



UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE
Making a World of Difference

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

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2017 • STATE



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Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick speaks with supporters of U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) after the results of the 2016 Nevada caucuses at his caucus night party at the Bill & Lillie Heinrich YMCA in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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STATE • 2017

- 1. Republicans insisted on getting Judge Neil Gorsuch on the Supreme Court. Democrats refused to “reward” them for denying Obama nominee Judge Merrick Garland a vote but did not have enough votes to trigger the filibuster that would trigger the “nuclear option.” What is the “nuclear option”?**
 - a. abolishing the filibuster in the House and Senate
 - b. bringing back Obama nominee Merrick Garland
 - c. having the full Senate vote with only a majority vote (51 votes) required for approval
 - d. having Democrats refuse to vote for rule changes, promoting negotiation
- 2. World markets surged upward the Monday before the national election after FBI Director James Comey told Congress that Hillary Clinton should face no charges. However, otherwise vague, his comments possibly left open charges based on the content of that same computer, against who?**
 - a. Clinton aide Huma Abedin
 - b. former Attorney General Janet Reno
 - c. former congressman Anthony Weiner
 - d. independent counsel Ken Starr
- 3. The Obama administration halted the construction of the Dakota pipeline by doing what?**
 - a. The local police arrested and jailed all of the protesters at gunpoint.
 - b. The U.S. Department of Energy sued Energy Transfer Partners and that company declared bankruptcy.
 - c. The Internal Revenue Service denied tax-free status to Midwest Alliance for Infrastructure Now.
 - d. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers denied an easement for the pipeline to cross Lake Oahe.
- 4. McDonald’s announced it will start making one of its signature hamburgers, the Quarter Pounder, with what?**
 - a. a much healthier mixture of beef and soy
 - b. fresh, not frozen, beef
 - c. a vegetable and protein mix
 - d. meat-like protein and eggs from chickens that aren’t confined to cages
- 5. What was the outcome of a South Carolina trial of a white former police officer, Michael Slager, who shot and killed a black motorist, Walter Scott, as Scott fled a traffic stop?**
 - a. Slager was one of only 13 police officers convicted of murder by a jury this year.
 - b. The jury found Slager not guilty, saying he was acting in self defense.
 - c. The judge declared a mistrial due to a hung jury.
 - d. Slager, after the trial started, entered a plea to avoid being found guilty of first-degree murder.

6. **The Supreme Court tightened its rules on capital punishment, ruling that Texas — the nation’s leader in executions — cannot use what?**
 - a. hanging
 - b. an old definition of intellectual disability to determine who lives and who dies
 - c. a three-drug “cocktail” for lethal injection that has to be monitored by a doctor
 - d. a method of appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court that delays almost every execution

7. **Two of Donald Trump’s top cabinet picks were born in Texas. Which two?**
 - a. Ted Cruz and Jeff Sessions
 - b. Sid Miller and Andy Puzder
 - c. Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Jeb Hensarling
 - d. Rick Perry and Rex Tillerson

8. **As one of his last orders, U.S. President Barack Obama announced permanent protection from oil and gas drilling where?**
 - a. the Bears Ears National Monument
 - b. the Gold Butte National Monument
 - c. all land in Massachusetts and Virginia
 - d. Chukchi and Beaufort sea in the Arctic

9. **The Federal Reserves Open Market Committee voted 9-1 in March to increase its benchmark interest rate by a quarter of a percentage point. The Fed also said it is looking to increase interest rates three times next year after raising interest rates how many times since 2009?**
 - a. 3
 - b. 5
 - c. 7
 - d. 9

10. **As the penalty phase of his federal trial got underway, 22-year-old Dylan Roof said, “I’m not going to lie to you,” he told the court. Roof had been convicted of murdering nine black churchgoers and did not want to present evidence of mental illness. What unique action did U.S. District Judge Richard Gergel approve?**
 - a. Roof can take the stand for the prosecution.
 - b. Only the prosecution can call witnesses.
 - c. Roof could act as his own lawyer.
 - d. The court ruled Roof as mentally competent after two hearings and allowed that fact as admissible in court.

