WACFL judge instructions for Public Forum debate

March 2026 topic:

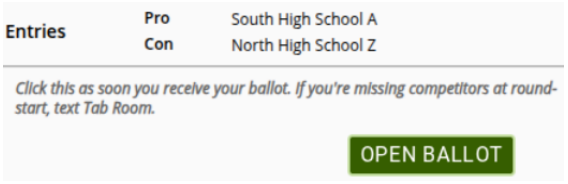
Resolved: The United States federal government should ban corporate acquisition of single-family residences.

Timing and sequence of speeches

- First Pro Constructive: 4 minutes.
- First Con Constructive: 4 minutes.
- Crossfire: 3 minutes. The 1st Con asks the first question. Then either 1st debater may ask questions.
- Second Pro Constructive: 4 minutes.
- Second Con Constructive: 4 minutes.
- Crossfire: 3 minutes. The 2nd Pro asks the first question. Then either 2nd debater may ask questions.
- First Pro Summary: 3 minutes
- First Con Summary: 3 minutes
- Grand Crossfire: 3 minutes. One member of the Pro team asks the first question. Then any debater may ask questions.
- Second Pro Final Focus: 2 minutes
- Second Con Final Focus: 2 minutes

A PF debate round lasts approximately 45 minutes. PRO debaters support the resolution. CON debaters reject the resolution. Each team is allowed 3 minutes preparation time for the round. Judges keep time, so they know when a team has reached their limit. The judge should call time when the limit is reached.

When you receive your assignment, login to Tabroom.com and click on the button that says **Current Ballots and Panels**. It will be along the right side of the screen. You will see the schools and debaters participating, plus the room number. Click the green **OPEN BALLOT** button, then proceed quickly to the classroom. When you arrive, the students should be sitting in the hallway. Invite 4 debaters (two teams) into the room. Confirm which students are PRO and CON and the speaking order. The order in which students are listed in Tabroom.com may not be correct. You can start the debate as soon as both teams are situated.



The judge's role during the debate round

- Take notes and listen actively to the students. Even though you may have personal opinions on the topic, you should only evaluate arguments that the students present.
- Keep time. Generally, students will time themselves, but to ensure students do not run over their allotted time, judges must keep time. When a student reaches their limit, you should clearly (but politely) tell them they have reached their limit. Judges must also keep track of prep time.
- Do not provide verbal feedback, either during or after the round. When the round is finished, students should not know how you are voting.

When the debate is finished, you have 2 tasks.

1. Choose a winning team, rank and assign points to each debater. As soon as possible after the round ends, submit your decision, rank and speaker points. Both rank and speaker points measure the speaking quality, style, and delivery of the individual debaters. The win/loss decision should reflect analysis and argumentation. When assigning speaker points, think of the last two numbers as A grade on a normal 100-point scale. For example, a 29.8 is like a 98 grade, which is an A+, and a 27.1 is like a 71 grade, which is a C. The winning team must receive higher combined speaker points.

Scale for assigning speaker points.

Points	Meaning
29.5-30.0	I wish I could frame your speeches - hard to imagine a better speaker
29.1-29.4	You were consistently excellent
28.8-29.0	You were effective and strategic, and made only minor mistakes
28.3-28.7	You hit all the right notes, but could improve (e.g. depth or efficiency)
27.8-28.2	You mainly did the right thing, but left a few things to be desired
27.3-27.7	You missed major things and were hard to follow.
27.0-27.2	You advanced little in the debate
26.0-26.9	You are not ready for this tournament and cost your team the round.
Below 26	You were offensive, ignorant, rude or tried to cheat. If you assign this, the judge must contact tournament managers in the tab room

When you have made your decision, click the **Submit Ballot** button. After submission, you must confirm your decision. You'll be shown your decision and points, with the option to re-enter or confirm. This message looks alarming, but if your decision and points are accurate, just push **Yes! Correct! Confirm it.**

2. Provide feedback to both teams. The ballot has three different spots where you can write comments:

- Reason for Decision (RFD): These comments go to all debaters and their coach. This explains why you voted for one team over the other. This is the most important feedback for the students.
- Feedback for PRO. This is only visible to the PRO team and their coach. The CON team will not see this.
- Feedback for CON. This is only visible to the CON team and their coach. The PRO team will not see this.

You will see a button at the top right labeled "**Save Feedback**." It saves your work but doesn't finalize the comments. Your decision and speaker points must be submitted as soon as possible after the round ends. However, the comments sections for all your rounds will remain open for at least 30 minutes after the last debate of the day has ended. Just click on **Edit Comments** to revise your feedback during the day.

Suppose I'm not assigned a round to judge? Please remain in the Judges Lounge for approx. 20 minutes after rounds are sent. We often need people to fill in for missing judges.

Suppose there is an issue in the round? If judges or students need to contact tournament officials quickly on tournament day, you can text **703-239-4576** or email **tabroom@wacfl.org**. Identify yourself and the room you are in, along with the issue. Please do not call - the phone number is only for texts.

Help students straighten up the classroom after each round. We are guests at the host school. Before you leave the classroom, please ask students to help you arrange chairs and get the room back to its original configuration. On Monday morning, teachers should find desks and chairs where they left them on Friday.