

Leadership



Competition and Rules Leadership Committee September Meeting Minutes

September 16, 2025

The NSDA Competition and Rules Leadership Committee held their virtual meeting September 16, 2025. In attendance were Byron Arthur, Jamelle Brown, Lori Crews, James Harris, David Huston, Adam Jacobi, Kelley Kirkpatrick, Kerry Konda, Kim Lenger, Xavier Liu, Renee Motter, Manvitha Narasimhan, Jay Rye, George Tennison, Elisabeth Venetiou, Chase Williams, David Yastremski, and Brianna Zhang.

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

WELCOME

The Competition and Rules Leadership Committee welcomed two new student representatives to the CRLC, Brianna Zhang and Manvitha Narasimhan.

SUBCOMMITTEE SELECTION AND RULE CHANGE PRIORITIZATION

A majority of Competition and Rules Leadership Committee work will take place in subcommittees. The group selected the following subcommittee focus areas based on the strategic plan: Regional Partnerships, Interpretation Rules, and School/District Recruitment. These subcommittees may be supplemented with additional coach members and begin their work in 2025-2026. Additionally, the committee reviewed member-submitted rule change proposals and prioritized which proposals will be discussed this year.

BIG QUESTIONS TOPIC UPDATE

Moved by Williams, seconded by Yastremski:

“Recommend that the Office of the Executive Director revises the wording of the 2025-2026 Big Questions topic.”

Passed: 17-0-1

Aye: Arthur, Brown, Crews, Harris, Huston, Jacobi, Kirkpatrick, Konda, Lenger, Liu, Motter, Narasimhan, Tennison, Venetiou, Williams, Yastremski, Zhang

No: None

Abstain: Rye

Two options for the 2025-2026 Big Questions debate topic were put up for a national vote, and on August 1, the winning topic was announced:

Resolved: Religious belief is a prerequisite for morality. After considering coach feedback, the Competition and Rules Leadership Committee suggested a slight wording change to ensure more robust debate. The updated topic is effective immediately. Tournament hosts who have already scheduled their events may use either version, but all district tournaments and the National Tournament will use the revised wording. **The updated 2025-2026 Big Questions topic is: Resolved: Moral systems rooted in theism are preferable to non-theistic moral systems.**

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INTERPRETER USE AT MIDDLE SCHOOL NATIONALS

The Competition and Rules Leadership Committee reviewed a team's use of live translation during the Middle School National Tournament. The committee determined that simultaneous translation technology will not be allowed in future tournaments because of its impact on other competitors. Instead, the committee recommended exploring alternative ways for these students to participate.

DISTRICT PILOT QUALIFICATION METHODS

The Competition and Rules Leadership Committee reviewed applications submitted for the one-year pilot program that allows districts to test alternative qualification methods for the National Tournament. Among the applications are proposals to revisit the "up-down" system, and the CRLC discussed concerns related to whether such approaches align with the organization's goals.

NATIONAL TOURNAMENT SECURITY

The committee engaged in a forward-looking conversation about potential ways to enhance safety and security at future National Tournaments. Committee members shared perspectives from their communities to help inform the organization's ongoing planning efforts.

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 9:00 p.m. 

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS? IDEAS?

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