

NCFL Student Congress Manual

About Student Congress

Student Congress combines aspects from both debate and speech competition in a unique blend. At the NCFL Grand National Student Congress, you will be placed in a legislative chamber with students from across the nation. To be successful, it is important that you work well with your peers to serve as an advocate for your “constituents” and pass meaningful legislation. Immersing yourself in the full experience of this event requires that you familiarize yourself with the procedures outlined in this manual.

Advancing to Nationals

This manual includes the procedures of the National Catholic Forensic League (NCFL) for the Grand National Forensic Tournament. NCFL does not restrict the operations of preliminary or qualifier events. Each league is encouraged to consider operating local Student Congress such that incremental events follow the procedures set forth for Preliminary sessions and that qualifier events follow the procedures of Elimination sessions (semifinals and finals).

Diocesan Leagues are permitted to advance entries in Student Congress according to the allocations based on league membership. Each participating league is responsible for providing one or two (based on league membership) judge candidates for Student Congress (By-Laws II.B.1.c). Leagues are expected to submit legislation, no later than April 1 for the subsequent Grand National Tournament (By-Laws II.C.6.e). Legislation addressed in prior local tournaments may be submitted for national consideration if it is original work of a student or group of students. Legislation will be released no later than one month before Nationals.

The NCFL By-Laws govern Student Congress operations on the whole. This manual describes the routines and procedures which will govern Grand National Tournament operations. Rules, requirements, and procedures vary across leagues. Participants are responsible for knowing and following NCFL standards during competition.

Preparing for the Grand National Tournament

The bills and resolutions that will be debated by the chambers are made available by the NCFL Clerk of Congress through [a link \(click here\)](#) on the NCFL website (NCFL.org). The Clerk of Congress attempts to select legislation that encourages educational debate on a wide range of subjects. Participants who write legislation for consideration have a theoretical advantage of research and familiarity with the subject material.

Bills and resolutions are different types of legislation; each type has a different purpose and a different format.

- **Bills** enumerate specific provisions which, if enacted, will have the force of law. Refer to [Appendix B \(Guide to Bill-Writing\)](#).
- **Resolutions** express a conviction or idea, used when Congress does not have jurisdiction to legislate. Debate on a resolution generally centers on broad principles about the concept presented. “Whereas” clauses (as opposed to articles/sections) are used to set forth the ideas presented in a resolution. It is not reasonable to undermine debate on a resolution simply because it cannot result in direct action. Refer to [Appendix C \(Guide to Resolutions\)](#).
- Since **Constitutional Amendments** are actually suggestions that the states ratify a provision, these should be written as resolutions. Refer to [Appendix D \(Guide for Constitutional Amendments\)](#).

Whether your legislation was selected or not, you have one month prior to the NCFL Grand National Tournament to review the legislation packet, conduct research, and write speeches for each session. Documentation is more impressive than personal opinion.

Role of the Clerk of Congress

The Clerk of Congress is appointed annually to serve the Tournament Director in efficient operation of the Student Congress event. The Clerk of Congress is the recipient of submissions of legislation for consideration. The Clerk of Congress operates the Student Congress tabroom on-site at the Grand National Tournament. They will be present for general meetings, awards, and emergencies. See [Appendix J \(Expectations for the Clerk of Congress\)](#) for more information.

Student Congress At the Grand National Tournament

General Meeting

Ideally, the General Meeting will be held on Saturday morning. **All Student Congress participants and assigned judges are expected to be present.** In some cases, for the sake of practicality, the General Meeting may be recorded and posted for participants to view at their leisure. If so, the video will be linked on the [NCFL Student Congress website](#) no later than Friday evening. The Clerk of Congress will conduct the General Meeting and share any instructional or facilities notes for those present. In the best circumstances, the Host Committee or a designee will have secured the attendance of a local or state official to offer a brief speech and lead the participants in swearing the Oath of Office.

Oath of Office

“I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter, so help me God.”

Preliminary Sessions

Saturday also includes all Preliminary Sessions. The first session begins with a 30-minute Caucus Session. During a Caucus Session, participants cordially, but professionally, discuss the best order for debating legislation and can also share their interest in serving as a Presiding Officer. Under no circumstances can the agenda be set or the Presiding Officer be elected during caucusing.

Preliminary Session 1	Preliminary Session 2	Preliminary Session 3
Convene	Reconvene	Reconvene
Presiding Officer Election	Presiding Officer Election	Presiding Officer Election
Set Agenda	Set Agenda	Set Agenda
Legislation (Four Items)	Legislation (Four Items)	Legislation (Four Items)
Recess	Recess	Adjourn

Role of the Parliamentarian

A Parliamentarian is assigned to each chamber for the day. The Parliamentarian will serve as the presiding officer through the election process. Ideally, the Parliamentarian is an observer in the chamber and will not interact in any way, until ranking all speakers during the final session, based on the day’s observations. However, in an emergency, the Parliamentarian is a tournament resource who can assist participants. All Parliamentarians are in direct contact with the Tab Room. Parliamentarians should see [Appendix E \(Guide for Parliamentarians\)](#).

Election of the Presiding Officer

A Presiding Officer will be elected from the members of the chamber at the beginning of each session. The following are rules for Presiding Officer elections:

- At the start of each session, the Parliamentarian takes nominations from the floor for Presiding Officer. No students may nominate themselves.
- Brief (30-45 seconds) speeches of introduction and qualifications may be given by each candidate prior to the first round of voting in a given election, but are not required.
- Elections for presiding officer are conducted by secret ballot, solely managed by the Parliamentarian. Students MAY NOT assist. See [Appendix E for Voting Slips](#).
 - On a small piece of paper, each student will vote for only one of the nominees.
 - A majority vote will elect the presiding officer for a given session. Balloting shall continue until a majority (50% + 1) is reached.
 - In each round of balloting, the candidate receiving the lowest total of votes is eliminated; if the bottom two students’ vote total is less than the total of the student who is third from the bottom, the bottom two students are both eliminated from the next round of voting.
- When the majority vote has been successfully completed, the Presiding Officer will vacate their seat in the chamber and assume the designated place at a table near the

podium with the Parliamentarian. **With this action, a Presiding Officer vacates any opportunity to speak on legislation in the session.**

Role of the Presiding Officer

The task of the Presiding Officer is to administer the rules of parliamentary procedure (see [Appendix F Parliamentary Procedure in a Nutshell](#) or Robert's Rules of Order for guidance) and keep the chamber operating efficiently through their tenure. Presiding Officers serve the interests of the Chamber over their own interests. Once elected, they are rewarded with an honorary gavel. Presiding Officers should consult [Appendix H \(Guide for Presiding Officers\)](#).

