Order of Business

The following is offered as a suggestion for the *Order of Business* at any Congressional Debate:
1. Call to order by the presiding officer
2. Pledge of Allegiance, opening comments and/or invocation
3. Oath of Office
4. Roll call of members and confirmation of seating charts
5. Special Orders
     a. Review of special rules
     b. Review of congress procedures
     c. Special announcements and questions
6. Election of presiding officer
7. Committee meetings (optional) and consideration of the agenda
8. Floor Debate on Bills/Resolutions
9. Selection of outstanding presiding officer(s) and/or legislators
10. Awards
11. Adjournment

Presiding Officer: Steps for Opening a Session

1. If you give a candidacy speech for election, state that you will be fair and work to make time is best spent giving speeches.

2. After you are elected, say "this session will come to order." State that you will use your best effort to recognize speakers around the chamber in a fair and balanced manner. If "gaveling" time signals have not been explained previously, demonstrate how you will conduct them. Explain procedures clearly ahead of time to save time later. Always stand when addressing the chamber (to project authority). Use a calm, controlled and caring voice to show a genuine interest in the chamber's business.

3. When you are ready to begin, say "Who would like to sponsor the first item of legislation?" When you recognize speakers, use the third person: "The chair recognizes…"

4. When a speaker concludes, say "Time of that speech was __minutes and __seconds. Questioners, please rise." Call on one legislator at a time, until the questioning period is over. You should keep track of questions to allow a fair distribution.

5. You may gesture for questioners to sit down when it is apparent time is running out. Afterwards, say "The questioning period has concluded, and the speaker may be seated."

6. "Those wishing to speak in opposition, please rise. Call on a speaker, using precedence and equity for all legislators. It is appropriate to first recognize speakers who have consecutively sought to speak earliest.

7. When you call on the last person seeking recognition to speak on a bill/resolution, say "since this is the last senator/representative who wishes to speak on this issue, if no one objects following his/her speech, we will move to the immediate previous question following his/her speech." (That way, a separate vote to call "previous question" is unnecessary).

8. When it is time to debate the next legislation, say "The next item of business is —" (say the legislation's title). Legislation should be considered in the order established on the agenda, unless it is laid on the table. Laying on the table should only be done to allow a legislator time to construct a speech to continue two-sided debate, or introduce new information. It should not be abused to allow another legislator an earlier opportunity to get to a later agenda item. Time and prudence is spent by the entire chamber to set a fair and balanced agenda to give everyone an equal opportunity to debate their own legislation, and attempts to circumvent this should not be allowed.

9. Use of the motion for previous question should be discouraged, particularly when legislators have something new to contribute to discussion. When debate or discussion becomes repetitive, allow the previous question without reservation. When debate becomes one-sided, the previous question may be considered immediately, and should be encouraged.

Presiding Officer: Motions and Voting

✎ *Recognizing Members*: (for speeches) "The chair recognizes [Sen./Rep. last name]" or (for motions) "State your point/question."

✎ *Second:* (if the chamber is silent) "Is there a second?"

✎ *Stating Motions:* "It is moved and seconded that…"

✎ *Taking Votes* (use recorded votes for any votes requiring other than a majority for passage (a specific fraction of members), and for the *main motion* (legislation itself), since legislators' voting records are ostensibly tracked by their constituents). All voting is done only be members present at the time the vote is taken.
  - *Negative* votes and *abstentions* are counted for *majority* votes; votes taken where a fraction of members are needed are based on those seated in the chamber at the beginning of the session, so counting nay votes and abstentions is unnecessary; however, never should an absentee or abstention be counted as a nay vote.
  - *Voice Vote* - "On the motion to [read the motion title] those in favor, say aye. (Pause) Those opposed, say no." If the result is not clear, especially evidenced by particularly loud members, or if a member moves for a *Division* of the vote, then a standing vote is taken.
  - *Rising Vote* (You may substitute "raise hands") "Those in favor of the motion to [read the motion title] will rise [or, "stand"]." [Count vote.] "Be seated. Those opposed will rise." [Count vote.] "Be seated."
  - Voting for individuals (presiding officer, awards) is done by *secret ballot*.