11. **After Khalid Masood sent a message to an unknown person before he attacked and killed four people in London, United Kingdom Secretary of State Amber Rudd said encryption capabilities of what messaging tool were unacceptable?**
 - a. Instagram
 - b. WhatsApp
 - c. Telegram
 - d. iCloud

- 12. When she realized what she discovered, the curator of historic dress called the piece of fabric with silver and gold strands “the Holy Grail, the Mona Lisa of fashion.” What was it thought to be?**
- the first dress designed by Christian Dior but never worn by anyone
 - the dress Beyoncé wore when she appeared in Dreamgirls, a dress valued at more than \$1 million
 - Lupita Nyong’o’s Calvin Klein dress she wore to the Oscars, a dress that was stolen in 2015
 - a piece of a dress once owned by Queen Elizabeth I
- 13. In the Kazakhstan capital, Astana, peace talks in January got off to an explosive start as rebel groups announced they would not talk face to face with the regime and the chief delegate slammed the opposition as “terrorists.” The talks, brokered by Russia, Turkey and Iran, aimed to bring peace to what country?**
- Afghanistan
 - Kazakhstan
 - Syria
 - Ukraine
- 14. Gov. Greg Abbott said the election of a Republican president does not change the need to assemble a convention of states to do what?**
- amend the U.S. Constitution to include an outright ban on abortion
 - amend the U.S. Constitution to include a balanced budget amendment
 - amend the U.S. Constitution to dissolve the U.S. Supreme Court
 - amend the U.S. Constitution to put term limits on senators and representatives
- 15. The yellow cab may be as synonymous with New York as pizza, Broadway and the Empire State Building, but more and more, it is no longer the ride of choice. What is?**
- newly opened subway operations
 - walking thanks to an enhanced emphasis on healthy living
 - a growing fleet of black cars summoned by ride-hailing apps such as Uber and Lyft
 - the Airbus self-piloted flying car
- 16. A team of scholars and attorneys filed a lawsuit alleging that U.S. President Donald Trump violated the Emoluments Clause. What does this provision in the Constitution prohibit?**
- The family can’t make income off Donald Trump’s lease of the U.S. post office building.
 - U.S. officials cannot accept any gifts from any king, prince or foreign state.
 - The president can’t sign a treaty without the consent of Congress.
 - The Abu Dhabi tourism office can’t do business in this country.
- 17. Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman was extradited to the United States where he pled not guilty to what charges?**
- selling automatic weapons to foreign governments
 - operating a continuing criminal enterprise, Sinaloa Cartel
 - creating fake money, also known as money laundering
 - murdering members of his family in retaliation
- 18. Tourist dives to the what famous site are planned to begin in May 2018 at a cost of \$105,210 per person?**
- the Titanic
 - Atlantis
 - Cleopatra’s Palace
 - Ancient Chinese city of Shicheng

- 19. Which multidrug resistant parasite represents a serious threat to global malaria control and eradication, spreading fast through Thailand, Laos and Cambodia?**
- Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*
 - Klebsiella pneumoniae*
 - Escherichia coli*
 - Plasmodium falciparum* Kelch13 C580Y
- 20. The program — universal basic income — guarantees participants \$587 regardless of income, wealth or employment status. The idea is that it offers workers greater security and the government thinks it could save money, simplifying the country's complex and expensive welfare system. In what country is this being tested?**
- Finland
 - Laos
 - Cuba
 - Belarus
- 21. Heinz led the charge, asking supporters to sign a petition for “Smunday.” What’s that all about?**
- supporting the North American Free Trade Agreement
 - making ketchup and mustard the official condiments of America
 - making the day after the Super Bowl a holiday
 - bringing jobs for the production of Heinz products back to Pittsburgh
- 22. Russia announced in January it would withdraw its aircraft carrier and some other warships from the waters off what country in the first step in a drawdown of its forces in the war-torn Mideast Country?**
- Ukraine
 - Turkey
 - Saudia Arabia
 - Syria
- 23. In the last five years, North Korea has test fired more than 50 ballistic missiles. What was special about the one launched in February while the Japanese prime minister was visiting Florida?**
- It was North Korea’s first intercontinental ballistic missile capable of reaching the U.S. mainland.
 - It was capable of carrying a nuclear warhead, making North Korea only the third country to have such technology.
 - Nothing. It never posed a threat to North America.
 - It failed, falling into the ocean, just like every other missile test the country has had.
- 24. Sears, Kmart, Nordstrom, Neiman Marcus and Belk all had something in common, something that also caused Kellyann Conway to be “counseled.” What?**
- They stopped selling Trump products.
 - Their CEOs signed a petition in support of NAFTA, as did Conway.
 - They retweeted a tweet from @realDonaldTrump: “We support Ivanka who has been treated so unfairly by #fakenews.”
 - They declared bankruptcy after Conway sold all her shares in those companies.

