



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE
Making a World of Difference

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

 @UILCIANDE

2021 • INVITATIONAL B

Prepared Jan. 12, 2021



Raphael Warnock. Photo courtesy Raphael Warnock.



Jon Ossoff. Photo courtesy John Ramspott.

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CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

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- 1. In an apparent suicide on Christmas morning, Anthony Warner, 63, exploded a trailer downtown in what city?**
 - a. Ogden, Utah
 - b. Brooksville, Florida
 - c. Queens (New York City), New York
 - d. Nashville, Tennessee
- 2. One of several fires last fall that burned more than a record 2 million acres, what started the El Dorado fire in California?**
 - a. lightning
 - b. an unattended campfire
 - c. a pyrotechnic device at a gender reveal party
 - d. a power line broken by high winds
- 3. Facing the Democrats' smallest majority in decades and a pandemic that hindered attendance, who was reelected to a fourth term as speaker of the House of Representatives when Congress convened in January?**
 - a. Mitch McConnell (R-KY)
 - b. Chuck Schumer (D-NY)
 - c. Kevin McCarthy (R-CA)
 - d. Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)
- 4. After health officials discovered a coronavirus mutation that can spread to humans, as many as 17 million what were killed in Denmark?**
 - a. caribou
 - b. reindeer
 - c. mink
 - d. Pond Bats
- 5. As part of the most active hurricane season in history, what storm was the earliest named "S-Storm" to form in the Atlantic Ocean basin last fall?**
 - a. Stan
 - b. Sally
 - c. Sebastien
 - d. Sam
- 6. Led by Ted Cruz (R-Texas), at least 12 Republican senators (and dozens of Republican members of the House of Representatives) objected to which one of the first actions of the 117th Congress?**
 - a. a COVID-19 aid package that included \$2,000 for all taxpaying citizens
 - b. the certification of the presidential election results
 - c. the budget that did not include any money for defense spending
 - d. legislation giving emergency approval to two COVID-19 vaccines despite objection from the FDA

- 7. The State Board of Education considered an update to the sex education standards for the first time in 20 years. Which of the following was included in the updates?**
 - a. teaching of birth control options beyond abstinence
 - b. teaching of gender identity
 - c. teaching of sexual orientation
 - d. teaching of how to analyze the similarities and differences between legal consent to sexual activity and affirmative consent to sexual activity

- 8. Opening the area to logging and road building, the Trump administration eliminated federal protections for which national forest?**
 - a. Angelina National Forest in Lufkin, Texas, the home to the red-cockaded woodpecker
 - b. Kauai Rainforest in Hawaii, the only rainforest under U.S. protection
 - c. Cimarron National Grassland in Kansas, the only forest that is also a protected grassland
 - d. Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska, the largest national forest in the U.S.

- 9. Scientific American has never endorsed a presidential candidate in its 175-year history. But, in September, the oldest continuously published U.S. magazine offered its first presidential endorsement. Who?**
 - a. Donald Trump
 - b. Jo Jorgensen
 - c. Joe Biden
 - d. Howie Hawkins

- 10. The Rev. Raphael Warnock made history after the run-off election in Georgia Jan. 6. How?**
 - a. He is the first Black Republican to represent a southern state in Congress.
 - b. He is the first Black person in the Senate.
 - c. He won by the largest majority of any sitting person in Congress.
 - d. He is Georgia's first Black senator.

