



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE
Making a World of Difference

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

 @UILCIANDE

2021 • STATE

Prepared April 12, 2021



Undocumented immigrants climb an embankment March 17 after running across the shallow Rio Grande separating Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, from El Paso, Texas. Photo by John Moore / Getty Images / Used with permission

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CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

STATE • 2021

- 1. Described among colleagues as a straight shooter familiar with the Texas legislative process and the policies at play, Dade Phelan, R-Beaumont, was elected to what position Jan. 12?**
 - a. governor
 - b. speaker of the House
 - c. lieutenant governor
 - d. speaker pro tempore
- 2. Maryland lawmakers repealed a Civil War-era call to arms for the Confederacy against “Northern scum.” What was it?**
 - a. the state’s motto, “Fatti maschii, parole femine”
 - b. the state’s flag containing the 17th-century heraldic banner of arms of Cecil, 2nd Baron Baltimore
 - c. the state’s song, “Maryland, My Maryland”
 - d. the words written into the state constitution to be read at the beginning of every legislative session
- 3. Joining Rutgers University in New Jersey and Cornell University in New York, St. Edward’s University, a small private university in Austin, Texas, announced what would be true for the fall semester?**
 - a. All fall classes will be virtual.
 - b. The university will refuse any state funding because of new state voting restrictions.
 - c. St. Edward’s University will accept students, often known as Dreamers, who are undocumented but who have been residents of the state for 10 or more years.
 - d. Students and employees must get a COVID-19 vaccine if they need to return in person.
- 4. On March 31, what state became the 15th state to legalize recreational marijuana, taxing it at 13% and joining Virginia that will make recreational use legal later this year?**
 - a. New York
 - b. New Jersey
 - c. Oklahoma
 - d. South Carolina
- 5. Which of the following is a characteristic of Georgia’s new voting law?**
 - a. Voters will have more time to request absentee ballots, up to 180 days before the election from 78.
 - b. Third-party groups cannot provide water to voters waiting in line.
 - c. Voters will have to sign their absentee ballots to prove their identity but won’t have to provide a number from a state-issued identification.
 - d. Election officials can mail absentee ballots to all registered voters but not to selected groups of voters.

- 6. A new energy-friendly fleet of delivery vehicles and shorter office hours were just part of a massive 10-year plan Louis DeJoy had to make so that which business would be more competitive and more modern?**
 - a. the United State Postal Service (USPS)
 - b. United Parcel Service (UPS)
 - c. Amazon Home Delivery
 - d. AT&T home service

- 7. President Joe Biden delivered the first prime-time address of his term on March 11. In the 24-minute speech, he pulled out a note on his schedule with the total deaths in the U.S. from COVID-19. How many?**
 - a. 23,399,584
 - b. 2,647,251
 - c. 527,726
 - d. 36,919,777

- 8. Regarding what he called “a banking error of perhaps unprecedented nature and magnitude,” a judge ruled that Citibank will not be able to recoup \$500 million, part of “valid debt,” that was mistakenly wired to lenders associated with what company?**
 - a. L’Oreal
 - b. Morgan Stanley
 - c. Alphabet, Inc.
 - d. Revlon

- 9. After a 292.5 million-mile journey, NASA’s Perseverance rover safely landed on Mars. What was its primary mission?**
 - a. establish a settlement on the red planet
 - b. seek signs of ancient life
 - c. begin the foundation of a power-generating plant
 - d. communicate with the indigenous population

- 10. Congress passed President Joe Biden’s \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan along party lines in early March. Which of the following did it ultimately NOT include?**
 - a. an increase in the minimum wage to \$15
 - b. one-time \$1,400 stimulus checks for most individuals
 - c. nearly \$20 billion into COVID-19 vaccinations
 - d. \$350 billion for tribal, local and state governments

- 11. A man who drove a car into a security barrier killed police officer William Evans, forcing officials to reexamine security at what building?**
 - a. the White House
 - b. the U.S. Capitol
 - c. the U.S. embassy in Baghdad
 - d. Chicago’s Trump Tower

- 12. For her vote to impeach Donald Trump, the Republican Party of what state voted to censure Rep. Liz Cheney, the third most powerful Republican in the U.S. House?**
 - a. Utah
 - b. Washington
 - c. Montana
 - d. Wyoming