Agenda-Setting

The first order of business for a Presiding Officer is to guide the chamber in setting the [agenda](#), the specific order in which the four items of legislation will be addressed. Commonly, this begins by entertaining a motion with a specific proposed order. As always, the motion must be seconded. A majority vote is necessary to adopt this agenda. A chamber may propose several agendas before adopting one.

While in the Chamber

There is a right way and a wrong way to speak in legislative sessions. Study and use [Appendix F \(Parliamentary Procedure in a Nutshell\)](#). In addition, remember the following best practices:

1. *When referring to another participant*, use the following form:
 - a. If in Prelims: "Representative..." or "The Representative from..."
 - b. If in Semis and Finals: "Senator..." or "The Senator from..."
2. *When referring to a Presiding Officer*, use the following form:
 - a. If in Prelims: "Mr. Speaker" or "Madam Speaker"
 - b. If in Semis or Finals: "Mr. President" or "Madam President"
 - c. A Presiding Officer may also specify another reasonable honorific at the beginning of the session.
3. *When wishing to offer a motion*, the correct way to obtain the floor is to wait until a [cycle](#) (pair of affirmation and negation speeches) to conclude, stand and say "motion," and wait for the Presiding Officer to recognize you. When the Presiding Officer recognizes you, make your motion.
4. *When you wish to oppose the views of the preceding speaker*, the correct way to obtain the floor to speak is to wait until the final questioner concludes, stand quickly, and wait for the Presiding Officer to recognize you. Holding your [placard](#) facilitates the process.
5. *When you wish to question a speaker for clarity and transparency*, the correct way to obtain the floor is to stand and wait to be recognized when the Presiding Officer calls for speakers or questioners. If you were not called for the first questions, remain standing. When the questioning period elapses or a speaker has been selected, those waiting should take their seats.

Debate in the chamber begins with an opening, affirmative speaker. No authorship or sponsorship speeches are permitted at Nationals because they offer clear advantages to some individuals. Speeches can never exceed three minutes. Each speech is followed by cross-examination from the floor.

- The first cycle of debate includes a MANDATORY two-minute cross-examination period for each speech.
- All speeches outside the first cycle include a MANDATORY one-minute cross-examination period.
- Cross-examination periods MAY NOT be suspended or expanded.
- NCFL has adopted the *direct questioning* method, allowing a single questioner to continue for 30 seconds without requesting and being granted a follow-up question.
- Presiding Officers should rule prefaced, “two-part,” misleading, or irrelevant questions out of order.
- If time remains and no questioners remain, the Presiding Officer will dismiss the speaker to be seated.

When many members wish to speak, the Presiding Officer will choose those who have spoken least, then least recently. Members of the chamber should plan accordingly, as recency is NOT reset from round to round.

Amending Legislation

Amendments can be used to correct unintentional errors in legislation, adapt legislation to reflect events that have unfolded since it was originally drafted and released, better reflect the course of debate on the legislation, or address other reasons entirely. Amendment forms will be provided to all participants (see [Appendix E Amendment Form](#)). Amendments must be presented in writing and state exactly the words to be added or stricken. A [Motion to Amend](#) requires a second from another member of the chamber. Use the following procedure to amend:

1. The amendment is written on an [NCFL Amendment form](#) and passed to the Parliamentarian.
2. The Presiding Officer will read the amendment and determine if it is germane.
3. When an Amendment is proposed, the Presiding Officer will read the amendment.
4. The Presiding Officer will ask for a second.
5. In keeping with Robert’s Rules of Order, the Presiding Officer will take a voice vote on entertaining the amendment.

Preference for the [sponsorship](#) speech on the amendment shall be based upon the number of speeches given (regular speaking precedence); the author of the amendment DOES NOT have the automatic right of sponsorship.

Debate on an amendment to legislation DOES NOT INCLUDE mandatory cross examination; after the opening speech, an opposing speech ON THE AMENDMENT will be in order.

Debate will alternate (pro and con) ON THE AMENDMENT until the amendment item is disposed of properly. Proper disposal of an amendment involves a successful calling of the question and a vote on the amendment's acceptance.

Any speech on the main motion is OUT OF ORDER while the amendment is on the floor.

Voting Procedures

When informative discussion on a piece of legislation is exhausted, a [Motion on the Previous Question](#) is in order. It requires a second. Because this motion closes debate and terminates the opportunity for any other member to speak on this legislation, it requires the assent of two-thirds of the chamber. For example, if there are 21 people assigned to the session, 14 is the minimum needed to invoke the Previous Question. Upon passage, the Presiding Officer will move into voting procedures. If defeated, debate on the legislation will continue.

If no one wishes to speak, the chair has the discretion to call the question without a motion.

In order to take a vote on any piece of legislation, it must have been debated on the floor for two full cycles. If sufficient speakers are not available, an item may be laid on the table.

Votes on passage of the legislation MUST be taken by standing vote.

A [Motion for Division of the Chamber](#) may be demanded by any two members (motion and second) when a voice vote has been taken. The call for a division of the Chamber must be made before the Chamber has moved on to other business.

