

FLORIDA FORENSIC LEAGUE



BYLAWS
Updated October 2025

ARTICLE 1: NAME

The name of the corporation shall be *Florida Forensic League, Inc.*, hereafter referred to as *the League*.

ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE

Section I: Purpose.

The purpose for which the corporation is organized is to promote and conduct activities related to forensics, including, but not limited to, organizing debate tournaments.

Section II: Vision.

Our mission is to provide students in grades 6-12 with opportunities to develop their communication, argumentation, and leadership skills through their participation in curricular and co-curricular educational and competitive events. Central to the accomplishment of this mission is the provision of instructional and organizational support for coaches and other adults who teach these skills to students through speech and debate programs in schools.

Section III: Affiliations.

The League shall maintain liaison with the National Federation of State High School Associations, the National Speech & Debate Association, and the National Catholic Forensic League. These affiliations shall be informal; the League operates as an independent entity and shall not be bound by decisions of these organizations unless otherwise noted.

Article 3: MEMBERSHIP

Section I: Eligibility & Requirements.

- A. Schools shall hold membership in the League. The word *member* shall hereafter be defined as a school that is part of the League.
- B. Membership shall be open to both public and private schools of the following classifications:
 - a. Middle Schools: those institutions enrolling students in grades 6-8.
 - b. Junior High Schools: those institutions enrolling students in grades 7-9.
 - c. Ninth Grade Centers: those institutions enrolling students in grade 9 only.
 - d. High Schools: those institutions enrolling students in grades 9-12 or 10-12.
 - e. Junior/Senior High School: those institutions enrolling students in grades 6-12.
 - f. Each school shall declare which classification it meets; however, the Board of Directors retains the authority to change such classification if it determines the change to be appropriate.
- C. The amount of annual dues for all schools shall be determined by the Board of Directors and published on the membership application. These schools will pay the full rate for all other tournament/entry fees. Payment of dues provides membership only. Additional fees will be charged for participation in league tournaments and workshops.
- D. Current annual membership dues for high school programs are \$70. Schools that have not held a league membership in the three (3) years before the year of membership application shall be entitled to a 50% reduction in the regular dues rate for their classification.
- E. Current annual membership dues for middle school programs are \$35.
- F. Schools that have both a high school and middle school program pay both fees.

- G. Any high school may apply for a supplement to its high school membership for its ninth-grade students. Supplements will be available to programs in years where members must compete at a Regional Tournament. The supplement shall allow the member to enter up to four (4) ninth-grade entries per event in addition to the member's regular entry spaces for students in grades 9-12 at a Regional Tournament and at the Novice State Tournament. For purposes of fees, judge requirements, tournament procedures, and membership votes, a member and its supplement shall be treated as a single member. Dues for the supplement will be 50% of the cost of the school's annual membership. The following exceptions apply:
- a. Any high school with a separate ninth-grade center campus shall be deemed to be affiliated with that ninth-grade center and, therefore, be entitled to purchase one membership for the high school and the supplement for the ninth-grade center (the ninth-grade center may not apply for its membership unless the high school does not apply for membership).
 - b. A physical campus that contains both a junior/middle school and a high school shall be deemed to be affiliated and may apply for no more than one membership: one for the high school and a supplement for either additional ninth-grade slots OR for the junior/middle school.
 - c. Multiple campuses within the same private school entity shall be considered affiliated and, therefore, may apply for no more than one membership and supplement.
- H. Students at member schools must be in grades 6-12 and must not yet have graduated from high school in order to participate in events sponsored and/or sanctioned by the League.
- I. Membership in the League shall be attained through submission of a written application established by the Board of Directors. The membership application requires written authorization from the school's highest-ranking administrator, who designates one adult as the *Head Coach* and, if applicable, one adult as an *Assistant Coach*. These individuals shall be responsible for supervising all persons representing the program and shall receive and respond to all league communications.
- J. No person may be designated as the *Head Coach* or *Assistant Coach* at more than one member school and its supplement within the same school membership classification, as outlined in Article 3, Section I, Subsection B.
- K. The completed membership application will be finalized upon receipt of the annual dues, and shall be contingent upon the completion of all membership requirements and approval by the Executive Board, which may deny membership for cause.
- L. Homeschooled students may compete as members of a program that exists within the zoned boundaries set by their public school district. Homeschooled students whose zoned public schools do not offer a speech and debate program should discuss representing the school with that school's administration. These students can also reach out to the President or their Regional Director for assistance.
- M. Florida Virtual School (FLVS) students who are legal residents of the State of Florida may compete as part of a program operated by FLVS, should FLVS join the League, and as long as FLVS is the degree-granting institution of those students. Students enrolled in FLVS where the program is not their degree-granting institution, may compete as members of a program that exists within the zoned boundaries set by their public school district. Students whose zoned public schools do not offer a speech and debate program should discuss representing the school with that school's administration. These students can also reach out to the President or their Regional Director for assistance.

