



Making a World of Difference

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

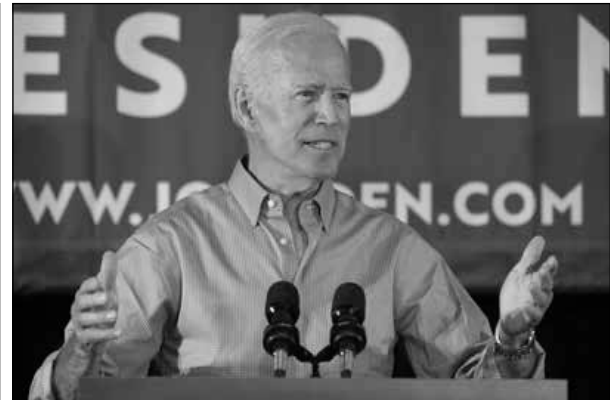
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2024 • REGION

March 13, 2024



Donald Trump



Joe Biden

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UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

REGION • 2024

- 1. With two women frontrunners, Claudia Sheinbaum and Xóchitl Gálvez, what country will likely elect its first female president on June 2?**
 - a. Iceland
 - b. Mexico
 - c. Dominica
 - d. Latvia
- 2. The U.S. House passed a bill that would lead to a nationwide ban of what popular app if its China-based owner doesn't sell?**
 - a. SnapChat
 - b. WhatsApp
 - c. Facebook
 - d. TikTok
- 3. Maria Tallchief, considered the country's first prima ballerina, is one of up to 20 women of a range of ethnicities that officials with the U.S. Mint selected to be a part of a program for what?**
 - a. A photo of her was put on a stamp.
 - b. She went on a speaking tour to support the sale of U.S. savings bonds.
 - c. Her likeness was put on a quarter.
 - d. The faces of each of the women would be on a limited run of \$1 bills.
- 4. George Santos was only the sixth member of the U.S. House of Representatives to be expelled in the body's history — only the third in the last half-century. How was Santos' case different from the other two in more recent years?**
 - a. More than two-thirds of the House voted to remove Santos.
 - b. The vote to remove Santos was bipartisan.
 - c. Santos was not convicted in criminal court before being expelled.
 - d. Santos was a member of the party in control of the House — Republican.
- 5. The SLIM space probe entered the moon's orbit on Dec. 25, 2023, and landed on Jan. 19, 2024. As a result, what country became the fifth to soft land on the surface of the moon?**
 - a. Japan
 - b. Luxembourg
 - c. Israel
 - d. China
- 6. In March, what country became the 32nd member of the trans-Atlantic military alliance NATO?**
 - a. Hungary
 - b. Finland
 - c. Sweden
 - d. Ukraine

7. **To comply with FIFA regulations, AT&T stadium will be renamed Dallas Stadium for nine games, all part of what 2026 event with the finals in New York New Jersey Stadium?**
 - a. the Stanley Cup playoffs
 - b. the World Cup
 - c. the NASCAR 500
 - d. the U.S. Open

8. **After 11 hours of deliberations, members of the jury found Jennifer Crumbley, the mother of the Oxford High School (Michigan) shooter, guilty of what?**
 - a. four counts of domestic terrorism
 - b. failure to register a firearm
 - c. improper parenting
 - d. four counts of involuntary manslaughter

9. **For more than a decade, Apple was the stock market's undisputed king. What company surpassed Apple as the world's most valuable public company on Jan. 12 after its value surged to \$2.89 trillion, according to Bloomberg?**
 - a. Saudi Aramco
 - b. Alphabet (Google)
 - c. Microsoft
 - d. Amazon

10. **The double emergence of Brood XIX and Brood XIII is expected to happen this year for the first time since 1803. It could result in the emergency of a billion what?**
 - a. migratory locust (*Locusta migratoria*)
 - b. mosquitos
 - c. golden toads
 - d. cicadas

11. **The Federal Highway Administration says no joking around and is giving states two years to get rid of what kinds of messages?**
 - a. sarcastic social media messages tagging groups such as @I35travel
 - b. funny messages on state highway electronic signs
 - c. any messages on electronic billboards with bright LED lights
 - d. comments on state-maintained web pages giving advice to the FHWA

