



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE
Making a World of Difference

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

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2018 • INVITATIONAL B



Photo by JD Lasica, used with permission
Cory Booker speaks at a conference in 2012.



Photo courtesy the
U.S. Department of Treasury
**Congressional Oversight Panel
Chair Elizabeth Warren speaks at
the Women in Finance Symposium
in 2010.**



Photo by Gage Skidmore, used with permission
**U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont speaking at a town
meeting at the convention center in Phoenix, Arizona in 2015.**

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- 1. U.S. President Donald Trump plans to recognize a new city as the capital of Israel and to move the American Embassy there. What city?**
 - a. Tel Aviv
 - b. Jerusalem
 - c. Gaza
 - d. Bethlehem
- 2. Organizers are trying to raise funds to transport the R-Evolution sculpture from San Francisco to Washington. If they get the funding, when you walk along the National Mall until March 28, you'll see the Smithsonian museums, the Washington Monument, Capitol Hill, and, possibly, something else. What?**
 - a. an "everlasting" bonfire
 - b. a light wall that will display a larger-than-life picture of people walking by
 - c. a 45-foot-tall statue of a nude woman
 - d. a real-time X-ray of passers-by, "making skin color not a consideration"
- 3. Joining Nevada and Oregon, to reduce the flow of black-market product and to raise billions in tax revenue, effective Jan. 1, California legalized what?**
 - a. recreational use of fentanyl
 - b. possession of up to 500mg of cocaine
 - c. recreational use of marijuana
 - d. possession of oxycodone
- 4. The cowboy-hat wearing Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller said he was furious with the Six Flags amusement park chain, calling a decision the park made a "militant, anarchist movement sweeping our country, destroying and attempting to sanitize our nation's history." The decision was to do what?**
 - a. to resign from the national manufacturing council
 - b. to remove the Confederate flag and four other flags that had flown over the park
 - c. to have uni-sex bathrooms at all of the parks
 - d. to hire workers regardless of their immigration status
- 5. U.S. President Donald Trump pardoned Joe Arpaio. What is NOT true about the president's pardon power?**
 - a. It comes from Article II, Section 2, Clause 1 of the Constitution.
 - b. Convicted criminals normally makes a request for pardon to the Justice Department's Office of the Pardon Attorney.
 - c. It can be used to pardon *any* person convicted of *any* crime.
 - d. Pardon seekers typically have to wait at least five years after their conviction or release from prison.
- 6. Federal judges ruled in August that parts of the Texas House map must be redrawn ahead of the 2018 elections. Why?**
 - a. Lawmakers intentionally discriminated against minorities.
 - b. Lawmakers gerrymandered districts to intentionally benefit Republican incumbents.
 - c. The new districts didn't coincide with voter IDs approved by Senate Bill 5.
 - d. Texas didn't spend enough money, only \$4 million, in voter education.

7. **Democratic Senator Al Franken announced his resignation after what happened?**
 - a. Three women accused him of having unwanted sex with them about 30 years ago.
 - b. He denied inappropriate behavior on his radio show, Prairie Home Companion, but later admitted lying.
 - c. More than half a dozen women said he touched them improperly or made unwanted sexual advances.
 - d. He was diagnosed with cancer.

8. **A uranium company launched a lobbying campaign to scale back which national monument, a monument U.S. President Donald Trump announced he was cutting by 1.1 million acres or 85 percent?**
 - a. Grand Staircase-Escalante in Utah
 - b. Gold Butte in Nevada
 - c. Cascade-Siskiyou in California
 - d. Bears Ears in Utah

9. **What is net neutrality?**
 - a. a requirement that internet service providers treat all traffic equally
 - b. a law that says nothing controversial can be posted on the internet
 - c. part of the internet protocol that prevents TCP/IP packets from being used for political purposes
 - d. part of popular WWW3 guidelines issued by the Internet Consortium applying the First Amendment to all Web traffic worldwide.

10. **National lawmakers took to Twitter to decry what they saw as hypocrisy from the Texas delegation in the wake of Hurricane Harvey as Texas applied for billions in federal funds for storm recovery. What was the hypocrisy?**
 - a. Legislators in Texas, a Republican state, keep pushing for limited government interference in such local disasters.
 - b. In 2013, almost every Texas Republican voted against the \$50.5 billion aid bill for Hurricane Sandy recovery.
 - c. It was Texas legislators that voted for the abolishment of FEMA and the “Storm Recovery Fund” just before the August recess.
 - d. Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton sued the federal government to block funding of a wall in the Houston Ship Channel that would have prevented much of the flooding.

