

CONGRESSIONAL DEBATE

Debate I

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CONGRESS

- The United States Congress is the bicameral legislature of the federal government of the United States consisting of two houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives.
 - The House and Senate are equal partners in the legislative process—legislation cannot be enacted without the consent of both chambers.
 - However, the Constitution grants each chamber some unique powers.
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LEGISLATION

- A specific, written proposal (“bill” or “resolution”) made by a member or committee for assembly to debate.

BILL

- A type of legislation that describes the details of how a policy would be enacted, if voted into law by the assembly.

RESOLUTION

- Expression of conviction, or value belief of an assembly, which may urge, request or suggest further action by another decision-making authority.
- 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), a recommendation to another party (such as the President, Supreme Court, or United Nations) or further action (such as amending the Constitution).
- Resolutions lack the force of law, and never establish enforcement.

DOCKET

- A complete packet of legislation (“bills” or “resolutions”) distributed by a tournament.

AGENDA

- The order of legislation as suggested by a committee or member, and voted on by the assembly (sometimes called the calendar).

PRESIDING OFFICER

- The leader who runs meetings by recognizing members to speak or move.
- Also called the Chair.
- Modeled after the Speaker of the House of Representatives, or the Vice President or President pro tempore of the Senate.

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).

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.

QUESTIONING

- A period where the members of the assembly ask individual questions of the speaker.
 - Multiple-part (or two-part) questions are not allowed because they take time from other members who may wish to question the speaker.
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PRECEDENCE

- The standard rule in most leagues, which requires the presiding officer to choose speakers who have spoken least (or not at all).

CHAMBER

- Large room(s) used for the purpose of discussing legislations such as bills, and resolutions.