Section II: Membership Year & Application Deadlines

- A. The official membership year shall be from November 1-October 31.
- B. All new and existing members must complete the membership application process annually. The regular membership application period shall begin no later than September 1. The deadline for returning member schools shall be December 15. The deadline for new programs shall be January 15.
- C. If December 15 (for renewals) or January 15 (for new schools) falls on a weekend, the Board of Directors shall have the discretion to move the membership deadline to the first business day after the first calendar day of the month.
- D. Exceptions to these deadlines shall be granted at the discretion of the Board of Directors.
- E. After December 15, no further applications for renewal memberships shall be accepted; existing members who have not completed the membership renewal process shall be dropped from the membership rolls and shall not be entitled to any membership privileges for the remainder of the membership year. After January 15, no further applications for new members shall be accepted.

Section III: Regions.

- A. The League shall be organized into two or more Regions.
- B. The membership of the League shall determine, by majority vote, the number and composition of the Regions, but shall adhere to the following requirements:
 - 1. Each Region shall be composed of one or more counties in the State of Florida.
 - 2. Each county shall be assigned to one and only one Region; boundaries of the Regions may not be drawn in such a way that one county is divided between two or more regions.
 - 3. Each Region's boundaries shall be drawn in such a manner that each county in the region is bordered by at least one other county in the region.
- C. Each member shall be assigned to the Region in which its primary physical campus is located.
- D. Each Region shall have a unique name, which shall be determined by the members in that Region, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors. Each Region shall also be assigned a single-digit number, determined by the Board of Directors, for faster identification.

Section IV: Membership Privileges.

- A. All members shall be entitled to access the membership areas of the website maintained by the League. The website shall include downloadable and printable copies of all governing documents and league meeting/league event invitations.
- B. All members shall be entitled to receive communications released by the League in any format determined by the Board of Directors.
- C. All members shall receive notice of, and have the right to participate in, meetings of the membership and league events, provided that any special requirements to participate in a given meeting/event have been met. Notification of such meetings shall be no fewer than 14 calendar days before the meeting date.
- D. All members shall be entitled to present their concerns to the Board of Directors.
- E. Each member shall be entitled to cast one vote in all elections and questions that are put to the membership of the League.

- F. In all cases, membership privileges shall be exercised by the member's *Head Coach* or *Assistant Coach*; no other individual is entitled to speak/act on behalf of the member.

ARTICLE 4: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section I: Board of Directors.

A Board of Directors shall govern the League. The officers of the League, all of whom are to be elected by the membership, shall comprise the Board of Directors.

Section II: Board of Advisors.

The Board of Directors may annually appoint one Middle School Liaison, who shall be a Head Coach or Assistant Coach of a middle school or junior high school member. The Board of Directors shall also have the authority to appoint one Administrative Liaison, who shall be a public school administrator. These positions are advisory, with no formal authority or right to vote on matters before the Board of Directors. Advisors may be appointed or replaced by a majority vote.

Section III: Meetings of the Board of Directors.

