

## **DUTIES OF AN NCFL PARLIAMENTARIAN**

Thank you for considering service as a Parliamentarian at the NCFL Grand National Tournament! This is one of the most critical roles at any tournament, and the Grand National Tournament is no exception. Don't be intimidated or put off by the responsibility, however; with a bit of knowledge and training anyone with a background in forensics – and especially in Student Congress – should be able to serve as a capable and effective Parliamentarian.

### **What does a Parliamentarian do, exactly?**

A Parliamentarian has a few key duties to perform. S/he sits at the front of the Congress chamber and evaluates the performance of the student elected to serve as Presiding Officer each session. The Parliamentarian also holistically evaluates the performance of each student speaking from the floor during a session. While s/he does not fill out ballots for each of these speakers, s/he should maintain notes or a record of each student's abilities as a Legislator (taking into account speaking, questions, activity, and decorum) as each Parliamentarian will complete a rank form at the conclusion of his/her service; at the end of Session 3 in preliminary rounds, and at the end of each elimination round.

A Parliamentarian also serves as a resource for the chamber. The Parliamentarian takes charge of the chamber before the first Presiding Officer's election and between sessions, conducting elections for the Presiding Officer. A Parliamentarian may seat the chamber, using the chart provided by the Tab Room. Along with the Presiding Officer, the Parliamentarian keeps a recency chart. Finally, the Parliamentarian is the person who settles any procedural problems that might arise during the session.

### **How is a Parliamentarian different from a judge or scorer?**

For the purposes of the Grand National Tournament, there are only a few differences between the Parliamentarian and the Scorer. In the preliminary sessions, a Parliamentarian is assigned to one chamber and remains with that chamber through all three preliminary sessions while the Scorers serve only one session in a given chamber. The Parliamentarian only completes ballots for three students during preliminary sessions: the three students who serve as Presiding Officer. Similar to a Scorer, the Parliamentarian should consider a student's performance as a Legislator rather than merely as a speaker when ranking at the conclusion of her/his service but the Parliamentarian's rank form will be on the basis of three sessions of floor debate rather than one.

### **Why is a Parliamentarian so important?**

The first set of reasons why the Parliamentarian is important relates to making the tournament run smoothly. Students participating in Congress at the Grand National Tournament come from across the country and directly interact with each other for nine hours of preliminary competition in groups of between 20 and 25 competitors. Regional variations in rules that might be resolved quickly in a debate or speech round are complicated by the larger number of participants in each chamber of Student Congress. A Parliamentarian's job is to ensure that the rules of the NCFL, as specified in the Bylaws and Congress Manual, are followed. Parliamentarians are not expected to know every possible motion or point of parliamentary procedure or independently resolve each concern or question raised by a student or judge, but they are the first point of contact for those in their chamber. Since the tab staff cannot be in every single chamber at all times, the

Parliamentarian functions as the authority on procedural and rules-related questions in his or her chamber.

There is another important reason why the Parliamentarian is critical. In Student Congress, the participants compete against the same group of 20-25 students throughout the preliminary sessions. Over the course of the preliminary sessions each will be evaluated by six different scorers, each of whom only sees the students for one of their rounds. The Parliamentarian is afforded a unique opportunity to observe how a student performs throughout the preliminary rounds of competition rather than only in one-third of it. As such, a Parliamentarian truly has a sense of a student's qualifications for Best Legislator in a way that no other tournament official will have. A Parliamentarian's ranking form at the conclusion of the third session takes into account each student's performance throughout the Saturday rounds rather than one of three sessions.

**I'm interested, but I still have questions. Will I really be ready?**

We're glad you asked! It is perfectly normal to have some trepidation about serving as a Parliamentarian at the Grand National Tournament; many do before they begin the preliminary rounds. What's important is that you are willing to do a good job for the students in your chamber and accept that there is some additional training (the Congress Manual, procedural rules, and the like) with which to become familiar. While the tab staff conducts a judge meeting before preliminary rounds begin, other members of the tab staff brief those who will serve as Parliamentarians at the Grand National Tournament to review key procedures and answer any questions. Tab staff will also check in during the course of the competition to ensure that things are running smoothly, and the tab room itself is nearby should you have any questions.

Hopefully the above information has answered your questions about serving as a Parliamentarian at the Grand National Tournament. If you are ready to serve the students of the League in this capacity, please let your Diocesan Moderator know as soon as possible. Should you have any remaining questions, you can reach the NCFL Clerk of Congress at [ncflbills@gmail.com](mailto:ncflbills@gmail.com).