



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE
Making a World of Difference

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

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2018 • INVITATIONAL A



Photo by Gage Skidmore, used with permission
Vice President of the United States Mike Pence speaking at the 2017 Conservative Political Action Conference in National Harbor, Maryland.



Photo by Gage Skidmore, used with permission
Speaker of the House Paul Ryan of Wisconsin speaking at the 2016 Conservative Political Action Conference in National Harbor, Maryland.

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- 1. The United States is the only United Nations country still opposed to the Paris climate agreement — although it officially remains a party until Nov. 4, 2020. Which country recently signed on, leaving the U.S. isolated?**
 - a. China
 - b. Brazil
 - c. Syria
 - d. India
- 2. Ten U.S. Navy sailors were initially missing after the USS John S. McCain was damaged in Singapore. It was the fourth U.S. warship damaged in Asian waters in 2017. How was it damaged?**
 - a. mines left over from World War II
 - b. missiles launched by North Korea
 - c. an accident, colliding with an oil tanker
 - d. running aground thanks to faulty equipment
- 3. Under the cover of darkness, four bronze likenesses on the University of Texas South Mall were abruptly removed, UT President Gregory Fenves announced in August. “Confederate monuments have become symbols of modern white supremacy and neo-Nazism,” Fenves said in a message. Which statue was NOT removed in this round of statue removals?**
 - a. Stephen Hogg, first native-born governor of Texas
 - b. John H. Reagan, Confederate postmaster
 - c. Robert E. Lee, Confederate general
 - d. Jefferson Davis, Confederate president
- 4. Robert Mugabe, 93, initially refused to resign, despite a military takeover — not a coup — of what country?**
 - a. Burkina Faso
 - b. Zimbabwe
 - c. Libya
 - d. Turkey
- 5. Thousands of people had to be rescued in the Houston area after Hurricane Harvey. What was it about this storm that caused the ‘historic’ destruction and loss of life?**
 - a. cholera caused by contaminated water
 - b. lowest barometric pressure
 - c. highest winds ever recorded
 - d. flooding
- 6. Members can now get purchases from Whole Foods Market, including free two-hour delivery in select cities and one-hour delivery for \$7.99, all made possible because what company purchased Whole Foods?**
 - a. Google
 - b. Amazon
 - c. eBay
 - d. Priceline

- 7. In last fall's election in Rowlett, a city of 56,000 in northeast Dallas County, more than 1,700 cast their votes early and another 1,000 on election day. Including the new mayor, six of seven people on Rowlett's council will be in their first term. What else was unique?**
- Tammy Dana-Bashian won a five-way mayor's race even after being convicted of altering government records.
 - Homeschooled student Blake Margolis, 18, won a city council seat, a semester before he got his high school diploma.
 - Arlan "Brownie" Sherrill won after marching with white-supremacists.
 - Matt Grubisich pled guilty but was never convicted of abuse-of-office charges for double-billing his campaign. He won with more than 90 percent of the vote.
- 8. Last fall, for the first time in what city's 300-year history did voters elect a female mayor — LaToya Cantrell?**
- Concord (New Hampshire)
 - Argonia (Kansas)
 - Marble Falls (Texas)
 - New Orleans (Louisiana)
- 9. Refineries in Houston and Corpus Christi shut down before Hurricane Harvey hit. What ramifications did this have?**
- historic gas price increases of more than 25¢/gallon seen overnight as the hurricane made landfall
 - modest gasoline price hikes of between 5¢/gallon and 15¢/gallon
 - gas prices increases up to an average of \$3.25/gallon, prices not seen since after Hurricane Katrina
 - permanent discontinuation of rules regarding the use of a cleaner, summer-blend of gasoline by airplanes
- 10. What shopping day hit a new record of \$6.59 billion in sales, making it the largest U.S. online sales day ever?**
- Black Friday
 - Small Business Saturday
 - Cyber Monday
 - Singles' Day
- 11. As the United States called for the toughest possible sanctions against North Korea, Russian President Vladimir Putin said North Koreans would rather do what than give up their nuclear weapons?**
- die as a country
 - be annexed into China
 - eat grass
 - unify with South Korea
- 12. To whom does DACA apply?**
- about 800,000 people in the country without legal authorization since they were children
 - the parents of 28,000 migrants in Arizona alone, all of whom overstayed their visas
 - criminals convicted of minor offenses detained by local authorities and threatened with deportation
 - all Mexican citizens working in the United States