12. **Mayor Eric Adams sued Texas, seeking \$700 million to cover New York City's costs for what?**
 - a. submitting false pipeline safety reports after a spill leaked 588,000 gallons of crude oil into pristine New York forests
 - b. tens of thousands of migrants sent by bus from Texas by Gov. Greg Abbott
 - c. use of water from the Gulf of Mexico
 - d. raising the price of oil pumped in the Gulf of Mexico to increase Texas tax revenue

13. **The New York Times became the first American media organization to sue what companies over copyright issues associated with its written works?**
 - a. search engine companies including Google and Bing
 - b. media conglomerates such as Disney and Comcast
 - c. social media companies such as X and Meta
 - d. artificial intelligence companies including ChatGPT

14. **Blazing past its previous record high reached nearly two years ago, the Dow Jones Industrial Average reached a new high on Feb. 23, 2024. What?**
- 7.595%
 - 4,796.56 points
 - 39,282.28 points
 - 16,623.45 points
15. **After becoming the first speaker to be unseated from his post in U.S. history, what did Kevin McCarthy do?**
- switched parties, becoming a Democrat because he said that party better represents his ideals
 - moved to Wyoming and said he would be running for public office there
 - started work as a firefighter
 - announced he would retire
16. **The Texas Department of Transportation announced it will create a smart freight corridor near Austin on a 21-mile segment of Texas 130 between Texas 71 and Texas 45 North, including areas between Georgetown and Del Valle, that could be used for what?**
- self-driving trucking and other advanced trucking
 - bicycles
 - high-speed rail
 - electric cars and trucks
17. **As the world marked International Women’s Day, France inscribed what right into its constitution?**
- the right to abortion
 - the right for individuals to own guns without registration
 - the right to unionize and a mandatory retirement age of 62
 - the right to have a minimum wage tied to the country’s GDP and inflation rate
18. **Republicans, for the most part, are looking at senators all with the first name of John as the leading contenders to take over for longtime Republican leader Mitch McConnell. Which candidate from Texas was in the mix?**
- John Thune
 - John Barrasso
 - John Fetterman
 - John Cornyn
19. **Beyoncé’s new single “Texas Hold ’Em” skyrocketed to the top of the charts. She became the first Black woman to do what?**
- to have a best-selling single in any genre
 - to top Billboard’s Hot Country Songs chart
 - to have the most No. 1 songs on the Billboard Dance Club Songs chart
 - to top the charts for selling more concert tickets than any other solo performer
20. **Ohio, Indiana and West Virginia want to pause the “good neighbor” plan — an attempt by the Biden administration to control what?**
- shipping of fentanyl across state lines
 - busing immigrants from Mexico to their states
 - building dams along waterways that cross state lines
 - smog-forming pollution that drifts into other states

21. **It was the longest such event and will go down as the most-watched program in U.S. television history with 123.4 million viewers. What?**
- the 2024 Super Bowl
 - the Eras Tour by Taylor Swift
 - the Simpsons revival and accompanying convention
 - the Dancing with the Stars Marathon 2024
22. **Not in 148 years — since War Secretary William Belknap in 1876 — has the House impeached a Cabinet secretary. However, this year, the House of Representatives impeached which Cabinet secretary on its second try?**
- Secretary of State Antony Blinken
 - United States Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield
 - Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas
 - Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg
23. **Despite a recent debate about whether they should be considered a grain or part of another food group, Americans consumed nearly 29.3 pounds per person in 2021, a far greater amount than the runner-up, tomatoes. What?**
- onions
 - lettuce
 - potatoes
 - corn
24. **Who sought to end the long-running whistleblower lawsuit against him — and avoid sitting for a deposition — by saying he would no longer contest the facts of the case and was prepared to accept any judgment?**
- Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton
 - former U.S. President Donald Trump
 - Edward Snowden, computer professional
 - Gerry Smith, CEO of Office Depot
25. **In a New Year’s Day address, Xi Jinping said, “The reunification of the motherland is a historical inevitability.” What two countries did he say would be unified?**
- China and Taiwan
 - North and South Korea
 - North and South Vietnam
 - Guam and the Philippines
26. **Starting Jan. 1, what group qualified for Medi-Cal, California’s version of the federal Medicaid health insurance program?**
- all low-income undocumented immigrants
 - anyone who has started the asylum process
 - individuals with passports from Ukraine
 - anyone with a job in California
27. **Given that companies attempt to sell products to minors using images of food, celebrities or cartoon characters, Texas HB4758 made it a class B misdemeanor to use packaging designed to appeal to minors for what products?**
- any form of tobacco
 - alcohol
 - junk food
 - vaping / e-cigarettes

