

LDEP Statement on Conflicts of Interest in Judging

Fair competition requires not merely the absence of impropriety but also *no appearance* of impropriety. A conflict of interest is a relationship that might reasonably be thought to bias a judge toward or against a competitor. Such relationships may themselves be quite innocent, but they could reasonably be thought to compromise a judge's impartiality. The Lincoln Douglas Education Project respectfully suggests that tournament directors adopt, publish, and enforce these or other guidelines reflecting their best professional judgment about conditions conducive to fair competition free from conflicts of interest. We also encourage judges to think about these relationships as reasons to recuse themselves even if a tournament does not formally require it. Recusing oneself due to a possibly biasing relationship is a mark of professionalism and integrity; it is not the possibly biasing relationship, but rather the failure to acknowledge it, that reflects poorly on one's character.

- 1) Judges should not judge any student from schools that they themselves attended.
- 2) Judges should not judge any student to whom they have family relationships.
- 3) Judges who have had paid or unpaid coaching, consulting, or judging relationships with a school should not judge any students from that school during the same academic year. Serving as a tournament-hired judge does not by itself constitute a biasing relationship with the tournament host school.
- 4) Judges who have received expressed or implied offers to provide future coaching, consulting, or judging to a school should not judge any students from that school.
- 5) Judges who have ever had what might reasonably be regarded as primary instructional responsibility for a student, whether through a school (e.g., assistant coach), a summer workshop (e.g., lab leader), or an informal arrangement (e.g., personal coach), should not judge that student.
- 6) Judges who have had personal relationships with a student should recuse themselves from judging that student. Examples of personal relationships include physical or emotional relationships that could reasonably be thought to compromise impartiality.
- 7) Judges who have actively participated in pre-round preparation of a student at a tournament should recuse themselves from judging that student in later rounds of that tournament.
- 8) Judges who socialize with a student in extra-debate situations (parties, card games, inappropriate substances, etc.) should refrain from judging that student.
- 9) To avoid even the *appearance* of impropriety, judges who receive transportation to or from a tournament from a school or student, even in the absence of further relationships, should seriously consider recusing themselves from judging that school or student at that tournament.
- 10) Judges who have traveled extensively with, regularly shared research or ideas with, or consistently remain in communication with a student should refrain from judging that student.
- 11) Judges who are administrators of, currently employed by, or anticipating employment from a summer workshop, research company, or other debate business should not judge any student who has received an express or implicit offer of employment from that institution.
- 12) To avoid the *appearance* of impropriety, summer workshops should make public as soon as possible formal or informal agreements to hire debaters as employees for their programs.