



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE
Making a World of Difference

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

 @UILCIANDE

2021 • INVITATIONAL A

Prepared Dec. 6, 2021



Photo by Gage Skidmore

Republican Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., then the Senate minority leader, speaks at the 2011 Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington, D.C.



Photo by Gage Skidmore

Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., addresses attendees at the 2019 California Democratic Party State Convention at the George R. Moscone Convention Center in San Francisco, California.

DO NOT TURN THIS PAGE UNTIL YOU ARE INSTRUCTED TO DO SO!

UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

INVITATIONAL A • 2021

- 1. Joe Biden won Wisconsin by roughly 20,000 votes. Donald Trump requested a recount and paid \$3 million to recount two counties. What was the outcome?**
 - a. Trump gained 132 votes in the election he described as “rigged.”
 - b. Biden gained nearly 460,000 votes in what was described as “massive election fraud.”
 - c. Biden’s winning margin increased by 87 votes.
 - d. Biden lost 20,600 votes after the courts ordered that mail-in ballots would not count.
- 2. At the virtual Democratic National Convention, the nominees for president and vice president were formerly senators from what states?**
 - a. North Carolina and Wisconsin
 - b. Delaware and California
 - c. New York and Indiana
 - d. Illinois and Texas
- 3. They were dining staples in Texas. But in September, the businesses, jointly owned, decided to liquidate their assets and distribute proceeds to investors, up to \$123 million. What businesses?**
 - a. Luby’s and Fuddruckers
 - b. Golden Corral and Boston Market
 - c. IHOP and Furr’s
 - d. Piccadilly Cafeteria and Red Robin
- 4. With 53.26% of the vote, the people of New Caledonia again rejected independence from what country?**
 - a. Canada
 - b. Germany
 - c. India
 - d. France
- 5. The U.S. Department of Interior removed which animal from the Endangered Species list last fall?**
 - a. Louisiana Black Bears
 - b. Whooping cranes
 - c. Gray wolves
 - d. Houston toads
- 6. Even while the S&P 500 was reaching record highs in early August, another economic indicator was also high, but this was not a good thing. Which one?**
 - a. the price of crude oil: \$42.66/barrel
 - b. the unemployment rate: 10.2%
 - c. the inflation rate: 1.0%
 - d. consumer confidence: 98.41

- 7. Army Col. Assimi Goita emerged as the new military leader of what African country after Ibrahim Boubacar Keita resigned as president?**
 - a. Niger
 - b. Algeria
 - c. Sierra Leone
 - d. Mali

- 8. When the Girl Scouts started selling cookies in January, they had a new flavor of cookie to hawk. Which one?**
 - a. Iced Berry Piñata (strawberry jam, cinnamon crumb)
 - b. Van'Chos (chocolate/vanilla sandwich)
 - c. Upside Down (frosted oatmeal)
 - d. Toast-Yay! (French toast)

- 9. Protests began after a police officer shot Jacob Blake in the back four times during an arrest. Where did the incident occur?**
 - a. Kenosha, Wisconsin
 - b. Elkridge, Maryland
 - c. Barbourville, Kentucky
 - d. Kingsland, Georgia

- 10. Jerry Falwell Jr. resigned as the president and chancellor of what Virginia school founded by his televangelist father?**
 - a. Washington and Lee University
 - b. James Madison University
 - c. Liberty University
 - d. College of William and Mary

- 11. McDonald's started selling the Travis Scott Meal on Oct. 4, its first celebrity meal in nearly 30 years. Who is Travis Scott?**
 - a. a rapper
 - b. the founder of Cactus Jack Records, a large investor in McDonald's stock
 - c. the creator of the Quarter Pounder
 - d. a movie star who grew up in Houston and died of cancer

- 12. Nick Moutos threatened Black Lives Matter protesters and has referred to the organizers as "terrorists." He called Islam a "virus" and trans people an "abomination." What position did he hold before he was fired?**
 - a. an assistant to Texas Gov. Greg Abbott
 - b. an attorney for the NRA
 - c. a U.S. representative from District 35
 - d. a Texas assistant attorney general

- 13. Pandemic-related anxiety is affecting the health of Americans. Dentists in September reported seeing a surge in what?**
 - a. cavities
 - b. halitosis
 - c. tooth fractures
 - d. gingivitis

