



CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

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2025 • STATE

May 5, 2025



In 2025, the Consumer Price Index is projected to rise, impacting the cost of everyday items. Food prices, particularly for fresh produce, are expected to rise due to factors like tariffs and supply chain disruptions.

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UNIVERSITY INTERSCHOLASTIC LEAGUE

CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS

STATE • 2025

1. **In 2024, 285 cases were reported nationwide, but an ongoing outbreak includes 663 cases in Texas alone by April 29. As of April 24, 30 jurisdictions had a total of 884 confirmed cases. Cases of what?**
 - a. Measles
 - b. Chickenpox
 - c. COVID-19
 - d. Smallpox
2. **Creating the nation's eighth-largest bank if the deal is finalized, U.S. banking officials approved the \$35.3 billion purchase of Discover Financial Services by which financial firm?**
 - a. Citibank
 - b. Bank of America
 - c. Capital One
 - d. JPMorgan Chase
3. **A federal judge agreed to block the Trump administration from shutting down which 83-year-old news service created by Congress?**
 - a. Radio Free Europe
 - b. Voice of America
 - c. National Public Radio
 - d. Public Broadcasting Service
4. **Debbie Downer, a fictional character who debuted in 2004, was created and portrayed by Rachel Dratch on what show television show that celebrated its 50th anniversary this year?**
 - a. "The Simpsons"
 - b. "Last Week with John Oliver"
 - c. "Good Morning America"
 - d. "Saturday Night Live"
5. **Saying they don't share Washington's concerns about TikTok's ties to China even as TikTok was banned, more than 300 million people downloaded what other popular Chinese social media app, making it the most downloaded free app in the U.S. Apple store at one point?**
 - a. WeChat
 - b. Xiaohongshu, Red Note
 - c. Douyin
 - d. Lemon8
6. **Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum has threatened to take legal action against Google for what?**
 - a. giving data about customers, including those applying for entry in the U.S., to DOGE
 - b. providing maps that help drug traffickers find their way into the U.S. with fentanyl precursors
 - c. providing information via websites to drug cartels that helped sell weapons
 - d. using "Gulf of America" on U.S. maps

7. **The New York Yankees beat the Milwaukee Brewers 20-9 in the season opener. In addition to the lopsided score, an invention by an MIT physicist used during the game also drew attention. What invention?**
- the use of a robot first-base umpire to call fair/foul balls
 - torpedo bats that put more of the mass of the bat to the middle
 - a dynamic batting helmet that tells a batter when to swing
 - the kinetic recovery shorts that help players run the bases faster
8. **The object — which scientists first detected in December — had a 3.1% chance of hitting Earth. NASA now says the odds are 0.004% for what to hit Earth and when?**
- a black hole with millions of times more mass than the sun, in about 5 billion years
 - a gamma-ray burst, GRB 221099A, on Oct. 9
 - Apophis 99942, a comet, in 2029
 - 2024 YR4, an asteroid the size of a football field, in 2032
9. **The private rocket firm Blue Origin, headed by Jeff Bezos, announced the six-person crew for its NS-31 mission that launched April 14. The NS-31 crew, the first all-female crew going into space since 1963, included whom?**
- Katy Perry, pop star and singer
 - Valentina Tereshkova, cosmonaut
 - Toyohiro Akiyama, journalist
 - Mikey Madison, actress
10. **Sean Duffy, the transportation secretary, did not indicate a specific date by which the federal government intended to end the program. But U.S. President Donald Trump celebrated on social media, saying, “Manhattan, and all of New York, is SAVED. LONG LIVE THE KING!” What program did Duffy want to end?**
- landing fees at New York City airports, \$100 for each landing or takeoff between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m.
 - baggage fees on planes and trains entering New York City, \$45 per bag
 - congestion pricing, \$9 per car entering Manhattan’s busiest streets
 - a 14.75% hotel occupancy tax for all hotel rooms in Manhattan
11. **In an upset victory, the center-right Demokraatit Party got the most votes in Greenland’s parliamentary elections. In second place was the Naleraq party. Both are in favor of what?**
- becoming the 51st U.S. state “one way or the other”
 - independence from Denmark
 - bringing the first U.S. military base to their country
 - opening northern shipping lanes to Russia
12. **Egg prices are predicted to increase by 41.1% in 2025, according to a report released by the Department of Agriculture. Why?**
- a bird flu outbreak
 - inflation
 - tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico
 - high feed and labor costs
13. **On a planet called K2-18b, a planet 700 trillion miles away, researchers on Earth say they’ve found a strong indication of life by finding what molecule that comes only from marine algae?**
- carbon dioxide
 - water
 - dimethyl sulfide
 - chlorophyll