11. **In September, panicked drivers in Dallas waited in long lines for gas and gas prices rose more than 17 cents in the first week after Hurricane Harvey. How did the Energy Department respond?**
 - a. Officials put a cap on gas prices for the first time since Hurricane Katrina.
 - b. The Energy Department released 500,000 barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve.
 - c. State legislators passed emergency legislation to prevent price gouging.
 - d. Officials opened the Keystone Pipeline.

12. **Hurricanes Harvey and Irma caused major damage in the U.S. territories in the Atlantic Ocean. Which of the following is NOT a U.S. territory?**
 - a. Antigua
 - b. Navassa Island
 - c. Puerto Rico
 - d. Virgin Islands

- 13. U2 and Ed Sheeran canceled concerts in St. Louis. More than 120 protesters were arrested and a dozen police officers injured in St. Louis in September after three days of protests. What were people protesting?**
- U.S. President Donald Trump’s visit to the city and his position on immigration
 - legislation being proposed to require people to use the bathroom of their gender at birth
 - the visit of conservative writer Ben Shapiro at the University of Missouri—St. Louis
 - the acquittal of former St. Louis Patrolman Jason Stockley in the shooting of drug suspect Anthony Lamar Smith
- 14. In late September, Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and Sen. Bill Cassidy (R-La.), sponsored health care legislation. Who led the opposition, saying he wanted the legislation to go through the regular order using a transparent committee process with both parties able to shape it?**
- Susan Collins (R-Maine)
 - Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.)
 - Dan Lipinski (D-Ill.)
 - John McCain (R-Ariz.)
- 15. During his address to the United Nations, U.S. President Donald Trump referred to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un by which nickname?**
- Dotard
 - Rocket man
 - Frightened dog
 - Gangster fond of playing with fire
- 16. “Gerrymandering is distasteful,” said Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito Jr. hearing a case in October. What is gerrymandering?**
- allowing one political party to raise money from sources that the other party can’t
 - using social media to give one party information that another party doesn’t have
 - drawing political boundaries to give one party an advantage over another
 - giving data from one party to the opposing party giving the first party an advantage
- 17. Why were shipments of fuel and emergency supplies delayed in Puerto Rico last fall after Hurricane Maria?**
- The governor, a Republican, refused shipments, saying they were a form of federal aid not needed on his island.
 - The Jones Act prohibited foreign-flagged vessels from picking up and delivering fuel between U.S. ports.
 - There just weren’t enough people to distribute the material with forces still deployed in Houston and Florida.
 - FEMA refused to accept the disaster declaration saying that doesn’t apply to U.S. territories.
- 18. She has outlasted two U.S. presidents, three French leaders, six Italian prime ministers and three British prime ministers, making her Europe’s longest-serving democratically elected leader. German voters elected who for a fourth term?**
- Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
 - Erna Solberg
 - Angela Merkel
 - Theresa May

- 19. Elon Musk, just five years from now, aims to land two cargo ships on future flights with colonists. Where?**
- the moon
 - Mars
 - Saturn's moon Titan
 - Proxima Centauri
- 20. Atlanta-based company Equifax, once trusted to handle our credit scores, has become a pariah of the financial world after what happened?**
- Corporate leaders withheld information regarding company losses.
 - Hackers stole vital information of 145 million Americans.
 - The CEO gave himself a \$1.45 million bonus.
 - Competitor TransUnion failed in a hostile takeover attempt, offering \$0.75/dollar on each share.
- 21. Three American researchers won the Nobel Prize in medicine for discovering what?**
- mechanisms of autophagy, a fundamental process for degrading and recycling cellular components
 - a theory against infections caused by roundworm parasites
 - the molecular circuitry of body clocks, circadian rhythms
 - a therapy against Malaria
- 22. As customers do more and more shopping online, what business bucked the trend, closing its online store last fall to focus on creating unique in-store experiences?**
- Sears
 - Starbucks
 - Target
 - Toys R Us
- 23. The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to a group of mostly young activists pushing for what?**
- reunification of North and South Korea
 - a global treaty to ban nuclear weapons
 - reparations for all the deaths from nuclear bombs in World War II
 - abolishment of chemical weapons such as those used in college towns in the Ukraine and Egypt
- 24. "I'm not in the business of 51-49," Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones said. "That's not what we're about. I'm removing the politics. I'm removing everything from this. What I have the right to say is who's on that football field." Yet he came under fire in October for preventing his players from doing what?**
- traveling to Puerto Rico to assist in relief efforts
 - using drone footage to learn the plays of opposing teams
 - playing the 49ers in a benefit game with all income going to help relief efforts in Houston
 - taking a knee during the national anthem
- 25. Nearly 100 cars were destroyed and Napa Valley vineyards jeopardized by what event last fall that had an impact around much of northern California?**
- Hurricane Max
 - a magnitude 4.9 earthquake
 - drought and record high temperatures
 - wildfires