- A. The Board of Directors shall meet as often as necessary on the days on which State Tournaments are scheduled to transact business related to the State Tournaments. No prior notice is necessary for these meetings and may be called by the President or by the highest-ranking member of the Board of Directors if the President is not present at the event, or by any five members of the Board of Directors. Meetings held at these events shall be held in executive session.
- B. The Board of Directors shall meet whenever the President or any five members of the Board of Directors call for a meeting. Notice of a meeting convened under this section must be given to all members of the Board of Directors through electronic mail at least three days before the meeting.
- C. The Board of Directors may meet using any means of communication by which all directors participating may simultaneously hear each other during the meeting.
- D. Meetings of the Board of Directors shall not be open to the membership unless a majority of the members of the Board of Directors vote to open it. The Board of Directors may invite others to attend to provide information to the Board.
- E. Minutes from meetings of the Board of Directors shall be published unless the Board of Directors votes to hold a meeting in executive session.

Section IV: Powers of the Board of Directors.

The Board of Directors shall have the authority to interpret and enforce the provisions of these bylaws and other governing documents of the League. In the event a situation arises that is not covered by the governing documents of the League, the Board of Directors shall have the authority to determine a course of action. Actions passed by a majority of the members who vote on an action shall be implemented by the President or their designee(s). The Executive Board is permitted to make decisions in the best interest of the League in terms of tournament operations and then have the League vote the following year in order to make changes permanent.

Section V: Communication Between Board Members.

Members of the Board of Directors may communicate with each other in person, by telephone, facsimile, email, or other electronic format. These communications shall not constitute a meeting unless a formal vote of the Board of Directors is taken.

Section VI: Removal From & Vacancies on Board of Directors.

Members of the Board of Directors, all of whom are officers of the League, may be removed through the process described in Article 5, Section VI. Vacancies on the Board of Directors will be filled through the process described in Article 5, Section V.

Section VII: Reimbursement of Expenses.

- A. The Treasurer shall be authorized to reimburse the members of the Board of Directors for the following documented, reasonable expenses: travel, lodging, and meals at official league functions; office expenses related directly to the conduct of league business.
- B. Reimbursements must be approved by the Board of Directors, which may not authorize reimbursement for any expenses that have been, will be, or should otherwise be paid by another organization.

Article 5: Officers

Section I: Officers.

The officers of this organization are President, Vice President/Operations, Vice President/Communications, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President/Middle School, New Team Support Specialist, and one Regional Director from each Region.

Section II: Duties.

The duties of the officers are as follows:

- A. *President*: Preside over all meetings of the Board of Directors and the membership of the League, serve as *Tournament Director* for and coordinate all operations of the State Tournaments, and maintain communication between all members of the Board of Directors.
- B. *Vice President/Operations*: Chair Standing Committees of the League unless another person is designated, serves as the liaison between the League and outside groups, acts in the capacity of *Ombudsperson* for the State Tournaments, mentors new Regional Directors, and is responsible for coach recognition. The Vice President/Operations is also responsible for overseeing trophy orders for all League tournaments.
- C. *Vice President/Communications*: Maintain and regularly update the League website and social media platforms, coordinate all online discussions and elections, serve as the liaison between FFL and the media, and consult with tournament hosts on technology needs for the State Tournaments.
- D. *Secretary*: Compile and maintain a *Membership Directory* to be updated and published on an annual basis, keep all official documents and records of the organization, and record the minutes of all meetings.
- E. *Treasurer*: Maintain the official financial accounts and records of the League, receive membership forms and dues from schools, file a Treasury Report with the League at least once per year, collect tournament entry fees for the State Tournaments, and disburse funds as necessary to operate the League. The Treasurer may not disburse funds to himself without written authorization from the President.
- F. *Vice President/Middle School*: Serve as *Tournament Director* for and coordinate all operations of the Middle School State Tournament, and serve as liaison and point of contact between the FFL and Middle School speech and debate coaches.
- G. *New Team Support Specialist*: Direct and maintain a point of contact with the coach(es) of new speech and debate teams in the State of Florida while providing mentorship, logistical support, and team/classroom resources.