14. **Building beyond solid, liquid and gas as the primary phases of matter, on Feb. 19, Microsoft’s scientists said they had built what is known as a “topological qubit” based on a new phase of physical existence, which could be harnessed to solve mathematical, scientific and technological problems. But, at least initially, it was created to be a part of what?**
 - a. new drugs
 - b. a new form of nuclear fusion
 - c. an entirely new kind of quantum computer
 - d. a new form of life
15. **Despite a U.S. Supreme Court ruling, when President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador visited U.S. President Donald Trump, both said they would do what for Kilmar Armando Abrego Garcia, a wrongly deported man?**
 - a. bring him back to the U.S. for a trial in U.S. courts
 - b. bring him to trial in El Salvador courts
 - c. allow him to leave the U.S. for a country of his choice
 - d. nothing
16. **American Cardinal Kevin Farrell took over the reins of the Catholic Church after the death of Pope Francis. What job did Farrell previously hold?**
 - a. bouncer at a Buenos Aires nightclub
 - b. playwright
 - c. bishop of the Diocese of Dallas
 - d. high school teacher
17. **Which leader was detained after a political standoff and hand-wringing over what the country should do with a leader who had declared martial law, a move that threatened decades of hard-won democracy in the country?**
 - a. President John Dramani Mahama, Ghana
 - b. President Luis Alberto Arce Catacora, Bolivia
 - c. President Yoon Suk Yeol, South Korea
 - d. Transitional President Capt. Ibrahim Traoré, Burkina Faso
18. **Secretary of State Marco Rubio declared Ambassador Ebrahim Rasool a “persona non grata,” a “race-baiting politician” who hates Donald Trump. Rubio told Rasool to leave the U.S. What country did Rasool represent?**
 - a. Russia
 - b. Bolivia
 - c. Ecuador
 - d. South Africa
19. **Sen. Cory Booker, D-New Jersey, delivered a 25-hour speech — the longest speech in the history of the Senate. Why?**
 - a. It was a filibuster of the budget plan calling for more than \$5 trillion in tax cuts.
 - b. Booker protested Donald Trump’s second presidency, including efforts to deport participants of the 2024 pro-Palestinian protests on university campuses.
 - c. Booker protested civil rights legislation including voting rights provisions that would, he said, limit the right of some people to vote.
 - d. It was a filibuster of the defense spending legislation including the creation of the F-47 fighter jet program to be built in Texas.

20. **The FBI and the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency in March warned against a dangerous ransomware-as-a-service software scheme that used a double extortion model and that has hit more than 300 victims across industries demanding ransoms between \$100,000 and \$15 million. What was the name of this ransomware variant?**
- Colonial Pipeline
 - Salt Typhoon
 - WannaCry
 - Medusa
21. **President Donald Trump launched \$TRUMP for nearly \$6.50. First lady Melania Trump launched \$MELANIA at nearly \$7. What are \$TRUMP and \$MELANIA?**
- official “meme coin,” cryptocurrency
 - new tags for use on TruthSocial
 - tags on the New York Stock Exchange
 - names on Venmo so supporters could donate to their cause
22. **“They have turned their back on our community,” said Rev. Jamal Bryant, an Atlanta megachurch pastor who initiated a 40-day consumer boycott. What popular retailer faced the boycott over its shift away from diversity, equity and inclusion policies?**
- Walmart
 - Target
 - United Parcel Service
 - The Home Depot
23. **Myanmar’s ruling junta has declared a state of emergency in six regions — Sagaing, Mandalay, Magway, northeastern Shan State, Nay Pyi Taw and Bago — after what happened in late March?**
- The Burmese civil war escalated with bombs destroying much of the region.
 - Military attacks from the United Kingdom resulted in the death of 1,600 noncombatants.
 - A magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck the country.
 - The Air Quality Index topped 159, a record high for pollution due to industrial and mining activities.
24. **In the most expensive judicial race in U.S. history, what did Elon Musk offer two Wisconsin voters who attended a rally open only to those Republicans who voted in the election?**
- a seat in Trump’s cabinet
 - citizenship
 - a trip to space
 - a check for \$1 million
25. **After investigating the mass killings that happened under the former president’s deadly crackdown against illegal drugs, Rodrigo Duterte was arrested March 11 on order of the International Criminal Court in connection with a case of crimes against humanity filed against him. He was the president of what country?**
- the Philippines
 - Turkey
 - Sudan
 - Brazil