- 13. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic led to lower-than-expected emissions, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued a report in April showing that what greenhouse gas had reached its highest levels in 3.6 million years?**
- carbon dioxide (CO₂)
 - nitrous oxide (N₂O)
 - various hydrofluorocarbons
 - chlorophyll (C₅₅H₇₀O₆N₄Mg)
- 14. As Texas residents dealt with record cold, roughly 3.9 million residents went without power when the power grid failed, and the Electric Reliability Council of Texas came under scrutiny. What is unique about ERCOT?**
- It provides power to Texas' profitable major cities but doesn't serve the rural areas, unlike all other power grids.
 - It is managed by a for-profit company with, according to the company's mission, an incentive to "pay off investors."
 - It provides energy to the nation's power grid using only renewable sources such as wind.
 - It is the only power grid that isn't under federal control.
- 15. U.S. President Joe Biden introduced a \$2 trillion piece of legislation he labeled the "America Jobs Plan" but that became known as the infrastructure proposal. Which of the following was NOT included in this legislation?**
- training of public school teachers in modern technology, \$100 billion
 - roadways, railways and bridges, \$621 billion
 - caregivers for elderly and people with disabilities, \$400 billion
 - clean drinking water, including replacement of all lead pipes, \$111 billion
- 16. The United States is under pressure to boycott the 2022 Winter Olympics over China's rampant human rights abuses. Much of the outcry is focused on China's treatment of which ethnic group?**
- Zhuang, a Tai-speaking ethnic group
 - The Mongols, most of whom live near Mongolia
 - Manchu, descendants from the Jurchen people
 - Uyghurs, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group
- 17. One of several guest hosts including Katie Couric and Dr. Oz, Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers did a two-week stint as host of what TV show in search of a permanent host?**
- Saturday Night Live
 - Jeopardy!
 - 60 Minutes
 - Call Me Kat
- 18. Hindering delivery of basic supplies to bakeries, hospitals, communication centers and other vital institutions nearby as well as worldwide oil supplies, a giant cargo ship, Ever Given, blocked what critical waterway in March?**
- the Panama Canal
 - Houston Ship Channel
 - the Suez Canal
 - Beijing-Hangzhou Grand Canal

- 19. Amanda Gorman — a 22-year-old poet — was the youngest poet ever to perform at a presidential inauguration. Her poem began with a question. Which one?**
- How could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?
 - There is always light. Is there always light?
 - When day comes, we ask ourselves where can we find light in this never-ending shade?
 - Is our nation broken? Unfinished? Great?
- 20. As Choe Sang-Hun reported in *The New York Times*, “North Korea issued warnings for more than a week. It swore that the Biden administration would pay a ‘price,’ accused it of raising ‘a stink’ on the Korean Peninsula and called Washington’s effort to open a channel of communication a ‘trick,’ vowing to deal with the United States ‘power for power.’ ” On March 24, what did North Korea do as a show of force?**
- launched a cyberattack on the world’s banking system and stole \$316 million
 - launched two short-range ballistic missiles
 - vowed to develop nuclear weapons by year’s end and to overturn the U.S. government
 - sent soldiers into South Korea reaching as far south as Seoul
- 21. Sarah Everard disappeared as she walked home in London on March 3 and was found dead a week later. Police told women to stay inside for their own safety. What social movement was set off?**
- Take Back the Night
 - Denim Day
 - Reclaim These Streets
 - Walk a Mile in Her Shoes
- 22. According to an analysis by NASA, the Earth in 2020 tied with 2016 as what?**
- the year with the least methane emissions thanks to travel restrictions related to the pandemic
 - the warmest year on record
 - the year with the smallest polar ice caps
 - the year with the highest high temperature (130°) and the coldest cold temperature (-128° F)
- 23. According to an intelligence report that the Biden administration released in February, who approved the assassination of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in 2018?**
- Recep Tayyip Erdogan, president of the Republic of Turkey
 - President Arif Alvi of Pakistan
 - Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia
 - Prime Minister Maen Abdulmaik Saeed of Yemen
- 24. Although House Resolution 51 is expected to pass in the House this spring, it will likely stall in the Senate as most Republicans oppose making what the 51st state?**
- Washington, D.C. — It would become the State of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth.
 - Puerto Rico — It would gain two seats in the Senate and one in the House.
 - Guam — Residents would have to pay U.S. taxes for the first time.
 - The Virgin Islands — It will become part of the 51st state with Puerto Rico.
- 25. The polar vortex brings the season’s coldest days to the central states. What is the polar vortex?**
- a part of the jet stream moving cold winds from the polar regions to North America
 - winds, including the Santa Ana winds, that bring moisture off the Pacific Ocean forming massive snowfalls and ice over the areas east of the Rocky Mountains
 - a high pressure system that forms over the North Pole and blocks warm winds from the tropics from reaching North America
 - a gigantic, circular, upper-air weather pattern in the Arctic that envelops the North Pole

