

Congressional Debate: Clinic

“If you can’t explain it simply enough,
you don’t understand it well enough”
— Albert Einstein

Clinic Agenda

- Structure, Organization, & Process of Congress Debate;
- Why Congress? Benefits & Advantages; and
- Questions / Hands-On Activity / Closing.

Structure, Organization, & Processes

What is Congress? Congressional Debate is a mock legislative assembly competition where students draft bills (proposed laws) and resolutions (position statements), which they and their peers later debate and vote to pass into law. It simulates either the House of Representatives or the Senate.

Pre-Tournament: In advance of the tournament, a docket of submitted titles or full legislative text are distributed to participating schools, so students may research and prepare themselves: There will be 3 “Committees” -- Foreign, Domestic, Economic -- with 3 “Topics” per Committee. Thus, there is a total of 9 Topics Debated.

Tournament Set-Up: Students caucus in committee(s) to determine the agenda, wherein they strive to select topics that will yield even and engaging debate. This “order” will be proposed by senators/representatives who will advocate for a certain agenda (setting the agenda), and will determine how debate will flow over the day.

The Debate: Debate on each legislation starts with a speech introducing it to the chamber, called an authorship if it’s delivered by the student or school who wrote it. Afterwards is 2 Minutes Q&A, then Aff/Neg Speeches on the Topic until there is a motion to move into the next topic or vote on the topic.

Detailed Structure – Tournament Preparation

1. Receive Docket of Topics (3 Committees, 3 Topics Each) and Register for a Committee that you would prefer to “Specialize” in for the Tournament.

2. Conduct Research on your 3 Primary Topics and Draft Aff/Neg Speeches for Each and Draft Legislation for 1–3. Then, Conduct Research on all 6 Other Topics with the Rest of the Team.

3. Print Out all of your Speeches and Resources before the Tournament. Practice Q&A to Find Flaws within your Resolutions.

4. Go to the Room and wait for the Session to Begin. Break up into the Separate “Committees” and Decide whose Legislation to Discuss. Try and Promote Your Legislation if Possible. All those within your committee will decide which one to debate.

5. Set the Agenda – Order in which to discuss all of the proposed papers.

6. Begin Debating Each Topic: Authorship Speech, Q&A, Aff/Neg Speeches, Q&A, Pass/Table the Topic and Move on to the Next One.

Sample Resolution / Sample Speech

Links to Kabir's Past Work:

- Sample Resolution: [Resolution -- Topic #3](#)
- Sample Resolution: [Resolution -- Topic #1](#)
- Sample Speech: [Speech -- Topic #3](#)
- Sample Speech: [Speech -- Topic #1](#)

If you would like access to more work, please don't hesitate to reach out, I will gladly give you access to more examples of research, speeches, and legislation for your reference.

Also keep in mind that I will be helping you with all of your work as a mentor, so it is okay to feel nervous or you just don't know what to do. We will go through the process together!

Why Participate in Congress?

- **About Me:** I have participated in Public Forum, Lincoln Douglas, and Congress over the course of my three years with Rock Ridge Debate. Last year alone, I had a record of **19-5 (79% Win-Rate)**...
 - PF: Varsity and JV, Metro Qualifiers (1st & 3rd Place)
 - Congress: Varsity, Metro Qualifier (4th Place)
 - LD: Varsity & JV, B.R. Invitational (2nd Place)
- **Why?** I've come up with **TEN REASONS** you should choose to participate in Congressional Debate!
- **I recommend that you attend the other clinics** to see whether you maybe have a knack for, let's say, philosophical and moral debates, specifically, or you simply want to learn about one particular public topic over the course of two entire months. However, in both cases, **I believe that Congress, in both cases, is still your best option** because of its diversity, versatility, and flexibility.

