



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE  
*Making a World of Difference*

# CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

 @UILCIANDE

**2021 • DISTRICT**

Prepared Feb. 13, 2021



Official White House photo by Chandler West

**Anthony Fauci, chief medical adviser to the president, participates in a briefing Jan. 21, in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House.**

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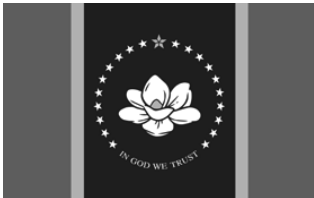
# **CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS**

## **DISTRICT • 2021**

- 1. Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick said he plans to introduce the Star Spangled Banner Protection Act, Senate Bill 4, after what athletic team's owner stopped playing the national anthem this season?**
  - a. Dallas Cowboys
  - b. Austin FC
  - c. Houston Dash
  - d. Dallas Mavericks
- 2. Twitter introduced a feature similar to Snapchat Stories that will automatically disappear after 24 hours. What are they called?**
  - a. Fades
  - b. Transitory Tweets
  - c. Fleets
  - d. Moments
- 3. In his second trial, former U.S. President Donald Trump was impeached and later acquitted of what high crime/misdemeanor charge?**
  - a. abuse of power and obstruction of Congress
  - b. perjury and obstruction of justice
  - c. violating the Tenure of Office Act
  - d. incitement of insurrection
- 4. Believing that the move will assist in freezing assets, criminalizing financing and slowing recruitment, Canadian officials designated what group as an extremist terrorist entity "fueled by white supremacy, anti-Semitism, racism, homophobia, Islamophobia and misogyny"?**
  - a. Canadian Heritage Alliance
  - b. Proud Boys
  - c. Boogaloo Bois
  - d. Sons of Liberty
- 5. There are hundreds of thousands of people who believe in at least part of QAnon theory, a theory that began in 2017. QAnon is an unfounded conspiracy theory that says what?**
  - a. President Trump is waging a secret war against elite Satan-worshipping pedophiles.
  - b. President Trump is actually a Russian citizen brought to bring down our democracy and to institute a communistic system.
  - c. President Trump is setting America up for a civil war, right wing against left wing.
  - d. Joe Biden and Hillary Clinton are Satan-worshippers who will face their day of reckoning and be arrested and executed.

6. **At a private ceremony attended by members of the Supreme Court in the East Conference Room, who administered Amy Coney Barrett's judicial oath Oct. 27?**
  - a. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas
  - b. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts
  - c. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg
  - d. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
  
7. **Although they typically happen once or twice a year during September and October, Ianos was one of the strongest on record. What was it?**
  - a. a volcanic eruption on the Greek islands such as the one that sank Atlantis
  - b. a medicane, a rare Mediterranean hurricane
  - c. a firestorm in Croatia that burned through the world's largest olive crops
  - d. a drought so severe it dried up portions of the Mediterranean Sea endangering shipping lanes
  
8. **Jeff Bezos stepped down as CEO of Amazon, saying he wanted to spend more time on what?**
  - a. Amazon's brick-and-mortar bookstores
  - b. SpaceX
  - c. COVID-19 relief
  - d. Blue Origin spaceship company
  
9. **Using powerful telescopes, scientists detected what chemical in Venus' atmosphere, a chemical that could be a sign of life?**
  - a. sulfuric acid
  - b. methane
  - c. phosphine
  - d. water
  
10. **The federal minimum wage for covered nonexempt employees is \$7.25 per hour. But which retail chain raised its minimum full-time hourly wage to \$17 starting Oct. 1, 2020?**
  - a. Hobby Lobby
  - b. Amazon
  - c. Costco
  - d. Target
  
11. **Which of the following is true about the shooting of Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky?**
  - a. The police officers who shot her were charged with varying degrees of murder.
  - b. Her family received a \$12 million settlement from the city.
  - c. Taylor was found guilty of drug possession by a grand jury.
  - d. None of the police officers involved in her shooting were charged with crimes.
  
