



Valley City High School
Home of the Hi-Liners
 460 Central Ave North
 Valley City, ND 58072

6/7/2018

To: North Dakota High School Activities Board of Directors
 From: Nick Lee, VCHS Speech/Student Congress Coach
 Re: Opposition of Rule Change Regarding Speech Competition Start Date

To Those Whom It May Concern,

This letter is written for the express purpose of stating publicly my opposition to the proposed rule change recently discussed by both Fine Arts Advisory and Fine Arts Review Board. The exact rule change that I hold fault with can be referenced below (taken directly from the grid review):

Speech	Speech, Debate, and Student Congress have an established beginning and ending date.	The Speech season first tournament will be the first weekend in February and ends with State tournament in April.	page 3	This would be best for the students involved and prevents one fine arts from pulling students away from the other fine arts. This will allow it to grow in our state.
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I oppose this rule changes for several specific reasons and also believes that this is not in the best interest of the activity and the students. The status quo as established (in which there is an overlap between debate and speech) is preferable to this proposed rule change.

1. While there is a chance that this would allow for some growth in debate, the reasoning is entirely speculative. There are more variables at play that prevent schools from starting debate teams: travel commitments, qualified coach availability, and the high cost of programs are just a few of the reasons that already prevent schools from the willingness to start programs. Until all issues surrounding debate are solved there **will not** be an influx of new participation. The reasoning discussed in the grid is not the main, nor only reason for shrinking or stagnant participation numbers in debate.
2. By limiting opportunities for speech tournaments by reducing the number of allowable tournament weekends in speech you force coaches and schools to travel a majority (if not all) allowable weekends in the now shortened allowable season in order to stay competitive, reducing flexibility for all schools and students. This will actually serve to hurt speech participation by forcing more "choose this or this" decisions from students, whereas the current longer season allows students the ability to be involved in other extra-curriculars AND speech.
3. This particular rule change faced opposition at both the State A Coaches Meeting and the State B Coaches Meeting (and was unanimously opposed at the State B Coaches meeting). This rule is not representative of what a majority of the schools and coaches involved with speech in the state want to happen with this activity.
4. Many schools, including Valley City Public Schools, host tournaments in January as a necessary part of their program. Hosting a tournament, helps an individual school control costs for their program by allowing a free competition weekend with no travel costs incurred, nor registration

costs. Under the proposed change, this will adversely affect those individual programs who host January tournaments.

5. For many students (particularly Class B Students) speech is representative of a very limited availability of performing arts that are accessible to students, this presents a huge limiting agent on the number of opportunities for North Dakota students to perform and is limiting their learning experiences.
6. With the many, many other extra-curricular programs that are scheduled in the spring, it is often those early January tournaments that students are able to attend.
7. It is imperative that more data be collected before executing such a drastic change (i.e. how many coaches and schools support this change?)

While this change has passed through two steps of the change process, it really is not a clear indicator of what is best for the activity and is not representative of what a majority of speech coaches and schools want to see happen. It is imperative that there is more time allocated towards a better solution rather than pushing through an agenda item that has not weighed all options. I hope for your due consideration in this matter and that a better solution can be found.

Sincerely,
Nick Lee
VCHS Head Speech Coach
VCHS Head Student Congress Coach
NSDA Advisor