

# TIPS FOR JUDGING A ROUND OF PUBLIC FORUM DEBATE

Thank you for agreeing to judge a Public Forum Debate round. Your service is especially important as this event is designed to bring citizen judges and high school debaters together in an educational and productive encounter. The pro team tries to convince you that the resolution is true while the con team tries to convince you that the resolution is not true. This activity was designed to teach excellent critical thinking and public presentation skills, so debaters typically communicate an air of professionalism in their dress, demeanor, and delivery.

## **BEFORE THE DEBATE:**

- Find out the exact wording of the debate resolution and write it down.
- Read and follow the instructions on the judging ballot you will receive.
- Read the PFD Judge Instructions that are provided for you (perhaps on the back of this sheet).
- You may introduce yourself to the debaters (esp. to put new debaters at ease) before the debate starts (if you are comfortable doing so), but without showing favoritism toward either side.
- Debaters should *always* be respectful of one another and of you, and you should set a tone of decorum.

## **TO BEGIN THE DEBATE:**

- There will be a coin toss to determine the side (PRO OR CON) and the speaking order (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>) that each team will take in the debate. The team that wins the toss may choose either the side or the speaking position it prefers. The team that loses the toss makes the remaining choice.
- The team that speaks first in the debate should be listed on the left side of the ballot and sit on the left side of the room as you, the judge, look at the debaters.
- Please pay close attention when recording the team code and side. You can ask teams for this information again if you are uncertain.

## **DURING THE DEBATE:**

- Judges need to monitor speaking times during the round. Maximum speech times are listed on the ballot. Each team has two minutes of preparation time total) in each round to use before their speeches.
- Judges should not ask questions or otherwise interrupt the round.
- Debaters directly question each other *only* during the Crossfire segments, with the team that spoke first asking the first question.
- Debaters should not expect any response from the judge.
- Judges are advised that plans and counterplans by either team are not allowed and that the Final Focus must deal only with issues previously raised in the debate.
- Judges should be objective and judge the debate on the quality of the arguments made, not on personal beliefs or on the arguments you wish they had made.

## **AFTER THE DEBATE:**

- Please pay close attention to the side that each team chose in the debate and which spoke first and last. Check your codes carefully. This is especially important when marking the winner of the debate.
- Judges should not reveal their decision at the end of the round.
- In your written comments, please be as encouraging and educational as possible.
- Assign points between 20 and 30, indicating the quality of each team as indicated on the ballot.
- Check your ballot carefully before you turn it in. Did you:
  1. declare a winner
  2. assign team speaker points
  3. provide useful suggestions for improvement
  4. justify your decision thoroughly
  5. sign the ballot

(MORE JUDGING TIPS ON BACK)