- 26. For a March 29 exhibition game between the Texas Rangers and the Milwaukee Brewers, 12,911 fans watched the Rangers lose, 4-0. What was unique about the game?**
- It was the first time the Rangers lost to a National League team in two years.
 - It was the first baseball game in the new Globe Life Field, a field completed last spring just as the pandemic started.
 - It was the first time the stadium could be open to its capacity of 40,300 since the state lifted coronavirus capacity restrictions earlier in the month.
 - It marked the first time alcohol could be sold at a game open to the public, given the rule changes made during the pandemic regarding alcohol sales.
- 27. As the district works to redress racial disparities, 16 organizations signed a resolution asking the Dallas school district to ban what?**
- punishment for being tardy to class
 - homework
 - in-school and out-of-school suspensions
 - virtual classes
- 28. What are Satan Shoes?**
- songs sung by rapper Joyner Lucas on a hit new album
 - a group of various right-wing Twitter personalities
 - a group of religious pastors and politicians working together for voter-suppression laws in 43 states
 - limited edition Nike sneakers produced with the rapper Lil Nas X
- 29. “We have defeated the enemy.” What group is scrambling to secure peace in Afghanistan while, at the same time, saying they have won the war?**
- the Taliban
 - ISIS
 - Al Qaeda
 - Daesh
- 30. Former Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder was charged with two counts of willful neglect of duty. He is facing up to one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine for his role in what?**
- election fraud in the 2020 election and manipulating Dominion Voting Systems machines
 - the 2014 Flint water scandal
 - knowingly giving nine people Legionnaires’ disease
 - a pay-to-play scheme, seeking to sell an appointment to Barack Obama’s old Senate seat
- 31. Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson signed Senate Bill 6 dealing with abortion. The controversial bill did what?**
- bans all abortions unless the pregnancy endangers the life of the mother
 - bans all abortions with no exceptions
 - bans all abortions except those that involve rape or incest
 - makes abortion legal when performed by a medical doctor in the first trimester
- 32. On Jan. 20, Joseph R. Biden Jr. was sworn in as the 46th president of the United States. Which of the following is true of the inauguration ceremony?**
- There was record attendance, 1.8 million people, the largest gathering on the Mall ever.
 - As per tradition, all living, former presidents attended.
 - Biden became the oldest president to assume the presidency at 78 years, 61 days.
 - Patrick Leahy, president pro tempore of the Senate, administered Biden’s oath.

- 33. The Democratic-led U.S. House approved HR1, a sweeping government bill designed primarily to do what?**
- impose voter ID requirements and curb access to early and mail-in voting in all states
 - amend the tax code to reduce tax brackets by 3% on average
 - appropriate \$5 trillion for infrastructure improvements as designated by the Department of Transportation
 - counter Republican efforts to restrict voting access
- 34. The number of billionaires on Forbes' 35th annual list of the world's wealthiest exploded to an unprecedented 2,755. There are 493 newcomers and more women than ever before. Who topped the list for the fourth consecutive year?**
- Bill Gates, Microsoft
 - Elon Musk, Tesla
 - Jeff Bezos, Amazon
 - Francoise Bettencourt Meyers, L'Oreal
- 35. Days before the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing — “Constitutional and Common Sense Steps to Reduce Gun Violence” — there were two mass shootings in America. Which of the following is NOT true of the shootings?**
- In a store in Boulder, Colorado, the gunman used a pistol that resembled an AR-15 rifle.
 - At one, a gunman targeted people in three spas in or near Atlanta.
 - In all, 18 people were killed including one police officer.
 - The FBI considered both to be hate crimes since they were racially motivated.
- 36. A study published in late February found that life expectancy in the United States dropped to its lowest level in 15 years. Which of the following is true?**
- Life expectancy fell to 75.1 years, down by 3.1 years overall.
 - Life expectancy for Black populations declined by 2.7 years to 72 years.
 - The pandemic had no impact overall.
 - The life expectancy for males exceeded that of females for the first time.
- 37. Who claimed responsibility in March for the seizure of a port in Palma, Mozambique, home to a French natural gas project?**
- Algerian insurgent groups
 - ISIS-linked militants
 - Nathan C, followers of Salafism
 - Ansar al-Sunna, a native extremist faction with tenuous international connections
- 38. Presidential candidate Guy-Brice Parfait Kolélas was trying to unseat President Denis Sassou Nguesso who had been in power for 36 years. Which is also true about the election?**
- Kolélas won the election changing the power structure in the Republic of Congo.
 - Nguesso was sent to jail, convicted of stealing \$50 million in state funds, leaving a power vacuum that Kolélas could not legally fill.
 - Election watchers from the UN charged Nguesso with election fraud and “forcing people to vote for him at gunpoint”; the results won't be known until this summer.
 - Having tested positive for COVID-10, Kolélas died the day after the election.
- 39. Adidas is exploring shoes that aren't made from animal leather. What is the base material for these new shoes?**
- fungi
 - ferns
 - cannabis
 - seaweed

40. Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo was fined nearly \$110,000 for violating the “Sauvadet law.”

