



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE  
*Making a World of Difference*

# CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

 @UILCIANDE  
**2018 • REGION**



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**Around 4,000 high school students walked out of school and marched to the Minnesota capitol to demand that legislators make changes to gun control laws March 7, 2018.**

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# **CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS**

## **REGION • 2018**

- 1. In February, nearly three weeks before the sun would rise at the North Pole, scientists recorded a historic event in the Central Arctic. What?**
  - a. Polar bears were found farther north than ever before, looking for food.
  - b. The average temperature was more than 36 degrees above normal.
  - c. Boats were able to travel across the Arctic Ocean from Alaska to Norway.
  - d. The ice cap cracked, releasing millions of gallons of fresh water into the oceans.
- 2. Some 277,000 public school teachers in West Virginia sat at home, on strike. What was the focus of the strike?**
  - a. school safety
  - b. teaching of abortion in the schools
  - c. better pay and benefits
  - d. allowing teachers to carry guns
- 3. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican and former governor of California, said politicians should not be in the business of drawing voting districts, a process known as gerrymandering. In Schwarzenegger's opinion, who should?**
  - a. the courts
  - b. statisticians, using up-to-date data
  - c. high-priced consultants
  - d. independent commissions
- 4. China's National People's Congress formally approved a constitutional change that will permit President Xi Jinping to serve in office for how long?**
  - a. 10 years, two five-year terms
  - b. five years
  - c. indefinitely
  - d. until 2023
- 5. Louisville Cardinals head basketball coach Rick Pitino was placed on unpaid administrative leave for one year. A federal indictment from FBI and Department of Justice forces resulted in 10 arrests. What was this all about?**
  - a. extortion of a opposing team's coach
  - b. administering irregular courses that allowed students to get high grades in bogus classes
  - c. bribery of new recruits
  - d. rewarding players with name-brand merchandise from Under Armour, Nike and Adidas worth thousands of dollars
- 6. In addition to securities fraud charges he's been fighting since July of 2015, a district attorney has been probing whether Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton broke any laws by doing what?**
  - a. using fraudulent prescriptions for painkillers
  - b. providing money to his wife, running for Senate District 8
  - c. investing in Texas-owned companies including Whole Foods and Dell Computer
  - d. accepting a \$100,000 gift from a CEO whose company was being investigated

7. **Exxon, the top energy company in the world for 12 years, was ejected from the top spot, falling all the way to ninth place. The Russian company Gazprom took the top spot, focusing on what form of energy?**
  - a. wind
  - b. natural gas
  - c. nuclear
  - d. solar
  
8. **Which hurricane left the United States and slammed into Ireland with winds of up to 119 mph, causing widespread damage and at least three deaths?**
  - a. Harvey
  - b. Irma
  - c. Arlene
  - d. Ophelia
  
9. **SpaceX launched the Falcon Heavy in February. Which of the following was NOT true of this launch?**
  - a. It was the world's most powerful rocket currently in use.
  - b. The two rocket boosters returned and landed in Florida.
  - c. The car's stereo system was playing Star Wars soundtrack written by John Williams.
  - d. The payload was a Tesla Roadster car headed for Mars orbit.
  
10. **After being held hostage for five years, an American woman, her Canadian husband and their three children were rescued by security forces from where and by whom?**
  - a. Canada, the Canadian Royal Air Force
  - b. Pakistan, Pakistani security forces
  - c. U.S., the Green Berets
  - d. Afghanistan, Afghan National Army
  
11. **If the United Nations' International Civil Aviation Organization has its way, you may no longer be able to put your laptop in your checked luggage. Why?**
  - a. It's too easy to hide a bomb in a laptop.
  - b. It prevents business people from getting work done.
  - c. Overheated laptop batteries could ignite a fire.
  - d. Security staff couldn't match computers and checked luggage to actual travelers.
  
12. **Donald Trump called her a "wacky congresswoman." She said the death of the soldiers was Trump's Benghazi. He said the phone call to the family of a soldier killed was a "very nice call." She said Trump's comments to the family were "so insensitive." This he-said, she-said debate was centered around the death of four soldiers in what country?**
  - a. Niger
  - b. Afghanistan
  - c. Iraq
  - d. Camp Lejeune (Jacksonville, N.C.)
  
