



Later Speeches in Congress: Refutation and New Arguments.

For students past the first speech. Learn how the job changes as debate goes on, how to answer earlier speakers, and how to avoid repeating what the chamber already heard.

The job changes as the debate goes on

In Congress, debate builds. The author gives a clear case, the first negative speaker gives the first answer, and every speech after that must **add something**. Judges rank students who move the debate forward above students who repeat the same points.

SPEECH POSITION	MAIN JOB	SHARE OF TIME
First affirmative (authorship)	Introduce problem and solution	About all new material
First negative	Answer the author and present a reason to reject	Mix of answers and new material
Second speakers	Extend one side with new evidence and answer the other side	Roughly half answers, half new
Middle speeches	Weigh the two sides and add one new angle	Mostly clash and new angle
Late speeches	Summarize what matters and give the chamber a reason to vote (NSDA instructions call these crystallization speeches)	Mostly comparison and crystallization

The share column is a coaching rule of thumb, not an official rule.

Refutation in four moves

Use this structure whenever you answer an argument. It takes about 25 seconds.

- 1 Quote.** Name the speaker and the claim: "Senator from Lincoln said the program costs too much."
- 2 Respond.** Give your answer: "Their number leaves out the savings from fewer hospital visits."
- 3 Prove.** Back it with a source or clear logic.
- 4 Impact.** Say why it matters: "So the program pays for itself, which removes their reason to vote no."

Mini-example

Claim: "A new bus program is too expensive." Respond: "The real comparison is cost versus no program."

Prove: "Cities with the program reduced car trips, per [source]." Impact: "That means lower road costs, which offsets spending."

Adding a new argument

Pick one new angle the chamber has not heard. Ideas that often open fresh ground:

- ♦ A group of people not yet mentioned (rural families, small businesses, seniors)
- ♦ A different type of impact (economic, health, security, fairness)
- ♦ A real-world example of a similar program elsewhere
- ♦ A problem with how the bill would be carried out

Make the new argument about one minute. Spend the remaining time on refutation and weighing.

Timed template for a middle speech

TIME	CONTENT
0:00 to 0:15	Short intro tying to the last speaker ("The previous senator argued that ...")
0:15 to 0:55	Refutation using quote, respond, prove, impact
0:55 to 2:00	One new argument with evidence
2:00 to 2:40	Weighing: why your side's impacts matter more
2:40 to 3:00	Conclusion: clear ask to vote yes or no

Common mistakes and fixes

MISTAKE	FIX
Repeating the first speaker's evidence	Cite a new source or a new example
Ignoring what was just said	Open with a reference to the last speaker
Reading a pre-written speech that no longer fits	Keep a flexible block to swap for refutation
Too many small points	Pick one or two points and develop them
Ending with no vote request	End every speech with a clear sentence about how to vote

- ☐ I can say what was already argued in one sentence
- ☐ I mention at least one earlier speaker by name or state
- ☐ My new argument is not in any previous speech
- ☐ I end with a clear reason to vote

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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