- 14. In the latest of legal actions brought by young people around the world, six young people from Portugal filed a lawsuit against almost all of Europe, targeting 33 European nations, for failing to take adequate action on what?**
- climate change
 - equal rights for Blacks
 - police brutality
 - developing a COVID-19 vaccine
- 15. Which of the following is true about Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg?**
- She was the first woman to lie in honor at the U.S. Capitol.
 - She was the first Supreme Court justice to lie in state at the U.S. Capitol.
 - In addition to being the first woman, Ginsburg was also the first Jewish American to ever lie in state at the U.S. Capitol.
 - She was the first Supreme Court justice to die while still in office.
- 16. Yoshihide Suga became the new prime minister of which country?**
- Japan
 - North Korea
 - Taiwan
 - Malaysia
- 17. Wildfires have gotten so extreme that experts have had to coin a new term — gigafire. What does it mean?**
- a fire that is the largest in history
 - a fire that costs more than \$1 billion to fight
 - a fire that has burned more than 1 million structures
 - a fire that burns more than 1 million acres of land
- 18. In a sweeping move aimed at accelerating the state's efforts to combat global warming, California Gov. Gavin Newsom said his state would ban the sale of what by 2035?**
- beef
 - new gasoline-powered cars
 - single-use plastic (including water bottles)
 - aerosol sprays
- 19. Scientists announced they detected, using radio waves, three underground saltwater lakes that could possibly support life. Where?**
- beneath the Sarah Desert
 - Mars
 - Proxima b, a rocky planet orbiting Proxima Centauri
 - the moon
- 20. Since 1934, Columbus Day is a national holiday, proclaimed so by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to celebrate the anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas in 1492. Gov. Ralph Northam announced that Virginia will join a dozen other states and will do what?**
- Virginia will recognize Black Lives Matter Day.
 - Virginia will give all government employees a holiday on election day.
 - Virginia will recognize Indigenous Peoples Day.
 - Virginia will cancel Columbus Day and make Juneteenth a holiday.

- 21. Carlo, a teenager who lived in Milan and died in 2006, is on his way to becoming the first millennial to be recognized by the Roman Catholic Church as what?**
- a Nobel Laureate
 - a pope emeritus
 - the head of the Spanish Catholic Church
 - a saint
- 22. The leader of what group acknowledged the shared suffering of Americans and Koreans during a ceremony commemorating the Korean War causing social media outrage in China?**
- the Korean pop group BTS
 - QAnon
 - Hyundai, the automaker
 - the Beatles
- 23. What is 5G?**
- the next level of cellphone expenses, five times more expensive
 - a network for big cities five times as fast as the previous network
 - a wireless network that can handle five times as many devices
 - the fifth generation mobile network
- 24. Just two weeks before the election, U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said he actually opposed what project supported by U.S. President Donald Trump?**
- immigration and border policies
 - the border wall
 - pushing through a Supreme Court nominee
 - getting out of the Paris Climate Accord
- 25. Overturning six decades of protections, the Trump administration finalized plans to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to what?**
- oil and gas development
 - commercial development including apartments and strip malls
 - highway construction
 - hunting of polar bears and caribou
- 26. Hurricane Laura made landfall as a Category 4 storm with a nearly 15-foot storm surge and tied as the fifth-strongest hurricane to make a continental U.S. landfall. Where?**
- Sabine Pass, Texas
 - Tampa, Florida
 - Biloxi, Mississippi
 - Cameron, Louisiana
- 27. “For now, and for my beloved children, it will be less drama, more mama.” And with that, which staunch supporter of the president, also known for coining the phrase “alternative facts,” announced she would leave the White House at the end of August?**
- Gina Cheri Walker Haspel
 - Kellyanne Conway
 - Jenny McGee
 - Hester Peirce

- 28. The point at which the COVID-19 virus can no longer spread because there are not enough vulnerable humans was initially thought to be 70%. Now, statistical models say it's more likely to be 50%. What is this called?**
- the plasma threshold
 - the Andromeda Level
 - herd immunity
 - the Fauci Point
- 29. What company became the first U.S. company to reach \$2 trillion valuation?**
- Alphabet
 - Microsoft
 - Amazon
 - Apple
- 30. To receive treatment for ulcerative colitis, Shinzo Abe stepped down as what country's longest-serving prime minister?**
- United Kingdom
 - Japan
 - Cambodia
 - Singapore
- 31. While touring the fires, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, also citing major fires in Oregon, said what was the cause of the fires?**
- forest mismanagement
 - Mother Nature, as part of the natural cycle
 - climate change
 - lightning
- 32. Vice President Mike Pence canceled plans to attend a Montana fundraiser for the Trump campaign in September, following revelations that the event's hosts have expressed support for what?**
- Satan worshippers
 - QAnon conspiracy theory
 - an omnipotent being, the Q
 - abolishing police departments
- 33. Whom did members of an anti-government group plot to kidnap, put on trial and then execute before they started a civil war?**
- Michigan Gov. Gretchen Witmer
 - U.S. Senator Kamala Harris
 - Stacey Abrams, the first African-American female major-party gubernatorial nominee in the U.S.
 - Janet Millis, the first female governor of Maine
- 34. Florida voters passed an amendment to raise the state's minimum wage incrementally until reaching what in September 2026?**
- \$7.25/hour
 - \$8.75/hour
 - \$12.75/hour
 - \$15/hour