- 13. Nikki Haley, America's ambassador to the United Nations, said a country would be destroyed if it continues with what she described as "reckless" behavior. What country?**
- North Korea
 - Afghanistan
 - Iran
 - China
- 14. Stressing that its stores and its website will be open as usual, what company, the largest U.S. toy chain, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection ahead of last fall's holiday season?**
- Toys 'R' Us
 - Hasbro
 - Build-A-Bear Workshop
 - FAO Schwartz
- 15. Hurricane Maria all but destroyed what United States territory, leaving it without power and with little communication?**
- Puerto Rico
 - Barbuda
 - Guam
 - Dominica
- 16. Crews in London are working to unblock a section of the city's sewer system blocked by a 130-ton mass — a "fatberg" — one of the largest to form, costing the city more than \$1.3 million/month for removal. What was it?**
- a congealed lump of fat, wet wipes, diapers and similar items
 - overweight animals that live in city parks then die and are washed into the sewer system
 - the remains of 90,000 soccer fans and all their hot dogs after each soccer game, flooding the sewer system
 - a form of concrete made of the remains of civilizations on which London is built
- 17. Hugh Hefner died in late September. Which of the following is true about Hefner?**
- He ignited the sexual revolution with the founding of Playboy at a time when states could legally ban contraceptives and the word "pregnant" wasn't allowed on TV.
 - He was an opponent of gay marriage, "a fight for the foundation of our civilization."
 - He was a strong advocate for a controlled press and limitations on the media, helping to create a course "Censorship in Cinema" at the University of Southern California.
 - He detested the whole Hollywood scene and attempted to bring down, for example, the Hollywood Sign.
- 18. Providing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets in support of French forces fighting Al Qaeda, three members of the U.S. Army Special Forces, colloquially known as the Green Berets, were ambushed and killed in October. Where?**
- Germany
 - Namibia
 - Togo
 - Niger

- 19. The Justice Department sued to block what company's \$85.4 billion bid for Time Warner?**
- Verizon Communications
 - T-Mobile
 - AT&T
 - Spectrum
- 20. The federal minimum wage is \$7.25 and hasn't increased since 2009. Wal-mart raised base hourly pay to \$10 in 2016. In late September, what company announced it was raising the minimum hourly wage for all workers to \$11/hour and would raise it to \$15/hour by 2020?**
- Target
 - McDonald's
 - TJ Maxx
 - Starbucks
- 21. A shooting on Oct. 1 in Lawrence, Kansas left three dead in the town where the University of Kansas is located. It received almost no media coverage, overshadowed by the Las Vegas shooting later that day. Then, about a week later, a student at what university allegedly shot and killed a police officer?**
- Transylvania University
 - Virginia Tech
 - Tennessee State University
 - Texas Tech University
- 22. In the wake of new legislation that requires training and criminal background checks, Uber is pulling out of Quebec. In addition, what city refused to renew Uber's operating license?**
- Austin (Texas)
 - São Paulo (Brazil)
 - London (England)
 - Seoul (South Korea)
- 23. In Saudia Arabia, women didn't get the right to vote until 2015. Effective in June of 2018, they can do what?**
- serve as judges
 - drive cars
 - run for public office
 - use social media
- 24. Three American physicists won the Nobel prize in physics for the discovery of what?**
- topological phases of matter
 - neutrino oscillations
 - gravitational waves, ripples in the fabric of spacetime
 - efficient blue light-emitting diodes
- 25. The spacecraft Cassini experienced "end of mission" in September. How?**
- It plunged into Saturn's moon Titan on Sept. 11.
 - It crossed the heliopause and left the solar system.
 - It plunged into Saturn on Sept. 15.
 - It passed into a black hole and was expected to reappear on the other side of the galaxy.