13. **Police in Portugal and Spain in January seized hundreds of kilograms of cocaine coming from a gang led by two brothers in South America. What was the cocaine hidden inside?**
  - a. furniture
  - b. a commercial bus toilet
  - c. freezers
  - d. pineapples

- 14. The Houston Astros won the World Series for the first time in the franchise's 56-year history. A Dallas-area professional team has never won a championship in that team's 45-year history in Texas, one of seven teams in the sport never to have won a championship. Which one?**
- Dallas Mavericks
  - Dallas Cowboys
  - Texas Rangers
  - Dallas Stars
- 15. Which of the following was true about the first week of open enrollment for the Affordable Care Act that ended Dec. 15, 2017?**
- Since fewer employers were offering healthcare the Trump administration stepped up outreach efforts and funding.
  - Consumers were advised on the website that this would be the last year the government-subsidized insurance would be available.
  - States abandoned state-run exchanges, putting all their money in the federal system.
  - It broke records. More than 150,000 people signed up each day, almost twice last year's average.
- 16. After the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced that it had finalized a policy to allow big-game hunters to bring heads back into the U.S., President Donald Trump put the controversial decision on hold. The heads of what animal?**
- elephant
  - rhinoceros
  - lion
  - caribou
- 17. U.S. President Donald Trump appointed Mick Mulvaney to lead an agency that Mulvaney, while serving in Congress, voted in favor of killing. What agency?**
- Office of Management and Budget
  - Department of Consumer Affairs
  - Office of the Attorney General
  - Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
- 18. The Congressional Budget Office and the Joint Committee on Taxation said in December the Senate's tax plan would add how much to the national deficit?**
- It would add between \$1 trillion and \$1.5 trillion to the debt.
  - It would almost double the debt.
  - None. It was paid for with additional taxes, \$100 for every U.S. citizen.
  - None. Indeed, it would decrease the \$20.7 trillion debt thanks to increased economic development.
- 19. In a federal court in early December, former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn pleaded guilty to what in connection with the investigation regarding Russian influence on the presidential election?**
- blackmailing White House officials
  - lying to the FBI
  - money laundering
  - failing to register as a foreign agent

20. **On the first day of trading, bitcoin futures surged past \$18,000. What is bitcoin?**
- a new coin put out by the U.S. Mint
  - a non-governmental, digital currency
  - currency for the new country of South Sudan
  - an illegal, black market currency used online
21. **A lopsided majority of the United Nations rebuked the United States Dec. 21, denouncing what decision?**
- recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital
  - a full blockade of North Korea
  - pulling out of the Paris Agreement on climate
  - changing the terms of the Trans-Pacific Partnership
22. **George Weah became Liberia's next president. He was the 1995 FIFA World Player of the Year in what sport?**
- tennis
  - soccer
  - rugby
  - basketball
23. **Although it has been blamed for thousands of overdose deaths nationwide, officials in Nebraska and Nevada plan to use what opiate drug in upcoming lethal injection executions?**
- Potassium chloride
  - Sodium pentobarbital
  - Fentanyl
  - Midazolam
24. **El Salvador officials were preparing to receive nearly 200,000 Salvadorans living in the United States. Why?**
- Their "temporary protected status" came to an end.
  - There are more job opportunities in El Salvador.
  - ICE officials were rounding up all El Salvadoran citizens and deporting them.
  - The country was back to normal after storms.
25. **Rex Tillerson was among the members of U.S. President Donald Trump's inner circle to leave either voluntarily or not. What position did Tillerson hold before being secretary of state?**
- He was chair and chief executive of ExxonMobil.
  - He was an assistant secretary of state.
  - He was director of the CIA.
  - Using the civil engineering degree he received from UT-Austin, he was Texas railroad commissioner.
26. **The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration confirmed that which of the following is true?**
- 2017 became the warmest year on record with global temperatures increasing by 1.78 degrees Fahrenheit over the previous year.
  - Globally averaged temperatures in 2017 were actually 1.62 degrees Fahrenheit cooler than average.
  - NOAA ranked 2017 as the third warmest year on record since records started in 1880, behind 2016 (the warmest) and 2015.
  - The February globally-averaged sea surface temperature was down, 1.46 degrees Fahrenheit below the 20th century average.

