

Synopsis of Problem Areas and Resolutions for 2026-2027

PROBLEM AREA I: HEALTH INSURANCE

Resolved: The United States federal government should establish national health insurance in the United States.

Health care is a life and death issue that affects every single person in the United States. For those that are insured, technical terminology and a confusing layout make the American health care system immensely difficult to navigate. But for the millions of uninsured people in the United States, affording unexpected medical costs becomes an insurmountable goal that puts people at risk of worse health outcomes and high medical debt. Despite the fact that health care is a politically “dominant” issue in political campaigns and in the lives of most Americans, people across the country lack “health literacy,” especially as it relates to public policy and specific insurance terminology. Given that the last time the high school debate community had a topic about health care was 1993-1994, it is time for a topic about national health insurance. Debating about health insurance reform would be an excellent entry point for students to learn the details of very technical policies in an approachable way. Considering that the United States is the only major developed country that lacks universal health care, there is a robust debate about whether and how the U.S. should change its health care system. Students at all levels will find something useful in the health care topic, ranging from introductory themes such as drug pricing and health disparities to more advanced policy discussions on administrative costs and precision medicine.”

Under this proposed topic, affirmative teams would argue for increased government provision of health insurance. Affirmative plans could range from various single payer mechanisms, to providing a public option, to mandating individuals acquire health insurance, or providing universal catastrophic coverage. Affirmative arguments could highlight improved health outcomes, reduction of racial, gender, and class-based disparities, enhanced economic well-being, a strengthened international reputation, and better preparedness for chemical and biological threats.

Negative teams would have a wide arsenal of arguments at their disposal. They could introduce disadvantages that increased government provision of health insurance would cause longer wait times, more rationing of care, disrupt the private health care industry, undermine pharmaceutical innovation, undercut military recruiting advantages, or fracture doctor-patient trust. Negative teams could introduce several other courses of action, such as moving toward a more privatized health care system, subsidizing access to private insurance, or having states implement their own health insurance schemes. The negative could also challenge critical assumptions about national health insurance by pointing out the biopolitical surveillance necessary to implement the plan, the racialized nature of medical care, the border drawing required to demarcate health insurance as “national”, or the Western conception of “medicine”.

PROBLEM AREA II: NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially reduce the size and/or restrict the roles of its nuclear weapons arsenal.

Discussions of nuclear weapons are everywhere. From popular media to the newspaper to the high school debate classroom, there is interest in almost every constituency with our ultimate destructive weaponry. Despite decades of debates centered on the potential use of the United States nuclear arsenal, the high school debate community has not debated a topic centered on nuclear weapons in over 20 years. And there has arguably never been a better time to engage in a debate than the upcoming debate season, both from a domestic policy and a debate perspective. Between the recent US actions in Iran and the leverage that the United States is exercising with its nuclear umbrella, literature will be timely, interesting and accessible. Additionally, with a president serving his second term, the major policy determining our nuclear policy, the Nuclear Posture Review, should remain predictable, and the direction of generic arguments on the topic should be stable and predictable. In addition, the proximity of the recent college topic will allow for an increase in the content knowledge and participation of many judges and coaches, who will have ample experience with a subset of the potential high school topic.

This specific wording will allow for students to have an adequate division of affirmative and negative ground that allows for in-depth debates focused on the affirmative case. Too many domestic topics focus on the relationship between state and federal control, which often skirts a focus on the action of the affirmative proposal. Because nuclear policy is solely controlled by the federal government, affirmatives will have quality literature focused on the role of nuclear weapons in deterring the action of adversaries and ability to assure allies. Negative teams will have the opportunity to read disadvantages that contest the core thesis of the affirmative, like the stabilizing deterrent effect that United States nuclear weapons have created. Students would also have access to arguments about the development of novel nuclear technology and the disposal of existing weapons, which are often major concerns among nuclear policy experts. This topic will allow us to have extensive debates that enhance the quality of all our debaters down the road, as they continue to grapple with the ramifications of nuclear use on topics beyond the 2026-2027 season. Debates across the country have shown for years that high school students are enamored by discussions of nuclear policy and the fear of nuclear use. At a moment where this concern is present in policy, pop culture and the broader debate community itself, it is time for the high school community to dive into nuclear policy again.