- 26. When the Boy Scouts of America said in October that they would admit girls, the Girl Scouts of the USA reacted. How?**
- They said it would do nothing to strain the century-old bond between the organizations.
 - The Girl Scouts said the BSA decision was driven by financial problems.
 - The Girl Scouts said they would immediately begin admitting boys.
 - The Girl Scouts announced two new flavors of cookies and otherwise made no reference to the BSA decision.
- 27. Putting its leader, 31-year-old Sebastian Kurz, on track to become the world's youngest head of government, the center-right People's Party won the national election in what country?**
- France
 - Austria
 - North Korea
 - Qatar
- 28. Texas has a new billionaire. Bert Beveridge, who originally got his start in the oil-and-gas industry, is worth an estimated \$2.5 billion and is now a part of the Forbes 400. What does his 20-year-old, \$2 billion company, the first of its kind in Texas, do?**
- produces vodka
 - ships packages
 - builds planes
 - designs personal computers
- 29. Honolulu became the first major city to enact a law that allows police to fine pedestrians up to \$35 for what?**
- texting in school zones
 - smoking on city streets and sidewalks
 - failure to give the right of way to native birds
 - viewing electronic devices while crossing streets
- 30. Officials in the 135-seat Catalan regional parliament voted, 70-10, for independence from what country?**
- Andorra
 - France
 - Algeria
 - Spain
- 31. According to the most comprehensive study ever of climate science by U.S. government researchers, it is "extremely" likely that what is the dominant cause of global warming?**
- the planet's move toward the sun
 - the normal cycles of climate change
 - rain forest destruction
 - human activities
- 32. Sayfullo Saipov obtained his green card as part of the Diversity Visa Lottery Program. He entered the United States from what country, a country NOT on the list of countries with travel bans?**
- Uzbekistan
 - Chad
 - Iraq
 - Kazakhstan

- 33. Although it was nothing really new, schools were closed, the government banned instruction, and residents were urged to stay inside and wear masks. Indeed, the pollution was so bad, United Airlines halted flights to where?**
- Beijing, China
 - Zabol, Iran
 - New Delhi, India
 - Kabul, Afghanistan
- 34. Three UCLA basketball players were arrested while their team was visiting the Chinese city of Hangzhou. They were eventually released and suspended from the team. What were they suspected of?**
- stealing sunglasses from a Louis Vuitton store
 - spying on behalf of the Democratic Party
 - stealing a propaganda sign from a hotel
 - the hazing death of a freshman involving “copious amounts of alcohol”
- 35. While, normally, deputy director Leandra English would have been named the acting director, U.S. President Donald Trump appointed Mick Mulvaney, previously head of the Office of Management and Budget, to lead what agency?**
- Small Business Administration
 - Department of Energy
 - Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
 - Office of the Comptroller
- 36. Two weeks after a Saudi-led coalition closed air, land and sea borders causing a humanitarian disaster, the U.N. called for an end to the blockade of what country?**
- Turkey
 - Cuba
 - Saudi Arabia
 - Yemen
- 37. Former army sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, who deserted his post in Afghanistan, was dishonorably charged. He spent five years captive by the Taliban-aligned Haqqani network. The military court sentenced him to how much prison time?**
- five years
 - seven years
 - life
 - none
- 38. Although he once proclaimed “only God will remove me,” Robert Mugabe resigned as president Nov. 21 shortly after lawmakers began impeachment proceedings against him. He was leader of what country since 1980?**
- Zimbabwe
 - Rhodesia
 - Botswana
 - South Africa
- 39. For allegedly covering up Iran’s role in the 1994 terrorist attack on a Buenos Aires Jewish center, former Argentine President Christina Fernandez de Kirchner was charged with what?**
- treason
 - obstructing justice
 - collusion
 - bribery

- 40. The Trump administration is ending a humanitarian program that has allowed some 59,000 Haitians to live and work in the United States since an earthquake ravaged Haiti in 2010. What program?**
- Obamacare
 - Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals
 - green-card lottery program
 - Temporary Protected Status

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, current events 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.

