

Tarheel Forensic League



State Tournament Manual

REVISIONS AS OF JANUARY 2025

The Tarheel Forensic League State Tournament Manual has been modified to incorporate adjustments for the 2025 State Tournament. New changes for 2025 are marked in yellow.

TFL Equity Statement

The Tarheel Forensic League (TFL) is committed to providing participants, judges, coaches, and volunteers the opportunity to pursue excellence in their endeavors. This opportunity can exist only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect.

The TFL prohibits all forms of harassment and discrimination. Accordingly, all forms of harassment and discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by any applicable federal, state, or local law are prohibited, whether committed by participants, judges, coaches, volunteers, and/or observers.

The TFL reserves all rights to subject violators to the full range of sanctions, up to and including removal from the tournament premises and referral to appropriate authorities. Any individual, or group of individuals, who believes they have been a victim of harassment and/or discrimination should report it to the Tournament Director or appropriate authority immediately.

Article I. Tournament Site and Date

The TFL Executive Committee shall determine the site, host school, and tournament date by January 1st of each school year.

Article II. Events and Eligibility

A. Events

1. **Debate:** Lincoln-Douglas Debate, Junior Varsity Lincoln-Douglas Debate, Public Forum Debate, Junior Varsity Public Forum Debate, Congressional Debate and Junior Varsity Congressional Debate.
2. **Speech Events:** Dramatic Interpretation, Humorous Interpretation, Duo Interpretation, Original Oratory, Extemporaneous Speaking, Program Oral Interpretation, Impromptu Speaking, Informative Speaking, Declamation (JV only)

B. Entering Multiple Events

1. Students qualified, via bids or at-large qualifications, can enter a maximum of three speech events.
2. Students entered in any division of Lincoln-Douglas Debate or Public Forum Debate may not double enter.
3. Students entered in any division of Congressional Debate may not double enter.

C. Debate Topics

1. The Lincoln-Douglas Debate topic will be the NSDA topic as announced for March/April.
2. The Public Forum Debate topic will be the NSDA topic as announced for April.
3. Congressional legislation will be set in this manner: Preliminary legislation will consist of 6 pieces of legislation from the current release of the NSDA legislation selected by rank-choice vote of TFL member coaches. Final legislation will consist of 3 pieces of legislation selected from the current agenda of the NC General Assembly converted to an appropriate format for Congressional debate format by an appointed Clerk of Congress.

D. Eligibility to Participate

1. Only students currently in grades 9-12 are eligible to compete at the TFL State Tournament.
2. All schools must accept a Terms & Conditions to verify that the official school coach has read the TFL State Manual and agrees that their team will abide by the policies and procedures listed within the document.
3. All schools must list a primary contact on their Tabroom.com registration. This contact must be an official school representative. If that representative is not a permanent employee, a letter signed by the principal/Head of School of the school must be uploaded to Tabroom.com designating an adult as the official chaperone in charge. That adult must be accessible throughout the entire tournament or the student(s) may be disqualified.
4. No independent entries will be accepted. All competitors must be entered by the official school adult representative.
5. Students in all Open debate events and speech events will be required to qualify for the state tournament through a qualification process. Details and qualification

- requirements are listed in the Appendix. Teams may still enter unlimited students with no qualification required in Declamation and Junior Varsity debate events.
6. Junior Varsity (JV) is defined as being in the first or second year of any forensic competition event. If a student has competed in any competitive speech and debate event for more than two years, that student is ineligible to enter Junior Varsity in any event at the State Tournament. JV is currently offered in Congressional Debate, Public Forum Debate and Lincoln-Douglas debate.
 7. Novice is defined as being in the first year of any forensic competition event or not having had more than two high school tournaments in the previous academic year. Any student with more than two high school tournaments in the previous academic year is ineligible to enter Novice in any event at the State Tournament. Novice is currently not offered at the TFL State Tournament. However, this definition remains in the event of possible future reinstatement of this division.
 8. Events not designated JV are considered “open” and anyone in grades 9 through 12 is eligible. There is one exception to this rule. Declamation is open only to 9th and 10th graders, regardless of previous experience, per NCFL rules.

E. Students with Disabilities

1. The TFL encourages students with disabilities to participate in the state tournament. The TFL will make reasonable accommodations to enable participation by students with disabilities. Factors that determine whether an accommodation is reasonable include, but are not limited to, the cost of the accommodation; whether the accommodation would disrupt the tournament schedule, and whether the accommodation would impair the competitive and educational purposes of the tournament.
2. The coach of a student seeking an accommodation must request the accommodation from the TFL Chair at the time the coach registers the student for the tournament. The coach must explain and document the student’s disability and must explain why the disability requires the requested accommodation.

F. Adult Supervision for In-Person Tournaments

1. The Head Coach of Record must be present with his or her school for the entire duration of the tournament. The coach is also required to be present for final tournament registration. If anyone other than the official head coach will be supervising the team, the school must present the TFL Executive Committee a letter to that effect signed by both the Head Coach and the School Principal. If any team is found at any time without the coach of record or officially approved adult chaperone on campus during tournament hours, the entire school will be disqualified from the tournament and a letter will be written to the school principal. All teams must be supervised at all times while they are on the host campus.

G. Title I Discount

1. Schools designated as "Title I" or are economically disadvantaged schools (40% of the school's student population qualifies for free or reduced lunch) may have a principal/head of school write a letter to the committee and receive a 10% discount on entry fees to the TFL State Tournament.

Article III. Conducting the State Tournament

A. Staffing

1. The TFL Executive Committee shall be responsible for conducting the State Tournament. The TFL Chair shall serve as Tournament Director and may appoint, with the advisement of the Executive Committee, a Tournament Manager to coordinate tab room responsibilities and to assist with online registration and downloading and assigning names and codes to competitors.
2. The TFL Executive Committee, under the leadership of the TFL Chair, shall be responsible for the operation of the Tab Room during the State Tournament. The TFL Chair, with the advisement of the Executive Committee, shall determine any other person(s) needed to assist in the Tab Room.

B. Invitations & Online Registration

1. Invitations shall be posted online by the TFL Chair, Tournament Registration Manager, or his/her designee approximately one month prior to the date of the State tournament.

C. Entry Caps

1. After the host school is selected, the TFL Executive Committee shall determine the largest number of entries that can be accommodated in Debate, Congress, and Speech Events. If the number of entries exceeds this maximum, per-school caps will be put into effect by the committee and affected schools will be asked to drop entries down to the cap to reduce tournament size.
2. If drops are necessitated because of the imposition of an event cap, coaches shall be notified by email as early in the week of the state tournament as possible.
3. Students affected by an imposed cap will be allowed to enter other events if space is available at no additional charge to the school beyond the original fee. Students dropped by the committee as a result of an imposed cap will not be charged fees.

D. Judge Penalties

1. Schools will be charged \$50 each time a judge misses or is more than 15 minutes late for a preliminary round assignment and \$100 each time a judge misses or is more than 15 minutes late for an elimination round assignment.
2. Schools will be charged \$200 for a judge that is dropped at the tournament without a replacement or does not show up at the tournament. Any judge missing two or more rounds will be considered an unreported drop and charged the dropped judge fee.
3. Awards may be withheld for failure to pay these assessments. If the failure of a school's judge(s) to meet their assignment impairs the ability of the tournament to function, students from that school may be removed from competition.
4. Schools will be denied entry into future TFL State Championship Tournaments until all outstanding judge penalty fees are paid.

