

Leadership

Competition Rules Board November Meeting Minutes

Nov. 16, 2021

The NSDA Competition Rules Board members held their virtual meeting November 16, 2021. In attendance were President Pam Cady Wycoff, Vice President Dr. Tommie Lindsey, Jr., Byron Arthur, David Huston, Adam Jacobi, Jennifer Jerome, Renee Motter, and Jay Rye.

President Wycoff called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

COMPETITION RULES

Flexibility in National Tournament Debate Penalties

Moved by Rye, seconded by Huston:

“Allow the National Tournament Director and Adjudication Panels the discretion to reduce the prescribed penalty for a rule violation in debate based on the severity of the infraction beginning with the 2022 National Tournament.”

Passed: 8-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Motter, Rye)

In speech, the National Tournament Director and Adjudication Panels choose the consequences of a rules infraction based on the circumstance and magnitude of the infraction. Unlike speech events, the *Unified Manual* prescribes specific outcomes for certain rule violations in debate. This new rule permits discretion in debate if the circumstance and severity of the rule violation does not rise to the level of penalty prescribed. Examples of alternate penalties that could be used when the rules infraction does not rise to the level of disqualification or loss of round in debate are the issuing of a warning, lower speaker points for the offending debater if applicable, double wins, or loss of round instead of disqualification.

National Tournament Congressional Debate Legislation Collection

Moved by Jacobi, seconded by Rye:

“Any high school or middle school NSDA member student may submit legislation that will be considered for the National Tournament docket in Congressional Debate. In May, high school national qualifying students in the House and Senate will have the opportunity to rank vetted legislation to determine what legislation is debated. Legislation will no longer be tied to districts; there will be no authorship speeches at the National Tournament.”

Passed: 8-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Motter, Rye)

The goal of this change is to champion student agency and voice by opening the door to more submissions and more student input. This new process also decenters the importance of geographic diversity among legislation writers because there is no longer the competitive advantage of authorship speeches that comes along with legislation being chosen. Instead, we can prioritize selecting high quality legislation on a diverse range of topics and level the playing field for any student to give the sponsorship on any piece of legislation. Top legislation writers will be recognized for their efforts, regardless of whether they qualified to the National Tournament.

Direct Questioning in Congressional Debate

Moved by Huston, seconded by Jacobi:

“Direct questioning will be used in every round of Congressional Debate at the National Tournament beginning in 2022. All district tournaments must use direct questioning in Congressional Debate beginning in 2022-2023.”

Passed: 8-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Motter, Rye)

This change streamlines the questioning rules in Congressional Debate so that there is only one format of questioning used at all districts and the National Tournament. The goal of using only direct questioning is to create better, more engaging debate that allows for clarification and follow-up questions.

National Tournament Main Event Final Round Judge Panels

Moved by Lindsey, seconded by Arthur:

“Set a goal that each main event final round panel at the National Tournament strives to meet the following minimum criteria regarding diversity and experience: equal gender balance, two to three judges who identify as LGBTQ+, four persons of color, two Black individuals, one Black woman, one person with a disability, half of judges have one or more diamond, one to two judges are either in the Hall of Fame or have three or more diamonds, all judges have at least two years of experience coaching, judging, and/or competing in the category in question.”

Passed: 8-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Motter, Rye)

We strive to make the National Tournament the best speech and debate tournament possible. Speech and debate can equip students to unleash their potential and change their world. We believe the National Tournament can provide an opportunity for students to hone their skills and experiences to lead in our diverse and multicultural world. One step to ensuring that is possible is by supporting a judging experience that reflects the diversity of our student population and our world. Read more about our rationale for this goal for our final round judge panels at www.speechanddebate.org/national-tournament-paneling-goals.

National Tournament Main Event Semifinal and Supplemental Event Final Round Judge Panels

Moved by Huston, seconded by Motter:

“Set a goal that each main event semifinal and supplemental event final round panel at the National Tournament strives to meet the following minimum criteria regarding diversity and experience: equal gender balance, one judge who identifies as LGBTQ+, two persons of color, one judge with one or more diamonds, all judges have at least two years of experience coaching, judging, and/or competing in the category in question.”

Passed: 7-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Motter, Rye)

Read more about our rationale for this goal for our semifinal and final round judge panels at www.speechanddebate.org/national-tournament-paneling-goals.

Transparency in National Tournament Judge Pooling

Moved by Huston, seconded by Motter:

“Release anonymized demographic data of National Tournament final round pools and panels on an overall basis.”

Passed: 8-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Motter, Rye)

Our goals with this reporting are to celebrate the diversity of our panels, begin to set a standard for panel composition, and educate to combat the problem of panels only being judged by their visual diversity. We also want to be open to hearing from our communities about standards we are not meeting and standards we should consider. We will report demographic data on an overall basis to ensure anonymity and avoid releasing private information.

Moved by Jacobi, seconded by Lindsey:

“Adjourn.”

Passed: 8-0 (Wycoff, Lindsey, Arthur, Huston, Jacobi, Jerome, Motter, Rye)

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 p.m. on Tuesday. 

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS? IDEAS?

We want to hear from you! Send your feedback to board@speechanddebate.org.