

Synopsis of Problem Areas and Resolutions for 2017-2018

PROBLEM AREA I: ENERGY POLICY

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase incentives for development and/or use of renewable energy in the United States.

United States energy policy has changed frequently over the past few decades. These changes are indicative of the fact that federal policy is traditionally reactive in nature. The very formation of the U.S. Department of Energy during the 1970s occurred after years of uncertainty regarding the nation's energy supply.

Although national energy policy has changed frequently over the past 3 decades, many of those changes have been the result of political, economic, or environmental factors at the time. At the start of the 21st century, the combination of technological advances in the renewable energy sector and increased concern regarding climate change contributed to ambitious development of new energy forms.

The list of more popular kinds of renewable energy includes solar, wind, hydro-electric, tidal energy, geothermal, as well as several additional options that remain in developmental stages such as hydrogen and fusion power.

Increased international focus on climate change over the past several years has further served as justification for expansion of renewable energy. These efforts, however, have been tempered by expansion of oil production in the United States. The advent of hydraulic fracturing has resulted in opening new petroleum reserves, especially in shale fields.

This topic is very well-balanced with Affirmative teams having the option of advocating for any one of the numerous forms of renewable energy resources. Harms associated with fossil fuel use as well as a potential impact on climate change are problem areas that affirmative teams can opt to address. Affirmative teams also have the option of making a number of critical claims, especially in the context of climate change and preservation of natural resources. Negative teams have a number of options for argumentation. They could argue that, due to current economic / supply factors, it is simply unfeasible to convert to renewable energy in a major way. Moreover, negative debaters can claim clean coal technology or nuclear energy as alternatives to traditional fossil fuel options. Finally, negative teams also have the option of relying on conversation to reduce both consumption as well as environmental impacts of fossil fuel use. Negative teams will also have the option of presenting federalism, backlash, and spending disadvantages. Negative debaters will have the option of a range of counterplans from relying on state and / or Non-Governmental Organizations for implementation or choosing to develop energy resources not supported by the affirmative.

PROBLEM AREA II: EDUCATION REFORM

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase its funding and/or regulation of elementary and/or secondary education in the United States.

United States students do not rank well compared to their peers from other countries. Achievement gaps also exist between children from different ethnic groups and between affluent and low-income students. Are the schools at fault or are other issues to blame? What changes in funding, regulations, standards, or support for our schools will bring better results? Do we need more teachers, higher teacher pay, uniform teacher standards, and/or smaller class sizes? Will more money for technology improve teaching? Do we need more flexibility to employ and develop different types of schools? Do we need more flexibility within our public schools? What will bring up graduation rates and help United States students compete internationally? How can we prepare and train the future United States workforce? This resolution will provide a balanced field to discuss these important education issues. The affirmative teams will have the ability to critically examine everything from charter schools to online programs to for-profit schools. There is flexibility to argue for or against K-12 in traditional schools versus more specialized schools. Each area of the country has substantially different standards and rules. This topic allows students to examine those differences and how the federal government can improve education across the board. Negative ground includes arguments from traditional policy options such as federalism, States CP, other agent counterplans, solvency deficits as to whether the affirmative is affecting a large enough scope to solve, spending DAs, politics scenarios, etc. Critical literature is also applicable to the wide variety of presumptions within our government and education systems.