5. Should a judge hired by the TFL Executive Committee on behalf of a school fail to meet the judging requirement, the hiring school shall not be assessed a penalty fee.

E. Adds, Drops and Associated Fees

1. Unlimited adds and drops are allowed until 5PM the Monday before the tournament. The online registration will close to adds at that time. Fees then will be locked and no students may be added.
2. Online drops will be accepted through 9PM the night before final registration. Any drops as of that time will still owe the original registration fee. However, there will be no additional drop fee except for dropped judges.
3. Drops made after the online deadline of 9PM the night before the tournament must be reported to the tab room prior to the start of round one and are subject to an additional \$50 drop fee per entry in addition to the original fee.
4. Any drop that is unreported as of round one will be charged a \$100 penalty
5. Any judge drops after 5PM the Monday before the tournament will be charged the cost of an uncovered judge unless a replacement judge is provided. The TFL Chair or their designee may waive this fee for extreme circumstances.
6. All registration and drop fees must be paid prior to the start of round one. Schools with unpaid fees are subject to the forfeiture of rounds until all fees are paid or arrangements are made with the TFL Chair.

E. Final Registration

1. The Executive Committee will hold a mandatory virtual registration the night before the tournament. The Executive Committee will release details concerning this registration 8 days prior to the TFL State Championship tournament.

F. Judges

1. All school judges are required to be available for the entire tournament, including all elimination rounds. When registering judges, each school should list judging preferences. Every attempt will be made to honor these requests. However, any judge may be asked to judge any event, should the need arise. Judge bond forfeiture as noted above applies to any judge who is not available for any round they are asked to judge.
2. Judge Quotas:
 - a. All schools are responsible for meeting judge requirements as follows:
 - i. 1 Lincoln-Douglas debate judge for every 2 Lincoln-Douglas debaters or fraction thereof.
 - ii. 1 Public Forum debate judge for every 2 Public Forum teams or fraction thereof.
 - iii. 1 Speech judge for every 5 entries or fraction thereof.
 - iv. 1 Congressional Debate judge for every 8 entries or fraction thereof.
 1. A team with 5 or more Congress entries must designate at least one judge on Tabroom from its above quota who is qualified to serve as a Parliamentarian. In the event that only one judge is owed, that judge must be a qualified Parliamentarian.

2. Coaches of all Congress judges must also designate one other event that each judge is qualified and willing to judge in the judge notes section of the online registration.
3. Judge Qualifications:
 - a. No one who has been enrolled in a high school during the academic year of the tournament may be used as a judge in the TFL State tournament.
 - b. Judges who are in their first year out of high school may not judge the event in which they competed unless there is a novice or JV division. These judges will be used in the lowest division offered. All first year out judges shall be considered “free strikes” above and beyond a team’s strike quota for any team wishing to exercise that option. These may be struck individually or as an entire package by any team.
 - c. Coaches are required to designate the experience level of each judge as part of online registration.
 - d. All judges are required to have active accounts on Tabroom.com for the purpose of filling out online ballots.
 - e. It is requested (but not required) that all debate judges provide a judging philosophy or paradigm on Tabroom.com. However, if a school has debate judges without paradigms, the school will be denied strikes.
 - f. All judges are required to complete [NSDA Judge Accreditation](#) for the 2025 TFL State Tournament. All judges will complete Level 1 training for Congress, Speech, or Debate based on the pool that they are placed into. Judges will also be required to complete Level 2 training for speech events, LD, PF, and Congress.
 - i. Failure to complete training prior to the start of round one will result in schools being fined for a missing judge.
 - ii. Judges who are not accredited and miss round one will be required to complete the training during that time.
4. Judge Responsibilities:
 - a. Judges are expected to pick up their ballots online within five minutes of being published on Tabroom.com and immediately report to their assigned rooms. Judges who fail to pick up an online ballot or are absent from the competition room fifteen minutes after the release of the pairing are subject to replacement with their team forfeiting its judge bond.
 - b. Judges are expected to give their full attention to the round that they are assigned. Using cell phones, texting or participating in other distractions during the round is not permitted and is subject to disciplinary action or penalty. Cell phones may be used as timing devices but are not allowed to be used for any other purpose once the round begins.
 - c. In the event of a virtual round, judges are expected to have their camera on at all times during a round.
 - d. Judges are the official timekeepers of the round and must keep time even if teams or contestants are also keeping time. Judges must give time signals if requested by a student.

- e. In addition to rendering a decision, judges are required to make constructive comments on each ballot. Even if an oral critique is offered, judges are obligated to leave comments on the ballots for the benefit of coaches who were not present during the oral critique. The comment portion of the ballot may be filled out anytime during the two days of the tournament, but the decision should be submitted immediately.
 - f. Oral critiques will be allowed in debate events only, but ballots must be turned in within five minutes of the conclusion of the round with brief comments and at least a short reason for decision clearly written on the ballot. Oral critiques may continue for longer than five minutes as long as the ballot is already submitted online, the room is not needed, and the judge does not miss his/her next posted round. If a ballot call is missed due to an extended oral critique, the judge's school forfeits its judge bond without exception.
5. Hired Judges:
- a. The TFL Executive Committee shall aid a school in finding qualified judges if finding the necessary number of judges become impossible for a school. All requests for hired judge assistance will be assessed at the rate of \$200 each.
 - b. If a school anticipates the need to hire a judge, this request must be made of the TFL Chairperson no later than two weeks before the first day of the tournament.
 - c. Only a limited number of judges are available and TFL will not offer any more hired judges than it can provide. These judges are available on a first come, first served basis while supplies last.
 - d. If the TFL is unable to fulfill a school's request for a hired judge, the school requesting such assistance will have to find their own judges to bring entries. A \$500 fee will show and be enforced on Tabroom.com for any judge uncovered by the school if TFL is unable to hire a judge on the school's behalf. If the school requests a hired judge and if TFL is able to hire a judge for the school, the fee will only be \$200 per uncovered judge.
 - e. All entries for a school in each event will remain waitlisted until all judge obligations in that event are met either through providing the judge or a TFL hired judge being available.
6. Assigning Judges:
- a. If the committee uses a neutral tournament manager, that person will assign all judges for all rounds. Committee members will not be directly involved in judge assignments.
 - b. If a neutral tournament manager is not used by the committee, all judges must be assigned by a minimum of two committee members working together with those judge assignments approved by the TFL Chair or Vice Chair before posting the round.
 - c. Under no circumstances may a coach with a student in elimination rounds be involved with the assigning of judges for the event in which they still have students competing.
7. Judge Strikes

- a. After the close of online registration, the TFL Chair and TFL Tournament Manger, in consultation with the TFL Executive Committee, will determine a reasonable number of judge strikes that can be offered in each event based on the number of rounds anticipated and the number of judges entered. Schools will be allowed up to that number of strikes which will be honored so long as it does not cripple the ability to run the State Tournament. Due to the number of schools in any given Congress chamber, TFL cannot guarantee strikes of Congress judges.
- b. Strikes must be submitted prior to the end of Final Registration. Every effort will be made to offer strike sheets online through Tabroom.com. However, TFL reserves the right to distribute strike options through other means that will be clearly announced to all coaches.