- 25. The heart of Philadelphia’s Italian Market was quiet. Fine restaurants in New York, San Francisco and Washington, D.C., closed for the day. Grocery stores, food trucks, coffee shops, diners and Tex-mex restaurants in places like Chicago, Los Angeles and Boston shut down Feb. 15. Why?**
- Most states declared it a holiday in honor of Galileo Galilei, his birthday.
 - Immigrants stayed home in a nationwide protest — A Day Without Immigrants.
 - Rumor, the Westminster Dog Show champ, traveled to those cities.
 - It was Susan B. Anthony’s birthday and local governments made it a holiday.
- 26. Yale University announced it would change the name of a residential college honoring John C. Calhoun, the seventh vice president of the United States. Why?**
- Students wanted all references to politicians removed.
 - Calhoun was a Democrat, a liberal, not part of the political party in power.
 - Elected officials like Calhoun, but also Thomas Jefferson and Woodrow Wilson, supported war such as the War of 1812, opposing pacifists.
 - Calhoun was a white supremacist.
- 27. A single rocket launch from what country sent a record 104 satellites into space?**
- U.S.A. via SpaceX
 - China
 - India
 - Russia
- 28. For young adults, research on social media found that heavy use of platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram was associated with feelings of what?**
- social isolation, depression
 - jealousy
 - inspiration and freedom
 - happiness and satisfaction
- 29. Why was a statue of a girl put up facing the statue of the bull?**
- It was “Fearless Girl,” placed by the National Federation of Women for International Women’s Day.
 - It was a marketing stunt of State Street Global Advisors pushing for gender diversity.
 - It was celebrating the admission of women to the Wall Street Journal editorial board.
 - It was created to celebrate the placement of women on every board of directors of companies on the Dow Jones Industrial Average.
- 30. South Korea’s Constitution Court ruled to uphold the impeachment of President Park Geun-hye, making her the first democratically elected president to be removed from office in the country’s history. Why was she impeached?**
- Females are not allowed to hold the nation’s top office.
 - She colluded with Russian President Vladimir Putin to get elected.
 - She received millions of dollars in bribes from businesses.
 - She refused to prosecute the men behind the 2014 Sewol ferry disaster.