12. **The 2020 hurricane season broke several records including which of the following?**
  - a. On Sept. 18, 2020, five storms formed in just six hours, a record.
  - b. Twelve storms made landfall in the U.S., breaking a 1916 record. (Eta made two landfalls in the U.S., both in Florida, to give the U.S. 13 official landfalls.)
  - c. Hurricane season began June 1. Within two weeks, 10 hurricanes had already formed.
  - d. The 2020 season produced 28 named storms (top winds of 39 mph or greater).

- 13. Members of the Southwestern University chapter of Kappa Alpha in Georgetown, Texas, demanded that the fraternity investigate the racial harms fraternity members have inflicted and drop the fraternity's association with whom?**
- Robert E. Lee
  - James Crow
  - Jefferson Davis
  - Stonewall Jackson
- 14. The maker of oxycontin agreed to plead guilty and to pay \$8.3 billion in fines for its role in the opioid crisis. Which company?**
- Insys
  - Mylan
  - Purdue Pharma
  - Depomed
- 15. Having been the chair of the Federal Reserve, the first woman in that role, Janet Yellen was appointed to what position in January, also the first woman in that role?**
- secretary of the treasury
  - co-chair of the High-Level Expert Group on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress
  - director of the World Bank
  - director of the Internal Revenue Service
- 16. Voters approved legalizing what everywhere it was on the ballot: Arizona, Montana, New Jersey and South Dakota?**
- possession of small amounts of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine
  - drinking/possession of alcohol
  - recreational marijuana
  - use/possession of tobacco at all ages



- 17. It's a new flag for what state?**
- Alabama
  - North Carolina
  - Louisiana
  - Mississippi
- 18. The Obama administration put in motion to print who on the \$20 bill, replacing Andrew Jackson, a move the Biden administration said it would try to move forward?**
- Barack Obama, the first Black president
  - Rosa Parks, civil rights activist
  - Harriet Tubman, a famous abolitionist
  - Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights activist

- 19. More than 82,000 people came forward with claims against the Boy Scouts ahead of a deadline established in bankruptcy court. Claims for what?**
- discriminating against women
  - not allowing people with disabilities to join
  - engaging in political activity despite nonprofit status
  - sex abuse
- 20. Kim Ng was the first woman hired as the general manager of a Major League Baseball team. What team?**
- Miami Marlins
  - Houston Astros
  - Frisco Rough Riders
  - Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp
- 21. Climbers of the mountain have the height, 29,029 feet from sea level to summit, memorized. But due to earthquakes and plate tectonics, the mountain's height was measured again in December and found to be 29,031.7 feet. What mountain?**
- Mount Chimborazo in Ecuador
  - Mauna Kea in Hawaii
  - Mount Everest in Nepal and Tibet
  - Denali in Alaska
- 22. On Sept. 15, 2020, Portland (Oregon), Seattle (Washington) and Vancouver (British Columbia, Canada) ranked the top in the world for what?**
- most incidents of police brutality
  - highest unemployment
  - most cases of COVID-19
  - worst air quality and pollution due to wildfire smoke
- 23. After it was damaged last fall, which 305-meter telescope was scheduled for demolition before it collapsed in December?**
- Hubble telescope
  - Arecibo radio telescope
  - China's Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope (FAST)
  - UT's McDonald Observatory telescope in Fort Davis, Texas
- 24. One of the newest sports for the 2024 Olympic Games is what?**
- karate
  - the running race, a 200-yard sprint
  - break dancing ("breaking")
  - baseball
- 25. After the game was over, the opposing team's coach brought a clipboard over. It read, "Good job." The six-man football team had just won what school's first state title in 164 years?**
- Young Women's Leadership Academy
  - Texas School for the Deaf
  - Arbor Academy Lions
  - Capitol School of Austin