- 27. The U.S. Olympic Committee's CEO has asked all members of the USA Gymnastics board of directors to resign. Why?**
- gymnasts not winning enough
  - public statements that USAG did not support Olympics coming to Los Angeles in 2028
  - a court order saying no current member could serve for at least 40 years
  - scandals over sexual abuse by former team doctor Larry Nassar
- 28. After his opponent boycotted the election, Uhuru Kenyatta won reelection with more than 98 percent of the vote in what country's rerun election?**
- Kenya
  - Somaliland
  - Iran
  - Liechtenstein
- 29. In a year when the Oscars were full of accolades for women and minorities, what was Jordan Peele's notable first?**
- first African American writer to win the Oscar for Best Original Screenplay
  - first African American actor to win the Oscar for leading actor in a major motion picture
  - directed the first movie with a credited woman screenwriter to win Best Picture since World War II
  - the first openly trans presenter
- 30. English athlete David Beckham plans to launch a major league franchise in Miami for which sport and in what league?**
- American football, NFL
  - baseball, NBA
  - hockey, NHL
  - soccer, MLS
- 31. In a humiliating end, the long-time president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, was forced to resign. Why?**
- He vocally supported apartheid.
  - Corruption allegations included misuse of public funds and influence peddling.
  - There were dozens of allegations of him harassing women.
  - He was impeached after a vote of no confidence by the ruling ANC party.
- 32. In a dramatic New Year's resolution, Phillip Morris International announced, "We're trying to give up cigarettes." The maker of such cigarette brands as Marlboro, L&M, Parliament and Chesterfield said it wanted to do what instead?**
- provide medical support for those with addictions
  - replace them with smoke-free alternatives like e-cigarettes
  - fund cancer research, creating new facilities worldwide
  - become a not-for-profit company, putting all profits into the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- 33. Where did the Winter Olympics take place this year?**
- Pyongyang, North Korea
  - Pyeongchang, South Korea
  - Beijing, China
  - Tokyo, Japan

- 34. In October, the White House released a list of priorities that must be implemented before the Trump administration would consider any replacement for the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals program. Which of the following was THE TOP priority?**
- “Eliminate loopholes in our asylum system.”
  - “Seek appropriations to hire an addition 1,000 ICE attorneys.”
  - “Block sanctuary cities from receiving grants or any federal funding.”
  - “Ensure funding for the southern border wall...”
- 35. Texas is an open-primary state. What does that mean?**
- Voters can vote in both primaries, and a third party one if there is one.
  - Once you’re declared to a party, you can only vote for people in that party.
  - Voters can vote in either primary, Republican or Democrat
  - Voters can vote for anyone anytime.
- 36. In what became the longest speech on record on the House floor, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi spoke for a little more than eight hours to oppose the budget deal to lift spending caps and to avert a government shutdown. Why?**
- It significantly increased the debt.
  - She had been sitting on her hands too long.
  - It didn’t address immigration issues.
  - She wanted full funding for Obamacare.
- 37. U.S. President Donald Trump wants to eliminate SNAP, a federal program for what?**
- afterschool programs
  - wetlands protection
  - public radio
  - food stamps
- 38. After Hurricane Irma and 30-70 percent crop loss, the price of what went up to \$2.30/gallon (near a 10-year high) from an average price of around \$1.47/gallon?**
- orange juice
  - soybean oil
  - coffee
  - ethanol (based on corn)
- 39. The European Union may slap tariffs on Harley Davidson motorbikes, Levi’s blue jeans and Kentucky whiskey in retaliation for what?**
- U.S. President Donald’ Trump’s meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un
  - U.S. President Donald Trump’s introduction of a 25 percent import tariff on steel
  - an increase in taxes on “everyday items” as part of tax code revisions
  - costs associated with Brexit for items imported to America
- 40. Washington state Gov. Jay Inslee, a democrat, signed a law that safeguards net neutrality protections. The federal rules on net neutrality will officially end on April 23 unless blocked by the courts. What is net neutrality?**
- a principle that internet service providers should treat all internet content the same
  - a type of blockade, a net, preventing criminal behavior on the web
  - a rule put in place by the FCC to block drug trafficking on the web, particularly trafficking of marijuana and fentanyl
  - an executive order signed by Barack Obama to block any politically sensitive speech, particularly that from radical groups like al-Qaida

