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**Washington Urban Debate League Earns National Award**  
*2026 Activating Equity Award*

**West Des Moines, IA (June 18, 2026)** — The National Speech & Debate Association (NSDA) is proud to present the Washington Urban Debate League with the 2026 Activating Equity Award.

The Activating Equity Award is awarded annually to a group or organization committed to increasing access to speech and debate activities. This award honors community members who have turned their values into meaningful action, both inside and outside of the classroom.

"We believe that every student should have access to speech and debate," said J. Scott Wunn, Executive Director of the NSDA. "The Washington Urban Debate League has provided transformative educational experiences for middle and high school students across the D.C. area, using debate as a tool to develop critical thinking, confidence, and communication skills."

The Washington Urban Debate League, which was founded by several former debaters, makes debate accessible to thousands of students in public schools across Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. They work with more than 100 schools, focusing their efforts on Title I middle schools and high schools.

"This award honors and validates the hard work of our coaches, volunteers, and students every day," said David Trigaux, Executive Director of the Washington Urban Debate League. "What started as a small group of debaters in 2014 has grown each year into a network of 80 after-school partner schools, now serving 3,800 students annually. We give these students the chance to find their voice and leave as confident, critical thinkers. This award belongs to them as much as it belongs to us."

Along with winning this prestigious award, the Washington Urban Debate League will also receive \$5,000 to continue their work. The funds will sponsor one debate team for an academic year, including coaching stipends, supplies, free food for tournament and practices, and participation in up to seven debate tournaments per semester.

“Studies show that students who participate in speech and debate experience a number of academic benefits including improved communication skills, test scores, analytical thinking, and higher self-esteem,” said Wunn.

The Activating Equity Award is selected annually by an esteemed committee of NSDA Board members, coaches, and alumni. The Washington Urban Debate League received the honor during the National Speech & Debate Tournament in Richmond, Virginia, where more than 7,000 students spent the week participating in the world's largest academic competition June 14-19, 2026. To learn more about the National Tournament, visit [www.speechanddebate.org/nationals](http://www.speechanddebate.org/nationals).

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### **About the National Speech & Debate Association**

The National Speech & Debate Association is the authority on public speaking and debate in the United States. The Association builds the infrastructure for speech and debate competitions around the world by providing topics, educational resources, and training for students and coaches. For more than 100 years, the National Speech & Debate Association has built a platform for youth voices that culminates in the National Tournament, the largest academic competition in the world. The National Tournament brings together thousands of students from across the United States and world with different backgrounds and viewpoints to engage in civil discourse. For more information, visit [www.speechanddebate.org](http://www.speechanddebate.org).