- 26. What evidence did U.S. Attorney General William Barr disclose regarding the 2020 election?**
- He produced ballots from four states that were improperly counted but amounted to less than 0.001% of the ballots counted, not enough to change the outcome.
  - He, and 126 congressional Republicans, showed how voting machines in 13 states had been manipulated.
  - Along with Rudy Giuliani, he found widespread irregularities in elections in Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.
  - There was no evidence of widespread irregularities.
- 27. At its peak, the stock price topped \$483. Reddit users invested heavily in the stock to push back against hedge funds that were betting against what company, a company whose stock fell more than 80% a week later?**
- GameStop
  - Roblox
  - Coinbase
  - Bumble
- 28. The statistics and records of greats such as Josh Gibson, Satchel Paige and roughly 3,400 other players are set to join Major League Baseball's books after MLB announced what?**
- It is reclassifying the Negro Leagues as a major league.
  - It is adding them to the Baseball Hall of Fame.
  - It is allowing them to play for current teams, adding their past records to the current team records.
  - It is reclassifying the Little Leagues as a major league and adding their records while playing Little League to their professional records.
- 29. Which of the following is NOT true regarding the markets at the end of 2020?**
- The benchmark S&P 500 index finished with a gain of 16.3% for the year at 3,756.07.
  - The Nasdaq composite soared 43.6%, its best annual gain since 2009 ending at 12,888.
  - The NYSE Composite Index ended the year at 14,524.80 a record high.
  - The Dow ended the year at an all-time high of 6,930.40.
- 30. Facing multiple crises including twin hurricanes, earthquakes, the island's debt crisis, corruption scandals and the pandemic, Pedro Pierluisi was sworn in as governor of what country Jan. 2?**
- Guam
  - American Samoa
  - U.S. Virgin Islands
  - Puerto Rico
- 31. What legislation became part of the first veto override by Congress in the Trump presidency?**
- a police reform bill that dissolves city police departments and gives police control to the states
  - the annual defense bill
  - a high-tech reform bill that would immediately break up tech giants Alphabet, Microsoft and Apple.
  - a coronavirus relief bill that would give all taxpaying citizens \$2,000

- 32. With less than six full days on the job, Manuel Merino stepped down as interim president of which country, faced with mounting opposition from protesters?**
- Peru
  - Azerbaijan
  - Somolia
  - Cabinda
- 33. In Texas, which of the following groups was NOT included in Phase 1A or 1B of the vaccine distribution?**
- health care providers
  - those 65 and older with underlying health conditions
  - long-term care facility residents and staff
  - teachers
- 34. Google, Apple and Amazon all booted Parler from their platforms, leaving the social media platform virtually homeless. What was Parler?**
- the world's leading live streaming platform for gamers
  - a Canadian multinational e-commerce company
  - a microblogging platform favored by conservatives
  - an American VoIP, instant messaging and digital distribution platform designed for creating communities
- 35. What is the Defense Production Act?**
- Legislation passed in response to the Cold War to create the National Guard in defense of the nation.
  - Legislation passed in response to the start of the Korean War to facilitate the production of goods and services necessary for the national security.
  - Legislation passed in 1845 by the first Texas legislature to create and defend a border between Texas and Mexico.
  - Legislation passed in 1789 that allowed the U.S. government to begin production of "weapons and other material" necessary to defend the country.
- 36. Tom Brady, now with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, set the record for most MVP awards, most wins, most starts (10) and most games played. This year, he played in what game?**
- Super Bowl LV
  - World Series
  - Stanley Cup Championship
  - U.S. Open
- 37. As required by the Constitution, who presided over the second impeachment trial of former U.S. President Donald Trump?**
- the chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, John Roberts
  - the vice president, Kamala Harris
  - a senator, Patrick Leahy, D-Vermont, the president pro tempore of the Senate
  - the speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, D-California
- 38. Leaders at Texas A&M University made it clear in late January that a statue was staying put in the center of campus on Academic Plaza despite requests to have it taken down. A statue of whom?**
- Martin Luther King Jr.
  - Sam Houston
  - Lawrence Sullivan Ross
  - Davy Crockett