**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.

**The United States has had more mass shootings than any other country. Defined as four or more victims and excluding gang killings or domestic violence, about one-third of the world's mass shootings have occurred in the United States. Research from Harvard School of Public Health and Northeastern University has shown that mass shootings are occurring more frequently. Discuss the mass shootings that have occurred this academic year and what actions officials at the federal, state and local level have taken as well as what actions ordinary citizens have taken. Also discuss what actions have NOT been taken in light of the nearly 200 mass shootings that happened so far this academic year.**



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# ANSWER KEY

## ESSAY PROMPT

The United States has had more mass shootings than any other country. Defined as four or more victims and excluding gang killings or domestic violence, about one-third of the world's mass shootings have occurred in the United States. Research from Harvard School of Public Health and Northeastern University has shown that mass shootings are occurring more frequently. Discuss the mass shootings that have occurred this academic year and what actions officials at the federal, state and local level have taken as well as what actions ordinary citizens have taken. Also discuss what actions have NOT been taken in light of the nearly 200 mass shootings that happened so far this academic year.

## DISCUSSION POINTS

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

- *Las Vegas shooting, the deadliest mass shooting in America.* In the Oct. 1, 2017 Las Vegas shooting a gunman opened fire on a crowd of concertgoers at the Route 91 Harvest music festival on the Las Vegas Strip in Nevada, leaving 58 people dead and 851 injured. Attention focused on bump fire stocks, which the shooter, a 64-year-old man from Nevada, used to allow his semi-automatic rifles to fire at a rate similar to that of a fully automatic weapon.
- *National ban on bump stocks.* President Trump called on the Justice Department to change its regulations and formally ban bump stocks in February, following the deadly high school shooting in Parkland, Florida. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives closed the public comment period for its review of bump stock regulation. The ATF concluded that the devices were not regulated under existing gun laws. And it ruled that only Congress can act to ban them. That is a view shared by gun safety supporters, including Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., who pushed for a legislative ban last fall. The National Rifle Association opposed the ban.
- *Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.* On Feb. 14, 2018, a mass shooting occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Seventeen people were killed and 17 more were wounded, all by bullets. The suspected perpetrator, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz, was identified by witnesses and arrested shortly afterward. He confessed. Police and prosecutors have not yet offered a motive. However, Cruz had made earlier threats to be a school shooter. Neither the FBI nor local officials investigated.
- *Legislation in Florida.* Florida Gov. Rick Scott signed Senate Bill 7026 into law Friday, the first gun control legislation enacted in the state after the Parkland school massacre Feb. 14. The law, known as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act, tightens gun control in several ways but also allows some teachers to be armed. One provision of the law raises the minimum age to purchase a firearm to 21 from 18. The NRA opposes this change. The appropriation includes more than \$69 million for mental health assistance in schools.
- *School walkout.* Students in Florida took a leadership role in planning a school walkout for March 14. Among their demands, participants want Congress to ban assault weapons, to require universal background checks before gun sales and to pass a gun violence restraining order law that would allow courts to disarm people who display warning signs of violent behavior.
- *Assault rifle ban.* After multiple instances of gun violence some gun control advocates have called for a ban on AR-15-style guns, similar to one the U.S. had in place until it expired in 2004. But that ban, which would need an act of Congress to be revived, isn't likely to go anywhere on Capitol Hill anytime soon, most congressional observers say. The NRA opposes any such ban.
- *Sutherland Springs, Texas.* Just one month after the tragic attack in Las Vegas, 26-year-old Devin Patrick Kelley killed at least 26 churchgoers and injured 20 others at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. The Nov. 5, 2017 shooting was the deadliest mass shooting in the state's history.
- *Kentucky school shooting.* Sixteen people were wounded, two of them fatally, after a shooter opened fire at Marshall County High School in western Kentucky, authorities said. Four others sustained various injuries Jan. 23, 2018. A 15-year-old male student was arrested at the scene. The suspect, armed with a handgun, just walked into the school and started shooting.
- *Terrorist groups.* None of these attacks were carried out by known terrorist groups.