- H. *Regional Directors*: Recruit and retain schools as members of the League, act as liaisons between the Board of Directors and the member schools in the region, and organize and direct a Regional Qualifying Tournament (should such a tournament take place) following guidelines established in the various governing documents. By the Monday following the Regional Tournament, Regional Directors should send the President the tournament results packet, list of qualifiers (including returning champions, if any), and the regional Coach of the Year candidate. Regional Directors also need to follow up with the tournament host to send the Treasurer the tournament registration fees, which are due to the Treasurer by the Friday following the Regional Tournament. Regional Directors shall accept State Tournament assignments as directed by the Executive Board. At the option of each region, the Regional Director may hold judge and/or student training workshops within the region. Regional Directors may also hold formal and informal meetings at the regional level for the purpose of suggesting future changes to league rules.
- I. *All Officers*: All officers are required to attend all State Tournaments and all meetings of the membership and the Board of Directors unless a reasonable explanation for an absence exists. All officers shall respond to concerns raised by the *Head Coach* or *Assistant Coach* for members in their Region (Regional Directors) or statewide (President, Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer) within 48 hours. Officers may forward and/or discuss membership concerns with other officers whenever necessary. Communications to officers should bear the name and school of the sender. Questions and concerns should always be raised by officials (eg, Head Coach, Assistant Coach, or highest-ranking administrator) representing the member school; communications initiated by parents and/or students shall be forwarded to the Head Coach and/or Assistant Coach of that individual's school for a response, unless the officer, Executive Board, or Board of Directors deems that a response is legally prudent or necessary and/or otherwise in the best interest of the organization. Officers shall be under no obligation to respond to or act upon unsigned and/or anonymous communications.

Section III: Eligibility, Nominations, and Elections.

- A. Elections shall be held annually for all offices with expiring terms.
- B. Only the *Head Coach* or *Assistant Coach* for a member may seek election to an office. No person may seek election to or serve in more than one office simultaneously. An officer who runs for and wins a second office must resign from the first office.
- C. Nominations shall be accepted beginning on the final day of the State Championship Tournament in person and shall continue to be accepted through the League website for 14 calendar days. Notice that nominations are being accepted and shall be given by electronic mail to the *Head Coach* for each member. Self-nominations shall be permitted. Nominees will be notified as nominations are made and will be provided the opportunity to accept or decline the nomination.
- D. No later than seven calendar days after the date on which nominations close, the names of all nominees shall be posted on the website along with a statement of no more than 250 words from each candidate for office. Voting shall be conducted through electronic submission for 21 calendar days following the posting of the nominees for office. Each vote that is properly transmitted by a member will have its receipt confirmed.
- E. The President, Vice President/Operations, Vice President/Communications, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President/Middle Schools, and New Team Support Specialist shall be elected by the entire membership, with each member receiving

one vote for each office. The Regional Director for each Region shall be elected by the members in that Region only, with each member in the Region receiving one vote for that office.

- F. The election process shall be overseen by at least three officers whose terms are unexpired, or who are not running for re-election, or by officers whose terms are expiring but are not opposed for re-election. If at least three members do not meet the above criteria, the Board of Directors shall appoint other coaches who are not running for office to oversee the election process. Following the expiration of the voting period, the election overseers shall tally the ballots. The candidate receiving a plurality of the ballots cast in the election shall be the winner. Results shall be promptly published on the website maintained by the League.
- G. Whenever possible, transition plans should be made during the Novice State Tournament; however, the departing members of the Board of Directors are still responsible for the operation of that event and any others until their terms have expired.

Section IV: Term of Office.

- A. Each term of office shall begin on June 1 of the year in which the term begins and shall end on May 31 of the year in which the term ends. An officer will serve beyond the end of their term if there is no person to replace them.
- B. Officers of the League shall serve terms as follows:
 - 1. The President shall serve from July 1, 2024, to May 31, 2027.
 - 2. The Vice President/Operations, Treasurer, Vice President/Middle Schools, and directors of all odd-numbered Regions shall serve from July 1, 2025, to May 31, 2027.
 - 3. The Vice President/Communications, Secretary, New Team Support Specialist, and directors of all even-numbered Regions shall serve from July 1, 2024, to May 31, 2026.
- C. For all future terms, the President shall serve a term of three years. All other officers shall serve a term of two years.

Section V: Vacancies.