Article IV. Tab Room Policies and Procedures

A. Protests & Disputes (see also Section VI – Protest Procedures)

1. The TFL Executive Committee shall have full authority to adjudicate disputes or interpretation of this manual but may not change the rules of this manual during the State Tournament.
2. Protests during the tournament must be submitted on the Official TFL protest form to the TFL Vice Chair by the head coach of the school filing the protest or their designee as noted in Tabroom.com. Instructions for filing protests can be found in Article IV.
3. Under no circumstances will protests be accepted directly from students.
4. The TFL Executive Committee may at its discretion assess penalties for violations of tournament rules up to and including disqualification from the tournament.
5. Protest decisions of the TFL Executive Committee are final. There is no recourse to the NSDA, CFL, or any other league, organization or governing body.

B. Fact Checkers

1. The TFL Executive Committee reserves the right to place “fact checkers” in preliminary and elimination rounds of Extemporaneous Speaking and Congressional Debate during the State Tournament. Violations will become automatic protests filed with the TFL Vice Chair.

C. Timekeepers

1. Unless the TFL places designated timekeepers in the round, the judge shall be the official timekeeper of every round in both speech and debate events. In rounds with multiple judges, one of the judges will serve as the timekeeper and that judge will be clearly announced to all competitors before the round begins.
2. Judges must use a digital timing device. Watches with only second hands or clocks with second hands in the room are not acceptable.
3. In Congress, the elected presiding officer shall be the timekeeper, but shall be closely monitored by the Parliamentarian. The same digital timing device rule noted above applies to the student Presiding Officer.
4. Students have the right to ask for visible and reasonable time signals from the judges and judges are expected to comply with requests for reasonable time signals. Judges in Extemporaneous Speaking and Impromptu are required to give time signals.
5. Although competitors in all events are allowed to keep their own time for their reference, the TFL Executive Committee recognizes whatever is recorded by the judge as the official time in the round. Different times recorded by anyone other than the official timekeeper (judge) will not constitute grounds for protest.

D. Final Round Non-Judging Chairpersons

1. The TFL Tournament Director reserves the right to assign non-judging chairs to each final round.

2. Non-judging chairs will introduce the round and officially end the round and clear competitors from the room quickly after the round is over so judges may privately complete their ballots in the room.
3. To the extent possible, preference to the selecting of a Non-Judging Chair will be a person who is not affiliated with a contestant or team participating in the round.

Article IV. Events Rules

A. Competition Rules

1. Except for any variances noted elsewhere in this manual, events at the Tarheel Forensic League State Tournament shall follow the rules listed in the current *National Speech and Debate Association High School Unified Manual*.
2. Exceptions
 - a. Declamation will follow the current rules of the National Catholic Forensic League, as there is no equivalent NSDA event.
 - b. Extemporaneous Speaking will be one mixed division. There will not be separate divisions for International and United States. Cross-examination will be used in the final round unless the tournament schedule does not permit it. Cross-examination will not be used in other rounds. All other NSDA rules will apply.
 - c. If at any time the TFL manual and NSDA or NCFL rules conflict, the rules in the TFL Manual shall prevail.

B. Procedural Rules

1. Although NSDA and NCFL contestant event rules will be followed as noted above, procedural and tabbing rules may vary for the TFL State Tournament. Procedural rules for this tournament are noted in Article V. Operation of Events.

C. Electronic Device Policy

1. The TFL State Tournament will allow the use of electronic devices in all events. Computers or other electronic devices may not be used to communicate with other individuals (coaches or assistants included) inside or outside the room in which the competition occurs. Internet access, use of email, instant messaging, or other means of receiving information from sources inside or outside the competition rooms are prohibited. This does not prohibit communication between debate partners during prep time.
2. Contestants found to have violated this provision will be disqualified from the tournament and will forfeit all rounds.

D. Evidence Policy

1. For all events, the TFL will follow and enforce the evidence policy of the National Speech and Debate Association as published in the current edition of the NSDA Unified High School Manual.

E. Unauthorized Aid in Extemporaneous Speaking

1. Definition: Unauthorized aid is defined as any aid from a prohibited source which will include, but not necessarily be limited to, pre-prepared speeches or outlines, sources, that have been annotated in violation of TFL guidelines, discussions with others about the speech topic, discussion with students yet to draw about potential speech topics, and assistance of any kind from other students at any time after the topic is drawn.

2. Any contestant in Extemporaneous Speaking found to have received unauthorized aid will upon the first offense forfeit the particular round in which the offense occurred, receiving a rank of 9 for that round. Depending on the seriousness of the offense the student may be subject to instant disqualification from the tournament per the discretion of the tournament director and the TFL Protest Committee. (This option is most likely to be utilized in cases of students using pre-prepared speeches or outlines or electronically communicating with individuals.) Any subsequent violation after the original offense will result in automatic disqualification from the tournament.
3. Unauthorized aid received through electronic communication will result in disqualification from the tournament, per the guidelines of Article IV-A-C.

F. Interpretation Cuttings and Speech Scripts

1. Copies of all cuttings or speeches must be available during the State Tournament. If a challenge is made and a copy of the cutting or speech is not available at the tournament, the contestant could be disqualified. Published sources should also be available.
2. Materials downloaded from the Internet must meet current NSDA source requirements, except in Declamation, which must meet NCFL requirements.

Article V. Operation of Events

These procedures will only be abdicated if tournament scheduling issues makes adhering to these guidelines infeasible per the discretion of the Tournament Director (under advice and consent of the TFL Executive Committee).

A. Size of Division

1. In speech events, the minimum number of entries to hold a division is 6 entries.
2. In debate events, the minimum number of entries to hold a division is 5 entries. If the Junior Varsity division does not have 5 entries, it will be merged into the open division of that event.
3. In congressional debate, the minimum number of entries to hold a division is 12 entries. If the Junior Varsity division does not have 12 entries, it will be merged into the open division of that event.
4. Dramatic and Humorous Interpretation can combine if one of the events does not meet the minimum number of entries, but only if it makes the total number 5 or more entries. The combined event will then be called Dramatic Performance.
5. Informative and Oratory can combine if one of the events does not meet the minimum number of entries, but only if it makes the total number 5 or more entries in the combined event.

B. Number of Rounds

1. There shall be six preliminary rounds in the debate events and five preliminary rounds in the Speech Events. In the event of extenuating circumstances, the TFL Executive Committee may change these numbers to a minimum of four or a maximum of six rounds. However, in no situation should there be fewer than four or more than six preliminary rounds. The determination to add or subtract a round must be made and explained to all competing schools prior to the start of round one.
2. Prior to the start of round one, the TFL Executive Committee shall decide and announce or post the number of elimination rounds that will be held in each event.
3. Congress shall have two preliminary sessions of a minimum of two and a half hours each, followed by a sudden death final session of at least two and a half hours. If there are only enough entries for one preliminary chamber of Congress, then a third preliminary session will be added with cumulative ranks from all three sessions used to determine the state champion. Per NSDA requirements, session length should allow at least 10 minutes per competitor in chamber. Therefore, chambers with more than 15 students will add 10 minutes per additional student to the 2.5 hour session length.
4. If any debate division has 5 to 7 entries, the Tournament Director may opt to hold a Round Robin with the minimum number of rounds needed to allow all entries to debate each other. Round Robins will not have elimination rounds. Final standings will be based on ballots won, speaker points (dropping the highest and lowest

points), total speaker points, speaker points (dropping the two highest and two lowest points).

