**INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRESIDING OFFICERS**

**General Guidelines**

A Presiding Officer may only serve in one of the three preliminary sessions; service as a Presiding Officer during preliminary competition does not obligate or bar a candidate from seeking election as a Presiding Officer during the semifinals. Once elected, the Presiding Officer MAY NOT relinquish the Chair during the session to enter into debate.

**Recognition of Speakers**

It is your job as Presiding Officer to keep careful records of speaker order. One suggested method: as each speaker gives a speech, mark an “X” next to his/her name on the seating chart and note the time s/he spoke. Check with the Parliamentarian at the end of each hour of debate or another convenient time to ensure that your recency charts agree. When many members wish to speak, choose those who have spoken the least. Check your recency or seating chart. When you must choose between two members with the same number of speeches, select the speaker who has spoken least recently.

**Procedural Matters**

During a Session time each speech. When 2 minutes have elapsed, tap the gavel once. When 2 ½ minutes have elapsed, tap the gavel twice. At 3 minutes, gavel down the speaker, allowing the speaker to complete his or her sentence and ask the speaker to relinquish the floor. The Presiding Officer is strictly charged with the responsibility to keep debate moving. You will be held responsible for seeing that no one monopolizes speaking time; you will also be held responsible for failing to rule dilatory motions out of order. The Presiding Officer will be expected to rule all interruptions of speakers – even for questions – out of order. Members may rise for questions only after the speaker has finished his/her speech. Speakers that gave authorship or sponsorship speeches on legislation must remain standing for two minutes of questions. Only authorship speeches on main motions carry this two-minute questioning period. All other speakers may answer questions if time permits in their speech time. Suspensions of the rules to add on questioning periods are allowed, but should be considered carefully by the Chamber. Each suspension of the rules for questions detracts from debate time. Only authors are required to answer questions. All other speakers may decline. A member may not yield any portion of his/her speaking time to another speaker except for a question. In this case, only a question may be asked. No statement or other non-interrogatory comment is allowed. The Presiding Officer should suppress such out-of-order statements immediately, but politely. NCFL Congress Manual Questions of procedure not covered by these rules shall be governed by Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised.

**Procedural Matters**

**Concluding Debate on an Item and Concluding a Session**

When taking votes, do so quickly and with precision: “The Question is…(state the motion). Those in favor please raise your hands…those opposed by the same sign.” You may use this format or a similar method. Then announce the votes and which side won. Voice votes may be taken EXCEPT on final votes on legislation and amendments and on all motions that require a vote other than a majority. Such votes as these must be taken by STANDING VOTE. Use of the motion for the Previous Question should be discouraged as long as members have something new to contribute to the discussion. When the motion is made and seconded, take a standing vote. Remember – a 2/3 vote OF MEMBERS PRESENT is required for passage. When no one wishes to speak, the vote on the legislation may be taken directly without moving and passing the Previous Question. Although a perfect session might end with a vote on the legislation at hand, it is not mandatory. Do not force a vote if there has been insufficient debate. There is no limit on the length of debate required on any piece of legislation.