AN INTRODUCTION TO CONGRESS

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WHAT IS STUDENT CONGRESS?

According to the UIL website, “Congress is an individual contest in a large group setting. It models the legislative process of democracy, specifically, the United States Congress.”

And,

“The purpose of this contest is to encourage the student to understand real-world social and political policies debated within the framework of a legislative body modeled after the United States Congress, with formal discourse guided by parliamentary procedure.”
WHAT ARE THE RULES?

Official UIL rules can be found at

INTENT TO PARTICIPATE


Your Congressional District is based on your ESC.
WHAT MAKES THIS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER UIL SPEECH AND DEBATE EVENTS?

Individual but in a group

Although Congress is sometimes called Congressional Debate, it is not like other debate formats.

Students do not win or lose a round but are ranked individually. However, there is still some clash like in debate.

Students are judged individually but in a group situation.

Extemporaneous but with preparation

Students are encouraged to deliver their speeches extemporaneously but they are able to prepare ahead of time.

Students can access the proposed legislation and do research prior to the contest and bring that research with them.

They can even outline speeches and have evidence to support their arguments.

Short speeches but a longer rounds

Speeches have a time limit of three minutes but multiple speeches are given on each piece of legislation.

Each session of Congress shall be a minimum of three hours plus ten minutes per each student beyond the optimum number of 20.

Students are not guaranteed a speech.
WHAT ARE THE ROLES?

Students competing in Student Congress should see themselves as senators or representatives with constituents “back home”.

Although competitors don’t receive extra points if a bill they speak on passes or fails, their devotion to a piece of legislation works for their ethos.

There is also a Presiding Officer (PO) that is elected by the Congressional chamber to conduct business and ensure parliamentary procedure is followed.

(Note: there is also an adult parliamentarian, but we’ll discuss that later)
WHAT IS THE LEGISLATION?

New this year to UIL, schools may submit legislation to their District Clerks. (Note: the deadline has already passed for you to submit this year)

Legislation for your Congressional District will be available here

TYPES OF LEGISLATION

Bill

Resolution
TYPES OF LEGISLATION

Bill

• From the NFL Congressional Debate Guide
  (http://www.uitexas.org/files/academics/speech/Overview_of_Congress.pdf)
  “A bill establishes details behind how a particular law must work, including when it takes effect, how much tax levy would be appropriated (if applicable), how infractions/violations will be dealt with, etc. A bill may answer the who, what, when, where – and most specifically how – but it will never answer “why.” Legislators explain rationale behind bills in their speeches, and how a bill implements its solution can spark deeper, more meaningful debate.”

Resolution

• From the NFL Congressional Debate Guide
  (http://www.uitexas.org/files/academics/speech/Overview_of_Congress.pdf)
  “Resolutions are simply position statements on issues Congress does not have jurisdiction over (such as a foreign issue, although a bill can suggest foreign aid), or further action (such as amending the Constitution). Resolutions lack the force of law, and never establish enforcement.”
WHAT IS PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE?

From robertsrules.org, “It is a set of rules for conduct at meetings, that allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion.”

It is a way to make sure speakers are recognized and allowed to speak in some kind of order. The PO is the person who recognizes speakers and gives them “the floor” to speak.

It also keeps track of “business” so that items are not overlooked.
From the UIL rules (http://www.uiltexas.org/files/academics/aplus/CONGRESS_RULES14-15_revweb1.pdf)

**ORDER OF BUSINESS:**
- Oath of office (collectively or by chamber)
- **Audition of Presiding Officer candidates** (order should be drawn by lots)
  - § The first candidate's obligation shall include the consideration of “rules of the day,” which will remain binding for the duration of the session, unless amended as allowed.
  - § Candidates shall NOT be scored during their candidacy, nor shall their candidacy be a consideration for precedency or recency.
- Conducting the business of the chamber
- Vote on presiding officer (should be recorded and will be picked up by the Clerk)
- Conducting the business of the chamber
- Chamber adjourns at the established time

**ORDERING THE DOCKET:** chambers may set their own docket.
CONGRESSIONAL SPEECH DEMO
LINKS

• http://www.uiltexas.org/speech/congress


QUESTIONS?