

BY-LAWS OF THE
NEW YORK STATE FORENSIC LEAGUE
2015 REVISION

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this organization shall be the New York State Forensic League.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. The purpose of the New York State Forensic League (NYSFL) shall be to develop articulate adults who revere truth and who effectively express the truth as they participate in the life of the nation. In order to promote the foregoing purpose, the NYSFL aims to stimulate speech activities in the high schools of New York State by encouraging schools and their students to participate in those activities.

B. The League is organized exclusively for educational purposes under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

C. Fiscal Responsibility of a Tax Exempt Organization

No part of the net earnings of the organization shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to, its members, trustees, officers or private persons, except as the League shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in the purpose clause above. No substantial part of the activities of the League shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the League shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provisions in this Constitution, the League shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from federal income tax under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future tax code, or (b) by an organization, contributions to which are deductible under section 170 (c) (2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

D. Dissolution of the League

Upon dissolution of the League, assets shall be distributed for one of more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501 (3) (c) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose.

Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by the Courts of Common Pleas of the county in which the principal office of the organization is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purpose.

ARTICLE III: MEMBERSHIP

A. Eligibility

1. Full Membership

a. Any single high school in New York State, public or private; four year high school, senior high school, or last year (grade 9) of junior high school, is eligible for Full Member status in the New York State Forensic League.

b. Students from small, neighboring high schools that do not have their own school's forensics programs may participate in sanctioned New York State tournaments as one team in all events, except the Varsity Level of Policy Debate. This form of membership could be executed through a BOCES or similar interschool organization. Permission is contingent upon approval by the State Coordinator after written application has been made. Each of the schools involved in a Multi-School team must pay full NYSFL dues to participate in the Regional and/or State Championship tournaments.

2. Associate Membership. Associate membership is available to institutions of higher education, associations, high schools outside of New York State, and individuals in high school forensics activities.

B. Certification. Application for membership is to be made to the State Coordinator through the League website. Membership will become effective upon payment-in-full of annual dues and submission of a registration form with the signature of the school principal. The school principal's signature states that the school accepts responsibility for its students at the NYSFL tournament.

C. Dues

1. Annual dues for both Full Members and Associate Members shall be determined by majority vote of the Regional Directors at the annual April meeting.

2. A payment schedule, including late registration fees, is set by the Regional Directors at their annual April meeting.

3. Dues must be paid in full by the date set by the Regional Directors in order to be eligible for participation in the Regional or State Championship Tournament.

4. New schools may register at any time without incurring late fees. For the purposes of registration, new schools shall be defined as schools which have never competed in the NYSFL before, schools that have had an inactive program, or schools that have had a significant change in coaching staff.

5. All checks for dues are to be made payable to the NEW YORK STATE FORENSIC LEAGUE and sent to the State Coordinator.

D. Privileges

1. Full Membership. Each Full Member school has the right to:

- a. cast one vote in the election of Regional Director;
- b. enter contestants in the Regional Tournament(s) at fees set by the Regional Director;
- c. enter contestants, if qualified, in the State Championship Tournament at fees set by the Regional Directors.

2. Associate Membership. Each Associate Member shall receive all mailings.

E. Communications

1. Most communication with member schools is done through Regional Directors to member schools.
2. Other communication is done through tabroom.com. All member schools should register on tabroom.com to receive pertinent updates.

ARTICLE IV: ADMINISTRATION

A. Regional Level. The New York State Forensic League shall be divided by counties and territorial continuity into the following Regions:

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|--------------------|---|
| 1. Long Island | Nassau, Suffolk |
| 2. Brooklyn-Queens | Kings, Queens |
| 3. Bronx-Manhattan | Bronx, Manhattan, Richmond |
| 4. Hudson | Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Richmond, Sullivan, Ulster, Westchester |

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|----------------------|--|
| 5. Rochester-Buffalo | Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua Erie, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Niagara, Ontario, Orleans, Steuben, Wayne, Wyoming, Yates |
| 6. North Country | Franklin, Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence, Cayuga, Onandaga, Oswego, Seneca |
| 7. Capital/Mid-State | Albany, Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Clinton, Columbia, Cortland, Delaware, Essex, Fulton, Greene, Hamilton, Herkimer, Madison, Montgomery, Oneida, Otsego, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schuyler, Schenectady, Schoharie, Tioga, Tompkins Warren, Washington, (to the Canadian border along the Northway) |