Ending the Session

A [Motion to Suspend the Rules](#) to permit speeches on only one side of a topic is ill-advised and should never extend beyond one cycle. When balanced debate is exhausted, it is time to [Move the Previous Question](#). A suspension of the rules requires agreement from two-thirds of the chamber.

A Motion to Suspend the Rules MAY NOT be used to alter any regulation in the NCFL By-Laws.

On Student Congress rulings, the Parliamentarian is the final authority within each chamber and they should correct any serious deviations from the rules. Decisions of a Parliamentarian on procedure will not be altered by the Tab Room.

Under no circumstances is a member permitted to argue with the Presiding Officer or the Parliamentarian. A member's only recourse if they feel the Presiding Officer has made a serious error is to stand and say: "I rise to a [Point of Parliamentary Procedure](#)." The Presiding Officer will say: "State your point." The member should state what they believe to be the error and sit down. The Presiding Officer may confer with the Parliamentarian before answering. If the member still feels the Presiding Officer is wrong, they can rise and say: "I [Appeal the Decision of the Chair](#)." This motion requires a second. There is no debate, but the person making the motion may, in a few sentences, state why they feel the decision should be overruled. The

Presiding Officer may also state, in a few sentences, why they feel the decision should stand. The Presiding Officer then takes the vote as follows: “Those voting to sustain the Presiding Officer...those voting to overrule the Presiding Officer.” Once the vote has been taken and the results announced, the decision is irrevocable and no further discussion is permitted on the matter. Please note: the purpose of Student Congress is to debate legislation, not show off one’s knowledge of parliamentary procedure. Take this into consideration when contemplating this action.

Role of the Scorer

Scorers are knowledgeable adults who objectively score each speech in the session independently. When the speeches have concluded, scorers holistically rank the top eight speakers in the chamber.

At no time should speakers approach or engage the scorers in conversation. While politeness is welcome while entering and exiting, anything more could be seen as an attempt to influence their decisions.

Under no circumstances are scorers permitted to participate in the business of the chamber.

Scorers should consult [Appendix I \(Guide for Scorers\)](#).

Advancement to Semi-Finals

Congresspersons are reminded that speeches are of primary importance in influencing advancement. Use of motions in a proper and timely manner also helps further debate and can influence advancement.

According to the NCFL By-Laws (II.C.6a), “The goal for the size of preliminary chambers will be 18 members. Five members will advance from each Chamber to the Semi-Finals.”

Based on the cumulative rankings from all Scorers (including each of the three Preliminary Sessions), the four top-ranking members of each chamber will advance to Semi-Finals. The Parliamentarian ranks all members of the chamber. The highest-ranking member of the chamber from the Parliamentarian ballot who has not already advanced based on Scorer ranks will also advance to Semi-Finals.

Semi-Final Session

Qualifiers for Semi-Finals will be posted by NCFL on Saturday night, approximately 10:30 PM.

Five members will advance from each Chamber to the Semi-Finals. The Clerk of the Congress will distribute the qualifiers into approximately equally-sized chambers of 16 to 20 students and assign four Scorers and a Parliamentarian for each Semi-Final Chamber (By-Laws II.C.6.b).

Semi-Finals will be held on Sunday morning and will consist of two parts which are each two hours long. A fifteen-minute break will separate the two parts. Other recesses may be considered by a vote of the chamber, at the discretion of the Presiding Officer and the Parliamentarian. Each part shall be presided over by a different student elected from chamber. A student MAY NOT preside for both parts. All Scorers and the Parliamentarian will serve through both parts of the Semifinals Session.

A new selection of five pieces of legislation will be preassigned to Semi-Finals by the Clerk of Congress. Legislation is posted on the [NCFL Student Congress website](#) on the [Semi-Finals page](#).

General procedures as described for the Preliminary Sessions continue in force for Semi-Finals.

Elections of the Presiding Officers

An election will be held at the beginning of the Semi-Final and Grand Final Sessions for both Presiding Officers. Any student wishing to serve as Presiding Officer must be a candidate in this election. Voting will proceed as it does for all other PO elections for the top candidate.

The Presiding Officer Elect must choose which part of the Semi-Finals Session to serve. After this decision has been announced, other candidates may choose to continue in the second election or withdraw.

A second election will follow, the winner of which will serve as Presiding Officer for the alternate part of Semi-Finals.

The Presiding Officer for the first part will vacate their assigned seat and take the position at the front of the room with the Parliamentarian. By doing so, they relinquish the right to speak on legislation during that *part* of the Semi-Finals session. When they have resumed their speaker position or before the Presiding Officer role has been assumed, they may speak on legislation as any member of the chamber.

The first order of business is the setting of the agenda.

The fifteen-minute break should be handled as a recess of the chamber. It does not require the disposing of legislation on the table. Upon return from the recess, the Presiding Officer for part 1 should convey precedence and recency information to the Presiding Officer for part 2. The first Presiding Officer will be assigned two speeches in precedence.

Advancing to Finals

Six to eight members will advance from each Semi-Final chamber to the Grand Final Session of 24 students (By-Laws.II.6.b, part 2). Based on the cumulative rankings from all Scorers (including each of the three Preliminary Sessions), the five to seven (five if there are four Semi-Final Chambers, seven if there are only three Semi-Final Chambers) top-ranking members of each chamber will advance to Semi-Finals. The Parliamentarian ranks all members of the chamber. The highest-ranking member of the chamber from the Parliamentarian ballot who has not already advanced based on Scorer ranks will also advance to Semi-Finals.

Grand Final Session

The Grand Final Session will be held on Sunday afternoon, following a lunch break. It will begin with a General Meeting in the assigned room. Following any pertinent instructions, the Clerk of Congress will announce the qualifiers at the General Meeting. Scorers and the Parliamentarian will also be announced.

Upon hearing their name announced, participants should rise and advance to the competition space and assume their places. While no official caucus period is scheduled, quiet discussions about the agenda or interest in presiding may occur among the senators.