- A. In the event of the resignation or removal of the President, the Vice President/Operations shall succeed to the office of President. The Vice-Presidency will then be considered vacated.
- B. In the event of the resignation or removal of any other officer, the Board of Directors shall fill the vacancy for the remainder of the unexpired term by appointing a person who meets all of the regular eligibility requirements that apply to elected officers. A two-thirds majority of the remaining members of the Board of Directors must approve any replacement appointment. If a replacement cannot be selected within 60 calendar days following the date of resignation, an emergency election will be held. All emergency elections will take place on the League website. A nomination window of not less than seven and not more than 14 calendar days, and a voting period of not less than seven and not more than 14 calendar days, shall be used in these elections. Unaffected members of the Board of Directors shall oversee the emergency election.

Article 6: Meetings & Votes

Section I: Regular Meetings.

- A. The membership of the league shall meet once during each year, and the Board of Directors shall meet a minimum of twice per year.
 - 1. Spring Meeting: The meeting will take place during the Novice State Tournament. Coaches will have the opportunity to submit proposed changes to the governing documents for the following school year and/or present questions or concerns. Items for the Spring Meeting agenda shall be solicited from the membership of the League through the League website for at least 30 days before the meeting. Items for the Fall Meeting agenda will be selected by the Board of Directors based upon the discussions at the Spring Meeting. The President shall appoint coaches to preside over this conference period.
 - 2. Summer Meeting: The date for this meeting shall be set and hosted by the President or their designee. The purpose of this meeting shall be to draft the language of proposals to amend the various governing documents of the League and to draft Pro/Con statements, as needed, for those proposals. This meeting can be in person or virtual.
 - 3. Fall Meeting – Board of Directors: The Board of Directors shall meet in the fall to finalize the proposed changes before posting on the FFL Website. This meeting can be in person or virtual.
 - 4. Fall Vote: The league membership shall have the opportunity to review all proposed changes via the FFL website. A method for posting comments and discussion will be provided online to the membership for 14 calendar days before voting. This meeting can be in person or virtual.
- B. The annual meeting of the League shall be conducted in the summer and again online in the Fall.
- C. The regular meetings of the League shall be open to the *Head Coach* and/or *Assistant Coach* for each member. No other representatives or individuals may attend these meetings unless invited by the Board of Directors.
- D. The agenda for regular meetings shall be established by the Board of Directors. Agendas for regular meetings shall be given to all member schools on the day of the meeting and posted on the League website in advance of the meeting whenever time permits.
- E. The Board of Directors shall encourage all members to attend these meetings in the interest of promoting open discussion and sharing information. Notice of these meetings shall be posted on the League website and sent to the email address of the Head Coach for each member at least 30 days before the meeting.

Section II: Special/Emergency Meetings.

Special meetings of the membership of the League may be called by a majority of the Board of Directors. Notice of these meetings must be provided through the League website and sent to the email address of the *Head Coach* for each member at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. The specific reason(s) for which the special meeting has been called must be published, and no other business except for that which has been published may be transacted.

Section III: Votes of the Membership.

- A. The membership of the League shall participate in regular votes as follows:
 - 1. Fall Vote: This vote shall be used to decide all questions and rule change proposals. No later than September 1, all proposed changes/amendments shall be posted on the FFL website for membership review and discussion. In addition to the ballot language itself, one statement from a proponent and one

statement from an opponent of the proposal shall be drafted. Members of the Board of Directors may compose these statements or appoint another coach who is present at the meeting to do so. Statements shall not exceed 150 words. Within 14 calendar days of the end of the Fall Meeting, ballot language and proponent/opponent statements for each proposal shall be posted on the League website. A 14-calendar-day moderated discussion period using a website message board shall follow. The *Head Coach* and/or *Assistant Coach* for a member shall have the right to use the forum to comment on ballot issues. After the discussion period has ended, a voting period of 14 calendar days shall begin. Each member shall be entitled to one vote, which will be submitted to the Board of Directors through the League website. Results of the election shall be certified by the Board of Directors and promptly announced on the League website.

- B. The above votes shall be the only regularly scheduled votes of the membership. The Board of Directors may schedule other votes for the removal of an officer, filling of a vacancy on the Board of Directors, and/or amendments to the governing documents (see Articles 10 and 11).
- C. In the event of a tie on any matter submitted to the membership that requires definitive action, including the election of officers and the selection of State Tournament venues, the matter shall be referred to the next meeting of the Board of Directors. The Board shall then resolve the matter at its next meeting by vote. This provision does not apply to votes on proposals to amend portions of the governing documents; tie votes in these situations would result in the defeat of the proposal.

