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The reason for this correspondence is to bring to your attention our feelings regarding the proposed speech rule change which would delay the start date for allowable speech contests to February 1. North Sargent School is opposed to this change for multiple reasons and we feel that the rules change will harm the speech program at North Sargent as well as the other schools in our area.

In small schools such as ours, the majority of students are involved in numerous activities. We believe that the shorter competition season would limit the opportunities for many of these students. With a shorter season, students will be forced to choose between joining one activity or the other as they will be unable to do both and meet the demands of each coach/advisor. The longer season allows students the flexibility to be in several activities successfully as they have more chances to compete on days that do not conflict with their other activity.

Another downfall that we see with the shorter season is that teams will be forced to travel every weekend during the months of February and March with no reprieve or weekends off. This will also be a deterrent to speech participation. Students need a break on occasion.

Many schools, including North Sargent, host tournaments during the month of January. Coaches work hard to schedule their tournaments with other scheduled tournaments in mind in an effort to make each tourney as successful and as well attended as possible. By eliminating the month of January from the allowable competition term, we feel that there will be negative effects on tournament managers as they will be forced to overlap dates with other schools.

We understand that the reasoning behind the suggested rule change has to do with the wish to remove the overlap between debate and speech and allow for growth in the debate program. However, most small schools do not have debate teams due to lack of resources and coaching staff. Thus, the shortened speech season would not help small schools as we simply do not have the resources or the student base needed to start a debate team.

It is uncertain how the suggested rule change has made it this far knowing that so many Class B Schools are not in favor of the change. It was very evident at the State Class B Speech Meeting that the majority of those in attendance were adamantly opposed. We understand that many of the Class A coaches were also opposed.

We ask for your careful consideration in this matter as we feel that this move would not enhance debate. We believe it would only harm the currently thriving speech programs and limit opportunities for performing and learning. More research must be done and opinions of Class A and Class B coaches gathered from all corners of the state before an educated decision on this matter can be reached.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Randall A. Cale, Superintendent

Jan M. Hovind, Speech Coach

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