Tab room officials will assist the Parliamentarian during the Presiding Officer elections. The method of electing two presiding officers for the session should follow that described for the Semi-Finals Session. A student MAY NOT preside for both parts. All Scorers and the Parliamentarian will serve through both parts of the Semifinals Session.

Procedures regarding the interim recess during the Grand Final Session also follow those set forth in the description of Semi-Finals procedures.

Five new pieces of legislation will be assigned to the Grand Final Session by the Clerk of Congress. Legislation selections will be posted on the [NCFL Student Congress website](#) on the [Finals page](#).

The four Scorers and the Parliamentarian will rank the top 8 persons at the end of the Grand Final Session; each student unranked by an official will receive a rank of "9". The ranks will be totaled to determine the final placement. The ballot cast by the Parliamentarian in Preliminary, Semi-Final, and Grand Final Sessions will be used to break any ties that may occur.

Awards

Advancing to Nationals from your league is an honor and should be reflected on your personal, educational résumé. The NCFL awards competitors who advance from Preliminary Sessions to the Eliminations on Sunday, individually. The NCFL also provides a Sweepstakes Trophy to schools based upon the number and successes of their entries, cumulatively. Through a special gift, the Dr. Paul E. Ward Memorial Trophy recognizes the number and successes of a school's entries, cumulatively and across the years of participation.

Speakers will be awarded as follows (By-Laws II.E.1.a):

- Non-advancing Semi-Finalists - Medal (distributed at Finals General Meeting)
- Finalists - Trophy (distributed together at ceremony)
- Top eight speakers (based on Finals) - Trophy (announced individually at ceremony)

Each Presiding Officer will earn a gavel for their service to the chamber (By-Laws II.2.E.1.c).

Sweepstakes points are awarded as follows (By-Laws II.2.E.2.d.4):

- Per participant per Preliminary Session - 8 points
- Per participant advancing to Semifinals - 18 points
- Per participant advancing to Grand Finals - 18 points
- For 1st place participant - 40 points
- For 2nd place participant - 35 points
- For 3rd place participant - 30 points
- For 4th place participant - 25 points
- For 5th place participant - 20 points
- For 6th - 8th place participants - 15 points each

The Dr. Paul E. Ward Memorial Trophy will be awarded for one year to the top school based on cumulative historical standing. Schools add to their cumulative points each year they participate in NCFL Grand National Student Congress in the following ways (By-Laws II.2.E.2.e):

- 1 point per preliminary session entry
- 2 points per presiding officer
- 2 points per speaker advancing to Semifinals
- 3 points per speaker advancing to Finals
- 8 points for 1st place speaker
- 7 points for 2nd place speaker
- 6 points for third place speaker
- 5 points for fourth place speaker
- 4 points for fifth place speaker
- 3 points for sixth place speaker
- 2 points for seventh place speaker
- 1 point for eighth place speaker

Appendix

- A. [Glossary of Useful Terms for Congressional Debate](#)
- B. [NCFL Guide to Bill-Writing](#)
- C. [NCFL Guide to Resolutions](#)
- D. [NCFL Guide to Constitutional Amendments](#)
- E. [NCFL Amendment Form/Voting Slips](#)
- F. [Parliamentary Procedure in a Nutshell](#)
- G. [Guide for Parliamentarians](#)
- H. [Guide for Presiding Officers](#)
- I. [Guide for Scorers](#)
- J. [Expectations of the Clerk of Congress](#)
- K. [Chamber Tally Precedence](#)
- L. [Chamber Tally Recency](#)

A: Glossary Of Useful Terms

Adjourn: end the session without the intent to return

Agenda: the specific order in which proposed legislation will be addressed in a session; an agenda can be adjusted through a vote of the chamber.

Authorship: generally refers to speechmaking privilege accorded to the writer of a bill or resolution, and can also refer to the introductory speech on legislation itself. At the Grand National Tournament, authorship speeches are not permitted. All speakers have an equal chance to deliver the first affirmative speech on a piece of legislation.

Bill: a type of legislation that lays out specific provisions and carries with it the full force of the law upon passage. Only a policy area that is within the purview of the United States Congress should be the subject of bills.

Constitutional amendment: a type of legislation, written as a resolution, that sets forth one or more specific changes to the Constitution of the United States.

Cross-examination: period of time after a speech concludes when members may ask questions of the speaker holding the floor upon recognition by the presiding officer. Simple, single questions are the only type allowed; multi-part and follow-up questions are out of order.

Cycle: pair of speeches, first affirmative and second negative, to assure balance of dialogue in the chamber; most motions are not appropriate until a cycle has been completed

Docket: all legislation assigned to a session, without regard to the order in which they will be debated

Parliamentarian: the adult in the room who serves as the check on all rules and procedures. Generally seated at the front with the presiding officer, they are available for consultation by the presiding officer, other students, and the scorers.

Personal privilege: motion that is required for a member to enter or exit chambers when the chamber is not in recess.

Placard: each participant is likely to have a name placard for the opening session to distinguish them in the chamber; placards facilitate referring to other members of the chamber by name, professionally; they can be raised during motions to aid recognition from the Presiding Officer or positioned on the speaker table to aid judges

Presiding officer: the student who is elected (prelims and Semi-Final) to chair debate in a given chamber. Referred to as “the Speaker” (if a House) or “the President” (if a Senate), they have responsibilities that are extensively outlined in Section III of the Congress Manual.

Previous question: a motion that ends debate and begins voting on an item of legislation. Passage of this motion requires a 2/3 vote (Appendix E).

Recency: a method of recognizing speakers that takes into account both how many times each member has spoken as well as how recently they have spoken. Once established, it is the method presiding officers must utilize to recognize speakers at the Grand National Tournament. It resets at the end of each session.

Recess: a period of time during which debate is temporarily suspended in a given chamber. It may be used after the conclusion of one item, prior to the introduction of an item, or for any reason at all. It is advised that these be few in number at the Grand National Tournament to maximize debating time.