Article 7: Committees

Section I: Executive Board.

- A. The President, Vice President/Operations, Vice President/Communications, Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President/Middle Schools, and New Team Support Specialist shall serve as the Executive Board of the League.
- B. The Executive Board shall have the power to take those actions necessary to conduct the business of the League between regular membership meetings, special membership meetings, and/or meetings of the Board of Directors. Emergencies and unforeseen situations shall also be addressed by the Executive Board.
- C. The Executive Board may meet if the President or any three members call for such a meeting. The Executive Board may meet using any means of communication by which all directors participating may simultaneously hear each other during the meeting. A quorum for any meeting of the Executive Board shall be three of its members.
- D. The Executive Board may take no action that is contrary to any rule in the governing documents of the League. The Executive Board may take no action unless three or more members of the Executive Board agree to such action. These rules shall not impose upon the individual officer's performance of their duties. Any actions approved by the Executive Board shall be implemented by the President or their designee(s).
- E. Meetings of the Executive Board shall not be open to the membership unless the committee votes to open it. The Executive Board may invite others to attend to provide information to the committee.
- F. Minutes from meetings of the Executive Board shall be published unless the committee votes to hold a meeting in executive session.

Section II: Extemporaneous Speaking Topic Committee.

The President and the Vice President/Operations shall arrange to find a qualified outside source to produce extemporaneous speaking topics for all League tournaments. The person selected will write questions for both domestic and foreign extemporaneous speaking. The topic areas will be announced in advance, and the outside source will write enough questions for each tournament.

Section III: Protest & Appeals Committee.

- A. For any Regional Qualifying Tournaments, a Protest & Appeals Committee of three individuals and one alternate should be appointed to handle written protests. The Regional Director shall make these appointments. All appointed individuals must be the designated *Head Coach* or *Assistant Coach* for a member. The alternate should participate in place of any committee member whose school makes or is the subject of a particular protest.
- B. At State Tournaments, the Executive Board shall serve as the Protest & Appeals Committee. If a member of the Executive Board becomes involved in an appeal or protest as either the person filing the complaint or the coach of a school/entry that is the subject of a complaint or if a member of the Executive Board is unavailable, they shall be replaced on the Protest & Appeals Committee by a Regional Director whose Region is not involved in the protest. In adjudicating a protest or appeal, the Protest & Appeals Committee may consult with the Regional Directors.
- C. To disqualify a contestant or take other action against a school/entry requires a 2/3 vote of the committee. Other actions can include, but are not limited to, a verbal warning, a loss in a debate round, or a last-place ranking in speech, a last-place ranking without a drop in speech, a placing of 9 without a drop in speech, or a rank of 9 in Congressional Debate.
- D. Decisions of the Protest & Appeals Committee shall be communicated to the involved parties, and a record of any action taken will be sent to the Secretary for archiving.
- E. The Protest & Appeals Committee will only address protests that originate from a direct observation in a round.

Section IV: Board Committees.

The Board of Directors may create and appoint committees of the Board of Directors at its discretion. Each committee shall have a minimum of three members and shall have a specific charge. Committee appointments may be made by the President unless a majority of the members of the Board of Directors vote to select a specific committee slate. Board committees may spend funds only if prior approval is granted by the Board of Directors.

Section V: Other Committees.

The Board of Directors and/or the membership of the League may vote to create standing and *ad-hoc* committees as needed. The President shall appoint committee members unless the Board of Directors and/or the membership of the League votes to select a specific committee slate.

Section VI: Committee Meetings.

Unless otherwise noted for a specific committee listed above, the following rules shall govern committee meetings:

- A. Committees may meet as necessary using any means of communication by which all directors participating may simultaneously hear each other during the meeting. Minutes of committee meetings shall be published.
- B. Committees may vote to make recommendations, but said recommendations must be approved by the Board of Directors for implementation to occur.

- C. A quorum of a committee shall be a majority of its members.

Article 8: Workshops & Tournaments

Section I: Workshops.