- 11. In a highly unusual move, the Republican Party chose not to adopt what at the convention that would have been held in Charlotte, North Carolina, but was, instead, largely virtual?**
 - a. support for Donald Trump
 - b. support for the ideologies that the Democrats approved a week earlier
 - c. a new platform
 - d. a Constitutional amendment removing term limits for the president

- 12. The California Republican Party admitted responsibility for placing what items across the state?**
 - a. billboards warning people not to get the COVID-19 vaccine when it becomes available
 - b. voting instructions in Spanish that gave improper instructions
 - c. fake voting machines
 - d. deceptively labeled "official" drop boxes

- 13. During the War of 1812, Francis Scott Key wrote the song that later became "The Star-Spangled Banner," inspired by the location where Mike Pence gave his acceptance speech as the 2020 Republican vice presidential candidate. Where?**
 - a. Fort McHenry (Baltimore, Maryland)
 - b. Fort Warren (Boston, Massachusetts)
 - c. Canaan's Happy Shore (Georgia)
 - d. Fort Sumter (South Carolina)

- 14. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United States led the world with the number of cases of COVID-19 with twice as many cases as India. How many cases did the U.S. have at the end of 2020?**
- 351,590
 - 10,340,469
 - 13,071,925
 - 19,346,790
- 15. What Canadian TV show won every comedy award at the 2020 Television Academy Emmy Awards and set a new record for most Emmy wins by a comedy series in a single season?**
- Dead to Me
 - Curb Your Enthusiasm
 - Schitt's Creek
 - The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel
- 16. After criticism of racial stereotyping, Mars Inc. said it will change the name of its 70-year-old brand of rice to what?**
- Tamanishiki Super Premium Brown Rice
 - Ben's Original
 - RiceSelect's Organic Rice
 - Annie Chun's Cooked White Sticky Rice
- 17. Jeanette Epps will join Sunita Williams and Josh Cassada to do which of the following?**
- serve as chief executives of Boeing; Epps the first Black CEO at Boeing
 - live at the International Space Station; Epps the first Black woman to work in space for an extended period of time
 - serve as leads in the movie successor to "Black Panther"
 - become archbishops of the Catholic Church in South America
- 18. If the temperature is validated by climate scientists, it would be the hottest reliably measured temperature on Earth in recorded history. The 130°F (54.4°C) was measured Aug. 16 at 3:41 p.m. Where?**
- Cherokee, Oklahoma
 - Death Valley, California
 - Port Sudan
 - Flaming Mountains (China)
- 19. At least 11 people who attended a White House event on Sept. 26 subsequently tested positive for the coronavirus. Eight of them, including the first lady, sat in the first several rows of a nomination ceremony for Judge Amy Coney Barrett in the White House Rose Garden. Those diagnosed include the president himself. This event became called what?**
- a super spreader event
 - ground zero for COVID-19
 - the trigger for terror in the White House
 - a coronation
- 20. For the first time since 1966, what show was not played on network television?**
- Psycho
 - It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown
 - The Exorcist
 - Rocky Horror Picture Show

- 21. Which of the following was NOT a part of the George Floyd Act that Black lawmakers at the Texas Legislature unveiled in January?**
- It would ban chokeholds.
 - It would do away with no-knock warrants.
 - It would require law enforcement officers to intervene or render aid if another officer is using excessive force while on the job.
 - It would address qualified immunity, which shields government officials from litigation.
- 22. It was found to be the first in the U.S., but officials said they removed a colony near Blaine, Washington, before its inhabitants could multiply and lay waste to bee colonies. What?**
- Eastern Spotted Skunk
 - White Nose Fungus
 - Small Hive Beetle
 - Asian Giant “Murder” Hornet
- 23. Disney put a 12-second disclaimer on movies like “Dumbo,” “Peter Pan,” “Aladdin” and “The Aristocats.” Why?**
- Animals were harmed in the making of those movies. PETA sued and won, requiring the disclaimer.
 - The movies were underrated according to a panel of parents that sued Disney. The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals determined the movies should be rated PG-13 or R. Disney officials said they will not appeal.
 - Those movies contained “negative depictions” and “mistreatment of people or cultures.”
 - The movies, all rated G, contain violence inappropriate by today’s standards for a G-rated movie.
- 24. According to research that used cellphone mobility data, which type of indoor space was the riskiest, by far, in terms of new coronavirus infections?**
- schools
 - football games
 - restaurants
 - gyms
- 25. Jim Mattis was the first person to hold the position in Trump’s cabinet. Then Mark Esper served until Nov. 9, 2020, six days after the election. What position did they both hold?**
- chief of staff
 - press secretary
 - secretary of the Department of Homeland Security
 - secretary of the Department of Defense
- 26. A federal judge prevented the Barbers Hill Independent School District near Houston from enforcing a dress code policy that states that male students must do what?**
- shave off all facial hair; no moustaches or beards
 - avoid wearing off-the-shoulder tops
 - take off all jewelry except watches on the wrist; no earrings; no necklaces
 - keep their hair ear-length or shorter; no dreadlocks