Resolution: a type of legislation that lays out reasons why Congress should support a particular measure and contains one or more specific “be it resolved” clauses. Ultimately, such items do not have the full force of law behind them even upon passage. This should be used if Congress does not have the power to take action on a given policy.

Sponsorship: generally refers to the privilege and responsibility accorded a student who is not the author of legislation, but begins debate by introducing an item of legislation. Locally, this may apply when a member of a school writes a bill, but is not in the same chamber and a teammate from the same school serves in the role which would be afforded to the author (see authorship). At the Grand National Tournament, league sponsorship is not permitted. All speakers have an equal chance to deliver the first affirmative speech on a piece of legislation.

Table: to place an item of legislation “on the table” refers to the process by which an item is set aside so that the chamber may move on to a new item even though debate may not be finished with the “tabled” item.

NCFL Guide to Bill-Writing

[A BILL TO [ACTION WORD] [ARTICLE] [OBJECT] TO
[SUMMARIZE THE SOLUTION SPECIFICALLY]

- 1 BE IT ENACTED BY THE STUDENT CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:
- 2 Article I: State the new policy in a brief declarative sentence, or in as few sentences
- 3 as possible.
- 4 Article II: Define any ambiguous terms inherent in Article I.
- 5 Article III: Indicate the implementation date.
- 6 Article IV: Name the government agency that will oversee the enforcement of the bill
- 7 along with the specific enforcement mechanism.
- 8 A. Go into further details if necessary.
- 9 B. Go into further details if necessary.
- 10 Article V: State that all other laws in conflict with this new policy shall hereby
- 11 declared null and void.

Respectfully submitted,

(Arch)Diocese of [Name]

Features

One-page limit



Articles,
not “whereas”



Defined goal for
each article



Content cannot
oppose Catholic
doctrine



Line numbers for
easy reference
and amendment



Submitted by
Diocese, not
individual

**E
X
A
M
P
L
E**

A Bill to Eliminate the Social Security Wage Cap

- 1 Article I: The wage cap on the Social Security component of FICA imposed on payments made by
- 2 employers and employees is hereby eliminated.
- 3 Article II: “Wage cap” refers to the maximum amount of income subject to the full 6.2% Social
- 4 Security portion of FICA.
- 5 Article III: The above provisions will take effect on January 1, 2014.
- 6 Article IV: The Social Security Administration and the Internal Revenue Service will jointly assume
- 7 responsibility for the implementation of the above provisions.
- 8 Article V: All laws or portions of laws in conflict with the above provisions are hereby declared null
- 9 and void.

Respectfully Submitted,

Diocese of Albany

NCFL Guide to Resolutions

Remember the resolutions are reserved for situations in which Congress **does not have the jurisdiction** to take action because it impacts another country or branch of government.

A RESOLUTION TO [ACTION WORD] [ARTICLE] [OBJECT] [SPECIFY RESPONSIBLE PARTY]

- 1 Whereas: State the current problem (this needs to be accomplished in one brief sentence); and
- 2 Whereas: Describe the scope of the problem cited in the first whereas clause (this clause needs to
- 3 flow logically from the first); and
- 4 Whereas: Explain the impact of or the harms perpetuated by the current problem
- 5 (once again, the clause needs to flow in a logical sequence, one step at a time).
- 6 Whereas: The number of Whereas clauses will vary based on the topic and explanation.
- 7 Therefore, be it resolved by this NCFL Student Congress here assembled that:
- 8 State your recommendation for dealing with the problem (the resolution should be a
- 9 clear call for action).

Respectfully Submitted,
Diocesan Name

Features

- One-page limit
 - ◆
- "Whereas", not "Article"
 - ◆
- Give reasons to take a stand
 - ◆
- Content cannot oppose Catholic doctrine
 - ◆
- Line numbers for easy reference and amendment
 - ◆
- Submitted by Diocese, not individual

**E
X
A
M
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E**

A Resolution to Urge Intervention in Syria

- 1 Whereas: The security situation in Syria has been ignored by the United States government for far
- 2 too long; and
- 3 Whereas: Civilians and other non-combatants have suffered the brunt of the instability with
- 4 insufficient aid from the global community; and
- 5 Whereas: Protection of human rights and a restoration of global order demand a more direct
- 6 American response.
- 7 Therefore, be it resolved by this NCFL Student Congress here assembled that:
- 8 The President is urged to deploy peacekeeping troops to Syria.

Respectfully Submitted,
Diocese of Albany

NCFL Guide for Constitutional Amendments

Remember the amendments are actually just resolutions because they recommend to States of the Union that they choose to pass the Amendment to the Constitution. They include language, but no force.

EXAMPLE

Features

One-page

“Whereas”,
not “Article”

Give reasons
to amend

Content cannot
oppose
Catholic
doctrine

Line numbers

Submitted by
Diocese, not
individual

Central text
“Therefore...”
remains the
same for all
submitted
amendments

A Resolution to Amend the Constitution of the United States
To Include Federal Term Limits on Congress.

1 Whereas: Members of the United States Congress have continued to demonstrate an
2 inability to achieve progress in Washington, DC; and
3 Whereas: The repeated delays in achieving meaningful reform of the budget processes
4 and resolution of the debt crisis stress the economy of the United States and
5 the world; and
6 Whereas: Implementing term limits may encourage members to seek compromise as a
7 lasting legacy.

8 Therefore, be it resolved by two-thirds of this NCFL Student Congress here assembled, that the
9 following article is proposed as an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which shall be
10 valid to all intents and purposes as part of the Constitution when ratified by three-quarters of the
11 several states within seven years from the date of its submission by the Congress:

12 ARTICLE XXVIII

13 SECTION 1: No member of the House of Representatives shall serve more than five
14 consecutive terms, nor shall any member of the Senate be elected more than
16 two consecutive six-year terms.

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

Respectfully Submitted,
Diocese of Albany

Notice that the topic of this Amendment would be inappropriate to submit as a bill because it seeks to change the U.S. Constitution. Selection of the legislation template is not merely a choice of a favorite style. It is necessitated by the topic being proposed. Submitting under the wrong template will cause the Clerk of Congress to reject your legislation.