C. Pairing and Tabulating Debate Rounds

1. Preliminary Rounds
 - a. Teams should rotate between affirmative and negative sides in the preliminary rounds of Lincoln-Douglas and Policy Debate. In the event that a round by round rotation of sides is not possible, it still should be assured that at the end of six preliminary rounds that each team had three rounds on one side and three on the other.
 - b. In Public Forum, sides will be determined after a coin flip, per NSDA rules.
 - c. The first two rounds of all debate events shall be randomly paired adjusting for school constraint. One round for each team shall be affirmative and one round shall be negative except in Public Forum where the coin flip will determine the side.
 - d. All remaining preliminary rounds after the second are to be power-matched high-low within brackets to the best extent possible, honoring side constraints. A team shall not hit another team from its own school or a team it faced in an earlier preliminary round unless it is unavoidable.
 - e. If there is an odd number of entries, byes will be assigned randomly during the preset rounds. In any power-matched rounds, the bottom ranked debater that has not previously received a bye shall receive a bye for that round. In no case shall any debater be assigned more than one bye in preliminary rounds. The assignment of byes shall not be done in a manner that would force a debater to debate another debater from their own school in a preliminary round, if avoidable.
 - f. It shall be up to the discretion of the Tournament Director how to even brackets if an odd number of teams share a bracket. The pulling up or down of a team into a different bracket must be done in a manner such that teams from the same school, or teams that have previously met, are not paired against each other, unless that is unavoidable.
 - g. Speaker points will be assigned on a 26-30 scale with half points allowed. Lower points are allowed only in extreme cases.
 - h. Ties for both preliminary powering and breaking into elimination rounds shall be broken in this order:
 - i. Wins
 - ii. Total Speaker Points – Drop Highest & Lowest
 - iii. Total Speaker Points
 - iv. Opponent Wins
 - v. Judge Variance
 - vi. Total Speaker Points – Drop 2 Highest and 2 Lowest
 - vii. Random Computer Assigned Number
 - i. A debater or team that fails to show for a round or forfeits the round shall be given a loss and awarded zero speaker points.

- j. Low point wins and ties are not permitted at the TFL State Tournament. A team must win by a minimum of one-half more points than the opposing team. In Public Forum debate, the speaker points must be issued in such a way that the winning team receives one-half or more total speaker points than the losing team.
2. Elimination Rounds
 - a. Teams with even or losing records may not participate in elimination rounds, regardless of seeding.
 - b. Ties for seeding will be broken using the tiebreaking procedure described in Article V.B.h.
 - c. Elimination rounds shall be power-paired based on win-loss records, such that the top seed debates the last advancing seed. Seeds will be maintained in a locked bracket through Finals.
 - d. Elimination brackets will not be broken to keep a school from hitting itself. The coach of record from the school may choose with team advances.
 - e. All elimination rounds will have three judges. The double-octafinal, octafinal, and/or quarterfinal rounds may have only one judge if the TFL Executive Committee decides a three-judge panel is impossible by majority vote. Once the tournament moves to three-judge panels, it cannot return to a one-judge panel.

D. Pairing and Tabulating Speech Rounds

1. Preliminary Rounds
 - a. Preliminary sections shall be randomly scheduled with an effort to observe school constraints. However, absolute school constraint observance is not guaranteed.
 - b. No more than seven and no fewer than four students may be in a section. The goal is six per section. All sections must be equal in number of contestants or within one.
 - c. The speaking order of contestants in speech events shall be assigned randomly with every effort made to vary the order for each individual speaker as much as possible. Judges should only allow contestants to speak out of order if directed by the Tournament Director.
 - d. TFL State Tournament ballots will not use speaker points.
 - e. A contestant who fails to show for a round or forfeits a round shall be assigned a rank of nine for the round, regardless of the size of the section. The rank of nine may not be dropped as part of the high-low tiebreaking.
 - f. Ties for breaking into elimination rounds shall be broken in this order:
 - i. Total Cumulative Ranks – Drop the worst rank
 - ii. Total Cumulative Ranks
 - iii. Total Cumulative Ranks – Drop the Highest and Lowest Ranks
 - iv. Reciprocals of Cumulative Ranks
 - v. Head-to-head
 - g. The following formula will be used to determine elimination rounds:
 - i. Events with 8 to 23 students (from at least two schools) should advance to a final. There will be no finals in events with fewer than 8 students.

- ii. Events with 24 to 36 entries should advance to a semifinal.
 - iii. Events with 37 or more entries should advance to a quarterfinal.
2. Elimination Rounds
- a. Elimination round sections should be weighted equally based on preliminary ranks. Sections will be adjusted for school constraints only when it can be done without disturbing the equal weighting of the sections. Equal section weighing must take first priority when pairing sections.
 - b. No final round will be held unless eight total competitors from at least two schools are entered in the event.
 - c. If an event breaks directly from preliminary rounds to finals, the top six in preliminary rounds should advance to the final round. If a tie in cumulative ranks (dropping the worst) exists, up to seven contestants can advance to finals before resorting to tiebreakers. The tournament director should not advance more than half of the entries in preliminary rounds to the final round. If there is an odd number of total entries, it should be rounded up to the nearest whole number.
 - d. If an event breaks directly from preliminary rounds to semifinals, the top 12 competitors automatically advance to elimination rounds. If a tie in cumulative ranks (dropping the worst) exists, up to fourteen contestants can advance to semifinals before resorting to tiebreakers.
 - e. Semifinals should have two sections of six students per section, although a seventh person may be placed in each section if 13 or 14 competitors advance from preliminary rounds.
 - f. If an event breaks directly from preliminary rounds to quarterfinals, the top 18 competitors automatically advance to elimination rounds. If a tie in cumulative ranks (dropping the worst) exists, up to twenty contestants can advance to semifinals before resorting to tiebreakers. If an event has over 70 entries, the TFL Executive Committee can opt to advance a maximum of 24 competitors to the quarterfinal.
 - g. Quarterfinals of 18 competitors should have three sections of six (top four in each section advance to semifinals). Quarterfinals of 24 competitors should have four sections of six (top three in each section advance to semifinals). The determination of 18 or 24 must be made prior to the beginning of round one of the tournament.
 - h. All elimination rounds will have three judges. The quarterfinal rounds may have only one judge if the TFL Executive Committee decides a three-judge panel is impossible by majority vote.
 - i. All elimination rounds, including finals, will use rolling cumulative ranks. Ranks from all preliminary and elimination rounds (except dropping the worst preliminary rank) carry over and are added to the ranks given by all judges in the elimination rounds
 - j. Ties in elimination rounds shall be broken in this order:
 - i. Total Cumulative Ranks – All Rounds – Dropping the worst preliminary rank

- ii. Total Cumulative Ranks – Previous Elimination Round
- iii. Judge Preference – Previous Elimination Round
- iv. Reciprocals of Elimination Round Ranks
- v. Total Cumulative Ranks – All Rounds

