



Congress Glossary

- Agenda** The order of legislation as suggested by a committee or member, and voted on by the assembly (sometimes called the “calendar”)
- Amendment** A specific change to an item of legislation, explaining exactly which words it modifies, and not changing the intent of the legislation itself.
- Authorship Speech** A constructive speech of up to three (3) minutes given by a member, which introduces an item of legislation for debate by the chamber. It is called a sponsorship speech if given by a student who is not affiliated with the school the legislation originated from. All authorship speeches are followed by a two-minute cross-examination period.
- Bill** Type of legislation that describes the details of how a policy would be enacted, if voted into law by the assembly.
- Chair** The leader of a legislative assembly who runs its meetings by recognizing members to speak or move. Also called the “presiding officer,” or “P.O.” Modeled after the Speaker of the House, or the Vice President or President pro tempore of the Senate.
- Committee** A small group of members who meet and bring recommendations to the full assembly.
- Cross-examination** Period where the members of the assembly ask individual questions of the speaker. Multiple-part (or two-part) questions are not allowed (unless the rules are suspended for that instance), because they take time from other members who may wish to question the speaker. For all speeches that follow an authorship, the speaker may speak for a maximum of three (3) minutes, followed by one minute of questions. All affirmative and negative speeches that follow an authorship speech should introduce new ideas (arguments) and respond to previous arguments (refute or rebut).
- Docket** The complete packet of legislation (as titles or full text) distributed by a tournament.



- Floor** When a member has the full attention of the assembly to speak (also refers to the area where the assembly meets, where its members speak, and where it conducts its business).
- Geography** This method is employed to balance recognition of speakers among various spatial zones in the chamber, so students seated in any given area aren't disadvantaged. The chair should ensure that an equal number of affirmative and negative speeches are called from the same zone. Geography is just one approach to recognizing speakers.
- Legislation** A specific, written proposal (in the form of a "bill" or "resolution") made by a member or committee for assembly to debate.
- Leading Question** Any question that begins with a preface ("according to the NY Times...") or suggests the answer or contains the information the examiner is looking for ("wouldn't you agree that this bill would...")
- Priority or Precedence** Standard rule in most leagues (including NFL and NCFL), which requires the presiding officer to choose speakers who have spoken least (or not at all).
- Priority Card** Numbered cards used to signify how many speeches a student has given. 1 would equal a member's first speech, 2 a member's
- Recency** Widely-used system (not a rule NCFL or NFL), where the presiding officer not only employs precedence, but also selects speakers based on who has spoken least recently (or earlier). Before precedence is established (applies to students who have not spoken), the following methods are often used:
- Standing Time** (or "Longest Standing") - notes when students first seek recognition to speak; those who were standing earlier, but were not called on initially will be recognized before students who wait until later in the debate to stand.
- Resolution** An expression of conviction, or value belief of an assembly, which may urge, request or suggest further action by another decision-making authority.
- Yield** An action in which a member is called on to speak but declines recognition thus yielding this time to another member who wishes to speak. Members who yield should lose their standing time.