- 26. The White House took down some government websites — covid.gov and covidtests.gov — that provided COVID-19 information and replaced those sites with what?**
- an anti-vaccination site hosted by Robert F. Kennedy Jr.: “The Anti-Vaxxers Are Right”
 - a site promoting removing fluoride from water: “Save Your Teeth”
 - a new page: “Lab Leak. The True Origins of COVID-19”
 - a single web page: “Making Americans’ Health Care More Portable, Accessible, and Tailored to Meet Your Unique Needs — Establishing Health Savings Accounts”
- 27. Several U.S. officials, including the vice president and the defense secretary, disclosed plans to attack Houthi rebels in Yemen in a group chat that included The Atlantic’s top editor. What app were they messaging on?**
- Signal
 - WhatsApp
 - TikTok
 - Lemon8
- 28. It first filed for bankruptcy in 2019. It survived then as a zombie brand with fewer stores, but the chain has struggled to find life beyond the mall and to compete against fast-growing online rivals. Once a formidable fast-fashion mall staple, what company filed for bankruptcy protection late in mid-March?**
- Forever 21
 - Shein
 - American Eagle Outfitters
 - Express
- 29. A Paris court found Marine LePen, the French far-right leader, guilty of embezzlement. What, as a result, was the judge’s sentence?**
- The judge sentenced LePen to five years of public service including running for public office.
 - The judge barred LePen from running for public office.
 - The judge said the facts of the case were unclear, so Le Pen had to spend three years working on tort reform in France.
 - The judge said LePen would be required to get an accounting degree.
- 30. The executive director of the Texas State Lottery resigned abruptly in late April in the latest fallout from the agency’s decision in 2023 to do what?**
- to record a fake lottery video that would trick people into buying more lottery tickets
 - to transfer lottery money into the public education fund where, the director said, “it was supposed to go anyway”
 - to register every lottery ticket purchaser to vote
 - to help professional bettors in Europe purchase and print millions of its tickets to guarantee themselves a \$95 million jackpot win
- 31. A long-standing offer of free checked luggage allowed one Texas-based airline to stand apart from the competition. Starting with flights booked on or after May 28, the airline will charge most customers for checked luggage. What airline?**
- Southwest Airlines
 - American Airlines
 - US Airways
 - Braniff International Airways

32. **Harvard, the world's wealthiest university, sued the Trump administration April 21, fighting back against the administration's threats to do what?**
- remove accreditation from any college/university that doesn't agree to be loyal to the Trump administration
 - deport any and all students who are not American citizens, saying they are a "brain drain" on the American knowledge bank
 - create a voucher system so all colleges receive the same funding per student regardless of whether the college is public or private
 - slash billions of dollars from the school's research funding
33. **Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre had convinced citizens that the Liberals needed to be fired. He had been leading in the polls for more than two years. And he was measuring the drapes in the prime minister's office. Yet on election day in late April, it was Mark Carney who won election of what country?**
- Belarus
 - Canada
 - Germany
 - the Philippines
34. **The so-called "Arab plan" is a direct rival to U.S. President Donald Trump's controversial vision of a "Middle East Riviera." The \$53 billion plan, el-Sisi, was approved at an emergency summit of the Arab League as a plan to rebuild what?**
- Ukraine
 - the West Bank
 - Gaza
 - Jerusalem
35. **"Have you ever looked at a map and thought, 'You know what Denmark needs? More sunshine, palm trees, and roller skates,'" the petition states. "Well, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make that dream a reality." The lighthearted petition for Denmark to buy what prompted more than 200,000 signatures?**
- Texas
 - California
 - the Gulf of America
 - Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands
36. **Modeled after a national and statewide trend to lessen instances of bullying and to keep students focused in schools, Rep. Ellen Troxclair, R-Lakeway, introduced Texas House Bill 515, which would do what?**
- block all Wi-Fi on public school campus and within 500 feet
 - make bullying of anyone under 18 years old a third-degree felony
 - ban cellphones in Texas classrooms
 - add to the curriculum a discussion of mental health surrounding bullying and social media use
37. **Only oddities in the orbits of small Pluto-like bodies lend evidence for its existence, but scientists are convinced that NSF-DOE Vera C. Rubin Observatory in Chile can help find what at the far reaches of our solar system??**
- extraterrestrial life
 - "Planet 9"
 - asteroid 2024 YR4
 - Proxima Centauri b

38. The Justice Department said the best way to address Google's monopoly over internet searching was to break up the \$1.81 trillion company. The government said Judge Amit P. Mehta of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia should force Google to sell what?
- a. its search engine
 - b. its artificial intelligence engine
 - c. YouTube
 - d. the Chrome web browser
39. Although it already holds about 6 million pages related to this moment in history, in response to Executive Order 14176, the National Archives released about 80,000 pages of documents related to what?
- a. the assassination of John F. Kennedy
 - b. the landing of aliens at Roswell
 - c. the disappearance of Amelia Earhart
 - d. the fate of the Lost Colony of Roanoke
40. Although opponents said it violates the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution, Texas SB11 would put what in Texas public schools?
- a. school prayer
 - b. the Ten Commandments
 - c. a Bible, a Quran and other religious texts in every classroom
 - d. a designated time for reading a religious text over the intercom

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

What are tariffs? Discuss the reasons behind the tariffs implemented this year by the United States and how the tariffs affected international relations, economies and consumers.