E. Pairing and Tabulating Congress Sessions

1. Legislation
 - a. The TFL Executive Committee will post a preliminary docket online for all schools a minimum of two weeks before the date of the State Tournament. The preliminary docket shall contain three pieces of legislation for each session. A finals docket or topic area will be posed a minimum of one week before the tournament.
2. Cross Examination
 - a. The TFL will use the Direct Questioning method of cross examination where presiding officers recognize questioners for a period of 30 seconds each during the allotted cross examination time. A precedence chart separate from the speech precedence shall be kept by the presiding officer to ensure fairness in recognizing questioners.
3. Presiding Officers
 - a. There will be one presiding officer per session. At the beginning of a session, the Parliamentarian shall conduct an election. The first candidate to receive a vote of 50 percent plus one shall be declared the winner.
 - b. No student may preside twice in the preliminary sessions unless no one else in the chamber is willing to serve as a presiding officer.
4. Preset Precedence
 - a. All sessions of Congressional Debate will utilize preset precedence. Prior to the beginning of Round One, the Clerk of Congress will publicly randomize the members of each chamber into a preset list for speech precedence. This list does not assign speaker order, but guides the Presiding Officer on who to recognize in the case that two or more legislators stand to be recognized for a speech prior to precedence and recency being established in the room. This list will be inverted in order to establish preset precedence for questions. Each session must have a new preset precedence list.
5. Number of Sessions
 - a. Congress shall have two preliminary sessions of a minimum of two and a half hours each, followed by a sudden death final session of at least two and a half hours. If there are only enough entries for one preliminary chamber of Congress, then a third preliminary session will be added with cumulative ranks from all three sessions used to determine the state champion.
6. Preliminary Sessions
 - a. The Clerk(s) of Congress, in consultation with the TFL Chair, shall determine the number of preliminary chambers needed prior to the start of the tournament.
 - i. If the tournament is held in-person, chamber size should not exceed 20 or be less than 12. Optimal size is 16-18. If 21-23 total students are entered, an exception will be made to have a single chamber. Ten

minutes per session should be added to the schedule for each student added to a chamber beyond 20. Under no circumstances should a chamber size be lower than 12 unless the event has fewer than 12 total entries.

- ii. If the tournament is held virtually, chambers must be between 8 and 15 students. The ideal chamber size is 12 competitors.
- b. Chambers shall be randomly assigned with students from the same school equally divided between chambers.
- c. Coaches may request to keep certain members of their team together as long as the total number of team members are equally divided between the chambers. However, coaches may not request that any member of their team be placed in chamber with a member of another school's team.
- d. Coaches who wish to have a disproportionate number of their team members placed together must make that request to both the TFL Chair and the Clerk of Congress and give good cause for doing so. TFL cannot guarantee a disproportionate division of teammates among chambers.
- e. Preliminary chambers shall be adjudicated by two judges and a Parliamentarian. The Parliamentarian stays for both sessions. The two judges are newly assigned each session.
- f. Judges fill out a preferential ballot of their top eight speakers at the end of the session in which they judge. Contestants not making the top eight shall be assigned a rank of nine by the computer. The Parliamentarian will fill out a preferential ballot of all speakers from both sessions at the end of Session Two. This ranking shall be factored in with the judges for both sessions as a fifth judge. The Parliamentarian's full ballot shall be used as a final tiebreaker if necessary.
- g. Preliminary dockets shall be set by the Chamber. A Ways and Means Committee consisting of one person per school will meet to establish a recommended three item Agenda order for both the first and second sessions. The agenda must consist of the three pieces of main legislation assigned for that session. legislation from another session or legislation not from the original docket is not permitted on the agenda. The Agenda is then proposed to the entire chamber, where it must receive a two-thirds affirmative vote of the chamber to be passed as the established agenda for the session. If it does not receive the required two-thirds vote, the Ways and Means Committee resumes work to establish an agenda that would receive a two-thirds vote. Once the Agenda is established, it may only be amended by unanimous consent of the chamber and only when the piece of legislation needed moved comes up for debate.
- h. Presiding officers will be given one speech score for every full hour of presiding. (Example: 3 scores for a 3 hour session but only 2 scores for a 2.5 hour session, per NSDA rules.)
- i. The Clerk or Congress and the TFL Chair shall determine the number of students advancing to finals per chamber prior to the beginning of the first preliminary

- session. All chambers will have an equal number of competitors advancing to a finals chamber of no fewer than 12 and no more than 16 students.
- j. Ties for breaking into elimination rounds shall be broken in this order:
 - i. Total Preliminary Ranks – Dropping the worst
 - ii. Judge Preference
 - iii. Reciprocal of preliminary ranks
 - iv. Parliamentarian’s preference
 - k. Speaker points are to be awarded for each speech and for each full hour of presiding for NSDA points purposes. However, speaker points shall not be used in any way to determine rank or placement.
7. Final Session
- a. Congress finals will have four judges and a parliamentarian unless absolutely impossible to do so. If this becomes impossible, congress finals will, at minimum, have two judges and a parliamentarian that are not affiliated with any school in finals. This reduction in the judge panel must occur first in the Junior-Varsity division, then the open division only if necessary.
 - b. The agenda shall be set from the docket by random draw of the Clerk of Congress in the presence of at least two other TFL committee members. There is no committee system or traditional Ways and Means for finals. The drawn agenda may neither be suspended or amended. No legislation may be tabled until after minimum of two affirmative and two negative speeches. Previous question may not be called until a minimum of one affirmative and one negative speech.
 - c. There shall be one presiding officer for finals.
 - d. The Clerk of Congress will ensure that scorers award one speech score to the Presiding Officer per full hour of presiding. (Example: 3 scores for a 3 hour session but only 2 scores for a 2.5 hour session, per NSDA rules.)
 - e. Speaker points are to be awarded for each speech and for each hour of presiding for NSDA points purposes. However, speaker points shall not be used in any way to determine rank or placement.
 - f. Ties for breaking into elimination rounds shall be broken in this order:
 - i. Total Elimination Ranks – Dropping the worst
 - ii. Judge Preference
 - iii. Reciprocal of elimination ranks
 - iv. Parliamentarian’s preference
 - g. Congress finals is “sudden death.” No ranks or placement from the preliminary session will factor into finals placement.

Article VI. Protest & Equity Procedures

A. Protest Procedures

1. Schools may designate one adult (counting the head coach) who will be allowed to file protests on behalf of the school. This should be the contact listed on the school's Tabroom registration page. Any change from this contact as the Coach-of-Record for protests must be noted in writing to the TFL Vice Chair prior to the beginning of Round One.
2. Coaches believing a rules violation has occurred have a right to file a protest with the TFL Executive Committee. The protest must be filed by one of the coaches of record for the school in a timely manner. The TFL Executive Committee reserves the right to refuse to hear any protest in which an unnecessary delay has occurred before filing the protest. Absolutely no protests from students or adults who are not listed as the coach of record will be heard.
3. When submitting a protest, the coach of record should fill out an official TFL Tournament Protest Form. This should include the exact details of the incident in question and the contestant(s)/team(s) (identified by code) involved, along with a specific reference to the section of the TFL Manual that addressed the concern. The coach must also indicate the specific remedy that is being sought for the infraction. The form should be submitted to the TFL Vice Chair and electronically signed by the coach of record.
4. A protest committee consisting of the TFL Vice Chair and two other members of the Executive Committee whose contestants/teams are not involved in the protest shall hear the protest and deliberate on it before making a final decision. In the event that the TFL Vice Chair has a vested interest in the outcome of the protest, the TFL Chair or their designee will serve in the place of the Vice Chair for that particular protest hearing. The Vice Chair or their designee shall record the result of the decision in writing and personally contact the involved coach(es) with the decision immediately after a ruling has been made.
5. Coaches wishing to appeal the protests committee's decisions may do so filing a notice of appeal. The appeal must note the specific error made in the interpretation of the rule(s) by the protest committee. The TFL Vice Chair will notify the entire committee that an appeal has been received. Two members of the Executive Committee who were not on the original protest committee must agree that the protest warrants being heard by the full nine member Executive Committee in order to grant appeal.
6. The ruling of the full nine member Executive Committee is final.

B. Equity Procedures

1. Unlike protests, any coach, judge, student, or volunteer may file an equity concern concerning the TFL State Tournament.
2. Anyone with a concern about equity, harassment or discrimination has a right to file their concern with the TFL Executive Committee. No requirement concerning the timing of a concern exists; Equity, harassment and discrimination concerns can be filed at any time within a seven-day period before or after the tournament.