- 26. Looks like the Russians got a lot of bang for their buck when they bought political ads to meddle in America's elections. What social media outlet said about 10 million people saw at least one of the 3,000 ads bought for about \$100,000 over two years by accounts linked to the Russian government?**
- Snapchat
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - LinkedIn
- 27. What prompted a move by the U.S. State Department to remove 15 Cuban diplomats from the United States?**
- Cuba's was unwilling to follow the Paris Accord.
 - Cuban President Raul Castro's was unwilling to work with the U.S. on trade.
 - The Trump administration rescinded all policies implemented during the Obama administration.
 - A mysterious illness affected U.S. diplomatic personnel in Havana.
- 28. New vehicle infotainment systems take drivers' eyes and attention off the road and hands off the wheel for potentially dangerous periods of time according to research released in October from the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. What was the biggest offender?**
- texting
 - listening to radio
 - social media
 - navigation systems
- 29. In response to the death of Pi Kappa Phi pledge Andrew Coffee, what action did Florida State University President John Thrasher take in November?**
- He resigned.
 - He followed an order by the Board of Governors, suspending all Greek activity on all public university campuses.
 - He suspended all fraternities and sororities.
 - He expelled all members of Pi Kappa Phi.
- 30. In an Instagram post, actress Heather Lind accused which former president of touching her from behind and telling her a dirty joke at a photo-op for Turn: Washington Spies? He later apologized.**
- Bill Clinton
 - George H.W. Bush
 - Barack Obama
 - George W. Bush
- 31. "It's a politically correct mistake." "It's huge." "This decision is the result of years of requests from families." What decision did the Boy Scouts of America announce in October that caused such an uproar?**
- They would admit openly gay boys.
 - They would admit transsexuals.
 - They would have a cookie sale.
 - They would admit girls.

- 32. A federal judge in Hawaii blocked the third version of the president’s travel ban one day before it was to take effect in October. Why?**
- The Supreme Court ruled it was “dangerously flawed” and plainly unconstitutional.
 - There were no provisions for relatives of Americans or those with educational visas.
 - The Trump administration could not demonstrate that Venezuela was a country “sponsoring terrorists.”
 - It “plainly discriminates based on nationality.”
- 33. According to a report in the medical journal *The Lancet*, released in October, almost one in six deaths on this planet, including 92 percent in low and middle-income countries, is related to what?**
- AIDS
 - tuberculosis
 - pollution
 - malaria
- 34. Sears ended a century-long relationship with which appliance company and will no longer be selling its products?**
- Amazon
 - Whirlpool
 - Carrier
 - Samsung
- 35. A U.S. District Judge granted a preliminary injunction of Senate Bill 4 in late August. To what did SB4 pertain?**
- “sanctuary” entities
 - transgender people in the military
 - Hurricane Harvey relief
 - property tax increases
- 36. Gov. Greg Abbott called the shooting at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas the worst mass shooting in Texas’ history. Which of the following was NOT true of the shooter, 26-year-old Devin Patrick Kelley?**
- He received a bad-conduct discharge from the Air Force.
 - He purchased the weapon, a Ruger-AR556 rifle, from Academy Sports and Outdoors.
 - His in-laws attended the church at which about half the congregation was killed.
 - He had been radicalized by ISIS.
- 37. “The political center of the state collapsed today,” said Rice University political scientist Mark Jones referring to when a central figure in Texas politics announced he would not run for re-election and questions began about what he would do with his \$10 million campaign war chest. Who?**
- House Speaker Joe Straus
 - Gov. Greg Abbott
 - Sen. Jeff Flake
 - Rep. Sam Johnson
- 38. The Paradise Papers, a series of leaks totaling 13.4 million documents made public by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, has brought to light how trillions of dollars moved through what?**
- real estate in big cities such as Miami and New York City
 - offshore tax havens
 - “Paradise Island,” an island in the Caribbean nearly destroyed by hurricanes this fall
 - corporate tax legislation approved by U.S. President Donald Trump

- 39. One side said, “It’s a bunch of bull.” “Ludicrous.” “Gutter politics.” Alabama Republican Senate candidate Roy Moore completely denied 40-year-old allegations that he did what?**
- used offshore tax havens for money laundering
 - molested underage women
 - helped Russia get information on the 2016 election
 - received a bad conduct discharge from the Air Force
- 40. Saying he wanted to have an “open discussion concerning the future of our Texas House,” which former police officer filed the paperwork to be speaker of the house?**
- Dennis Bonnen (Angleton)
 - Tan Parker (Flower Mound)
 - Phil King (Weatherford)
 - Senfronia Thompson (Houston)

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 White House and both houses of Congress belong to the Republican Party. So do 34 governorships, matching a 1922 party record. The Republican Party has complete control of state government in 26 states, and full legislative control in 32 states. Yet some pundits have declared that the Republican Party, and, particularly, the Trump administration, is in a state of disarray. They have been called strangely impotent. Dysfunctional. Discuss why this might be a fair characterization AND why it might be considered unfair.