- 27. To get funding to make documentaries, feature films and children’s programming, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex have founded a yet-to-be-named production company and signed a multiyear deal with what global company?**
- Netflix
 - BBC
 - Al Jazeera
 - AT&T Entertainment Group
- 28. Released on Christmas Day, what was the first Pixar movie with a Black lead character?**
- Soul
 - Out
 - The Flight Attendant
 - Wonder Woman 1984
- 29. Facebook announced it would remove any group or Instagram account that openly identified with what conspiracy movement that believes, falsely, that the world is run by Satan-worshipping pedophiles who are plotting against U.S. President Donald Trump?**
- “Patriot Paranoia”
 - 8chan
 - QAnon
 - The Anti-Masons
- 30. As part of a decline that researchers in Australia said would continue unless drastic action is taken to mitigate the effects of climate change, the Great Barrier Reef lost half of its ___ populations in the last quarter-century.**
- coral
 - fish
 - eel
 - oxygen-producing bacteria
- 31. After securing a landslide victory in the Andean nation’s presidential election, Leftist leader Luis Arce promised to rebuild his country. What country?**
- Bolivia
 - Argentina
 - Venezuela
 - Paraguay
- 32. After nearly 60 years on the market, Coca-Cola discontinued its first diet soda. Which one?**
- Fresca
 - No-Cal Ginger Ale
 - Diet Dr Pepper
 - Tab
- 33. Hunter Biden, the son of President-elect Joe Biden, is under investigation by federal prosecutors regarding his business dealings, most notably in what country?**
- China
 - Myanmar
 - Taiwan
 - Catalonia

- 34. Following the death of Vanessa Guillen, a 20-year-old Army specialist killed after reporting she was sexually harassed, officials punished 14 officials at which Texas military base?**
- Fort Hood
 - Fort Bliss
 - Fort Sam Houston
 - Camp Mabry
- 35. While SpaceX and Tesla maintain major operations in California, Elon Musk announced in December he had moved where?**
- Austin, Texas
 - Brandenburg, Germany
 - Boca Chica, Texas
 - Pretoria, South Africa
- 36. As part of a wider push for sports teams to stop using Native American names and imagery as team names and mascots, what baseball team announced a change in December?**
- Washington Redskins
 - Cleveland Indians
 - Atlanta Braves
 - Chicago Blackhawks
- 37. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said what country was likely behind a massive cyberattack on U.S. federal agencies?**
- Israel
 - Russia
 - Saudia Arabia
 - Iraq
- 38. The second COVID-19 vaccine began distribution in mid-December. It was produced in Norwood, Massachusetts, for what company?**
- Pfizer
 - Johnson & Johnson
 - Moderna
 - AstraZeneca
- 39. President Donald Trump announced in a tweet that an outspoken proponent of conservative values and an expansive view of presidential power would be leaving office before Christmas, leaving the deputy, Jeff Rosen, in his position. Who?**
- Counselor to the President Kellyanne Conway
 - Attorney General William Barr
 - Secretary of Defense Mark Esper
 - Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency Chris Krebs
- 40. Virgin Hyperloop became the first company to conduct human tests at a desert site near Las Vegas. Tests for what?**
- a COVID-19 rapid antibody vaccination
 - a ship designed like a plane that can escape Earth's gravity
 - living in a bubble in preparation for moving to Mars
 - high-speed ground transportation

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

Per constitutional mandate, the 117th Congress convened Jan. 3 at noon, bringing an influx of new lawmakers to Capitol Hill amid the ongoing pandemic. Newly elected and returning members took the oath of office.

