

Congressional Debate Constitution Amendment

Fall legislation will come from legislation used at previous national level tournaments (examples include: Glenbrooks and Harvard) and shall be selected by the Congressional Debate Committee. The fall docket will be released no later than May 25th for legislation that will be debated in the fall semester of that year. Spring legislation and TFA State Tournament legislation will come from legislation submitted by schools on or before the due date of November 1st of the previous year (in the fall semester). Schools must submit their legislation by the November 1st deadline in order to participate at the TFA State Tournament the following March.

Justification:

1. The benefit to the submission of quality legislation by our membership in May seems negligible in light of the fact that graduating seniors will not be debating the fall semester legislation, and no requirement exists for schools to submit at this time.
2. Coaches cannot check the legislation they produce and submit to the Congressional Debate Committee against the legislation debated at NFL Nationals because, with the current submission date of May 1st, the national docket has not been released.
3. Under the current wording, a team could be disqualified from the TFA State Tournament for a plagiarized submission by a student who might have graduated and, in that case, would no longer be competing during the time in which the penalty was enforced.

Some benefits to this system would be as follows:

1. The Congressional Debate Committee can determine quality legislation that has been successfully debated at previous national level tournaments to set an example of quality legislation to Texas' congressional debaters.
2. Coaches could suggest legislation to the Congressional Debate Committee that promoted quality debate from national level tournaments in which their students competed, which would make the process for selecting legislation seem more collaborative.
3. The Congressional Debate Committee would begin selecting legislation earlier, which would allow them to have the docket released by May 25th. If that were the case, coaches would be able to provide their non-graduating students a docket to work with before they leave for the summer break.
4. A submission date in November provides legitimate assurance that original, quality legislation is submitted, as students will have a model (from the fall legislation), and would have an incentive to submit legislation in the spring (participation at TFA State).
5. This amendment would also relieve the Congressional Debate Committee of a significant amount of stress at the end of the academic school year, as the process of combing through and ranking a large amount of legislation is quite cumbersome.

Proposed Changes to the TFA Constitution for 2013-2014

Regarding plagiarism and “extensive paraphrasing” in Congressional Debate:

While some legislative issues continue to merit legislative debate in Congressional Debate, the creation of legislation surrounding the issue should be the original work of the authoring school. Schools are encouraged to use quality legislation for ideas regarding legislation submissions, but the final submission to the Congressional Debate Committee should be the original work of the authoring school. Any work that is not the work of the submitting school may be reviewed when a challenge to originality is made. If a piece of legislation is suspected of plagiarism or “excessive paraphrasing” by the Congressional Debate Committee, the TFA Executive Council will be notified first, and immediately upon accusation, and the Executive Council will then conduct an investigation into the matter, calling for a statement from the chair of the Congressional Debate Committee, and a statement from the coach of the school suspected of the violation. If the Executive Council determines that the school is in violation of plagiarism or “excessive paraphrasing,” all legislation (if applicable) submitted by the school in violation, including the piece of legislation containing plagiarism or “extensive paraphrasing,” will not be considered for either the fall, spring, or TFA State Tournament Congressional Debate dockets. The school in violation will be allowed to submit new, original legislation in order to compete at the TFA State Tournament, however they will not be allowed to give any authorship speeches IQT Tournaments, or the TFA State Tournament.

This wording would replace the following and would go into the TFA Constitution immediately:

Plagiarism and “extensive paraphrasing” are addressed under the Oratory rules in the TFA Constitution, and these rules apply to legislation submitted for Congressional Debate. While some legislative issues continue to merit legislative debate in Congressional Debate, the creation of legislation surrounding the issue should be the original work of the authoring school. Legislation from NFL District contests, NFL Nationals, and previously submitted TFA Congressional Debate legislation (not the work of the submitting school) are all reviewed when a challenge to originality is made. Schools found to be in violation shall be disqualified from participation in Congressional Debate at the State Tournament for *that* year.

Justification:

1. This amendment removes the benefit associated with submitting legislation, which is authorship speeches at IQT Tournaments and the TFA State Tournament. A quality piece of legislation written by a congressional debater’s school does not benefit that debater competitively outside of authorship speeches, unlike plagiarism in events like Original Oratory, or any of the other debate events (Lincoln-Douglas, Cross Examination, or Public Forum).
2. The current punishment for plagiarism or “extensive paraphrasing” is inequitable, and simply too severe, when compared to other TFA events. If a graduating senior contributes the plagiarized or “extensively paraphrased” portion of the legislation (unbeknownst to the other students and coach), the graduating senior will not be punished at all for their actions. It is their former teammates who will be punished (the inability to compete at the TFA State Tournament), some of whom may not have competed for the team the previous year. In no other event are incoming students penalized for plagiarism or “extensive paraphrasing” done by graduating seniors.

Season Start and End Dates

Action: Change Page 40 "Hosting an IQT #3" so that it reads "The tournament shall be held between the dates of the weekend following Labor Day and final weekend in January. "

Effective: 2014-2015 school year

Rationale: This allows us to have a more reasonable TFA qualifying season. It relieves some of the pressure on coaches both in terms of their time and the financial burdens placed on teams to compete every weekend. This exhibits a willingness on our part to do our best to reign in some of the expenses we are costing our parents, schools and districts by putting out a more reasonable schedule. It also allows us to then have the first two weekends in February to run the TFA Regional Tournaments that we are trying to pilot this year.

Submitted by Heath Martin, Cypress Woods High School

Amendment to Lengthen Term of Office

Action: Section 5 A of the By laws so that it reads, "The term of office shall be two years and will be elected in even number years."

Action: Change Section 5 B of the by laws by striking "the Vice President shall become the President the following year." Replace that line with the sentence, "The term of office shall be two years and will be elected in odd number years."

Effective: The Vice President we elect this year will serve as Vice President for two years. The President we elect in 2014 will serve as President for two years with the term beginning April 1 of 2015—they will have no time serving as Vice President.

Rationale: As the immediate past president, I can assure you that no one fully understands the totality of their role as president until the end of their first year in office. A second year would allow for some continuity in vision. This also allows someone whose skill set fits well with the role of Vice President to only work in that office if they choose. The skill set required for the offices are not one in the same and so it is easy to assume that some may be well suited for one office and not the other.

Submitted by: Heath Martin, Cypress Woods High School