- 28. Although later unanimously overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court, the Colorado Supreme Court in a 4-to-3 decision said Donald Trump was barred by the 14th Amendment from holding federal office because he allegedly did what?**
- engaged in insurrection
 - lied about his citizenship
 - failed to give due process to people he accused of crimes
 - violated the equal protection clause
- 29. World leaders held climate talks in Dubai as part of COP28. Scientists forecast 2024 will be the hottest year in recorded history. Which of the following is also true?**
- Floods, fires, droughts and storms are made worse by the “normal cycle” of the planet, King Charles III of Britain said. “We should not be concerned.”
 - Greenhouse gas emissions, mainly driven by the burning of fossil fuels, have now warmed the planet by about 1.2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels.
 - The president of COP28, Sultan Al Jaber, admitted that phasing out all fossil fuel use by 2050 is a necessity.
 - The oil-rich nations in the Middle East doubled down and were adamant that sustainable fuel sources such as solar and wind just weren’t feasible.
- 30. It’s furry, it’s fierce — and it’s served as inspiration for sports mascots in Michigan and beyond. But now in much of the U.S., the animal is at risk of disappearing as the climate warms, prompting federal wildlife officials to protect what animal under the Endangered Species Act?**
- black-footed ferret
 - red wolf
 - wolverine
 - evening bat
- 31. Historically, passengers boarded commercial aircraft from the front to the back. United Airlines, on Oct. 26, started boarding which group of economy class passengers first saving up to two minutes in the boarding process?**
- people in aisle seats
 - people in window seats
 - people at the back of the plane
 - people flying standby
- 32. Dallas billionaire Mark Cuban’s health-care venture, Mark Cuban Cost Plus Drugs Company, took what action in March?**
- The company declared bankruptcy.
 - The company diversified by taking ownership of the Dallas Mavericks.
 - The company presented a new drug on Shark Tank that would detect and then reverse narcotic overdose.
 - The company began manufacturing its own drugs at its Deep Ellum facility.
- 33. Apple’s attempt failed after 10 years and was abandoned in February. What?**
- virtual reality goggles
 - a one-stop social media app
 - the self-driving car
 - a clothing line including athletic shoes and turtleneck sweaters

34. **The Smokehouse Creek fire became the largest on record in Texas history, scorching more than a million acres, devastating cattle ranches and consuming homes. What was the cause?**
- a broken power pole and downed wires
 - a cigarette thrown from a vehicle
 - a campfire that was not properly doused with water
 - lightning
35. **Researchers said an intensive study of Earth's deep interior confirmed the existence of a distinct structure. What?**
- a vast underground world populated by prehistoric creatures
 - a hot solid ball of iron and nickel about 800 miles wide
 - a frozen ocean
 - a silicate mass almost identical in composition to meteorites that have landed on Earth
36. **Unusually warm waters in the Caribbean Sea are fueling what some scientists said in October is the region's worst episode of what?**
- whale extinction
 - coral bleaching
 - oil leakage from the sea floor
 - shark migration
37. **He commands wide support after nearly a quarter-century in power, despite starting an immensely costly war in Ukraine that has taken thousands of his countrymen's lives and provoked repeated attacks inside Russia. He announced his candidacy in the presidential election, which would prolong his repressive and unyielding grip on Russia for at least another six years if he wins. Who?**
- Vladimir Putin
 - Yevgeny Prigozhin
 - Sheikh Mohamed
 - Volodymyr Zelenskyy
38. **On banners and T-shirts and balloons and social media posts, one piece of red, green, black and white imagery has emerged around the world in protests against the Israel-Hamas war. What?**
- a Christmas tree
 - an apple
 - the watermelon
 - the Nike Dunk Low Gorge Green
39. **Coming on the heels of a fake message created with artificial intelligence to mimic U.S. President Joe Biden, the Federal Communications Commission moved to criminalize what?**
- social media posts from foreign governments
 - unsolicited robocalls that use voices made with AI
 - posts on X, formerly known as Twitter, harassing government workers
 - fake websites giving false information about political campaigns
40. **Evidence of shifting global trade patterns in 2023, for the first time in 20 years, the U.S. bought more goods from what country than China?**
- Canada
 - South Korea
 - India
 - Mexico