Neither the White House nor either house of Congress belong to the Democratic Party. The Republican Party has complete control of state government in 26 states, and full legislative control in 32 states. “[T]he party is in disarray,” said Rep. Scott Peters (D-Calif.) in a November interview with Robert Draper of *The New York Times*. “We’re at the lowest level of elected officeholders since Hoover. We got a bit lazy and found ourselves relying on Barack Obama’s charisma, and it left us in bad shape.” Discuss why this might be a fair characterization AND why it might be considered unfair.

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ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

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| 7. C | 27. B |
| 8. D | 28. A |
| 9. A | 29. D |
| 10. B | 30. D |
| 11. B | 31. D |
| 12. A | 32. A |
| 13. D | 33. C |
| 14. D | 34. A |
| 15. B | 35. C |
| 16. C | 36. D |
| 17. B | 37. D |
| 18. C | 38. A |
| 19. B | 39. A |
| 20. B | 40. D |

DISCUSSION POINTS

- *No leader.* Rep. Jackie Speier (D., Calif.) was not able to name who the leader of the Democratic Party is on MSNBC last September. “There are a lot of leaders. What we need to kind of determine over the next, I’d say, six to eight months, is who really rises to the top,” Speier said. In March, MSNBC’s Kasie Hunt asked Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) to name the leader of the Democratic Party and asked whether it was him. “We have a bunch of leaders. You know, I certainly am the leader of the Senate and I try to help represent the Democratic Party. But we have a lot of very good voices. It’s much too premature to handicap 2020,” Schumer said. Or was it Bernie Sanders, Joe Biden, Elizabeth Warren, Kirsten Gillibrand, Kamala Harris or Cory Booker.
- *State elections.* The party’s performance in Virginia last fall was nothing short of a triumph. In the face of a vicious, race-baiting Republican campaign; manufactured controversies over Confederate monuments, (nonexistent) sanctuary cities, and kneeling NFL players — not to mention a rain storm that singled-out the bluest parts of the state — Democratic gubernatorial candidate Ralph Northam defeated Ed Gillespie by a near double-digit margin.
- *State elections.* A single vote in Newport News, Virginia, gave Democrats partial control of the state’s House of Delegates and could help the party pass Medicaid expansion next year. After a recount, Democrat Shelly Simonds had 11,608 votes to Republican incumbent David Yancey’s 11,607 votes in Virginia’s 94th House District. Simonds’ apparent victory — which will head to a judicial panel on Wednesday for certification — means Democrats and Republicans will have an even 50-50 split in the House of Delegates and will have to share power.
- *Presidential disapproval.* Polls from Gallup, CNN, Monmouth University and Quinnipiac University all showed Trump’s approval rating between 33 percent and 37 percent — among the lowest numbers of his entire presidency. The Republican Party has more than two warring factions and disgust by many in the party’s establishment for the President is palpable.
- *Democrats moving ahead.* CNN poll showed Democrats taking a nearly unheard-of 18-point lead in the 2018 midterm generic ballot, becoming just the latest poll to show a very bad environment for not just Trump but his party, too.
- *No remedy.* As Francis Wilkinson said in a 2017 article on Bloomberg View, “Democrats have no remedy for the contradictions of globalization, which has enriched the party’s donor base and elevated an elite strain of multiculturalism, while helping to crush the industrial unions and workers who once powered Democratic campaigns. Democrats must sustain their unwieldy feminist, multiracial, multiclass coalition in the face of a virulent cultural backlash at home and an ugly anti-liberal trend abroad.”
- *More findings.* Action for a Progressive Future, a non-profit organization, issued a 34-page report, “Autopsy: The Democratic Party in Crisis.” Among the findings: (1) Aggregated data and analysis show that policies, operations and campaign priorities of the national Democratic Party undermined support and turnout from its base in the 2016 general election. Since then, the Democratic leadership has done little to indicate that it is heeding key lessons from the 2016 disaster. (2) After suffering from a falloff of turnout among people of color in the 2016 general election, the party appears to be losing ground with its most reliable voting bloc, African-American women. (3) One of the large groups with a voter-turnout issue is young people.
- *Retirements and resignations.* About twice as many Republicans than Democrats have announced that they will not be running for their House seats in 2018.