



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE
Making a World of Difference

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

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2023 • DISTRICT

Feb. 13, 2023



TOP Gov. Greg Abbott spoke to supporters on a campaign stop in Wichita Falls in 2014. Photo by Bradley Wilson. | **Texas Sen. Drew Springer spoke to supporters on a campaign stop for Abbott in 2022.** Photo by Bradley Wilson. **BOTTOM Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick spoke with supporters of U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz in 2016.** Photo by Gage Skidmore. | **Dade Phelan became speaker with a nearly unanimous vote on the House floor.** Photo by Bob Daemrich/CapitolPressPhoto/Pool

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1. Since February 2022, Ukraine has received more than 200 T-72s from Poland, the Czech Republic and a small number of other countries. Now, the German government has said it will be sending 14 Leopards to Ukraine, while the U.S. is planning to deliver 31 Abrams in the coming months. What are they?

 - a. bombers
 - b. drones
 - c. fighter planes
 - d. tanks
2. North Korea fired an intermediate-range ballistic missile that flew over Japan before landing in the ocean, setting off alarms and panicking residents. With a maximum distance of 2,800 miles, such a missile could reach what U.S. territory?

 - a. Hawaii
 - b. Puerto Rico
 - c. Guam
 - d. American Samoa
3. An estimated 1 billion of the crustaceans mysteriously disappeared in two years, state officials said, marking a 90% drop in their population. As a result, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, for the first time in state history, canceled what season in the Bering Sea?

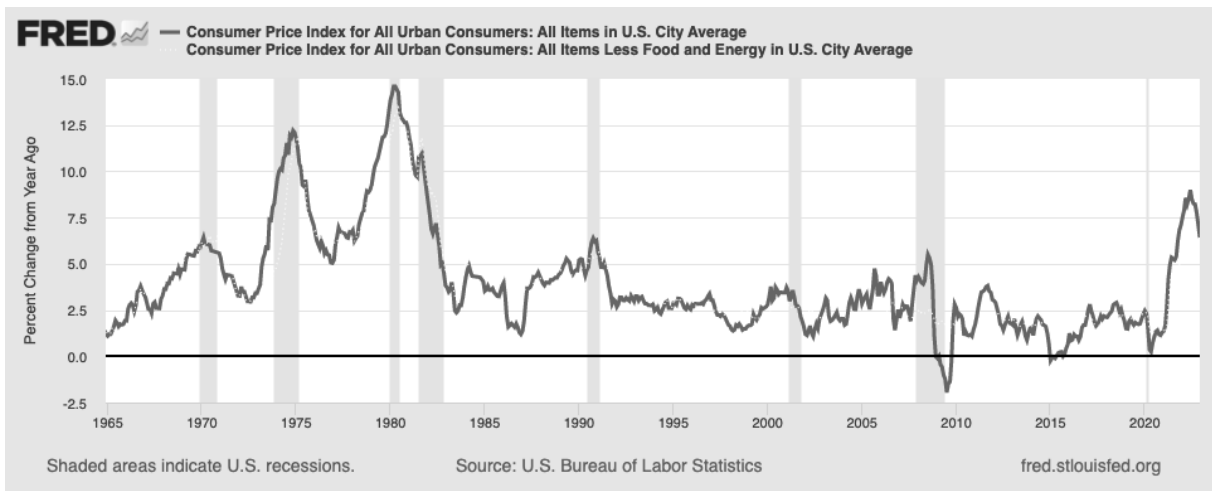
 - a. sockeye salmon
 - b. blue crabs
 - c. snow crabs
 - d. mantis shrimp
4. What company released a new version of its Bing search engine driven by Artificial Intelligence “to deliver better search, more complete answers, a new chat experience and the ability to generate content”?

 - a. Yahoo!
 - b. Microsoft
 - c. Alphabet
 - d. DuckDuckGo
5. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said it spent \$290 million on Nplate, a drug to treat what?

 - a. acute radiation syndrome
 - b. monkeypox
 - c. smallpox
 - d. polio
6. A new drug, Legembi, is hitting the market — the first with clear-cut evidence that it can slow, by several months, what mind-robbing disease?

