

Leadership



Competition and Rules Leadership Committee November Meeting Minutes

November 11, 2025

The NSDA Competition and Rules Leadership Committee held their virtual meeting November 11, 2025. In attendance were Byron Arthur, Jamelle Brown, Lori Crews, James Harris, David Huston, Kelley Kirkpatrick, Kerry Konda, Kim Lenger, Xavier Liu, Renee Motter, Manvitha Narasimhan, Jay Rye, George Tennison, Elisabeth Venetiou, David Yastremski, and Brianna Zhang.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF PARADIGMS

The Competition and Rules Leadership Committee (CRLC) discussed the role of judge paradigms as tools for conveying a judge's background, expectations, and approach to evaluating rounds. While Tabroom.com currently allows judges unlimited, free-form text, concerns have been raised about paradigms that include unprofessional language, inappropriate incentives, or excessively narrow preferences that may disadvantage students. Committee members reviewed how the National Tournament supplements written paradigms with structured questions to provide clearer guidance to competitors. Following discussion, the CRLC recommended that the Association consider adopting a similar structured approach to paradigms for all tournaments while continuing to maintain limited space for written preferences. The recommendation will be shared with the Office of the Executive Director for consideration and to determine next steps.

OBSERVER USE OF TECHNOLOGY AT THE NATIONAL TOURNAMENT

The committee reviewed concerns regarding observer conduct at the National Tournament, particularly the use of technology by spectators. Currently, all rounds are open to observers with no specific limitations on conduct or technology use. However, multiple protests this year cited alleged instances of observers communicating with debaters via laptops or phones, and there have been concerns shared about disrespectful conduct among those spectating rounds. The CRLC recommended that the Association consider implementing a procedure that limits observers from using technology while watching rounds. The recommendation will be shared with the Office of the Executive Director for consideration and to determine next steps.

PREP TIME USE FOR EVIDENCE EXCHANGE IN DEBATE

The CRLC reviewed a member-submitted proposal aimed at clarifying when prep time should be used during evidence exchange in a debate round. Current rules do not specify whether teams must take prep time when locating and sharing requested evidence, creating inconsistencies, prolonging rounds, and opening the possibility for strategic misuse.

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Committee members considered two options: (1) continuing ad-hoc requests but giving teams one minute to produce evidence before prep time begins to accrue, or (2) requiring teams to share any evidence prior to the speech in which it is read, with one minute allotted for sharing before prep time is used. Discussion focused on whether evidence should be produced up front or only upon request, and how each approach might affect round management, fairness, and accessibility. The committee determined that additional feedback from our communities is needed before moving forward. The CRLC will revisit this issue next year with the intention of considering a formal rule change once more information has been gathered.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN DEBATE AND CONGRESS

The committee reviewed a member-submitted proposal requesting a ban on AI use in debate and Congress. Current rules allow students to use generative AI as a research aid but prohibit citing AI outputs as evidence;

all quoted or paraphrased material must be traceable to an original source upon request. After discussion, the CRLC reaffirmed the existing rules, emphasizing enforceability concerns and a desire to teach ethical use to students. The group charged the national office with continuing to develop resources on responsible use of AI, the risks of misinformation and bias, and how to use AI as a learning tool. The CRLC will revisit these rules periodically to assess whether future adjustments are warranted.

EQUITY PAUSE

The Competition and Rules Leadership Committee used the [NSDA Equity Lens](#) to reflect on the nature of their meeting deliberations and whether their decisions and decision-making processes are transparent, accountable, and reflect the organization's core value of equity.

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m. ✨

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS? IDEAS?

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