B. Regional Director

1. Each Region shall have one Regional Director, chosen by its Full Member schools.
2. The Regional Director shall be chosen for a two-year term of office. If a Regional Director should be unable to complete any term of office, the State Coordinator shall immediately consult the members of the Region to choose a new Regional Director to fill the remainder of the unexpired term.
3. The duties of the Regional Directors of the NYSFL are to:
 - a. run the Regional Tournament(s) in debate and speech at least three weeks in advance of the State Championship Tournament;
 - b. encourage new members of the NYSFL;
 - c. act as a publicity director for the Region;
 - d. represent the Region at the Directors' meetings;
 - e. serve on the Committee for the State Championship Tournament.
4. Meetings
 - a. The Directors shall meet twice a year, once in the fall, usually by conference call, and once at the State Championship Tournament.

b. A majority of the Directors shall constitute a quorum. The majority of those present and voting shall be sufficient to conduct business.

c. The chairperson of the Directors' meetings shall be the State Coordinator.

C. State Level

1. The NYSFL shall be administered by a State Coordinator(s).

2. The State Coordinator(s) shall be elected by a majority vote of the Regional Directors.

3. Election of the State Coordinator(s) shall be for a two-year term. The election shall take place at the Regional Directors' meeting during the State Championship Tournament of odd-numbered years. Two months prior to the State Championship Tournament, the State Coordinator(s) shall solicit nominations for the State Coordinator(s) from member schools.

4. The term of office of the State Coordinator(s) shall begin at the start of the scholastic year following election.

5. Duties of the State Coordinator(s) shall be to:

a. coordinate the activities of the NYSFL with the National Federation of State High School Associations, the National Forensic League, the National Catholic Forensic League, and other pertinent forensics and educational organizations;

b. collect the state dues, administer the finances of the NYSFL, and provide an annual financial report with budgetary recommendations at the fall meeting of the Regional Directors;

c. communicate information to schools as needed;

d. promote the activities of the NYSFL;

e. inform the NYSFL members of forensics activities within the state;

f. act as the official representative of the NYSFL at pertinent meetings, wherever the work of the NYSFL can be furthered;

g. preside over meetings of the Regional Directors;

h. perform other duties as instructed by the Regional Directors.

D. Tournament Director

1. The Tournament Director shall be elected by a majority vote of the Regional Directors.

2. Election of the Tournament Director shall be for a two-year term, coinciding with the election of the State Coordinator. The election shall take place at the Regional Directors' meeting during the State Championship Tournament of odd-numbered years. Two months prior to the State Championship Tournament, the State Coordinator(s) shall solicit nominations for the Tournament Director from member schools.

3. Duties of the Tournament Director shall be to:

- a. contact Regional Directors and assign the extemporaneous topics to be provided by each for the State Championship Tournament;
- b. receive all registrations for the State Championship Tournament;
- c. administer the State Championship Tournament.

E. Site Director

1. The Site Director shall be elected by a majority vote of the Regional Directors.

2. Election of the Site Director shall be for a two-year term, coinciding with the election of the State Coordinator. The election shall take place at the Regional Directors' meeting during the State Championship Tournament of odd-numbered years. Two months prior to the State Championship Tournament, the State Coordinator(s) shall solicit nominations for the Tournament Director from member schools.

3. The Site Director shall have the responsibilities of arranging and coordinating with the site(s) of the State Tournament. Such responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- a. Arranging with schools for sites for the tournament.
- b. Negotiating costs with the sites.
- c. Arranging food and other hospitality for the tournament.
- d. Arranging for materials to be sold at the Tournament.

4. The State Championship Tournament shall rotate its location every two years; two years upstate and two years downstate. The Site Director agrees to maintain this rotation.

ARTICLE V: Tournaments

A. General Information

1. The only official tournaments sponsored by the NYSFL shall be the Regional Tournaments and the State Championship Tournament.

2. Official tournaments shall be composed of one or more of the following divisions:

a. Policy Debate, which shall consist of the following subdivisions:

(1) Varsity: two-person teams composed of students in any grade level of high school, prepared to debate both sides of the national high school policy debate resolution;

(2) Intermediate: two-person teams composed of students who are in their first or second year of high school debate. They must be prepared to debate both sides of the national high school policy debate resolution.