 - a. kleptomania
 - b. Pick’s disease
 - c. dementia
 - d. Alzheimer’s

7. **Liz Truss's leadership fell apart over a plan for tax cuts and deregulation that sent financial markets spiraling. She resigned after just 44 days in office. The Conservative Party replaced her in just a week. Truss held what distinction?**
- She was the shortest-serving prime minister in British history.
 - She was the first female prime minister in England's history.
 - She was the first Black woman appointed to national office by King Charles.
 - She was the first woman appointed by the Conservative Party.
8. **The Trump Organization charged what group up to \$1,185 per night, well above government rates, for hotel rooms, according to documents released by the House Oversight Committee?**
- foreign dignitaries visiting as guests of the State Department
 - Democrats traveling to Washington, D.C., to testify before Congress
 - the Justice Department, when executives required testimony from telecom executives
 - Secret Service agents protecting Trump and his family
9. **It's about 10 times as massive as our sun and is just 1,600 light-years away—rather nearby on a cosmic scale. Astronomers have discovered what type of object closer to Earth than any other previously found?**
- Quasar
 - Rogue planet
 - Black hole
 - Comet



10. **Based on this chart measuring inflation, when was inflation at its highest point BEFORE 2022?**
- 2010
 - 1980
 - 2009
 - 1975
11. **In late December, at the height of the holiday season, Union leaders said a main cause of the Texas-based airline's problems was inadequate computer systems that cost what airline about \$800 million?**
- American Airlines
 - Southwest Airlines
 - Envoy Air
 - Lone Star Airlines

12. **Raising anxieties of a wider war, Ukrainian air defense missiles most likely caused a deadly explosion in what NATO country in mid-November?**
 - a. Slovakia
 - b. Poland
 - c. Moldova
 - d. Belarus

13. **Which movie theater chain, the largest such chain in the world with more than 11,000 screens, announced that CEO Christina Spade will step down and that the company will lay off 20% of its workforce?**
 - a. AMC
 - b. Cinemark
 - c. Wanda Cinemas
 - d. Cineworld

14. **The Democratic National Committee's Rules and Bylaws Committee adopted President Joe Biden's recommended changes to the primary schedule, making what state the first primary state?**
 - a. South Carolina
 - b. Texas
 - c. New Hampshire
 - d. Iowa

15. **The plan in early December was to storm the Capitol, arrest lawmakers and execute the chancellor. A prince descended from nobility would take over as the new head of state, and a former far-right member of Parliament would be put in charge of a national purge. Where?**
 - a. Brazil
 - b. Afghanistan
 - c. Niger
 - d. Germany

16. **El Paso, Texas, Mayor Oscar Leeser declared a state of emergency in late December. Why?**
 - a. a 5.6 magnitude earthquake hit the area
 - b. Hurricane Owen struck late in the season, devastating coastal areas
 - c. a surge of migrants living in unsafe conditions settled in the area
 - d. the drought resulted in having no drinking water available

17. **Declaring that it is both dysfunctional and immoral, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown took what action?**
 - a. Commuted the death sentences of 17 people on death row in her state
 - b. Summarily removed all laws regarding marijuana use, making all use of marijuana legal in the state
 - c. Issued an executive order deleting laws on the books and making abortion illegal in her state
 - d. Signed an order requiring one person, the secretary of state, to manage all elections in her state

18. **The U.S. obtained custody of Abu Agila Mohammad Mas'ud, accused of building the explosive device used by Libya in what?**
 - a. the 1993 bombing of New York's World Trade Center
 - b. the 9/11 attacks on America
 - c. the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 that killed 270 people
 - d. the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing

19. **According to new data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Texas has joined what other state as the only two in the nation with a population of more than 30 million?**
- New York
 - Florida
 - New Jersey
 - California
20. **What company announced that it expects to acquire at least 66,000 battery-electric delivery vehicles as part of its 106,000-vehicle acquisition plan to replace an aging delivery fleet?**
- Amazon
 - Federal Express
 - The United Parcel Service
 - The United States Postal Service
21. **Congress approved a \$1.7 trillion omnibus spending bill that included banning what social media from most U.S. government-issued devices for employees?**
- Truth Social
 - Vine
 - TikTok
 - Meerkat
22. **Clothing giant Adidas has cut ties with rapper Ye, also known as Kanye West. Why?**
- On his Instagram account, Ye admitted he stole designs from a rival company.
 - Ye posted anti-Semitic comments on his Twitter account.
 - Ye said he was on track to lose \$252 million this year because Adidas sales were low.
 - Gap started selling merchandise with Ye's likeness on it, in violation of Adidas agreements.
23. **Although law-enforcement agents opposed the legislation already passed in 25 states, Alabama became the latest state to allow citizens to do what?**
- to complete three-question survey in lieu of a formal background check when purchasing a firearm
 - to purchase one or more semi-automatic weapons after taking a training class
 - to carry a weapon openly in any public place except schools and the capitol building in Montgomery
 - to carry a concealed handgun without a state permit
24. **What country, at the beginning of the new year, switched to the shared European currency, the euro, and removed dozens of border checkpoints to join the world's largest passport-free travel area, the Schengen zone?**
- Ukraine
 - Georgia
 - Croatia
 - Iceland
25. **Vladimir Putin's 12-mile "bridge of dreams," before special operations fighters partially destroyed it, was the longest in Europe, carrying vehicles and trains over a strait between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, connecting what two areas?**
- the Chernihiv and Zhytomyr regions of Ukraine with Moldova
 - Crimea (as part of Ukraine) and Russia
 - the Donetsk region of Ukraine with Belarus
 - Ukraine and Turkey