ANSWER KEY

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The White House and both houses of Congress belong to the Republican Party. So do 34 governorships, matching a 1922 party record. The Republican Party has complete control of state government in 26 states, and full legislative control in 32 states. Yet some pundits have declared that the Republican Party, and, particularly, the Trump administration, is in a state of disarray. They have been called strangely impotent. Dysfunctional. Discuss why this might be a fair characterization AND why it might be considered unfair.

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

DISCUSSION POINTS

- *Tax overhaul.* Who knows where this will go and how it will benefit — or hurt — the middle class. With 227 Republican votes, the House passed the most sweeping tax overhaul in three decades in mid-November. The swift approval came two weeks after the bill was unveiled, without a single hearing on the legislation and over the objections of Democrats and 13 Republicans. The focus now shifts to the Senate, where Republicans are quickly moving ahead with their own tax overhaul. U.S. President Donald Trump wanted the legislation passed before the holiday break but this failed to get widespread support with some key legislators objecting.
- *State elections.* Even in historically red states, Republicans ran into problems. In Alabama, a special election for the United States Senate in Alabama is scheduled for Dec. 12, 2017, to choose former Senator Jeff Sessions's successor for the term through January 3, 2021. Sessions resigned from the Senate in February 2017 to serve as U.S. Attorney General. The Republican candidate for the seat, Roy Moore, came under fire when multiple women alleged that Moore had made unwanted advances or sexual assaults on them some 30 years ago. Some Republicans were forced to publicly support the Democratic candidate Doug Jones.
- *Obamacare.* The repeal of the Affordable Care Act was one of the signature items on the agenda. However, a few individuals kept it from passing. Twice. In September, Sen. John McCain declared his opposition Friday to the GOP's last-ditch effort to repeal and replace "Obamacare," dealing a likely death blow to the legislation and, perhaps, to the Republican Party's years of vows to kill the program. It was the second time in three months the 81-year-old McCain emerged as the destroyer of his party's signature promise to voters.
- *Graham-Cassidy bill.* Under this plan, the mandates would be eliminated at the federal level. States could choose to keep the measure, replace it or get rid of it completely. Senate Republicans said they would not vote on the last-ditch GOP bill to repeal and replace Obamacare. They could not even get this compromise passed. They have yet to outline a singular vision for health care beyond determination to repeal Obamacare.
- *Immigration.* While Trump has yet to change US immigration laws, he has signed two executive memos that instruct immigration officers to take a much tougher approach toward enforcing existing measures. The Trump administration is ending a temporary residency permit program that has allowed almost 60,000 citizens from Haiti to live and work in the United States. The administration is spending millions researching how to build an effective wall on the U.S.-Mexico border. The administration officially announced its plan to end the DACA program — which provides a level of amnesty to certain illegal immigrants, many of whom came to the U.S. as children.
- *Economy.* Stock markets have hit record highs, oil prices remain low, consumer confidence is buoyant and inflation is under control. The White House has set a growth target of 3 percent, but the Federal Reserve chairwoman has sounded sceptical. Growth has only averaged less than 2 percent a year since 2001. The American economy grew 1.4 percent in the first quarter of this year.
- *Paris climate agreement.* There has been widespread international condemnation of Trump's decision to withdraw the U.S. from the 2015 Paris climate agreement. Trump, who use executive authority to pull out, said it would cost the U.S. \$3 trillion in lost GDP and 6.5 million jobs. Trump has signed almost 60 executive orders.
- *Approval ratings.* Trump's approval ratings are drifting south of 35 percent while he continues to romance the fewer than one-quarter of Americans who say they can't think of anything he could do to shake their support.
- *Political skills.* As *New York Times* columnist Bret Stephens said, Mitch McConnell and Paul Ryan have the parliamentary skills but not the political authority. Trump has the authority but not the skills.