✎ *Announcing the Result*: "On the motion to…"
  - *Voice Vote* **-** "The ayes have it and the motion is adopted [or "carried"]." Or, "The noes have it and the motion is lost." If you are unsure of the prevailing side, announce that you will take a rising vote (before someone asks for a division… to save time).
  - *Counted Rising Vote or Show of Hands Vote* **-** "With a vote of 51 in the affirmative and 23 in the negative, the affirmative has it [or, "there are two-thirds in the affirmative] and the motion is adopted."
  - Or, "There are 29 in the affirmative and 33 in the negative. The negative has it and the motion is lost."

✎ *Discipline*
  - *Motion Not in Order* "The chair rules that the motion is dilatory [or "not in order"] because . . ."
  - *Member Out of Order* (serious offense) "The member is out of order and will be seated."

Legislators (Members of a Chamber)

✎ When referring to another legislator, state "Representative (or Senator) [last name] from…"

✎ The correct way to obtain the floor is to rise immediately at the conclusion of the preceding speaker's remarks and say "Mr./Madam President (or Mr./Madam Speaker)." If another legislator is recognized, take your seat until he/she relinquishes the floor.

✎ It is unnecessary for speakers to state they yield to questions, because NFL rules conventionalize the period for questioning. The presiding officer – who has a seating chart – controls calling on questioners, however, a legislator may call for a *suspension of the rules* to allow for recognition by the speaker on the floor.

✎ Do not argue with presiding officers; they are elected by the chamber to run it, and their decisions should not be challenged unless they violate the rights of the assembly or its members. For significant errors:

  - Stand and say "I rise to a point of order." After the presiding officer says "state your point," reply by stating what you believe has been done wrong, and then site down. Until the presiding officer – who may first confer with the parliamentarian – answers, neither you nor any other member may say anything.

  - If you still believe the presiding officer is wrong and the mistake should be corrected, rise and say "I appeal the decision of the chair." This motion requires a second. There is no discussion, but the legislator making the motion may *briefly* explain why he/she thinks the presiding officer should be overruled. The presiding officer then takes the vote by saying "those voting to sustain the presiding officer…" and "those voting to overrule the presiding officer…" Once the vote has been taken and the results announced, the decision is irrevocable and no further discussion is permitted on the manner.

  - Please see item 9, relative to conduct; and item 10, relative to what rules may not be suspended, under "General Rules for Student Congress Debate." On Student Congress rules, the parliamentarian is the final authority, and he/she should correct any deviations from the rules, particularly when it affects competitive equity.

✎ Do not abuse the motion for previous question. The reason it requires a two-thirds vote is it limits the free expression rights of legislators in the chamber. While majority rules for actions an assembly takes, the rights of minority to engage their peers in discourse is the very foundation of our democracy. When a legislator moves the previous question immediately after speaking, it sends the message "I gave a speech, and I don't care if others wish to have the same opportunity." Limiting other contestants' opportunities to engage in debate by suspending rules to alter the agenda, or by laying legislation on the table is even worse, and should be discouraged by presiding officers. If debate truly gets one-sided and repetitive, that is the only true purpose of the Previous Question.

Conducting Single-Ballot Elections

When using a *single ballot vote* (and not the preferential process) to elect presiding officers or to determine advancement, each student in the chamber will vote for *one* nominee at a time. The parliamentarian often counts single ballots. After each vote conducted, unless *one* candidate has received a *majority* of the votes cast, follow this priority:

1. Separate the ballots into piles by candidate. Void ballots not containing names of candidates, or containing more than one name.

2. The one candidate receiving the fewest votes shall be dropped.

3. If the *combined votes* of the *two lowest* candidates do *not* equal the votes of the *next* lowest candidate, *both* are eliminated.

4. If a tie exists for the lowest candidates and their total votes *exceeds* those of the candidate above them, have the chamber vote for the tied candidates (called a *run-off* election). If the chamber is still tied, keep voting. After three votes, ask the candidates to briefly address the chamber with reasons why they should be considered.

5. If after casting five votes, the chamber still cannot break a tie, have the parliamentarian complete a preferential ballot, ranking <u>all</u> candidates nominated at the beginning of the election.

6. A single ballot election can only determine one winner at a time; if subsequent places need to be determined, a new election process must begin, considering the remaining candidates (otherwise their vote for majority is skewed, because of the earlier winners' share in the previous elections).