- 31. The newly appointed administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency Scott Pruitt said, “No, I would not agree that it’s a primary contributor to the global warming that we see.” The vast majority of scientists, however, argue that it is the human emissions of it that are the primary cause. What is it?**
- methane, CH₄
 - nitrous oxide, N₂O
 - ozone, O₃
 - carbon dioxide, CO₂
- 32. Inside a French zoo, poachers killed Vince, a white rhino. Why?**
- for its horns
 - because it attacked a child
 - for its toenails that have medicinal value
 - for its tongue that is a delicacy in Japan
- 33. Possibly costing a Portland, Maine dairy company an estimated \$10 million, a class-action lawsuit about overtime pay for truck drivers hinged entirely on a debate over the most polarizing of punctuation marks. Which one?**
- the Oxford comma, “created to avoid uncertainty”
 - the exclamation point, “reserved for once in a writer’s life”
 - the semicolon, the one mark “no one understands”
 - a dash, “a misunderstood hyphen”
- 34. House Oversight Committee Chair Jason Chaffetz (R-Utah) said Americans at all income levels will be able to afford health care. They just might have to give up what?**
- Starbucks
 - “that new iPhone that they just love”
 - bottled water
 - unused gym memberships
- 35. During a powerful storm, the limestone natural arch on the island of Gozo in Malta collapsed. What was it called?**
- Azure Window
 - The Arches of Etretat
 - La Portada
 - The Green Bridge
- 36. Of the 17 hottest years ever recorded, 16 have now occurred since 2000. According to NOAA and NASA, global temperatures have continued to rise and 2016 finished the year as what?**
- the second hottest year on record
 - the wettest year on record
 - the year with the smallest Arctic ice cap
 - the hottest year on record
- 37. The International Olympic Committee gave two sports provisional recognition this fall. Which two?**
- cheerleading and Muay Thai
 - baseball and softball
 - surf lifesaving and karate
 - skateboarding and sport climbing

- 38. In mid-December, American intelligence agencies announced they had concluded with “high confidence” that Russia had acted covertly in the latter stages of the presidential campaign by doing what?**
- hacking into the email of the Republican candidates and posting those emails on Wikileaks
 - hacking into the Republican National Committee computers systems and feeding information to the DNC
 - hacking into the computer systems of Democratic organizations and releasing documents they found
 - hacking into social media accounts and distributing tweets using @realDonaldTrump
- 39. The Obama administration halted a decades-long provision that allowed Cubans to be given immediate legal status. But to earn that status, what did the Cubans have to do?**
- apply for a “green card” and then citizenship
 - live in the U.S. without committing any crimes
 - reach a U.S. land port, not be caught at sea
 - arrive via one of the new commercial flights from Cuba to the U.S.
- 40. After the U.S. Senate passed a similar measure, the U.S. House was almost certain to pass a similar measure that some said would bring down the internet by doing what?**
- selling email addresses and phone numbers with a customer’s permission
 - allowing service providers to track and share a customer’s browsing activity without advance permission
 - sharing voting records if not by name, by IP address
 - sharing a private company’s billing information, who got billed and for what

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.

This year, meeting as part of the Jan. 10 - May 29 biennial legislature, the Texas House is as Republican-dominated as the Texas Senate – both roughly two-thirds GOP majority – and Texas remains a conservative stronghold. In their 140 days, legislators will discuss legislation ranging from the trivial to the monumental. Most of the legislation will go unnoticed and will never make it out of committee. Some legislation, however, will gain national attention setting precedent for other states. Discuss some of the actions and pieces of legislation that have drawn national attention and where they have gotten their support.

ANSWER KEY

ESSAY PROMPT

This year, meeting as part of the Jan. 10 - May 29 biennial legislature, the Texas House is as Republican-dominated as the Texas Senate – both roughly two-thirds GOP majority – and Texas remains a conservative stronghold. In their 140 days, legislators will discuss legislation ranging from the trivial to the monumental. Most of the legislation will go unnoticed and will never make it out of committee. Some legislation, however, will gain national attention setting precedent for other states. Discuss some of the actions and pieces of legislation that have drawn national attention and where they have gotten their support.