NCFL Amendment Form

Title/ID:

Author/Diocese:

Lines Affected:

Wording:

NCFL Amendment Form
Title/ID:
Author/Diocese:
Lines Affected:
Wording:

Voting Slip

Voting Slip

Voting Slip

Voting Slip

Voting Slip

Voting Slip

Voting Slip	Voting Slip	Voting Slip
Voting Slip	Voting Slip	Voting Slip

Parliamentary Procedure in a Nutshell

Key to Understanding How to Use These Motions: S/A/I/D/#

- **Does it require a SECOND?** Y/N Another member of the chamber must agree that this business is important enough to consider.
- **Can it be AMENDED after it is made?** Y/N If you motioned to change a penalty to \$1,000 and discussion suggested it should be higher, the motion could be amended instead of failed, then redone.
- **Can it INTERRUPT business?** Y/N Can this be made within a cycle before the floor is open?
- **Is it DEBATABLE?** Y/N Can this be discussed BEFORE voting on it?
- **Vote required** - Majority (50%+1), Supermajority ($\frac{2}{3}$), or Decision of the Chair/P.O.

Each of the motions below will be followed by (Y/N/Y/N/ $\frac{1}{2}$) or some variation. The first answer is for **second**. The next answer refers to **amending**, then **interruptibility** and next, **debatability**. The last identifier is the **vote** required to successfully pass the measure or if PO discretion is enough.

Commonly Used Motions in Congress

- ❖ **Motion to Open Debate (Y/Y/N/Y/ $\frac{1}{2}$)**
It's time to begin discussing legislation, instead of doing elections and organizing.
- ❖ **Motion to Open [Legislation] (Y/Y/N/Y/ $\frac{1}{2}$)**
Suggest beginning to debate a piece of legislation.
- ❖ **Motion the Previous Question (Y/N/N/N/ $\frac{2}{3}$)**
We are done debating this topic and ready to vote on this piece of legislation.
- ❖ **Motion to Amend (Y/Y/N/Y/ $\frac{1}{2}$)**
This legislation includes flaws which are "fixable" with some adjustments. (See manual for procedure to amend).
- ❖ **Motion of Personal Privilege (N/N/Y/N/PO)**
- For a request to leave the chamber, if it is closed, or to address the chamber apart from debating.
- ❖ **Motion to Lay on the Table (Y/N/N/N/ $\frac{1}{2}$)**
No! This is not time for a nap. It means to put legislation aside, without voting on it, to be considered later

Less Frequently Used Motions

- ❖ **Motion to Adjourn (Y/Y/N/N/ $\frac{1}{2}$)**
Request that the session is ended completely; cannot return for business
- ❖ **Motion to Recess (Y/Y/N/Y/ $\frac{1}{2}$)**
Announce that it's time for a brief break
- ❖ **Motion to Appeal the Decision of the Chair (Y/N/Y/N/ $\frac{1}{2}$)**
Challenge a call of the discretion of the PO (Extreme!)
- ❖ **Motion to Rise to Point of Parliamentary Procedure (N/N/Y/N/PO)**
Challenge a procedural call made by the PO, like who to call
- ❖ **Division (N/N/Y/N/PO)**
Requires a verification of a voice vote which challenges the PO judgment on a vote
- ❖ **Motion to Suspend the Rules (Y/N/N/N/ $\frac{2}{3}$)**
Change a rule of parliamentary procedure (Restricted)
- ❖ **Motion to Take from the Table (Y/N/N/N/ $\frac{1}{2}$)**
Reopen a "tabled" piece of legislation for debate or a vote
- ❖ **Motion to Amend the Amendment (Y/N/N/Y/ $\frac{1}{2}$)**
Obvious, right?

Guide for Parliamentarians

The role of the Parliamentarian is of **paramount importance** because the Clerk of Congress and other adults are not situated in the individual Preliminary Sessions or Sunday Eliminations. The Parliamentarian represents the **voice of experience in the room**. While Scorers are knowledgeable adults, their focus is to objectively score speeches and rank speakers. The Parliamentarian is concerned with the **legitimate operation of the chamber**.

Task 1 - Opening the Chamber

1. Meet in the Tab Room for initial instructions and to collect the supplies for the chamber.
2. Monitor the Caucus Session in order to assure that all participants have equal opportunity to speak and that decisions are not considered final until the Preliminary Session opens.
3. Complete a roll call of the chamber at the opening.
4. At the appointed time, declare Preliminary Session 1 open and take nominations from the floor for Presiding Officer. No student may self-nominate. Permit 30- to 45-second speeches of introduction and qualifications from each candidate prior to the first round of voting (not required).
 - a. Collect small paper slips from each member of the chamber to reflect their vote, **solely managed by the Parliamentarian. Students MAY NOT assist.**
 - b. On a small piece of paper, each student will vote for only one of the nominees.
 - c. A majority vote will elect the presiding officer for a given session. Balloting shall continue until a majority (50% + 1) is reached.
 - d. In each round of balloting, the candidate receiving the lowest total of votes is eliminated; if the bottom two students' vote total is less than the total of the student who is third from the bottom, the bottom two students are both eliminated from the next round of voting.
5. When the majority vote has been successfully completed, the Presiding Officer will vacate their seat in the chamber and assume the designated place at a table near the podium with the Parliamentarian. **With this action, a Presiding Officer vacates any opportunity to speak on legislation in the session.**
6. **From this time, the Parliamentarian is only an observer, unless an emergency arises.**

Task 2 - Chamber Record-keeping

Supervise the Chamber Record (available digitally or on paper (see Appendix K)). This should remain accurate and transfer from one Presiding Officer to the next to share precedence/recency.

Task 3 - Chamber Supervision (Passive)

If you observe a minor problem in the chamber...