26. **Giorgia Meloni became what country's first far-right prime minister since Benito Mussolini?**
- Brazil
 - Sweden
 - Italy
 - Venezuela
27. **Ukrainian troops are heading to the U.S. soon for training on the Patriot missile system in what would be an unusual case of Ukrainians being trained on American soil. Where?**
- Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, Texas
 - Eglin AFB, Florida
 - Fort Bliss, El Paso, Texas
 - Fort Sill, Lawton, Oklahoma
28. **“Breaking News: The U.S. has hit its debt limit,” *The New York Times* said in a Jan. 19 tweet. What action did government officials, including Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, take at that point?**
- Congress voted that day to raise the debt ceiling.
 - U.S. citizens ratified a balanced budget amendment.
 - They shut down the federal government.
 - The U.S. began using “extraordinary measures” to pay its bills.
29. **More than a million protesters, chanting slogans like “retirement before arthritis,” took to the streets throughout France to protest President Emmanuel Macron’s plan to do what?**
- raise the legal age of retirement from 62 to 64
 - provide weapons to Ukraine
 - secede from the EU
 - raise the price of gas and home heating oil due to declining supplies from Russia
30. **Several grocery items have gotten more expensive this year. However, nothing comes close to the rise, more than 60% in a year, of what food staple now hitting \$4.25?**
- a dozen eggs
 - a gallon of milk
 - a loaf of bread
 - a pound of rice
31. **This year’s Oscars broke the record for most Asian acting nominees in one year. Some of these nominees acted in which picture, a selection for best picture?**
- Armageddon Time
 - Everything Everywhere All at Once
 - She Said
 - Devotion
32. **Diplomats from nearly 200 countries concluded two weeks of climate talks on Nov. 20 by agreeing to establish a fund to do what?**
- Pay poor nations for damage caused by climate change.
 - Make renewable energy the dominant energy source worldwide by 2030.
 - Stop the drilling and mining of fossil fuels immediately.
 - Eliminate all greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

33. **Wes Moore put his hand on the Bible that once belonged to abolitionist Frederick Douglass and took the oath of office to become the 63rd governor and the first Black person to hold the position in what state's history?**
- Georgia
 - Massachusetts
 - Maryland
 - New York
34. **The world's second-largest ice sheet serves a pivotal role in regulating the Earth's climate. It is now feeling significant effects of climate change. Researchers found that areas have recently seen the hottest temperatures in a millennium, saying there is "almost zero" chance that anything but human-caused climate change is to blame for the sharp rise in temperature. Where?**
- the Greenland ice sheet
 - the Antarctic ice sheet
 - the Arctic ice sheet
 - the Siberian ice sheet
35. **The issue before the U.S. Supreme Court in *The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts v. Lynn Goldsmith* is a serious one for the art world: "When should artists be paid for original work that is then transformed by others, such as a movie adaptation of a book?" The case involved an Andy Warhol painting of whom?**
- Prince
 - Madonna
 - Elton John
 - Michael Jackson
36. **The Doomsday Clock has been ticking for 76 years. It attempts to gauge how close humanity is to destroying the world. In late January, according to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, the clock was set to the closest to midnight it has ever been. What was the clock set to?**
- 15 seconds to midnight
 - 90 seconds to midnight
 - 17 minutes to midnight
 - 6:30 p.m.
37. **In February, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), who is running for a third term, reintroduced a bill calling for a constitutional amendment to do what?**
- to limit members of the U.S. house of representatives from serving more than two terms
 - to limit U.S. senators from serving more than two six-year terms
 - to outlaw abortion of any kind nationwide
 - to require background checks and a waiting period for any gun purchase by anyone in any state
38. **Astronomers discovered comet C/2022 E3 (ZTF), a bright green comet, last March. It was at perihelion Jan. 12 and at perigee on Feb. 1. What does "perigee" mean in this context?**
- brightest
 - nearest to Earth
 - most colorful
 - closest to the sun

39. **Making it one of the deadliest disasters of the century, the death toll went above 33,000 after a magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck Feb. 6. Where?**
- east of the Oshika Peninsula in Japan
 - Buffalo, New York
 - Turkey and Syria
 - Albania and Greece
40. **“At 40 I’m the youngest governor in the country, and at 80 he’s the oldest president in American history,” said the person who gave the Democrat’s response to the State of the Union. Who gave the response?**
- Iowa Gov. Kimberly Reynolds
 - Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin
 - Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs
 - Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders

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

The Texas Legislature opened on Jan. 10 and will run for 140 days until May 29. But already, much of the agenda of the 181 members is set. Discuss some of the people leading the legislature, the issues they have on their agenda and the challenges they face.