A Regional Director may hold judge/student workshops in their Region at their discretion.

The Board of Directors may also hold statewide workshops at its discretion.

Workshops shall be open to the *Head Coach* and/or *Assistant Coach* for all members, as well as others invited by the Regional Directors and/or Board of Directors. Participation fees may be charged for a workshop to cover its operating costs.

Section II: Sanctioned Tournaments.

The League shall sanction the following tournaments:

- A. One Regional Qualifying Tournament within each Region (if held) to determine qualifiers to the State Championship Tournament.
- B. One "Open State" Championship Tournament to determine the State Champion in each League event. If this tournament is not deemed an "open" tournament by the Board of Directors, students must advance through competition at a Regional Qualifying Tournament.
- C. One Novice State Tournament to determine the top first-year contestants in each League event. This tournament shall be open to all students from member schools that meet the novice entry requirement (see Standing Rules, Rule 8). To attend Novice State in years when a Regional Qualifying Tournament is held, a member school must have sent one or more competitors to the Regional Qualifying Tournament; a school must be physically in attendance at the Regional Qualifying Tournament to attend Novice State. Members who fail to attend the Regional Tournament (if held) are, therefore, ineligible to attend the Novice State Tournament.
- D. One Middle School State Tournament to determine the top middle school contestants (grades 6-8) in each League event. This tournament shall be open to all middle school students from member schools that meet the entry requirement, in grades 6-8, not to exceed three years of participation.
- E. Other tournaments, such as online/virtual competitions, may be offered at the discretion of the Board of Directors.
- F. The rules and procedures at all League tournaments must adhere to all guidelines contained within the governing documents of the League.
- G. The League shall ensure tournament invitations (at least indicating the tournament title, dates, location, and entry fees) are posted/sent to coaches no later than 6 weeks before the tournament.

Section III: Regional Tournaments.

- A. This section is only applicable if Regional Tournaments are needed; they will be held in years when the State Championship is not set in advance by the Board of Directors as an "Open State" Championship Tournament.
- B. The Regional Directors from the various Regions shall host their respective Regional Tournaments at their school or be responsible for finding a substitute location.
- C. Each Regional Tournament shall be under the direction of the Regional Director from that Region. Regional Directors must follow the governing documents of the League in operating their Regional Tournaments. The Regional Director may appoint other individuals to serve as tournament officials.
- D. Results from the Regional Tournament are subject to audit and certification by the Executive Board of the League. In the case of tabulation errors discovered after the

conclusion of a Regional Tournament, the Executive Board shall have the authority to determine any remedies or actions that need to be taken.

- E. Regional Directors may be awarded a stipend for fulfilling their duties at the regional qualifier.

Section IV: State Tournaments.

- A. The State Championship Tournament, the Novice State Tournament, the Middle School State Tournament, and any other League tournament shall be under the direction of the Board of Directors of the League. The President shall serve as Tournament Director and assign responsibilities to each member of the Board of Directors. If the President is unavailable to serve as Tournament Director, they shall appoint one from among the members of the Executive Board.
- B. Whenever possible, all personnel appointed to the tabulation room shall be members of the Board of Directors. However, the Executive Board may appoint others to serve. The tournament staff should not be paid unless the Executive Board decides that the circumstances surrounding a certain tournament require that an outside consultant be hired to certify that the operation of the tabulation room is fair and unbiased.

Section V: Location of State Tournaments.

- A. The State Championship Tournament, the Novice State Tournament, and the Middle School State Tournament shall be scheduled by a bid process one year in advance.
- B. These tournaments shall be hosted by a school that is a member of the League. Other institutions may enter a bid only if there are no members who wish to host the tournament.
- C. Each member that wishes to host a State Tournament must review the guidelines for host schools as published on the League website and certify that it can meet those guidelines. A letter from the administration indicating the school's administration supports the bid must be received before the deadline to apply to host.
- D. Locations and, when necessary, dates shall be voted on by the Board of Directors. The potential host site that earns a plurality of the votes cast in the election shall host that tournament.

Section VI: Hosting Guidelines & Site Visits.