Lean toward the Presiding Officer at an opportune time and mention the oversight or make a note and pass it to the Presiding Officer.

If you observe a major parliamentary infraction,

State your concern to the Presiding Officer. It is likely that Scorers will be aware of this interaction and may rank accordingly. It should be reserved for major infractions.

If any member of the chamber has a medical (including emotional) issue requiring intervention...

Notify the Tab Room immediately for assistance.

If a Scorer engages member of the chamber,

Attempt to curtail the interaction politely, then make note in the chamber record.

If a you need anything,

Contact the Tab Room (usually by text message)

Remember

- Your rankings will advance one member of the chamber to the next session. Choose wisely.
- The purpose and the success of Robert's Rules of Order lies in allowing the most participants to be heard and the least-frequent speakers to be recognized.
- Refer to the Student Congress manual for any rule clarification or request information from the Tab Room.

The Bottom Line

- **Parliamentarians are the eyes and ears of the tabroom in the chamber.**
- **Parliamentarians should not interject their personalities into the chamber at any time.**
- **Parliamentarians MAY serve as a reference source for the elected Presiding Officer.**
- **Parliamentarians DO NOT score speeches or address members of the chamber or Scorers.**
- **At the end of the third Preliminary Session or the second parts of the Semi-Finals and Finals, Parliamentarians rank ALL of the members of the chamber, from a unique perspective of observation.**

Guide for Presiding Officers

You have agreed to serve the chamber by tracking the flow of speeches for order and efficiency. You are solely responsible for managing the chamber. Your Parliamentarian is a resource, but relying on someone else for answers is likely to diminish your score/rank.

At no time can you deliver a speech in the chamber on legislation while you serve.

Order

The Presiding Officer is strictly charged with the responsibility to keep debate moving. Speaker shouldn't:

- Monopolize the floor
- Make dilatory motions to show parliamentary skills.
- Interruption speakers – even for questions

Timing

- When 2 minutes have elapsed, tap the gavel once.
- When 2 ½ minutes have elapsed, tap the gavel twice.
- At 3 minutes, gavel down the speaker, allowing the speaker to complete their sentence.
- Announce the speaking time.
- Speakers may yield time to questions. In this case, add the fractional time to the allowed time.
- Limit first cycle questions to two minutes and all other cycles to one minute, if questioners are standing.

Cross-examination

- Speeches share a point of view, and hopefully evidence, but questions explore loopholes and inconsistencies. They're essential.
- Cross-examination is only for questions, not mini-speech with a minor question added.
- Decorum, however, is critical in questioning fairly.
- Direct questioning allows a 30-second window for a single questioner.
 - The first cycle allows for four questioners. Other cycles, only two.
 - Questions should be brief, to allow for answers
 - Questions should focus on the speech content.
- Leading questions ("did you know" or "are you aware") should be ruled out of order.
- Questioners may not preface their questions without permission.
- Rule all problematic attempts out of order.
- A Motion to Suspend the Rules to allow for additional questions is not permitted.
- Questions of procedure not covered by these rules shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised.

Order of Business

- Election of Presiding Officer
- Setting Agenda
- Motion to Open Debate
- Debate on All Legislation in the Session
- Motion to Recess (except Session 3)

Keep a careful record of speakers for precedence and recency. Share it with the following Presiding Officer.

The cardinal rule in Robert's Rules of Order is to preserve the opportunity to speak for those in the minority. You guard their right to be heard. When in doubt, **always call those who held the floor least.**

You are the Emcee –

- State the agenda item, then as for speakers in favor of [the first piece of legislation]. No authors allowed.
- "Speakers opposed, please stand" and call your designee by name: "Representative [Last Name]"

You are the Host –

- Define the chamber as open or closed early (Is Personal Privilege required to enter/exit?)
- "Before moving to the Previous Question, are there any further speakers in affirmation? At this time we have not heard from three members of the chamber."
- "We have moved into the realm of rehashing. Speakers should remember to add new evidence and new reasoning pathways in each speech."

You are the Accountant –

- Call for all voting in affirmation, all in negation, all abstaining *every time*, then announce the result. "In a vote of 12 to 6 to 1, this bill passes."
- Previous Motion requires $\frac{2}{3}$, whereas a vote on legislation (Standing required) is a simple majority.
- Know the size of your chamber. Do the math.

You are a Time-Keeper –

- Of course, you are timing speeches and questions.
- Also monitor the time spent on each item so that all pieces of legislation are addressed if feasible.
- Know the end-time of the session and plan well.
- Know when to lay a bill on the table for later consideration, if debate is stale, but not ready to vote. Don't forget it's on the table either.
- Recess or adjourn effectively, at the close of a cycle.

When you relinquish your position, you will have earned the equivalent of two speeches AND a souvenir gavel.

Guide for Scorers

The role of the scorer is to objectively adjudicate the speeches, the speakers, and the Presiding Officer in each session.

Scorers do not engage the members of the chamber at any time or in any way.

Feedback on individual speeches, scores on comparative quality, and rank among one's peers in the chamber is essential information, which should be provided as clearly and thoroughly as possible in each session.

Tips on Scoring Speakers

Scoring in Student Congress is similar to judging other events in the sense that you take notes. Speakers will usually alternate from pro to con, and questions may be asked. In scoring speeches, however, you need not decide the "winner" as you would in a debate round. While you may see speakers who refute the positions of the opposition point by point, it is not necessary that they do so. Each speech should be rated on its own merit, using the following categories:

- **Delivery:** Is the speech clear? Is it persuasive? Does the speaker demonstrate poise?
- **Originality of Thought:** Does the speaker demonstrate that they have listened to others in the debate? Does the speech advance debate? Does the speaker respond to issues raised in the debate?
- **Organization and Coherence:** Does the speech ramble, or does it develop? Is the speech easy to follow? Are the speaker's purpose and/or focus clear?
- **Evidence and Logical Basis:** How many sources are referenced? Are the sources credible? Does the speaker use logic in the development of arguments?

