Leadership

Board of Directors Fall Minutes

Des Moines, IA
September 25, 2026

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME/ RECORD OF APPROVED MINUTES

The NSDA Board of Directors held its fall meeting September 25, 2026, in Des Moines, IA. Members in attendance were Byron Arthur, Jamelle Brown, David Coale, Marc Ehrhardt, Meg Howell-Haymaker, Erez Kalir, Michael Ledford, Wendy Orthman, Esther Oyetunji, Jay Rye, Steven Schappaugh, Josh Swartsel, Aaron Timmons, and Rachel Wilczewski.

President Rye called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

LEGAL/CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

Moved by Timmons, seconded by Arthur:
"Enter into executive session."
Passed: 14-0 (Arthur, Brown, Coale, Ehrhardt, Howell-Haymaker, Kalir, Ledford, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Schappaugh, Swartsel, Timmons, and Wilczewski)

Moved by Arthur, seconded by Timmons:
"Exit executive session."
Passed: 14-0 (Arthur, Brown, Coale, Ehrhardt, Howell-Haymaker, Kalir, Ledford, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Schappaugh, Swartsel, Timmons, Wilczewski)

Each Board meeting includes time allotted for relevant updates on any pending legal matters or other business that requires discussion in executive session.

FY26 END OF YEAR BUDGET REPORT / FY27 FINAL BUDGET APPROVAL

Moved by Kalir, seconded by Swartsel:
"Approve the FY27 Final Budget."
Passed: 14-0 (Arthur, Brown, Coale, Ehrhardt, Howell-Haymaker, Kalir, Ledford, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Schappaugh, Swartsel, Timmons, Wilczewski)

The Chief Financial Officer, Executive Director, and related staff leadership answered questions related to the FY26 Draft Financial Report. The Chief Financial Officer, Executive Director, and related staff leadership answered questions related to the proposed FY27 Final Budget. This included the Chief Advancement Officer and Chief Strategic Growth Officer fielding questions concerning the planned fundraising projections and strategies for FY27. The Internal Affairs Committee received approval on the proposed FY27 Final Budget.

FY27 STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

The Assistant Exectutive Director and Chief Operating Officer provided a progress report on the NSDA's five-year plan and National Speech & Debate Initiative. Board members were asked the following questions to drive the conversation.

- What evidence would give you confidence we're on a credible path to our 2030 goals?
- Assuming appropriate budgetary constraints, what principles should guide our decisions on priorities?
- Looking at this through your own professional experience, what assumptions do you see in our growth model that we may be under or overestimating?

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) WORKING GROUP SCOPING

Board members began by identifying ways AI may significantly affect the NSDA, speech and debate, and the people we serve over the next several years. They then worked in small groups to turn those ideas into the most important questions the NSDA needs to answer. As a full Board, they considered where responsibility for those questions should primarily reside—with the Board and its AI working group, NSDA staff, the Competition and Rules Leadership Committee (CRLC) or another existing committee, or as an issue to continue monitoring. They determined what dependencies exist between questions and which are foundational enough to warrant being part of the working group's scope. Finally, they identified what they would like the FY27 AI working group to help the Board understand, recommend, or prepare for, as well as the perspectives and expertise that should be represented in the group.

BOARD FY26 SELF EVALUATION

Moved by Arthur, seconded by Howell-Haymaker:
"Enter into executive session."
Passed: 14-0 (Arthur, Brown, Coale, Ehrhardt, Howell-Haymaker, Kalir, Ledford, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Schappaugh, Swartsel, Timmons, Wilczewski)

Moved by Arthur, seconded by Timmons:
"Exit executive session."
Passed: 14-0 (Arthur, Brown, Coale, Ehrhardt, Howell-Haymaker, Kalir, Ledford, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Schappaugh, Swartsel, Timmons, Wilczewski)

As part of its biennial self-review process, the Board of Directors entered into executive session to discuss the Governance Committee's assessment and recommendations based on the Board's self-assessment survey and exit interview summaries of the outgoing Board members. The discussion focused primarily on the Board's role in the following areas:

- Fulfillment of the NSDA mission
- Tracking progress toward organizational goals
- Communication with members related to public image and advocacy
- Identification of gaps in Board representation
- Measuring the impact of NSDA-specific programs
- Ensuring Board member commitment

NATIONAL TOURNAMENT UPDATE

The Executive Director and Chief Programs Officer fielded questions/discussion concerning the safety and security protocols implemented at last year's National Tournament and ongoing preliminary plans for the 2027 National Tournament.

EQUITY PAUSE

To be consistent and intentional about incorporating the NSDA Equity Lens, a moment was added at the end of the meeting to consider questions from this lens that may be relevant to the conversation.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Schappaugh, seconded by Orthman:
"Adjourn."
Passed: 14-0 (Arthur, Brown, Coale, Ehrhardt, Howell-Haymaker, Kalir, Ledford, Orthman, Oyetunji, Rye, Schappaugh, Swartsel, Timmons, Wilczewski)

The meeting adjourned at 4:34 p.m. on Friday.

QUESTIONS? CONCERNS? IDEAS?
We want to hear from you! Send your feedback to **board@speechanddebate.org**.