DO NOT DISTRIBUTE TO STUDENTS BEFORE OR DURING THE CONTEST!

ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

The Texas Legislature opened on Jan. 10 and will run for 140 days until May 29. But already, much of the agenda of the 181 members is set. Discuss some of the people leading the legislature, the issues they have on their agenda and the challenges they face.

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS PREPARED Feb. 13, 2023
might include, but should not be limited to...

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|-------|-------|--|
| 1. D | 21. C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Intro</i> — A University of Texas Texas Politics Project poll found a significant increase in Texans' skepticism about the responsiveness of state government. The plurality of Texans, 46%, said the state government in Austin "mostly ignores" the needs of Texas residents.. • <i>People</i> — President of the Senate, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick (R), has served since Jan. 20, 2015. More than anyone else, Patrick controls the agenda including controlling the budgeting process as a leader of the Legislative Budget Board. Speaker of the House Dade Phelan (R) has been speaker since Jan. 12, 2021. Republicans have sizeable majorities in both the Senate and the House. The governor of Texas is weaker than other states' governors but can call a special session to deal with issues on his agenda and can veto legislation. • <i>Money</i> — Legislators have a historic \$32.7 billion surplus to work with. According to a University of Houston poll, the median Texan believes that between \$10 and \$14 billion of the record-breaking budget surplus should be saved. • <i>School funding</i> — State Rep. Gina Hinojosa, D-Austin, filed HB31, which would basing the state's public education funding system on student enrollment instead of average attendance. Texas has about 5.5 million K-12 students, but only about 92% of them regularly attended classes last school year, meaning schools missed out on millions in funding from the remaining students. Rep. Donna Howard, D-Austin, filed HB882, which would increase that amount to \$7,075 and would adjust it annually according to inflation. • <i>School choice</i> — Gov. Greg Abbott, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and the Texas GOP have listed school choice as a legislative priority. Sen. Mayes Middleton, R-Galveston, filed Senate Bill 176, which could become the most expansive school choice program in the state. It would create an education savings account program that would allow parents to use state funds to pay for their children's private school, online schooling or private tutors. According to a poll from the University of Houston released Jan. 30, 61% of Texans support educational vouchers for low-income families and 53% support vouchers for all families regardless of income. Texas already practices school choice, as parents can choose to send their children to free charter schools or transfer schools within or outside of their district. • <i>Teacher shortages</i> — Issues like low pay, working overtime, health worries during the pandemic and being caught in the middle of Texas' culture wars have left Texas struggling to fill its teacher vacancies. Rep. James Talarico, D-Round Rock, filed HB1548, which would give teachers a \$15,000 pay raise. • <i>School safety</i> — School safety is on top of the priority list for both Republicans and Democrats. Legislators are discussing ways to make schools safer and how to provide more mental health services for students. Legislators from both parties have said they will set aside \$600 million for school safety. For example, Rep. Shawn Nicole Thierry, D-Houston, has filed HB801, which would require districts to have only one entrance per school campus. • <i>Gambling</i> — SJR 17 would require approval by a majority of voters in a November constitutional referendum. It would allow one casino resort in each of the state's four major metro areas along with limited casino gambling at horse and greyhound racetracks and legalized sports betting. It also would allow the state's three recognized tribal communities to operate slot machines or casino gambling. In the University of Houston poll, 75% of Texans support the passage of SJR 17, including 41% strongly support it. • <i>Gun regulation</i> — Influenced by parents from Uvalde, Sen. Ronald Gutierrez, D-San Antonio, filed SB145 which would raise the minimum age for buying or renting firearms from 18 to 21. • <i>LGBTQ restrictions</i> — Reps. Steve Toth, R-The Woodlands, and Jared Patterson, R-Frisco, filed HB631 and HB1155, respectively. Both are similar to legislation in Florida dubbed the "Don't Say Gay" law. HB631 would ban schools from teaching students from kindergarten through fifth grade about sexual orientation or gender identity. HB1155 would extend that ban to eighth grade. • <i>Other issues</i> — legalization of marijuana, ethnic studies courses in public schools, |
| 2. C | 22. B | |
| 3. C | 23. D | |
| 4. B | 24. C | |
| 5. A | 25. B | |
| 6. D | 26. C | |
| 7. A | 27. D | |
| 8. D | 28. D | |
| 9. C | 29. A | |
| 10. B | 30. A | |
| 11. B | 31. B | |
| 12. B | 32. A | |
| 13. A | 33. C | |
| 14. A | 34. A | |
| 15. D | 35. A | |
| 16. C | 36. B | |
| 17. A | 37. B | |
| 18. C | 38. B | |
| 19. D | 39. C | |
| 20. D | 40. D | |