What did she do?

- a. Promoted too many women to senior management positions
- b. Passed an order effectively barring gay couples from adopting children
- c. Barred more than 10 people from attending religious services at churches and synagogues during the pandemic
- d. Used “Dr.” as part of her title on social media even though she is not a medical doctor

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 statement from the White House on Jan. 20 began, “President Biden is sending a bill to Congress on day one to restore humanity and American values to our immigration system.” But over the next few months, what happened along America’s southern border, a border with Mexico, was frustrating for the Biden administration as well as state and local officials and seen as anything but humane by observers from both parties.

Describe some of the challenges local, state and federal officials have faced in recent months along the border, what might be behind the problems at the border and what is being done about these problems.

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ANSWER KEY

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POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS PREPARED April 12, 2021 might include, but should not be limited to...

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

- *The Problem* — Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas, March 16, 2021: “We are on pace to encounter more individuals on the southwest border than we have in the last 20 years. We are expelling most single adults and families. We are not expelling unaccompanied children. We are securing our border; executing the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) public health authority to safeguard the American public and the migrants themselves, and protecting the children. We have more work to do.”
- *Children* — Mayorkas: “We are encountering many unaccompanied children at our southwest border every day. The Border Patrol facilities have become crowded with children and the 72-hour time frame for the transfer of children from the Border Patrol to HHS is not always met.” The number of unaccompanied children crossing the border in March reached more than 18,500, according to preliminary Customs and Border Protection data obtained by NBC News, smashing the previous record as the Biden administration scrambles to set up new shelters to accommodate them. The daily average as of March 23 is up from around 500 earlier this month, and far surpasses the height of the 2019 surge of migrant families, when Border Patrol apprehended around 370 unaccompanied children a day on average.
- *The wall* — To pick up border wall construction where former President Donald Trump left off, Texas House Rep. Bryan Slaton, R-Mineral Wells, has introduced HB 2862 that would see the construction of a border wall along the Texas-Mexico border. According to Customs and Border Patrol, 281 miles of border wall have been completed or are under construction as of the beginning of the year. Texas and Mexico share 1,254 miles of common border.
- *Biden perception* — The president campaigned on easing immigration controls, including a moratorium on deportations, an end to former U.S. President Donald Trump’s “wait in Mexico” policy for asylum-seekers and halting construction of the border wall. Biden’s platform gave migrants reason to believe it would be easier to get into the U.S. if he were elected. Despite the numbers, the Biden administration has avoided calling it a “crisis.”
- *Immigration bill* — Since taking office, Biden has also given potential immigrants good reason to think they might be allowed to stay. His immigration bill, the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021, would offer legal status and a pathway to citizenship to much of the U.S. undocumented population.
- *Escaping El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras* — While the U.S. will continue to support asylum seekers and other vulnerable populations, Biden’s legislation allocates \$4 billion to address the underlying causes of immigration in the region.
 - *Honduras* — Widespread gang violence fuels the instability and suffering. Criminals have extorted Hondurans into paying an arbitrary “war tax” for their survival, and those who can’t pay often are killed. Some of the migrants are transgender people who faced persecution.
 - *El Salvador* — Poor economic conditions and natural disasters also have contributed to Salvadorans fleeing their country.
 - *Guatemala* — More than half of Guatemala lives in poverty, and 23% lives in extreme poverty – meaning people live on less than \$1.25 a day.

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

CONTESTANT ANSWER SHEET

DO NOT write your name or school on this paper. Clearly write the **LETTER** corresponding to the best response to each question in the space below. Each objective question is worth 1 point. Write your response to the essay on the paper provided. The essay is worth as much as 10 points. You have 60 minutes.

- | | |
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FOR JUDGE'S USE

Points from **OBJECTIVE**
questions (each correct
answer counts 1 point) _____

If in the top eight places,
add the points from the
ESSAY question _____

TOTAL POINTS _____

Reminder: Team score is based on the cumulative score of the multiple choice portion of the contest only. Do not count the essay scores toward the team championship.