership shall be open to all public and private secondary schools in the state of North Carolina. Schools shall be allowed to form auxiliary units at the junior high or middle school level under the sponsorship of a recognized TFL chapter.
- C. Associate membership shall be open to all middle schools, junior high schools, and institutions of higher learning in the state of North Carolina who wish to support high school forensics.
 - a. Associate membership does not carry voting, state tournament or office-holding privileges.
 - b. Dues for associate membership shall be the same as for regular membership.
- D. Membership shall be renewed annually.
- E. The TFL's official year shall be from May 1 to April 30.

Article II. Activities

- A. The TFL Executive Committee shall develop a list of activities annually as part of the tournament manual, giving due consideration to tradition, continuity, and emerging or promising events. The Committee shall publicize changes in a timely fashion via the TFL website or email to allow preparation and planning prior to invitations being mailed.

- B. The TFL Executive Committee shall develop and publish a list of norms regarding competitive rules and procedures for use at the state championship and for consideration for use by member schools for use in training and coaching in order to promote and maintain continuity.

Article III. The Executive Board

- A. The Executive Board of the TFL shall consist of nine voting members and two alternate members.
1. All members of the board shall be sponsors of active TFL chapters.
 2. No chapter or school may have more than one sponsor on the Executive Board at any one time.
 3. In the absence of a voting member at an official meeting, the alternate shall serve as a voting member at that meeting.
- B. The Board shall select its Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and Historian at its first meeting of the year, to occur during May or other agreeable & timely fashion following the State Championship Tournament.
- C. Duties of Officers:
1. The Chair shall preside at meetings of the general membership and Executive Board, serve as chief administrative officer of TFL, serve as director of TFL state tournament, and carry out any specific duties delegated by the constitution.
 2. The Vice-Chair shall perform the duties of the chair when the chair is absent or unable to perform said duties, and carry out any specific duty delegated by the constitution.
 3. The Secretary shall keep the minutes of the organization and the Executive Board, submit to the website manager timely communication for TFL members containing those minutes, maintain copies of all official documents of TFL, and carry out any specific duties delegated by the constitution.
 4. The Treasurer shall keep the funds of the society and disperse said funds as instructed by the Executive Board and carry out any specific duty delegated by the constitution. The Treasurer shall also keep an updated membership roll of all members who have paid their dues and forward that list to the Secretary and Website manager for publication.
 5. The Historian shall attempt to restore the records of the TFL from its beginnings, collect data from the current year which includes officers, winners, and changes, list member schools, and bind materials to keep in a permanent state. The TFL secretary shall aid the historian by transferring pertinent information to the historian at the close of the academic year.
- D. A quorum shall consist of any five voting members in attendance in any meeting of the Board.
- E. The Board shall have the following powers and duties:
1. To make all final administrative decisions.
 2. To administer tournaments to determine state championships.
 3. To administer all related activities of the TFL.

4. To call for a vote of the general membership.
 5. To set the place and time for all meetings of the general membership.
 6. To enforce this constitution.
- F. A special session of the board may be called by the chair, any two members of the Board, or by five active chapters of the TFL.
- G. All Executive Board members must be notified five days in advance of all meetings.