(3) Novice: two-person teams composed of ninth or tenth grade students in their first year of high school debate who did not compete in high school interscholastic high school debate prior to July 1 of the present year of competition. Students who, in middle school, competed in high school debate tournaments, may not compete on the novice level.

b. Lincoln-Douglas Debate, which shall consist of the following subdivisions:

(1) Varsity: a student in any grade level of high school, prepared to debate both sides of the announced resolution.

(2) Intermediate: a student in any grade level of high school who has had no more than two years experience at the intermediate level, prepared to debate both sides of the announced resolution.

(3) Novice: a student in the ninth or tenth grade who has had no interscholastic experience in any form of high school interscholastic debate prior to September 1 of the present year of competition, prepared to debate both sides of the announced resolution. Students who, in middle school, competed in high school debate tournaments, may not compete on the novice level.

c. Speech shall consist of all categories designated and defined by the Regional directors in the Tournament Procedure Handbook.

d. Student Congress shall consist of a legislative body prepared to debate agenda items suited to the Congress of the United States. Students in grades nine through twelve are eligible to participate.

e. Public Forum Debate which shall consist of the following divisions:

(1) Varsity: two person teams composed of students from any grade level prepared to debate both sides of the announced resolution.

(2) Intermediate: two person teams consisting of students in any grade level of high school who has had no more than two years experience at the intermediate level, prepared to debate both sides of the announced resolution.

(3) Novice: two person teams consisting of students in the ninth or tenth grade who has had no high school interscholastic experience in any form of debate prior to September 1 of the present year of competition, prepared to debate both sides of the announced resolution. Students who, in middle school, competed in high school debate tournaments, may not compete on the novice level.

3. Students may prequalify for the State Tournament by receiving 2 half-qualifications at any sanctioned tournament. Criteria for a sanctioned Tournament are that the tournament:

a. Follows the rules of the NFL, the NCFL, or the NYSFL in all its categories;

b. provides reasonable times for completion of rounds;

c. provides a reasonable time between completion of competition on one evening and its inception the following morning;

d. uses ballots in all tournament events that meet the following minimum criteria:

(1) provide the name of the host school or the tournament or be a nationally accepted standard ballot for the event;

(2) provide the name of the event;

(3) provide sufficient labeled space at the top of the ballot for appropriate information such as: contestant name(s); code(s); title, number of the topic or division; round; date; room;

(4) provide labeled space for rank(s) and speaker points (if used), including directions for handling ties in ranks and /or points;

(5) indicate the total possible points (if used) and method of setting ranks;

(6) indicate time limits, including specific penalties, if any, for various time infractions;

(7) identify the major criteria for judging the event;

(8) provide labeled space for the judge's signature and school affiliation.

4. If a tournament includes students younger than the 9th grade, they may not be counted in determining the number of half qualifications to be given.
5. Half qualifications may not be dropped down.
6. Students may compete at the State Tournament in a maximum of one debate category (including congress) or a maximum of two speech categories. For double entry at the State Tournament, the following criteria must be met:
- a. The two categories must be speech categories. Students may not enter two debate categories (Congress is a debate Category) or one debate and one speech category.
 - b. Both qualifications must be earned through the prequalification system. A student may not use a qualification earned at the RQT. **Exception:** If a student receives a qualification at the RQT and subsequent to that date, receives either one or two half qualifications to the State Tournament, that student may be double entered. (Note, the purpose of this rule is to prevent a student who already has a qualification from earning, and thus taking away a qualification from another student. Students who attend the RQT and the subsequently qualify in another event are not in violation of the spirit of this rule.)
 - c. Students may not enter in both levels of Extemporaneous or both levels of Oral Interpretation.
 - d. Students may not enter in both Humorous and Dramatic Interpretation.
 - e. Students may not enter Program of Oral Interpretation and Oral Interpretation (either level).
7. All official policy debate tournaments and those which are used for pre-qualification shall debate the annual national high school debate topic as selected by the National Debate Topic Selection Committee of the National Federation of State High School Associations, unless the NYSFL decides by a majority vote of the Regional Directors to debate another topic.
8. There must be at least 2 schools and three contestants in a category for half qualifications to be awarded. The number of debate or speech entries for half qualifications to be awarded is the following:

| <u>Teams or Contestants</u> | <u>Qualifiers</u> |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 3-5 | 1 |
| 6-10 | 2 |
| 11-15 | 3 |
| 16-20 | 4 |
| 21-25 | 5 |
| 26-30 | 6 |
| every 10 thereafter | +1 with no upper limit |

9. For two-person events, one member of a team that has qualified for the State Championship Tournament may be replaced for good reason. However, a dropped team member can not compete in the tournament in any event. (“Good reason” is to be determined by the Regional Directors by “case”.)

