

2009 GREAT DEBATES COMPETITION OVERVIEW

Topic: “Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially increase social services for persons living in poverty in the United States.”

Potential case areas: Students are already highly familiar with the topic and will be experts by December in many dimensions of this debate topic. Potential cases include housing subsidy, healthcare reform, immigrant services, food and cash aid to the needy, job training and educational access, school reform, and the military.

Competitors: Dallas ISD public high school students who compete regularly in the Dallas Urban Debate League (UDL.) The Dallas UDL supports rigorous, competitive interscholastic policy debate as a tool for changing the lives of disadvantaged youth in Dallas public high schools. The League operates in 15 Dallas ISD high schools with a full six-Tournament schedule for UDL schools, provides scholarships to University summer debate institutes, operates a Debate Center with comprehensive training and resourcing sessions, and sponsors regional competition and special events throughout the year.

Competitive structure: 4 teams of 2 students per team will debate head-on in a Semifinal competition. The winners of each will proceed to the Final Round. There will not be a 3rd place debate amongst the two teams defeated in the semifinals.

Judges: Will include prominent community members and sponsors and will be oriented to the practices of policy debate. No further expertise in policy debate is sought or presumed. Judges will function in panels of 3, 5, or 7 as supply dictates. All judges must make a decision, Affirmative or Negative, and provide speaker points to each speaker to assign relative qualities to each speech and the round as a whole. Judges may not declare a tie or decline to vote. Judges should put their personal beliefs aside when judging each round and decide the round based on the merits of the arguments advanced in the round and how well they are defended and applied to the opponent’s case. Note-taking is highly encouraged.

Debater selection: Debating in this competition will be an honor reserved to the eight best debaters in the Dallas UDL. Coaches will nominate students to participate and final decisions will be made by the Dallas UDL Director in conjunction with the Great Debates Planning Committee. Teams will not be created on a by-school basis and teams may be composed of 2 students from 2 different schools.

Audience: Selected students will be instructed in strategies to adapt their arguments and debating techniques for the public debate atmosphere. In respect to the complexity of the issues and to the accomplishments of the students in mastering difficult public policy and economic concepts that underlie their argument and the general topic, students will not be asked to remove arguments that may fail to be understood by the general audience. They will, however, be instructed in the rhetorical techniques that are a part of the public appeal.

Awards: By virtue of being selected from more than 200 eligible debaters, each participating student should be eligible for a portion of the scholarship prize.