Immediately, Congress — both the House and the Senate — faced controversial issues, some that forced votes and public dissension, those first days. Discuss three of the issues that Congress faced in those early days from Jan. 3 until the inauguration Jan. 20.

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ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

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POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS PREPARED Jan. 12, 2020 might include, but should not be limited to...

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| 1. D | 21. B |
| 2. C | 22. D |
| 3. D | 23. C |
| 4. C | 24. C |
| 5. B | 25. D |
| 6. B | 26. D |
| 7. A | 27. A |
| 8. D | 28. A |
| 9. C | 29. C |
| 10. D | 30. A |
| 11. C | 31. A |
| 12. D | 32. D |
| 13. A | 33. A |
| 14. D | 34. A |
| 15. C | 35. A |
| 16. B | 36. B |
| 17. B | 37. B |
| 18. B | 38. C |
| 19. A | 39. B |
| 20. B | 40. D |

- *Leadership* — Representative Nancy Pelosi (CA-12) was re-elected Speaker and will preside over the chamber for the next two years. Representative Steny Hoyer (MD-5) was elected majority leader, and Representative Kevin McCarthy (CA-22) was elected minority leader. With her party in control of just 222 of 435 seats, Pelosi can afford to lose only a handful of Democrats on any given vote. Pelosi, who has led her party in the House since 2003 and is the only woman to be speaker, received 216 votes to 209 for McCarthy.
- *Georgia* — Control of the Senate was in the balance until a runoff election Jan. 6 when two Democrats, Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, won their elections in tight races. Warnock, pastor at the Ebenezer Baptist church in Atlanta, the church where Martin Luther King Jr, the civil rights leader, often preached here became the first African American senator from Georgia. With democratic victories in both Georgia runoff elections, the U.S. Senate will be evenly split, 50-50. Vice President Kamala Harris would cast any deciding vote needed.
- *Death* — Luke Letlow, a Republican and congressman-elect from Louisiana, died Dec. 29, 2020 from complications of COVID-19 days before he was set to be sworn into office. He was 41. Given how slim the Democratic majority was in the House, any changes were watched closely.
- *Pandemic* — Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the first day of the 117th Congress was modified to accommodate guidelines from the Office of Attending Physician, such as social distancing, reducing the number of guests and staff allowed in the chamber, and mask wearing. Late last year, Congress passed legislation giving most Americans \$600. Democrats wanted more and the incoming administration pledged to get more vaccinations out faster and to get out more relief money.
- *Biden election* — With mounting desperation, Trump declared he would “fight like hell” to hold on to the presidency and appealed to Republican lawmakers to reverse his election loss to Joe Biden when they convened to confirm the Electoral College vote. Trump enlisted support from a dozen Republican senators and up to 100 House Republicans to challenge Biden’s win. The tally tipped the win to Biden and Harris at 3:31 a.m. ET. The counting finally ended at 3:40 a.m. Biden got 306 electoral votes to Trump’s 232
- *Mob invades Capitol* — On Jan. 6, hundreds of pro-Trump protesters pushed through barriers set up along the perimeter of the Capitol, where they tussled with officers in full riot gear, some calling the officers “traitors” for doing their jobs. About 90 minutes later, police said demonstrators got into the building and officials locked the doors to the House and Senate. Ultimately, five people died and 14 police officers were injured. More than 50 people were arrested in the week after. The FBI said pro-Trump and far-right online networks planned “armed protests” in all 50 state capitals and in Washington, D.C., leading to Biden’s inauguration.
- *Impeachment* — The House seems prepared to pass Articles of Impeachment for incitement of insurrection. If passed, U.S. President Donald Trump would be the first president to be impeached twice. It was unclear whether the Senate would hear the case before April. It was unclear whether Vice President Mike Pence would invoke the 25th Amendment with a majority of the Cabinet.