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ANSWER KEY

POTENTIAL DISCUSSION POINTS PREPARED May 5, 2025
might include, but should not be limited to...

What are tariffs? Discuss the reasons behind the tariffs implemented this year by the United States and how the tariffs affected international relations, economies and consumers.

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|-------|-------|--|
| 1. A | 21. A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Definition:</i> Tariffs are taxes that a government places on imported goods. The main purpose of a tariff is to make imported goods more expensive compared to domestic products. By doing so, tariffs can protect local industries from foreign competition, raise government revenue, or be used as a tool in international trade negotiations. • <i>Reasons for tariffs:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Protecting domestic industries:</i> U.S. policymakers sought to shield sectors like clean energy (solar panels, electric vehicles), steel and agriculture from what they said they deemed as unfair competition, particularly from heavily subsidized Chinese products. • <i>Reducing trade deficits:</i> With the U.S. trade deficit reaching record highs in March 2025, tariffs aimed to make imports more costly and to incentivize domestic production. • <i>National security:</i> Tariffs on critical minerals and technological components were justified as measures to reduce reliance on potentially adversarial nations. • <i>Political strategy:</i> With the 2024 presidential election cycle fresh in memory, tariffs were also a political tool to appeal to key voter groups, particularly workers in manufacturing and agriculture-heavy states. • <i>International relations:</i> The tariffs heightened tensions between the U.S. and key allies and trading partners. China retaliated with its own tariffs on U.S. goods, and the EU warned of potential countermeasures. Relations became strained, with several countries threatening to bring cases against the U.S. at the World Trade Organization. Diplomatic negotiations became more complex as countries balanced economic retaliation with the need to cooperate on other global issues like climate change and security. • <i>United States economy:</i> Some domestic industries benefited from reduced foreign competition, but others—especially industries that rely on imported materials (like automakers and tech companies)—saw increased costs. The U.S. economy experienced a contraction in the first quarter of 2025, with real GDP decreasing at an annualized rate of 0.3%. This marked the first decline in GDP since the first quarter of 2022. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One specific example of the impact of the tariffs is on the airline industry. The U.S. aviation industry is lobbying the White House for exemptions from tariffs. Airlines have been cutting flights in response to softening bookings. Ryanair threatened to cancel orders for hundreds of Boeing aircraft if a U.S.-led tariff war leads to higher prices. • <i>Consumers:</i> U.S. consumers faced higher prices for many goods, especially electronics, automobiles, and some food products. This contributed to continued inflationary pressures, although less severe than in 2022–2023. Lower-income households were disproportionately affected because they spend a greater share of their income on goods sensitive to tariffs. Economists worry Trump’s sweeping tariffs will drive up prices and lead to shortages — two things that could make buying gifts and preparing for the holidays more difficult. • <i>China economy:</i> Export-driven economies like China felt the impact of reduced access to the U.S. market, leading to slower growth in some sectors. China is facing a 104% tariff on goods imported into the US. China has responded with a 84% tariff on US goods. Starting May 2, imports under \$800 USD containing products of China and Hong Kong were not eligible for duty-free treatment under the <i>de minimis</i> exemption. • <i>Europe economy:</i> Europe experienced mixed results: some countries benefited by filling supply gaps, while others suffered from retaliatory measures. The EU has used this period to strengthen trade ties with other partners (e.g., ASEAN, Mercosur, and the UK) to diversify away from U.S. dependence. • <i>Global economy:</i> Overall, the tariffs contributed to rising global economic uncertainty, slower international trade growth and concerns over inflation. |
| 2. C | 22. B | |
| 3. B | 23. C | |
| 4. D | 24. D | |
| 5. B | 25. A | |
| 6. D | 26. C | |
| 7. B | 27. A | |
| 8. D | 28. A | |
| 9. A | 29. B | |
| 10. C | 30. D | |
| 11. B | 31. A | |
| 12. A | 32. D | |
| 13. C | 33. B | |
| 14. C | 34. C | |
| 15. D | 35. B | |
| 16. C | 36. C | |
| 17. C | 37. B | |
| 18. D | 38. D | |
| 19. B | 39. A | |
| 20. D | 40. A | |