THE ESSAY

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.

PROMPT

Every month, the polling service Gallup asks a random sample of people, “What do you think is the most important problem facing the country today?” In February 2024, the top five responses were

- Immigration (28%)
- The government / poor leadership (20%)
- The economy in general (12%)
- High cost of living / inflation (11%)
- Poverty / hunger / homelessness (6%)

All of these responses have become issues on the campaign trail, particularly after the Super Tuesday primaries headed into the fall election, but immigration continues to top the list.

Discuss (1) the facts surrounding immigration; (2) how the presumptive nominees at the top of the Republican and Democratic parties stand on immigration; and (3) how the legislative branch has dealt with immigration.

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ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

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POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS PREPARED March 13, 2024 might include, but should not be limited to...

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

- *Topping polls* — Immigration has ranked ahead of all other issues as the most important problem before, having last done so five years ago when there was a surge of attempted border crossings by Central American migrants. Republicans typically are the subgroup most likely to name immigration as the most important problem. Up from 37% in January, 57% of Republicans in February said immigration was the top problem. Independents showed a modest uptick, from 16% in January to 22% in February, while there has been no meaningful change among Democrats (9% in January and 10% in February).
- *Biden accused of inaction* — The border crisis confronting the U.S. President Joe Biden administration has left the president accused of inaction by critics. The U.S. House voted to impeach Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, with the Republican majority determined to punish the Biden administration over its handling of the U.S.-Mexico border after first failing in a politically embarrassing setback.
- *Administrative action* — Since Biden took office in January 2021, his administration has acted on a number of fronts to reverse Trump-era restrictions on immigration to the U.S.. The steps include plans to boost refugee admissions, preserving deportation relief for unauthorized immigrants who came to the U.S. as children and not enforcing the “public charge” rule that denies green cards to immigrants who might use public benefits like Medicaid. Biden has also lifted restrictions established early in the coronavirus pandemic that drastically reduced the number of visas issued to immigrants.
- *Record number of immigrants* — The U.S. southern border has witnessed a record of at least 6.3 million migrant encounters at and between ports of entry since Biden took office in January 2021, according to data from the Office of Homeland Security Statistics, resulting in more than 2.4 million migrants allowed into the country.
- *Legislation* — Senate Republicans blocked a bipartisan border deal and foreign aid package with assistance for Ukraine and Israel from advancing amid opposition from top House Republicans and former President Donald Trump. The failed vote on the bipartisan bill amounts to a stunning rebuke by the Senate GOP of a deal that would have enacted restrictive border measures and was crafted in part by one of their own members. Republicans had demanded that border security be in the bill – but then rejected it after pressure from Trump, who is making the border a campaign issue in his race for the White House.
- *Campaign trail* — On the campaign trail in mid-February, Trump made clear that, if elected again, he’d pursue more extreme immigration policies, including mass deportations of millions of people. As reported by PBS, Trump said, “On day one, I will terminate every open border policy of the Biden administration, and we will begin the largest domestic deportation operation in American history.”
- *Root causes* — As reported in the Congressional Research Service newsletter, *In Focus*, “Although motives vary by individual, difficult socioeconomic and security conditions — exacerbated by natural disasters and poor governance — appear to be the most important drivers of this mixed flow of economic migrants and asylum-seekers.” In FY2023, U.S. Border Patrol encountered more than 447,000 foreign nationals from the Northern Triangle crossing the U.S. Southwest border between ports of entry, including 213,000 Guatemalans; 181,000 Hondurans; and 53,000 Salvadorans.