3. When submitting a concern, the petitioner should fill out an official TFL Tournament Equity Form. This should include the exact details of the incident in question with a specific reference to the individuals involved and/or actions that occurred. The petitioner may, but is not required to, request a specific remedy that is being sought for the infraction. The form should be submitted to the TFL Vice Chair and electronically signed.
4. The TFL Chair will appoint a neutral, non-affiliated Equity Officer for the duration of the tournament. Upon receiving the concern, the TFL Vice Chair will forward the concern to the Equity Officer. The Equity Officer is empowered by the TFL Executive Committee to conduct all necessary research and investigation into the matter. Upon the conclusion of the Equity Officer's research, the Equity Officer will make a recommendation to the TFL Chair and TFL Vice Chair on the appropriate course of action.
5. Upon final consultation with the TFL Chair and TFL Vice Chair, the Equity Officer shall record the result of the decision in writing and personally contact the involved individuals.
6. If the recommendation of the Equity Officer is to remove someone from the tournament premises and/or refer them to appropriate authorities, the TFL Vice Chair will assemble the full seven-member Executive Committee. The Equity Officer will advise the Committee on the situation prior to notifying the involved parties of the final decision.

Article VII. Recognition

1. Awards shall be given to contestants in the final rounds of speech events.
2. In Congressional Debate, medals will be presented to each non-place legislator advancing to finals and appropriate awards will be given to the top-six legislators at the conclusion of finals.
3. In Debate events, teams advancing to elimination rounds will receive appropriate awards. There will be no speaker awards at the TFL State Tournament.
4. Awards will only be offered in events with at least two schools and meeting minimum number of entries. Awards will be given in all events meeting this criterion. In events with fewer than 12 entries, no more than 50 percent of the field should receive awards.
5. The TFL Chair, with advice and consent from the TFL Executive Committee shall determine where the trophies are to be purchased and by whom.

Article VIII. Sweepstakes Awards

A. The Governor's Cup (Overall Sweepstakes)

1. The TFL will award First through Fifth Place School Awards

B. Steven Davis Excellence in Debate/ Kurt Earnest Excellence in Speech

1. The TFL will award First through Third Place School Awards in both categories.
2. Calculation of Excellence in Debate will consist of all divisions of LD, PF, Congress and Policy.
3. Calculation of Excellence in Speech will consist of all other events.

C. Randall Shaver Excellence in Forensics

1. The TFL will award First through Third Place School Awards.
2. Schools in the smallest 25 percent of teams in attendance based on the team's NSDA points for the year that have a minimum of five entries in the TFL State Tournament are eligible.

IX. Sweepstakes

1. On the Friday prior the start of the TFL State Tournament, the TFL Chair, with the advice and consent of the Tournament Manager (if used) and the TFL Executive Committee, shall determine what level of elimination rounds are necessary in each event, based upon final entry numbers. This information shall be clearly posted for students and coaches prior to the start of round one.
2. The Speech Category and the Debate Category will be weighted equally in determining the Governor's Cup winner. In other words, 50 percent of the total number of sweepstakes points awarded will come from speech events and 50 percent will come from debate events. To calculate this, the number of "raw" debate points earned from the formula in the next section will be converted to a percentage of available sweepstakes points within that category. The same will be done for speech. So regardless of the number of "raw" points awarded within each category, Debate will ultimately have 100 total sweepstakes points and Speech will also ultimately have 100 total sweepstakes points, essentially balancing the two categories.
 - a. Calculation of Debate will consist of all divisions of LD, PF, Congress and Policy.
 - b. Calculation of Speech will consist of all other events.
3. In the event of an unbreakable tie in any event, duplicate points shall be awarded for that place, but the number of total places shall remain the same. For example, if the unbreakable tie is for fourth place, points would be awarded for first, second, third, fourth, fourth (again), and sixth place, but no fifth. This assures that the true sixth place finisher remains in sixth place. The exception would be if the unbreakable tie was for sixth place, in which case seven total contestants would be awarded points after the sixth place points are duplicated.

TFL State Tournament Sweepstakes “Raw Points” Formula

A. Speech Events Raw Points – All except Declamation

1. Champion: 20 Points
2. Runner-Up: 16 Points
3. 3rd Place: 12 Points
4. 4th Place: 8 Points
5. 5th Place: 6 Points
6. 6th Place: 4 Points
7. If semifinals are held, all non-advancing semifinalists receive two points.
8. If quarterfinals are held, all non-advancing quarterfinalists receive one point.
9. No semifinals or quarterfinals points are awarded if the round is not held.

B. Speech Events Raw Points – Declamation

1. Champion: 10 Points
2. Runner-Up: 8 Points
3. 3rd Place: 6 Points
4. 4th Place: 4 Points
5. 5th Place: 3 Points
6. 6th Place: 2 Points
7. If semifinals are held, all non-advancing semifinalists receive one point.
8. If quarterfinals are held, all non-advancing quarterfinalists receive one-half point.
9. No semifinals or quarterfinals points are awarded if the round is not held.

C. Congressional Debate Raw Points – Open Division

1. Champion: 20 Points
2. Runner-Up: 16 Points
3. 3rd Place: 12 Points
4. 4th Place: 8 Points
5. 5th Place: 6 Points
6. 6th Place: 4 Points
7. All finalists not in the top six receive one point.
8. If no final session is held, sweepstakes points will only be awarded to the top six.

D. Congressional Debate Raw Points – Junior Varsity Division

1. Champion: 10 Points
2. Runner-Up: 8 Points
3. 3rd Place: 6 Points
4. 4th Place: 4 Points
5. 5th Place: 3 Points
6. 6th Place: 2 Points
7. All finalists not in the top six receive one point.
8. If no final session is held, sweepstakes points will only be awarded to the top six.

E. Debate Events Raw Points – Open Divisions

1. Champion: 20 Points
2. Runner-Up: 16 Points
3. Non-advancing Semifinalist: 10 Points
4. Non-advancing Quarterfinalist: 5 Points
5. Non-advancing Octafinalist: 2 Points
6. Non-advancing Double-Octafinalist: 1 Point
7. If Quarterfinals, Octafinals and/or Double-Octafinals are not held and no award is given, there will be no sweepstakes points awarded at that level and the formula begins at the next level up.
8. If the round is not held, but a trophy is still awarded for quarterfinals or octafinals, the “non-advancing” teams receive only two points for quarterfinals and one point for octafinals.
9. Points for Semifinals and Finals remain the same, regardless of whether a quarterfinal or octafinal is held.
10. No team with an even or losing record will advance to an elimination round or receive sweepstakes points. Rather, a bye will be issued to the higher seed, which will automatically advance to the next elimination round.

F. Debate Events Raw Points – Junior Varsity Divisions

1. Champion: 10 Points
2. Runner-Up: 8 Points
3. Non-advancing Semifinalist: 5 Points
4. Non-advancing Quarterfinalist: 2.5 Points
5. Non-advancing Octafinalist: 1 Points
6. Non-advancing Double-Octafinalist: 0.5 Point
7. If Quarterfinals, Octafinals and/or Double-Octafinals are not held and no award is given, there will be no sweepstakes points awarded at that level and the formula begins at the next level up.
8. If the round is not held, but a trophy is still awarded for quarterfinals or octafinals, the “non-advancing” teams receive only two points for quarterfinals and one point for octafinals.
9. Points for Semifinals and Finals remain the same, regardless of whether a quarterfinal or octafinal is held.
10. No team with an even or losing record will advance to an elimination round or receive sweepstakes points. Rather, a bye will be issued to the higher seed, which will automatically advance to the next elimination round.