- 35. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., chaired what committee that oversaw the “advice and consent” hearings for Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett?**
- Committee on Judicial Appointments
 - Judiciary Committee
 - Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
 - Rules and Administration Committee
- 36. The Cameron Peak Fire started in mid-August and burned more than 326 square miles. It became the largest fire in what state’s history?**
- California
 - Oregon
 - Colorado
 - Utah
- 37. The attorneys general in 11 states, all Republican, joined the Justice Department in suing which company for antitrust violations?**
- Google
 - Microsoft
 - Waymo
 - Oracle
- 38. After mockingly referring to COVID-19 as the “beer virus,” Rep. Don Young, 87, tested positive for the virus. Young is the longest-serving member of the House, representing what state since 1973?**
- Vermont
 - Alaska
 - Iowa
 - Massachusetts
- 39. Just hours after Russia claimed that its Sputnik V vaccine is 92% effective, what company announced in November that its vaccine was 90% effective?**
- Johnson & Johnson
 - Moderna
 - Pfizer
 - Novavax
- 40. Last year he won the Nobel Peace Prize. This year, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced a military operation against one of his country’s own regions pushing the country toward civil war. What country?**
- Ethiopia
 - Sudan
 - Somalia
 - Kenya

ESSAY PROMPT

NOTE: *Contestants who do not write an essay will be disqualified.* Essay length is not a major grading factor as long as the essay is substantial and demonstrates a sincere effort to discuss the assigned topic. Cover as many corners of the issue as practical, including historical, political, economic, social and cultural, when relevant. Avoid including your personal opinions, as more than enough information on the subject has been published. A focused, concise and specific essay beats a vague and rambling essay.

Topic

The 117th U.S. Congress is the next meeting of the legislative branch of the federal government. The 535 members of the House and Senate are scheduled to meet in Washington, D.C., from Jan. 3, 2021, to Jan. 3, 2023, during the final weeks of Donald Trump's presidency and the first two years of Joe Biden's presidency.

Discuss two similarities and two differences between the 117th Congress and its predecessor.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

The 117th U.S. Congress is the next meeting of the legislative branch of the federal government. The 535 members of the House and Senate are scheduled to meet in Washington, D.C., from Jan. 3, 2021 to Jan. 3, 2023, during the final weeks of Donald Trump's presidency and the first two years of Joe Biden's presidency.

1. C 21. D

2. B 22. A

3. A 23. D

4. D 24. B

5. C 25. A

6. B 26. D

7. D 27. B

8. D 28. C

9. A 29. D

10. C 30. B

11. A 31. C

12. D 32. B

13. C 33. A

14. A 34. D

15. C 35. B

16. A 36. C

17. D 37. A

18. B 38. B

19. B 39. C

20. C 40. A

Discuss two similarities and two differences between the 117th Congress and its predecessor.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS PREPARED Dec. 1, 2020 might include, but should not be limited to...

- *Speaker* Nancy Pelosi has been reelected speaker of the House by her caucus for the next session of Congress, marking what will be her fourth term with the gavel. The caucus vote was conducted virtually, but Pelosi was approved by a voice vote. Pelosi, 80, did not face any challenge for her post. She will also need to secure a simple majority — 218 Democratic votes — by the full House of Representatives in January to be sworn in again as speaker.
- *Term limits for officers.* Ahead of the 116th Congress, Pelosi cut a deal with a handful of members threatening to vote against her for speaker on the floor. To win their support, the California Democrat agreed to allow the caucus to vote on proposed term limits for the top three Democratic leaders and to abide by the proposal herself regardless of whether it was adopted. If she does, this would be her final term as speaker. She was the first woman elected speaker of the House in 2007.
- *Women.* Women will gain at least 14 seats in the 117th Congress, setting a new record for female representation. In 2018, the nation elected 127 women — and 48 women of color — to the House and Senate. On Jan. 3, 2021, at least 141 women, including 51 women of color will be sworn in. Women will be at least 27% of the House and 24% of the Senate. The Senate numbers do not include Vice President-elect Kamala Harris, or Kelly Loeffler, a Georgia Republican involved in a runoff that will take place after Congress is sworn in. Women make up 50.52% of the U.S. population.
- *Women of color.* There will be more women of color sworn in to the 117th U.S. Congress than ever before, with at least 51 women of color elected. After the final elections are certified, that number could change. In western Washington state, Democrat Marilyn Strickland was elected the first Black person to represent the state at the federal level and is one of the first Korean Americans ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Democrat Deb Haaland, one of the first Native American women elected to Congress, was reelected, as was Democrat Teresa Leger Fernandez, giving New Mexico its first House delegation made up entirely of women of color.
- *Senate undetermined.* So far, Democrats have flipped two seats and Republicans have flipped one, for a net gain to the Democrats of one seat. But Democrats held onto one of their most hotly contested seats in Michigan, where Gary Peters, a low-profile Democratic senator, survived a tight race against his Republican challenger, John James. Mitch McConnell and Chuck Schumer were unanimously reelected leaders of the Senate Republican and Democratic caucuses, respectively. It is still unclear which party will have a Senate majority next year. Right now, both parties have 48 seats.
- *Georgia.* Control of the Senate may hinge on Georgia's two runoff races in January as no candidate in either contest has reached a required 50% threshold in votes to win outright.
- *House remains under Democratic control.* Democrats clinched two more years of controlling the House but with a potentially razor-thin majority. Democrats were all but certain to see their current 232-seat majority shrink after an unforeseen surge of Republican voters transformed expected gains of perhaps 15 seats into losses potentially approaching that amount.