Introduction

"Where there are no laws, or individuals have their own rules and laws, there is the least of real democracy."
-- Gen. Henry Martyn Robert (author, Robert's Rules of Order)

Congress is an individual contest in a large group setting. It models the legislative process of democracy, specifically, the United States Congress.

PRIOR TO THE CONTEST
Within this mock legislative assembly competition, contestants draft legislation (proposed laws and position statements) that they submit to the tournament; and they research the docket of bills and resolutions dealing with real-world social and political policies to prepare speeches.

DURING THE CONTEST
At a tournament, students deliver formal discourse on the merits and disadvantages of each piece of legislation; after a period of debate, contestants vote to pass or defeat the measures they have examined. Parliamentary procedure forms structure for the discourse, and students extemporaneously respond to others' arguments over the course of a session.

STRUCTURE OF A CONGRESS ROUND
Each Congress session lasts approximately 3 hours. A student Presiding Officer (PO) runs the session. The PO's job includes:
- Recognizing speakers
- Giving time signals
- Conducting votes
- Keeping order

A congress tournament begins with the establishment of an agenda, or order of legislation to be debated from the docket provided by the tournament host.

The first speech, introduces the piece of legislation, is called an authorship speech (if the student who wrote the legislation or a teammate delivers the speech) or a sponsorship speech if given by a student from a different school. The author or sponsor may speak for up to 3 minutes, followed by 2 minutes of continuous questioning by other delegates. The first opposing speech is also 3 minutes, followed by 2 minutes of questioning.

All other speeches on the same legislation are 3 minutes, followed by 1 minute of questioning.

DETERMINING THE WINNERS
In most rounds, there will be one parliamentarian and two judges (also called "scorers"). Judges evaluate contestants for based on the depth of their research and analysis of issues, argumentation, skill in asking and answering questions, use of parliamentary procedure and clarity and fluency of speaking.

Judges and parliamentarians evaluate and award points for each speech delivered by students in the chamber. Top scorers ranked students advance to a final session, called a "super" congress.

For additional information, explore resources produced by the University Interscholastic League at *www.uiltexas.org/speech/congress*.