Article X. Special Awards

A. Mildred Hussey Award

1. This award shall be given to an active speech and debate coach and shall constitute the "Coach of Year" award for North Carolina. The TFL Vice Chair will accept written nominations and essays to be due at a time established by the committee prior to the state tournament. Nominees names shall be placed on a ballot to be voted on coaches prior to midnight of the first day of the state tournament. In the event of a tie, a second ballot shall be taken by the membership between the tied coaches in attendance at the State Tournament.

B. TFL Assistant Coach of the Year Award

1. This award shall be given to an active speech and debate assistant coach. The rules and process shall be the same as with the Mildred Hussey Award. Note: The nominating coach has the right to place an assistant coach in the running for either the Assistant Coach of the Year or the Mildred Hussey Coach of the Year, but not both.

C. TFL Free Speech Award

1. 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. In order for a nominee's name to appear on the ballot, one school must nominate the person or organization. The winner will be selected from the nominations by a simple majority of the TFL Executive Committee. The winner shall be announced at the TFL State Championship Tournament. 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. 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. The TFL Historian shall be responsible for keeping a list of all previous and current winners of the Tarheel Forensic League Free Speech Award.

D. Virginia Sutherland Circle of Honor

1. This award may be presented to an individual or group who is recognized by the TFL Executive Committee as having contributed substantially to the long-range benefit of the TFL (see Constitution). This action must be considered at a regular scheduled meeting of the TFL Executive Committee. As this is the Hall of Fame award, this award is not necessarily given annually.

E. John Woollen/Tarheel Forensic League Student of the Year

1. The Tarheel Forensic League wishes to recognize the accomplishments of our student members who exemplify the National Forensic League Code of Honor, a dedication to the art of speech and debate, and a strong commitment to the values of the NFL. Each year, coaches will nominate deserving graduating seniors for the

Tarheel Forensic League Student of the Year. Our hope is to annually recognize students who personify the codes of integrity, humility, respect, leadership, and service

- a. Each nominee must:
 - i. Be a graduating senior from a Tarheel Forensic League member school.
 - ii. Have competed for two or more years in speech and debate
 - iii. Demonstrate good academic standing
 - iv. Exhibit team leadership
 - v. Display a dedication to community service
 - vi. Uphold the NFL Code of Honor
- b. The TFL Student of the Year will receive a \$200 cash award and a commemorative plaque. Each member school's coach may nominate ONE student for the award, and the TFL Executive Committee will convene during the State Tournament to review all applications and choose the recipient of the honor.

F. The Jackie Foote Award of Excellence in Congressional Debate

1. This award has been established by the Tarheel Forensic League to honor the congressional competitor who best exemplifies what Congressional Debate stands for. The winner should be a "good person speaking well." The award is modeled after and the equivalent of the Congressional Leadership Bowls offered at tournaments such as Harvard and the NSDA National Championship. Any student who competes in the Open division of Congressional Debate Finals at the TFL State Tournament is eligible.
 - a. The following are the qualities that must be exhibited in the recipient:
 - i. Above all else, the winner should demonstrate the highest ideals of character. They should not necessarily be the most popular competitor or the most successful, but must be held in the highest esteem of his or her fellow congresspersons. The award winner should be known for honesty in speech writing, procedural fairness, and ethical behavior both in debate and in their daily life. This honoree should be a suitable example for all students and coaches in North Carolina as a model citizen.
 - ii. The winner of this award should demonstrate leadership both in chamber and among his or her team. An ability to negotiate conflicting interests among participants in a chamber is desirable in the honoree.
 - iii. This award is not a popularity contest. The winner should be carefully evaluated by each person casting a vote for each of the qualities named above. The Award of Excellence in Congressional Debate represents TFL's highest honor for a student legislator and only those with the utmost integrity and ethics should be considered.
 - b. Selection Process:
 - i. The Jackie Foote Award of Excellence in Congressional Debate shall be chosen by students who compete in the finals of the Open division of TFL Congress.

- ii. At the beginning of the final session, the TFL Chair and/or TFL Clerk of Congress will address the chamber briefly to explain the award, the seriousness of the award and the qualifications an honoree must possess. A handout with the criteria for selection shall be given to each competitor. It needs to be strongly emphasized that this is NOT a popularity contest. Students should think about who demonstrates true leadership and meets the other requirements of the award, especially as demonstrated at the TFL State Tournament.
- iii. No one shall campaign for this award, nor should any student advocate on behalf of anyone.
- iv. At the end of the session, all students will receive a preferential ballot with the names of all finalists. Each competitor will preferentially rank only their top eight choices for the award. The Clerk of Congress will administratively assign a "9" to any student not ranked in the top eight of each ballot. Tabulation will use the same process and rules as the tabulation of judge scores, including the tiebreaking procedure.
- v. There will be no speeches given in support of any student. All competitors will immediately begin the secret ballot voting process without discussion at the conclusion of the finals session. The room should remain silent until all ballots have been collected.
- vi. Under no circumstances will the winner or any candidate being eliminated during the voting process be announced or disclosed until the awards ceremony. The TFL Chair and/or Clerk of Congress will guarantee the secrecy of the honor until the awards ceremony.

G. TFL Administrative Excellence Award

1. This award shall be given to an active administrator in North Carolina that advocates for speech & debate. The rules and process shall be the same as with the Mildred Hussey Award.

Appendix

TFL State Tournament Qualification Procedures

Revisions as of December 2024

A. Rationale

1. The Tarheel Forensic League State Championship is a culminating tournament resulting in the crowning of state champions in each of the main NSDA and CFL events. As such, it is the belief of the TFL Executive Committee that it should be a meaningful tournament that students earn their way into through a combination of regular season success and dedication to attending North Carolina tournaments. The state tournament has grown substantially in recent years and is outgrowing the space at many potential host schools with an open unlimited entry policy. The implementation of a bid system keeps tournament numbers manageable while also increasing the quality of competition. It creates a meaningful state championship experience for all involved.

B. Eligibility to Compete:

1. All TFL schools that pay dues by the established deadline are eligible to participate in the TFL State Championship Tournament.
2. Varsity students from member schools qualify to enter the state tournament through either earning **two** bids at participating North Carolina regular season tournaments or by receiving one of their school's "wild card" bids from their coach. Students may also qualify by receiving an automatic bid, outlined in a separate section below.
3. All students in their first two years of Speech and Debate competition are eligible to enter the Junior Varsity (JV) division of an event when that division is offered (currently Lincoln Douglas, Public Forum, and Congress). No bids are necessary to enter JV and each member school receives an unlimited number of JV entries unless TFL needs to impose a cap due to room availability.

C. Earning Bids to the TFL State Tournament:

1. Each student or partnership must earn **two** bids during the academic year in order to participate in Varsity or Open divisions of the TFL State Championship Tournament.
2. Bids are offered at all TFL sanctioned tournaments within the state of North Carolina. Guidelines for sanctioned tournaments are listed in a separate section.
3. A bid to the TFL State Championship Tournament may be earned at sanctioned tournaments in one of the following ways:
 - a. Placement in an event at a sanctioned tournament according to the formulas below.
 - b. Earning **four** "legs" over the course of a season. A "leg" is defined as participating in all preliminary rounds of a sanctioned tournament regardless of placement. All **four** legs must be earned in the same academic year and with the same partner if it is a team event (PF and Duo). They also must be earned in the same event. So any student competing in all preliminary rounds of **four** different sanctioned tournaments in the same event (with the same partner, if applicable) will receive a bid in that event.