Speeches from the floor should do so rather than rehash previously-delivered arguments. A quality speech may be presented even if it does not run three minutes. Speakers who do not add to the evidence or logical reasoning of a topic should not be rewarded with high scores.

Low points indicate poorly-written speeches without evidence, not topics with which you might disagree.

Score each speech on a 1 (worst) to 6 (best) scale.

Tips on Scoring Presiding Officers

Presiding Officers are NOT scored like other chamber participants because their role is entirely different. If you experience frustration or anxiety about the flow of speeches, monopolization by certain chamber members, or a lack of inclusion of all members of the chamber, these are critical shortcomings of a Presiding Officer.

Presiding Officers should be scored on the following criteria:

- Knowledge Of Usual Parliamentary Procedure
- Clarity In Explaining Rules And Procedures
- Control Of Chamber
- Fairness In Order Of Recognition And Rulings
- Overall Impact And Impression/Chamber Leadership

The Parliamentarian is available to guide the Presiding Officer so that the chamber will operate even with poor leadership. They preserve the experience for the whole chamber and tournament operations.

Scoring Presiding Officers involves both spoken and demonstrated organizational control. Sometimes that control is passive. If problems did not arise in the chamber, this too can be credited to the Presiding Officer for making appropriate calls and including members fairly.

Presiding Officers are also scored on a six-point scale (which will be multiplied by the number of hours they serve for point-keeping). A six (6) reflects a flawlessly-run chamber, whereas a three (3) indicates a poorly-run chamber. A one (1) or two (2) would suggest egregious offenses to parliamentary procedure and/or chamber members. Support all scores with comments.

The Bottom Line

- Please make thorough and extensive comments on the ballots. Ballots are reviewed during the post-round audit process and judges failing to provide comments may be called back to the event venue to do so.
- After they have left the room, review which speaker was the most indispensable to the operations of the chamber. This CAN include, but is not required to reflect, the Presiding Officer. Select your top eight chamber members in order.
- Take a fresh look at the speech ballots for missing comments or differentiating factors. **Scorers should not confer.**

Expectations of the Clerk of Congress

The Clerk of Congress is appointed by the Tournament Director at the Fall Director's meeting each year for service leading to and during the Grand National Tournament and the duration of the academic year.

The task of the Clerk of Congress is to enforce and interpret rules guiding the operation of the NCFL Student Congress and to assure a smooth and fair tournament environment for all participants.

Prior to the Grand National Tournament

The Clerk of Congress will:

- ❑ Monitor all communication from the Board of Directors and the Tournament Director with a "lens" for Student Congress operations.
- ❑ Attend all preparatory meetings regarding tournament operations to gain information about new procedures and also to share a perspective about the impact of decisions on the functioning of Student Congress.
- ❑ Review and adjust the calendar of events for the tournament and Tab Room operations, in conjunction with the official details of the Event Manager.
- ❑ Assure the operating status of the Legislation Submission document no later than March 1st.
- ❑ Update the NCFL Congress website with new information for the current year.
- ❑ Form a committee, which includes the Tournament Director as an *ex officio* member, for the review and discussion of all submitted legislation. The committee will select four pieces of legislation for each Preliminary Session and five items for each Elimination Session (totaling 22). Assignments should reflect an array of subjects in each session and avoid excluding any submitting (Arch)Diocese, if possible.
- ❑ Confer with the Tournament Director to set the number of Preliminary chambers, based on the number of registered participants.
- ❑ Submit a request for members of the Tab Room staff to the Tournament Director. The Tab Room should be comprised of half the number of staff members (not including the Clerk of Congress) as there are Preliminary chambers, so that one staff member can actively monitor two chambers.

At the Grand National Tournament

The Clerk of Congress will:

During the week of the tournament –

- ❑ Assign Parliamentarians to each of the Preliminary chambers, based on a select list of qualified individuals. These may be notified in advance in order to schedule appropriately.

On the day prior to the tournament –

- ❑ Engage tournament software to assign participants to chambers and review any issues which arise in the process. **Assignments will NOT be released to participants.**
- ❑ If appropriate, the Clerk of Congress will prepare a video General Meeting for posting.

On the day the tournament begins (Saturday) –

- ❑ Conduct the General Meeting for all participants, including judge assignments, with the assistance of Tab staff.
- ❑ Administer the Tournament in compliance with NCFL By-Laws and the Congress Manual, reporting to the Tournament Director.
- ❑ Analyze results and provide a list of advancing Semi-Finals candidates to the Tournament Director.
- ❑ Panel Parliamentarians and judges for Semi-Finals.

On the second day the tournament begin (Sunday) –

- ❑ Administer the Elimination Sessions.
- ❑ Analyze results and prepare a list of advancing Finalists to the Tournament Director.
- ❑ Panel Parliamentarians and judges for Finals.
- ❑ Conduct the Finals General Meeting.
- ❑ Audit scoring results and finalize them by 6:00 PM.
- ❑ Participate in distribution at the Awards Ceremony.

The Bottom Line

- The Tournament Director is the final authority on matters concerning the operation of the Grand National Tournament, therefore, all questions and concerns which are not explicitly covered should be addressed first to the Clerk of Congress who will consult the Tournament Director if guidance is needed.
- The purview of the Clerk of Congress is the entire operation of the Student Congress portion of the Grand National Tournament and all information about sessions should be available to the Clerk of Congress to audit.
- A smooth and equitable tournament is the primary goal.

Chamber Tally - Precedence Table/Seating Chart

An interactive NCFL Chamber Tally Template is available and encouraged for use at this link: rb.gy/wwkfv or the QR code provided here >>



Chamber Tally - Recency Table

Legislation Title>>				
1st Aff				
1st Neg				
Aff 2				
Neg 2				
Aff 3				
Neg 3				
Aff 4				
Neg 4				
Aff 5				
Neg 5				
Aff 6				
Neg 6				
Aff 7				
Neg 7				

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 or the QR code provided here >>