- A. The Board of Directors shall publish and maintain a *Guidelines for Hosts* document to assist tournament hosts in preparing for their tournament.
- B. The President and another member of the Board of Directors shall visit the site(s) of the State Tournaments as often as necessary to verify that all needs of the League can be met by the tournament host. The first visit must be done early enough to execute a change in location if needed. Reasonable expenses for the site visit shall be paid from the League Treasury.
- C. The host school shall be responsible for the safety and security of all facilities used at the tournament by students and adults, including the proper purchase and service of all food and beverage items, as well as responsibility for any taxes due on food, beverage, or merchandise items for which the host school receives direct revenues or is reimbursed by the League.
- D. The host school for each State Tournament shall be entitled to a minimum of \$500 and a maximum of \$1,500 from the League to defray expenses. The first \$500 will be presented to the host school after it has delivered its invitation information to the League President. The remaining amount will be presented to the host school after the conclusion of the tournament and with satisfactory completion of the hosting

requirements. In the event the Executive Board of the League deems that a school did not meet the hosting requirements, it may elect to penalize the host school by withholding up to the full amount of the second payment.

Article 9: Forensics Ethics & Civility Code

Section I: Ethical Conduct.

Ethical behavior is expected of members, students, coaches, judges, faculty, and adults who participate in all forensic activities sponsored by the League. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of library resources and evidence, rendering judgments, and accurate recording of results.

Section II: Civility Code.

The Board of Directors shall maintain a Civility Code. All individuals attending events sponsored or sanctioned by the League shall follow the guidelines in that document.

Section III: Ethics Review.

Allegations of behavior that is unethical or that violates the Civility Code must be submitted in writing to the President. Three members of the Board of Directors, including at least one member of the Executive Board and one Regional Director, shall be appointed by the President to investigate such charges and make recommendations to the Board of Directors. In cases where the President makes or is the subject of a charge, the Vice President/Operations shall receive the complaint, appoint the committee, and oversee the process. The recommendations of the committee shall be forwarded to the Board of Directors, which is hereby empowered to act on those recommendations at its next meeting.

Article 10: Amendments to Bylaws

Section I: Substantive Amendments.

- A. Amendments to this document should be suggested through the process described in Article 6, Section I. Voting on changes to bylaws shall be conducted through the process described in Article 6, Section III. For an amendment to be adopted, two-thirds of the members who return ballots must support it.
- B. The Board of Directors may, with a three-fifths vote, put an amendment of the bylaws to the membership for its consideration. In these situations, voting will be conducted through the League website, and the *Head Coach* for each member shall be notified through electronic mail. For an amendment to be adopted, two-thirds of the members who return ballots must support it.

Section II: Technical/Grammatical Amendments.

The Board of Directors shall have the authority to correct typographical and grammatical errors in this document and/or in the other governing documents and the various publications of the League as they are discovered.

Article 11: Standing Rules

Section I: Purpose & Scope of Standing Rules.

The League shall maintain a series of *Standing Rules*, which shall contain the specific regulations for the operation of and competition at League tournaments and other events. Standing rules shall be subservient to the bylaws; any conflict between the two documents shall be resolved by the Board of Directors in favor of the bylaws.

Section II: Amendments to Standing Rules.

- A. Amendments to the *Standing Rules* should be suggested through the process described in Article 6, Section I. Voting on changes to that document shall be conducted through the process described in Article 6, Section III. For the amendment to be adopted, a majority of the members who return ballots must support it.
- B. The Board of Directors may, with a three-fifths vote of its members, put an amendment of the *Standing Rules* to the membership for its consideration. In these situations, voting will be conducted through the League website, and the *Head Coach* for each member shall be notified through electronic mail. For the amendment to be adopted, a majority of the members who return ballots must support it.
- C. At least one month before publishing the invitation for any League tournament, the Executive Committee may submit to the Board of Directors proposed pilot changes to the *Standing Rules*. If approved by a three-fifths vote by the Board of Directors, said pilot rule may be enforced for no more than one year, and will be subject to voting at the immediate subsequent annual vote of the members. Pilot rules that do not pass a vote of the members cannot be enforced or repropose by the Executive Committee for at least two years, unless a pilot rule is subsequently passed through the process described in Article 6, Section I.