10. At the State Championship Tournament, the decision of the Regional Directors administrating a section of the tournament is final. There is no appeals process.

B. Regional Tournaments

1. The Regional Director shall hold a tournament in Speech, Debate, and Student Congress open to all qualified students of Full Member schools in the Region. Regional tournaments shall be held no less than three weeks prior to the State Championship Tournament.

2. Any Full Member school which has paid its current dues in full prior to the start of the Regional Tournament is eligible to participate in that tournament. The Regional Director shall set a date by which entries must be received.

3. Any student in grades 9-12 of a qualified Full Member school may compete in any event for which he or she is eligible.

4. A Full Member school may register any number of entries in Speech, Debate, or Student Congress at the Regional Tournament.

5. A student who has pre-qualified for the State Championship Tournament in any event forfeits that pre-qualification if he or she enters the same event at the Regional Tournament. However, a student pre-qualified in one event may decide to enter a different event at the Regional Tournament without losing the earned pre-qualification in the other event. If the student receives a qualification at the Regional Qualifying Tournament, the student must attend the State Championship Tournament in that category.

6. The Regional Tournaments shall be administered in accordance with regulations in the Tournament Procedure Handbook.

7. The number of debate or speech entries to qualify for the State Championship Tournament from the Regional Tournament shall be according to the schedule listed below; however, to count as an entry for determining the number of Regional qualifiers, a student or team must seriously compete in all the rounds of the event at the Regional Tournament.

| <u>Entered Teams or Contestants</u> | <u>Qualifiers</u> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1-3 | 1 |
| 4-6 | 2 |
| 7-10 | 3 |

| | |
|------------|---|
| 11-14 | 4 |
| 15-20 | 5 |
| 21-25 | 6 |
| 26-30 | 7 |
| 30 or more | 8 |

8. If, for any reason, a Regional qualifier does not choose to attend the State Championship Tournament, the qualification may pass down to the next 2 persons on the Regional list. For this reason, students should be entered in Regional Tournaments if they intend to compete seriously in the event and attend the State Championship Tournament if they attain a qualification to do so.

9. The Regional Director shall have the discretion to limit a school's registration to the Regional Qualifying Tournament based upon the capacity of the host school to provide space for competition. The Regional Director is also empowered to exclude contestants from the Regional Qualifying Tournament based upon the school's failure to provide the requisite number of qualified judges or the school's failure to follow the registration procedures set out by the individual region.

10. At the Regional Qualification Tournament, the decision of the Regional Director or the Regional Director's representative is final. There is no appeals process beyond the Regional Director. A Regional Director, however, may not grant a qualification to a student who is not eligible to compete at the State Championship in that category. (For example, a Regional Director may not grant a qualification to a senior in Declamation.)

C. Wild Card Spots

1. Each school that is registered and has paid dues in the NYSFL may send one (1) entry in Speech and one (1) entry in debate above those who have either prequalified for the State Tournament or who have qualified at the Regional Qualifying Tournament.
2. The entry may be a single or double person entry. Duo Interpretation and Public Forum count as a single entry and are eligible for the wild card slot.
3. Student Congress shall count as a debate entry.
4. The contestant must have competed in at least one forensics competition during the school year.

C. State Championship Tournament

1. Only students from Full Membership schools whose dues are paid in full and who have resolved any judging fines from the previous year may participate in the State Championship Tournament.

2. A debate or speech entry shall be eligible to participate in the State Championship Tournament only by:

- a. Receiving two (2) half-qualifications at a sanctioned tournament.
- b. Receiving a full qualification at the Regional Qualifying Tournament.
- c. Being designated as the “Wildcard” spot by the coach of the school.

3. The State Championship Tournament shall follow the rules in the Tournament Procedure Handbook and/or modifications to those rules as made by majority vote of the Regional Directors.

4. The State Championship Tournament will be run by the Regional Directors, the Tournament Director, and the State Coordinator. Any questions of procedure will be decided by a majority vote of the Regional Directors involved in administering that portion of the Tournament. Their decision is final.

ARTICLE VI: AMENDMENT

Changes in the By-Laws or the Tournament Procedure Handbook of the New York State Forensic League can be made only by a majority vote of the total number of Regional Directors.