

Glossary

10th Amendment Establishes states' rights; all powers not explicitly granted to the federal government are reserved to the states or to the people. Some consider this a major limitation on the bills that can be debated in Congress.

Adjourn End a session.

Affirmative team *See* Pro team

Agenda Set of legislation placed in the order in which it will be debated.

Amendment to the Constitution In Congressional Debate, a piece of legislation intended to change the text of the U.S. Constitution.

Argumentative goals What a debater is trying to accomplish in the debate, i.e., what arguments and ideas the debater is trying to advance.

Article I Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution This section enumerates the various powers of the Congress.

Assertion Unwarranted claim; a statement made without support.

Attention-Getting Device (AGD) Dynamic first lines of a speech designed to “hook” the audience and raise their interest in the speech.

Authorship First affirmative speech on a piece of legislation; delivered by the student who wrote the legislation or a student from the same school as the author.

Ball-park To draw one’s opponents into a debate about one’s own arguments while downplaying opponents’ arguments.

Ballot Form a judge fills out during and after a debate round. It provides feedback to the debaters, indicates the winner of the round, and assigns speaker points.

Bill A proposed law.

Blocks Pre-written responses to anticipated arguments; read during refutation speeches.

Burden of rejoinder Obligation to respond to arguments. If this burden is not met, the unanswered arguments become “true” in the debate.

Case Text of the four-minute constructive speech; establishes the advocacy for the debate round.

Chamber Physical room of Congressional Debate or the group of students competing.

Claim Most basic expression of an idea or argument.

Close-ended question Query that has only a few possible answers, often either “yes” or “no.”

Committee Group of students tasked with ordering or amending a subset of the docket.

Communicative goals In her speech, what a debater is trying to tell implicitly to the judge or audience.

Con team Team debating against the resolution; also called the “negative” or “neg.”

Congressional questioning period Following each speech, a specific time when questioners are recognized individually by the presiding officer; each questioner may ask a single question of the speaker.

Constative Statement declaring something to be true.

Constructive speech Speech that establishes the core advocacy for the debate. The constructive is typically fully written out before the debate round begins. Also called a “case.”

Contention Main argument in a debate case.

Convergent communication Speech or assertions that satisfy the expectations of the audience, aligning them with the speaker’s purpose.

Cover To answer all of the arguments made in a previous speech; to avoid “dropping” any arguments.

Cross-application Using an argument made in one part of the debate to respond to an argument made elsewhere in the debate.

Cross-examination Period of questioning controlled by the questioner, similar to the exchange between a lawyer and a witness.

Crossfire Three-minute period of questions and answers in a Public Forum Debate round. The first speaker has the

right to ask the first question, but after that any participant may ask or answer questions.

Crystallization Process of clarifying, summarizing, and prioritizing the most important arguments in a debate round.

Data A piece of evidence that proves, illustrates, or explains a warrant, claim, or impact.

Defense A reason to discount an argument, but not sufficient on its own to justify a vote for one debater or another.

Direct questioning A style of Congressional questioning where one questioner, chosen by the presiding officer, controls 30 seconds of time during which he may ask any questions he wants.

Disclosure Judge revealing her decision at the end of a round.

Dissonant communication Speech or assertions that violate the expectations of the audience, pitting them against the speaker.

Division of ground Ability of each side of a debate to make arguments and reasonably uphold their burdens for the round.

Division of the house Motion used to obtain a precise vote count when a voice vote is inconclusive.

Docket Set of legislation compiled for a tournament.

Dropped argument Argument that has not been answered by the opposition. It becomes a “true” argument for the purposes of the round.

Extension Process of pointing out an unanswered argument. Debaters must explain why their extensions are important for the debate.

Final focus Last speech given by each team in a Public Forum Debate round. Teams use these speeches to reiterate and expand on the primary reasons the judge should vote for their side.

Flex case Case that may change depending on the specific content of a round.

Flow Stylized form of note-taking used to record the arguments in a debate round.

Framework Analysis of value that enables clear weighing of arguments.

Friendly question Query directed to a Congressional debater who shares the questioner's position. Rather than challenging the speaker, it allows the speaker to simply rehash his arguments.

Garden path Series of questions that lead the speaker to a particular, and often damaging, admission or contradiction.

Gaveling procedure System used by a presiding officer to communicate time information to the speaker.

Grace period Small amount of time given to speakers beyond their allotted speech time to allow them to conclude their final thought; usually between 5 and 10 seconds.

Grand crossfire Third crossfire in a Public Forum Debate round; follows the summary speeches. During grand crossfire, all four debaters participate and may ask or answer questions.

Grouping Answering or analyzing many similar arguments at the same time. Grouping is a useful way to save time or add clarity to a debate.

Impact Reason why an argument is important or should matter to the audience.

Intervention Judge making a decision based on his own thoughts or feelings rather than on the arguments advanced by debaters during the round.

Jargon Terminology employed by debaters that is not widely used or understood beyond the context of a debate round.

Judge fatigue The growing uninterest felt by judges when listening to a long debate.

Legislative day Complete and independent session of Congressional Debate.

Line-by-line An approach to refutation that answers each argument in the order it was made, proceeding down the flow “line by line.”

Link Causal or correlative relationship between two ideas.

Magnitude Size or severity of an impact.

Majority More than 50 percent of the those members of the chamber voting. Abstentions and those members who are not present for the vote do not count.