Article IV. Election of Members of the Executive Board

- ~~A. Any TFL chapter may nominate any person who meets the requirements of the following section to be a candidate for election to the Executive Board of the TFL.~~
- A. Qualifications for candidates for the Executive Board shall be as follows:
1. A candidate must hold membership in a recognized TFL chapter.
~~A candidate must not have served four consecutive years on the Executive Board prior to the term to be filled by the election.~~
 2. Members of the board shall serve ~~two~~ three-year terms. Elections will be held every ~~other~~ year.
- B. Nominations must be filed with the Vice-Chair no later than one month before the scheduled date of the state tournament. Each school may nominate up to two eligible candidates.
- C. The Vice-Chair shall prepare a ballot consisting of the names of all ~~persons nominated and willing to serve on the Executive Board. The Vice-Chair shall forward a ballot to all recognized chapters no later than 2 weeks before the scheduled date of the state tournament.~~ active coaches (Head and Assistant).
~~The Vice-Chair shall forward a ballot to recognized chapters no later than 2 weeks before the scheduled date of the state tournament.~~
- D. Each chapter may ~~vote for a number equal to the number of openings.~~ cast one ballot. Advisors must rank a minimum of six and a maximum of eight coaches. Votes shall be tallied by ordinal ballot; the ballot from each chapter to be counted equally. Ties will be broken by reciprocals, then the number of first place votes, then the number of second place votes, and so on.
- ~~E. The openings of the Executive Board shall be filled by 1), the three (3) sponsors from schools in the Carolina East NSDA District ~~receiving the most votes,~~ 3), the three (3) sponsors from schools in the Carolina West NSDA District ~~receiving the most votes,~~ and 3), the three (3) sponsors receiving the most votes who have not already filled seats. Alternates will be ~~the next two sponsors with the most votes.~~ selected during the same election as the at-large seats. Alternates are allowed to be elected to a full-term seat in an East or West election. If they are promoted to a voting-status member, the fourth and/or fifth highest vote getter would become the alternate to serve the remainder of their term.~~

- F. The ballot shall be returned to the Vice-Chair, postmarked or emailed at least one week before the scheduled date of the State Tournament, or may be hand delivered to the Vice-Chair at tournament registration.
- G. The Vice-Chair shall appoint and chair an Election Committee of three TFL sponsors to tabulate the ballots.
- H. The Vice-Chair will notify the secretary who shall inform all chapters of the election results through the TFL website no later than two weeks following the conclusion of the election of the year in which the election is held.
- I. The new TFL Executive committee shall choose its officers at the May meeting each year. The TFL secretary will report the names of newly elected executive committee officers through the TFL website no later than 30 days after the conclusion of the May committee meeting.
- J. When vacancies occur, the person(s) receiving the most votes other than those elected shall become members of the board for the rest of the year. When this procedure is not feasible the chairman may choose qualified sponsors for the vacancies, subject to the approval of the Executive Board

Article V. Non-Elected Positions

- A. Website Manager: The website manager shall be chosen by the TFL Executive Committee for the purposes of maintaining the TFL Website according to the desires and guidelines provided by the committee. The website manager shall serve at the pleasure of the committee and for a length of time determined by the committee, but not to exceed the length of the term of the committee members with the longest remaining time on the board. Future committees may opt to renew the term of the website manager for up to the same period of time. The Executive Committee shall determine, at its discretion, a reasonable stipend to be paid to the website manager for services.

- B. Tournament Manager: The tournament manager shall be chosen by the TFL Executive Committee for the purposes of administering the TFL State Championship tournament according to the TFL Constitution and current tournament manual provided by the committee. While the TFL Chair shall serve as tournament director and chief executive officer of the tournament as outlined in the constitution, the tournament manager shall be responsible for working with the TFL Chair to make the tournament work, especially in the areas of scheduling and pairing. The Executive Committee shall determine, at its discretion, a reasonable stipend to be paid to the tournament manager for services.

Article VI. Dues & Finances

- A. Annual dues for participating chapters shall be determined by the Executive Board at the first meeting of the year following the State Championship Tournament for the upcoming school year. Dues for membership must be paid by December 1st to avoid a penalty fee for late payment; dues must be paid for a school to maintain voting privileges in TFL and to be eligible for State Championship Tournament participation.
- B. All requisitions, authorizations, and vouchers shall be signed by the Treasurer of TFL.
- C. All money left over in the TFL treasury at the end of the academic year shall remain in the budget for the next year.
- D. The treasurer shall make an end of the year financial report to the membership. This report shall be made through the TFL newsletter.