Benefits of Congress (Pt. 1)

- 1. Real-World Applicability:** Congress is the most common form of debate in the current socio-economic and political climate of the World; for those interested in Public Policy, Government, Economics, Business, Academia, etc., Parliamentary-Style Debate will prove practical and beneficial.
- 2. Skills & Professional-Development:** Congress will improve your faculties in Public Speaking, Critical-Thinking, Problem-Solving, Ad-Hoc Abilities, Communication, Negotiation, Research & Analysis, Rhetoric, Communication, and Leadership, amongst other benefits.
- 3. Unlimited Participation:** Congress has no limits on the amount of competitors it will hold, compared to other debate events, specifically Public Forum and Lincoln Douglas. Hence, you can attend as many tournaments as you would like, prep as early as you want, and continue to refine on your skills throughout the year to become the best version of yourself. With online tournaments this year, there's going to be even less opportunities in other events, but more opportunities in Congress.
- 4. Structure Exploitation:** Congressional Debate is unique in that it does not have on set topic for the span of two months; every tournament, there are nine brand new topics that are released. While you will specialize in three, if you are able to prepare for all nine topics (generally, 1-4 hours per topic), you can speak on every subject during the course of committee, sound plausible, and be knowledgeable about everything, influencing your results and point-scoring.

Benefits of Congress (Pt. 2)

5. More Prep = More Opportunity: The majority of Congressional Debaters prepare for 1-5 topics for each tournament; however, if you, like myself, prepare for all nine total topics, your chances to speak rise during committee rise dramatically and make you stand out when nobody else has anything to say. In doing so, you open the opportunity to score more points, and thus, a higher placement. Because you are not directly competing against another “team,” be extreme in your views and be direct: call out other representatives/senators, voice your opinions, and present quality.

6. Learning Curve / Competition: Congress Debate is still relatively small in the WACFL circuit with only about 3-4 different schools competing at every tournament, and about 15-30 people in each committee. This small pool allows you to learn from your mistakes faster and become the best Congressional Debater by picking up on what other people are saying. Instead of one judge, there are technically four, and this also ensures that your scoring is your accurate and you can understand what you need to improve on. You will also be with other members from your school in the same location, thus, you can cross-share prep in advance, and build off each others’ speeches. We work together as a whole, rather than trying to do everything by yourself or with a partner.

7. Growth & Understanding: By participating in Congress, you genuinely gain an academic and research experience that allows you to test the waters in dozens of different topics throughout the year, rather than four or five, and gain a better understanding of what is going in the world and what you can do to address some of the concerns.

Benefits of Congress (Pt. 3)

8. Nationals/Nat-Circuit: As you progress and become a stronger Debater in Congress, as long as you follow my advice, there will be a lot of opportunities to earn MetroFinal Qualifications, Bids to Nationals, and even National Circuit Tournaments to the Tournament of Champions (TOC), given the opportunity arises in the future. Remember that trophies are not an indication of success, it's merely a side-effect of hard work and dedication: If you put in the work, time, and dedication at Congress, you will become one of the best in WACFL, possibly within the year, and be one of the highest ranked debaters in Virginia in Congress through NSDA.

9. Leadership Opportunities: Because this is Congress Debate's first year at Rock Ridge, and considering that I am the only Captain for the event, there will be leadership positions if you are able to demonstrate interest, dedication, and commitment to the club, likely with a Vice President and 1-2 Captaincy positions, depending on how many people join the team. My goal is to recruit 50 students for the team and to make Rock Ridge one of the best Congress Teams in the Circuit: We can only do this together.

10. The Learning Experience: Because the Congress team will be fairly sized this year, I will work with each and every debater to make sure that they are understanding the intricacies of Congress, are conducting their research in a timely manner, are participating in skill and training sessions to improve their debating faculties, and are at the best they can be. With experience from all 3 types of debate, I am the only leader in Rock Ridge Debate who can offer you an education and training to become the best debater unlike no other person today. I am here for you.

Virtual Practices – Meetings

Meetings will be Held Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:15 PM to 5:05 PM through Google Meets: I strongly encourage everyone to have microphones muted and video on, so that I can engage more effectively with you guys and so the team becomes closer over time! Debate is a Sport. We are a Team.

Types of Practices: *Hey Kabir, how are you going to make this group of debaters the best in Congress? I'll hit em with the SICE...*

- 1) Skills-Development (Lectures + Training)
- 2) Insight & Research (Topic-Analysis & Arguments)
- 3) Core Applications (Hands-On Activities & Drills)
- 4) Extemporaneous Mocks (Class-Wide Simulations)

Please let me know in advance if you have any technological issues, will not be present at practices for an excusable reason, or have any other concerns about how the year will operate. Our first tournament will be towards the End of October! Remember, we are here to have fun and to be the best. That's the Congress Way.

Questions, Comments, or Concerns?

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