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

DISCUSSION POINTS

- *Legislation.* More than 2,200 bills have been filed in the Senate and 4,300 in the House and that doesn't include concurrent legislation or joint resolutions.
- *Bathroom bill.* Probably the legislation that has drawn the most attention is Senate Bill 6 — labeled the Texas Privacy Act, legislation that Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick introduced he said would ensure that transgender people would have to use public restrooms based on their “biological sex” on their birth certificate. The legislation was modeled after similar legislation in North Carolina that ultimately cost the governor in that state his job and drew the ire of the NCAA that refused to hold games there until the rules were changed.
- *Anti-abortion.* Sen. Brandon Creighton's SB 25, a “wrongful births” bill designed to prevent doctors from encouraging abortions to avoid lawsuits, passed the Senate 21-9 in March. Creighton said without it, doctors have “an invitation to be sued for just practicing medicine” and might not want to work in the state. Opponents have argued the measure would encourage doctors to withhold information from parents about an unborn child's disability. SB 415 bans “dilation and evacuation” abortions — the most common second-trimester procedure, where doctors use surgical instruments to grasp and remove pieces of fetal tissue. It also passed 21-9. SB 8 allows abortion providers to sell aborted fetal tissue — but only to authorized medical researchers. SB 258 would require cremation or burial of fetal remains.
- *Voter ID.* The 2011 law requires Texans to show one of seven approved forms of identification to vote. Its proponents say it is meant to protect against voter fraud, but a federal appeals court ruled in 2015 that it discriminated against Latinos and other minorities. Sen. Joan Huffman, R-Houston, said SB 5 used the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruling as a road map for changing the voter ID law. The Senate passed the bill 21-10 in late March. Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick identified photo voter ID as one of his top 10 legislative priorities for the 2017 session.
- *Sanctuary cities.* Under SB 4, law enforcement in cities, counties and on college campuses would have to hold an arrested person in custody while U.S. Customs and Immigration Enforcement looks into his or her immigration status. If the entities fail to do so, they could be denied state grant money.
- *Bullying.* HB 304 would make it a misdemeanor to electronically harass or bully anyone under age 18 through means such as texts and social media. House Speaker Joe Straus, R-San Antonio, also has said he supports anti-bullying legislation. State Rep. Ina Minjarez from San Antonio introduced the legislation after a 16-year-old committed suicide after being harassed online.
- *Powdered alcohol.* HB 133 would officially make powdered alcohol an “alcoholic beverage.” Already, 25 states had enacted a permanent ban on the sale of powdered alcohol. As of last summer, 32 states have permanently or temporarily banned the product, and only three, including Texas, allow regulated sales.
- *Banning use of hand held devices while driving.* SB 31 would make it a criminal offense to use a wireless communication device when operating a motor vehicle. Unlike nearly every other state, Texas has no state-wide law banning texting while driving. Only Texas, Arizona, Missouri, and Montana have yet to ban the practice. Texas has passed similar legislation before but it was vetoed in 2011 by Gov. Rick Perry. More than 100 cities in Texas have already banned the practice.
- And if you want some trivia.
 - HB 95 would make Texas exempt from daylight savings time.
 - HCR 32 would officially recognize the Bowie knife as the state knife of Texas

Essay Prompts from Spring 2017

INVITATIONAL A

Seven states legalized marijuana in some form on Election Day while one proposal failed. “This is really day one of a decade-or-more-long process of bringing this industry into the light and getting rid of the illicit market,” Richard Miadich, one of the authors of California’s Proposition 64, told Business Insider. The landmark election brings a few victories for the budding legal market, which is on pace to hit \$20 billion in revenue by 2020, according to the Marijuana Business Daily.

Discuss the issues surrounding the legalization of marijuana, including the proposals on ballots this past fall, in Texas and nationally.

INVITATIONAL B

Donald Trump won the election, beating out Democratic rival Hillary Clinton. He is the 45th president of the United States. But the election process itself was not without problems.

Discuss the problems surrounding the process in last fall’s presidential election.

DISTRICT

In remarks at CIA Headquarters during his first week in office with about 40 invited supporters in the audience, U.S. President Donald Trump said, “I have a running war with the media. They are among the most dishonest human beings on Earth.” NBC Broadcaster Chuck Todd said it may be the worst relationship between the president and the news media since Richard Nixon. This complicated relationship played out in the White House press corps, media coverage of the presidency and on social media. How?

REGION

“Protecting our borders from the illegal movement of weapons, drugs, contraband, and people, while promoting lawful entry and exit, is essential to homeland security, economic prosperity, and national sovereignty.” The mission of the Homeland Security Department of Customs and Border Protection seems clear. Yet over the last year, just how the borders of the United States should be secured and from whom has come into question. Elaborate.

STATE

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