**39. The Russian coronavirus vaccine was reportedly 92% effective. What was the vaccine named?**

- a. Vostok
- b. Sputnik
- c. Soyuz
- d. Kosmos

**40. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken announced that the U.S. and Russia have extended what treaty, a key nuclear arms control agreement that was set to expire on Feb. 5?**

- a. Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START)
- b. Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (IRNFT)
- c. Paris Agreement
- d. Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)

### **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**

In the spring of 2020, the economy was booming and unsettled Americans were preparing for an election season like no other. Then the pandemic hit. The World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic. In the fall of 2020 and into the spring of 2021, the country's response to the pandemic continued, changing our way of life, at least temporarily.

Discuss four ways life in America changed as a result of the pandemic, including one science / technology change, one economic change, one social / cultural change and one other change.



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# ANSWER KEY

## ESSAY PROMPT

In the spring of 2020, the economy was booming and unsettled Americans were preparing for an election season like no other. Then the pandemic hit. The World Health Organization on March 11, 2020, declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic. In the fall of 2020 and into the spring of 2021, the country's response to the pandemic continued, changing our way of life, at least temporarily.

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

## POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS PREPARED Feb. 13, 2021 might include, but should not be limited to...

- *Science / Technology* — The first vaccines for COVID-19 to complete phase 3 testing are an entirely new type: mRNA vaccines. Never before have mRNA vaccines — such as the two-dose Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines that have now received emergency use authorization from the FDA — been approved for use in any disease. Some traditional vaccines use weakened virus, while others use just a critical piece of the virus's protein coat. In the case of COVID-19, a piece called the spike protein is the critical piece. Researchers from the University of Texas at Austin, including Jason McLellan, Daniel Wrapp and Nianshuang Wang, helped to identify this protein.
- *Economic* — A study from the University of Southern California found that the pandemic could result in net losses from \$3.2 trillion and up to \$4.8 trillion in U.S. real gross domestic product over the course of two years. But the real costs were more tangible. The mandatory closure of restaurants and bars, the places found to have the most rapid spread of the disease, hit home particularly with small-business owners. The unemployment rate was 6.3% in January, up from just below 4% before the pandemic but down from a high of 14.7% last spring. Still all the markets remained high, closing off 2020 at or near record highs. Inflation remained nearly constant at about 1.4% in January of 2021.
- *Economic sidebar* — We learned how to videoconference, using videoconferencing for everything from teaching classes to doing job interviews. Use of Zoom software jumped 30-fold. At its peak, the firm counted more than 300 million daily participants in virtual meetings, while paying customers have more than tripled. Zoom founder Eric Yuan has seen his net worth soar by almost 400%, with his personal shares in Zoom now valued at around \$17 billion.
- *Social / Cultural* — CDC guidelines recommended that people wash their hands frequently, maintain a 6-foot separation and wear masks. So we got used to eating out in. We got used to using Zoom for meeting. And we got used to having class at home. On Jan. 20, 2021, U.S. President Joe Biden issued an executive order making these more than recommendations: “[T]o protect the Federal workforce and individuals interacting with the Federal workforce, and to ensure the continuity of Government services and activities, on-duty or on-site Federal employees, on-site Federal contractors, and other individuals in Federal buildings and on Federal lands should all wear masks, maintain physical distance, and adhere to other public health measures, as provided in CDC guidelines.”
- *Other* — The way teachers taught and students learned changed. While face-to-face education was the norm before the pandemic, it remained the exception in areas hit by the pandemic even a year after the start of the pandemic. Most schools canceled or modified fall sports seasons, even moving football into the spring.
- *Other* — College enrollment declined with more than 8% of high school seniors saying they were no longer planning to enroll in college due to the pandemic (according to [educationdata.org](https://educationdata.org)).
- *Other* — Even our vocabulary grew and evolved. We added words and phrases such as lockdown, social distancing, quarantine, pandemic, covidiot, doomscrolling, super-spreader, flattening the curve, quaranteam, Zoombomb, WFH and coronacation to our everyday vocabulary.