



The Authorship and Sponsorship Speech: **Structure and Script.**

For students giving the first speech on a piece of legislation. Learn what the speech must do, see a timed outline, and practice with a fill-in script.

What this speech is for

The **authorship speech** is the first speech on a bill, given by the student who wrote it (or a student from the author's school). If nobody from the author's school is in the chamber, another student gives a **sponsorship speech**, which works the same way. Both are followed by a longer questioning period than most speeches, two minutes in NSDA national tournament instructions.

Unlike later speeches, there is nothing to refute yet. Your job is to **introduce** the problem and the solution and give the chamber a clear reason to care. Judges notice speeches that are clear, organized and confident, and they notice speakers who handle questions well.

Timed outline (3 minutes)

PART	TIME	GOAL
Hook	0:00 to 0:20	A short, specific story or fact that points to the problem
Thesis	0:20 to 0:30	State what the bill does in one sentence
Problem (contention 1)	0:30 to 1:20	Explain the harm with one or two pieces of evidence
Solution (contention 2)	1:20 to 2:10	Explain how the bill works and why it fits the problem
Benefits and funding (contention 3)	2:10 to 2:40	Who gains, what it costs, who pays
Conclusion	2:40 to 3:00	Link back to the hook and ask the chamber to vote yes

Three contentions is a common pattern, but two strong ones beat three thin ones. Speeches usually allow a short grace period, but plan to finish at 3:00.

Fill-in script

Hook: "Picture [specific scene or number that shows the problem]."

Thesis: "Today's legislation will [action] so that [result]."

Contention 1, the problem: "[Source] reports that [fact]. This matters because [impact on real people]."

Contention 2, the solution: "This bill works in three steps. First, [step]. Second, [step]. Third, [step]."

Contention 3, practicality: "The cost is [amount or source]. That is [reasonable because ...]."

Conclusion: "Remember [hook]. This bill gives us a way to [outcome]. I urge you to vote yes."

Writing the speech

- 1 **Name the problem in one sentence.** If you cannot say it simply, narrow it.
- 2 **Pick your two best pieces of evidence.** Recent, from a credible organization, and easy to say aloud.
- 3 **Explain the mechanism.** How does each part of the bill cause the benefit?
- 4 **Predict two objections.** Prepare short answers because questioners will ask them.
- 5 **Time it out loud.** Read from a timer at least five times.

Avoid

Reading the bill word for word, listing five statistics in a row, and ending without a clear call to vote.

Surviving the two-minute questioning

- ♦ Answer in 15 to 20 seconds so more students can ask
 - ♦ If you do not know, say so briefly and pivot to what you do know
 - ♦ Stay calm if a question is tricky: restate the key point in your own words
 - ♦ Never argue with the questioner; answer the question that was asked
- ☐ Hook is under 20 seconds
 - ☐ Thesis names the action in one sentence
 - ☐ Each contention has a claim, evidence and an impact
 - ☐ Conclusion calls back to the hook
 - ☐ I can answer "how much does it cost?" and "why not an existing program?"

Want a plan built around your debater? Book a free consultation with Scholar Coach at the link below.

Built from public guidance: NSDA Nationals Congressional Debate scorer instructions · Wikipedia: Congressional Debate. Rules change by league and tournament, so always confirm against your tournament invitation and current league rules.

NOTES

Want a plan built around **your** debater?

Book a free consultation. The short intake takes about a minute and opens right away.

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