Article VII. TFL Virginia Sutherland Circle of Honor

- A. The purpose of this award shall be to recognize meritorious contribution to the TFL.
- B. This award may be presented to any individual or groups who is recognized by the TFL Executive Board as having contributed substantially to the long-range benefit of TFL.
- C. Both members of TFL and non-members of TFL are eligible.
- D. This is not necessarily an annual recognition but rather to be awarded at the discretion of the TFL Executive Board.
- E. The new inductees shall be recognized at the TFL State Tournament.
- F. The new inductees shall receive an appropriate award and their names shall be inscribed on a plaque to be displayed annually at the TFL State Tournament.
- G. The maintenance of this plaque shall be the responsibility of the TFL Executive Board Chairman.

Article VIII. Mildred Hussey Coach of the Year Award

- A. This award shall be given to an active debate and speech coach and shall constitute the “Coach of Year” award for North Carolina.
- B. The nomination election process will be the same as for the selection of TFL committee members.
- C. In the event of a tie, a second ballot shall be taken by the membership between the tied coaches in attendance at the State Championship Tournament.
- D. The Award shall be presented at the TFL State tournament.
- E. Any Head Coach or Assistant Coach of a TFL member school is eligible for the award. However, no school may have more than one nominee in any given year.
- F. Yearly winners shall receive an appropriately inscribed plaque commemorating the honor.
- G. The TFL Historian shall be responsible for keeping a list of all previous and current winners of the Mildred Hussey Award.

IX. Tarheel Forensic League Free Speech Award

- A. This award shall be given to any national or world figure or organization that has contributed to free speech. This award constitutes the recognition by the Tarheel Forensic League of North Carolina of an individual who exemplifies the essence of the right of free speech.
- B. In order for a nominee's name to appear on the ballot, one school must nominate the person or organization.
- C. The winner will be selected from the nominations by a simple majority of the TFL Executive Committee.
- D. The winner shall be announced at the TFL State Championship Tournament.
- E. The TFL Executive Committee, after contacting the winner, shall make a financial contribution to the charity of the winner's choice. The committee, at its discretion, may also present the winner with a plaque or other suitable commemoration of the award.
- F. The TFL Chairperson shall deliver or send the award to the winner no later than December 31st of the calendar year in which it was given.
- G. The TFL Historian shall be responsible for keeping a list of all previous and current winners of the Tarheel Forensic League Free Speech Award.

X. TFL Administrative Excellence Award

- A. The purpose of these awards shall be to recognize outstanding support of the TFL and/or forensic activities in North Carolina by administrators in public and private schools and school systems.
- B. One award to a principal and one award to a superintendent or other administrator may be made annually, at the discretion of the TFL board, with recommendations from the members.
- C. While the intent of these awards is to find worthy recipients each year, the board may choose to skip years in which no suitable candidates are known.
- D. Winners shall receive an appropriate award and their names shall be announced at the TFL State Tournament.
- E. Implementing the search for candidates and sending awards shall be the responsibility of the TFL Executive Board Chairman.

XII. Adoption and Method Amendment

- A. This constitution was adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the members of the Tarheel Forensic League in May 1979.
- B. This constitution may be amended by written ballot with approval of two-thirds of the membership provided such amendment and the note of proposed vote is given to each member school, in writing, at least thirty (30) days prior to said vote.

Note: The original 1977 constitution was revised by vote of the members in December of 1997, March of 2006, March of 2017, February of 2022, and January of 2024. This is a copy of the January 2024 revised edition.

January 2024 Rationale

In March of 2022, the TFL Executive Committee could not secure enough coaches to run an election because of 1) term-limited candidates ineligible for elections, 2) multiple coaches from the same school being unable to serve on the Board, and 3) coaches refusing nominations to appear on the ballot.

This started a discussion in the Summer of 2023 about what structural changes the TFL could consider in order to increase participation and representation on the Executive Committee. The TFL Executive Committee conducted a membership survey putting forward a number of structural changes. You may see the results of that survey [at this link](#).

Much of the Fall of 2023 was spent discussing those changes and considering how to improve the League for the next 47 years of our history. In that vein, the Tarheel Forensic League Executive Committee brought forth multiple constitutional amendments for the consideration of the membership. These changes aim to 1) increase representation, 2) maximize participation, 3) align our election procedures with the NSDA District model.