Menu List of what will be covered later in the speech, also called a “preview.”

Mitigate To lessen or de-emphasize an argument or impact.

Negative team *See* Con Team.

Normative truth Statement of value; statement that cannot be empirically verified.

Null and Void clause Language (clause) attached to the end of every bill that cancels or overrides any conflicting legislation or regulation.

Observation Argument that defines or clarifies the burdens of the debate round.

Offense Proactive reason to vote for a debater or position.

Open chamber In an open chamber, students may exit and return without asking permission of the presiding officer.

Open-ended question Query that allows the speaker to answer in many ways or explain previous ideas without limitations.

Oral critique Judge providing oral feedback to the debaters immediately following the round; may or may not be accompanied by a disclosure.

Orders of the day Motion used to conclude a session.

Paradigm Set of criteria and preferences that determine how a judge makes her decisions.

Parliamentarian Adult tasked with monitoring procedure in a session; the individual often serves as a judge as well.

Paving the road Dealing with objections and argumentative obstacles before advancing offensive arguments.

Perceptual control Appearance of dominance in a room or chamber. A debater may be argumentatively losing a debate but can still be perceptually winning a debate.

Personal privilege Motion used when a student wishes to exit or enter the chamber for any reason.

Point of information Motion used to obtain information from the presiding officer about procedure or tournament rules.

Point of order Motion used to correct a procedural error made by the presiding officer.

Poise Debater's presence in the room or chamber; a debater's ability to project confidence, maturity, and professionalism.

Positive truth Empirical statement of fact that can be verified or disproved through observation and analysis of the world as it is.

Power of the Purse Congress's constitutional mandate to set the federal budget and raise income through taxation.

Precedence The rule that grants participants who have spoken the fewest number of times priority when standing to speak. Precedence does not carry over to the next session.

Preferential ballot A ballot for ranking competitors at the end of a session; used at most tournaments to determine advancement.

Preparation time Amount of time allowed for debaters to prepare and organize their thoughts between speeches in a debate round. Also called “prep time” or “prep.”

President pro tempore Student or adult temporarily serving as the presiding officer of a session, typically at the beginning of a session before the presiding officer is elected.

Presiding Officer Student elected by her peers to run the session; responsible for selecting speakers and questioners and for dealing with procedure.

Previous question Motion used to call for a vote on the legislation currently being debated; if passed, it ends debate on the legislation.

Pro team Team debating in favor of the resolution. Also called the “affirmative” or “aff.”

Probability How likely an argument’s impact is to occur; probability often depends on the strength of the link to the argument.

Rebuttal Defending one’s arguments against the attacks made by an opponent; “rebuilding” one’s argument.

Rebuttal speeches Second set of speeches in a Public Forum Debate round. Debaters use these speeches to answer the arguments made by their opponents.

Recency In conjunction with precedence, the rule that grants students who have spoken least recently priority when standing to speak. Recency does not carry over to the next session.

Recess A break from the session.

Refutation Attacking an opponent's arguments.

Rehash To repeat arguments that have already been made. Also used as a noun to describe the content of rehashed speeches.

Resolution Piece of legislation that expresses the opinion of the Congress.

Resolution Topic for debate in Public Forum Debate.

Resolved clause Language at the end of a resolution that encapsulates the actual opinion or judgment of the Congress.

Road map Brief explanation of what a debater will cover in a speech. Typically roadmapping occurs either before timing of the speech has begun or at the outset of a speech.

Role-playing In Congressional Debate, students are asked to play the role of a U.S. representative or senator.

Scenario A session of Congressional Debate where participants are presented with a series of events or situations and must make decisions about how to react. Role-playing becomes more important in a scenario session.

Secret ballot System of voting that does not reveal each member's vote to the chamber.

Section Unit of division in a bill.

Session A single round (typically three hours) of Congressional Debate. A tournament may have multiple preliminary sessions followed by semifinal and/or final sessions.

Signposting Making statements that indicate to the judge where a debater is in the flow in a rebuttal speech.

Sin tax Sales tax on an unpopular item, often one associated with vice (such as alcohol or tobacco).

Softball question *See* Friendly question.

Sponsorship The first affirmative speech on a piece of legislation if the author is not present.

Straw-man Attacking an opponent's weak or insubstantial argument to make one's own position seem stronger.

Sub-point Common method of providing additional organization and structure to a contention.

Summary speeches Third set of speeches in a Public Forum Debate round. Debaters use these to summarize the key arguments in the round.

Super session Final session of Congressional Debate.

Supermajority At least two-thirds of the members present at the beginning of the session. Abstentions and members who are not present for the vote count as voting "nay."

Suspension of the rules Motion used to alter the format or regulations of a session; most often used to extend questioning.

Table Motion to suspend debate on a bill with the intention of returning to it later.

Tagline First sentence of an argument; used to label or "tag" the idea; sometimes used as a synonym for claim.

Transitional movement Physical movement by the speaker that indicates or reinforces a transition from one main idea to another; often takes the form of a few casual steps across the stage or speaking area.

Voice vote Voting for or against a motion by saying “aye” or “nay,” respectively; used to quickly move through procedural issues.

Voting issues Simple, bullet-point style summary of an offensive reason to vote for a team.

Warrant A reason why a claim is true.

Whereas clause Language in a resolution that justifies the resolved clause. A whereas clause may present findings or information that explains the subject of the resolution.