4. A student who is disqualified for any reason at a tournament may not receive a bid or a leg from that tournament.
5. **Sanctioned Tournaments** must meet the following minimum criteria:
 - a. Approval from TFL by application (guidelines noted in separate section)
 - b. A minimum of eight (8) participating schools to award any bids at the tournament
 - c. A minimum of two (2) schools participating in any event receiving bids
 - d. Participating schools do not have to be from North Carolina to meet the minimum criteria for awarding bids as long as the tournament is held in North Carolina
 - e. In the event that a tournament has placing students from out of state or from non-TFL schools, bids will move down in order to the next placing competitor from a TFL member school as long as they have a winning or even record in debate or are in the top half of the field in a speech event. Congress students should be in the top half of their chamber. In the case where a final session of Congress is held, only students in the final session are eligible.
6. **Debate Events (LD, PF):**
 - a. 2-6 entries: Champion receives a bid
 - b. 7-11 entries: Top three finishers receive bids
 - c. 12 or more entries: Top six finishers receive bids
 - d. Number of competitors is set and locked at the end of final registration the morning of the tournament
 - e. Every competitor listed must compete in at least one round
 - f. Bids can only be awarded to students with winning or even records. No bids can be awarded to losing records even if the event meets the entry numbers listed above.
7. **Congressional Debate:**
 - a. Tournament must have a minimum of two sessions of at least 2.5 hours each
 - b. Bids are determined by the total number of students entering congress (not the individual chambers) and are divided equally among chambers. For example, if the event is entitled to six bids and there are three chambers, each chamber will award bids to the top two finishers (total of six for the event).
 - c. A tournament with a finals chamber will award bids to the top six finishers, provided that there were at least 12 total competitors in the event. If a finals session is offered, no bids will be awarded out of the preliminary chambers.
 - d. 2-6 total entries in Congress: Only one chamber allowed and only champion receives a bid
 - e. 7-11 entries in Congress: Only one chamber and top three competitors receive bids.
 - f. 12 or more total entries in Congress: Six bids awarded. Bids are evenly distributed among the number of chambers offered.
 - i. 1 Chamber: Top 6 receive bids
 - ii. 2 chambers: Top 3 in each chamber receive bids
 - iii. 3 chambers: Top 2 in each chamber receive bids

- g. Number of competitors is set and locked at the end of final registration the morning of the tournament
 - h. Every competitor listed must compete in at least one full session of Congress (minimum 2.5 hours)
8. **Speech Events:**
- a. 2-6 entries: Champion receives a bid
 - b. 7-11 entries: Top three finishers receive bids
 - c. 12 or more entries: Top six finishers receive bids
 - d. Number of competitors is set and locked at the end of final registration the morning of the tournament
 - e. Every competitor listed must compete in at least one round

D. Bid Entry Exceptions:

- 1. Schools may enter an unlimited number of students in Junior Varsity (JV) divisions of events (currently Lincoln Douglas, Public Forum and Congress). No bids are necessary in JV divisions.
- 2. Each member school receives five “wild card” entries that may be given to any student on their team that does not receive a bid through the normal qualification process.
- 3. New TFL member schools will receive 10 “wild card” entries in their first year of competition in the league. A new member school is defined as a school that has never been a TFL member or was once a member but has not joined the league for the five consecutive years prior to the current year.

E. Automatic Bids / Autoqualification:

- 1. Any participant in a Varsity elimination round at the previous year’s TFL State Tournament earns automatic entry into the TFL State Tournament in that event. If the event is a partnership event (PF or DUO), both partners must have competed together at last year’s tournament.
- 2. Any student or team that earns one bid to the University of Kentucky Tournament of Champions (TOC) during the course of the school year receives an automatic entry into the TFL State Tournament in that event. If the event is a partnership event (PF or DUO), both partners must have competed together at the tournament in which the TOC bid was received.
- 3. Any student or team that autoqualified to the current year’s NSDA Tournament receives an automatic entry into the TFL State Tournament in that event. If the event is a partnership event (PF or DUO), both partners must have competed together in the final round of the previous year’s NSDA Tournament.

F. Becoming a Sanctioned Tournament:

- 1. Before the tournament: Any paid TFL member school or paid affiliate school as defined in the TFL Constitution meeting minimum requirements will be considered a sanctioned tournament for that academic year, subject to TFL Committee review and approval. Tournaments are expected to make available all of the following.

- a. The names of all Tab staff. Tab staff with administrative access to tabulation software for the tournament must include coaches or personnel unaffiliated with the host school.
 - b. A complete tournament schedule
 - c. Tiebreaking methods to be used at the tournament
 - d. Tab software being used (must be Tabroom or SpeechWire)
 - e. Confirmation that all rules are clearly and publicly posted online
2. Tournaments must adhere to the following guidelines as a condition of awarding bids:
- a. A school must be a member of the TFL in order to host a tournament eligible to award bids. Being a member last year, or prepaying this year, or intending to pay this year prior to the state tournament counts.
 - b. Students from the host school may be allowed by their coach to compete in their own tournament if the host school declares its intention as part of the bid application process. A change in this decision must be made with the TFL Chair before the tournament date in time to give reasonable notice of the change to all participating schools.
 - c. Tab staff must include coaches or personnel unaffiliated with the host school
 - d. No member of the tab staff may do anything in the pairing of rounds or judges to give their own team an unfair advantage.
 - e. All judges must be high school graduates
 - f. Judges may not judge their own school except in the case of Congress when impossible to pair judges without doing so
 - g. Tournaments must be open to all North Carolina Schools, but that does not guarantee entry. However, a tournament's entry criteria including limits and deadlines must apply equally to all schools.

G. Hurricane Helene Adjustments

1. Based on the unprecedented impact of Hurricane Helene, the TFL is recognizing unique qualifications procedures for schools in the following counties: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey. This also extends to any schools supported or sponsored on the tribal lands of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina
2. Students who attend affected member schools may gain qualification by earning two "legs" over the course of a season. A "leg" is defined as participating in all preliminary rounds of a sanctioned tournament regardless of placement. Both legs must be earned in the same academic year and with the same partner if it is a team event (PF and Duo). They also must be earned in the same event. So any student competing in all preliminary rounds of two different sanctioned tournaments in the same event (with the same partner, if applicable) will receive a bid in that event. A student who is disqualified for any reason at a tournament may not receive a bid or a leg from that tournament.

3. Each affected member school receives ten “wild card” entries that may be given to any student on their team that does not receive a bid through the normal qualification process.

H. Tracking Bids:

1. The TFL Executive Committee will appoint official Bidkeepers to track and publish a list of current bids to the TFL State, including automatic qualifications.
2. Upon receiving result materials from the host school, the TFL Bidkeepers will publish an updated list of awarded bids within seven (7) days of the conclusion of each TFL sanctioned tournament.
3. The Bidkeepers will also keep track of students earning legs toward a bid for each tournament.
4. After reviewing the published bid list, coaches believing a student has earned a bid but does not appear on the bid list may submit proof to the TFL Bidkeepers for review and consideration.
5. In the event that a question remains after review by the Bidkeepers, the TFL Executive Committee is the final avenue of appeal and its decision is final.