**Policy Debate Vocabulary Handout #1**

**Key Vocabulary to be Defined:**

**Refutation** – the process of engaging in structured debating that goes against an opponent’s argument.

**Argument** – the process of providing a claim, warrant, and impact of a line of thought.

**Policy Debate** – is a civilized argument to decide which policy option should be adopted.

**Resolution** – the statement, provided by the NSDA, which will serve as the general debate topic for the entire school year. Most start with, “The United States federal government should…”.

**Stock Issues –** The affirmative has the burden to show: problem (harms/significance), cause (inherency), and solution (solvency/plan) to justify the adoption of the resolution. The final burden is topicality. Does the affirmative’s case and plan fall within the bounds of the resolution?

**Affirmative** – the side in the debate that agrees with the resolution.

**Prima Facie** – Because the affirmative team is advocating a change in the present system (status quo), they must meet the burden of demonstrating the reasons for a change. This is called “Stock Issues.” Once the 1st affirmative presents their case (scripted speech), the Prima Facie test is can this case, at “first glance, first face” stand alone without any negative refutation a a reason to adopt the resolution.

**Negative** – either (1) the side in the debate that disagrees with the resolution, or (2) the side in the debate that disagrees with the affirmative team’s position.

**Affirmative Position** – this team defends a 1AC plan text that acts as a change to the status quo.

**Negative Position** – this team defends (at least as a default) maintaining the status quo.

**Advantages** – the positive benefits to enacting the affirmative position. These are also known as harms that exist in the status quo. These create offense for the affirmative because it scores them points.

**Harms/Significance** – The affirmative must present a **“problem”** or “harm” as part of their Prima Facie burden. Also, they must demonstrate the significance or magnitude of the problem.

**Key Vocabulary to be Defined:**

**Inherency** – can be explained in several ways. (1) the reason **why** the advantages are not occurring in the status quo. (2) what, in the status quo, is **causing** the harms. (3) a **barrier** that exists in the status quo which prevents the affirmative position from being realized.

Inherency argues that because the affirmative could not happen on its own that the affirmative position is necessary to affirm in this debate round. This becomes a reason why the status quo is bad. Because the problems would be solved on its own, the affirmative position becomes necessary.

**Plan** – the specific advocacy statement of the affirmative. It should be specific enough (or not simply the resolution), but does not need to be so specific that it becomes a lengthy component of the 1AC.

**Solvency** – the arguments that prove why the plan will be effective at accruing the advantages or solving the harms presented.

**Risk Assessment** – also known as impact calculus. A way for either side to weigh the impacts of a specific position.

**Magnitude** – size of the impact (often measured in terms of lives saved or lost). Teams can also equate this as the number of people directly affected by the argument. This is a descriptive part of the argument.

**Probability** – likelihood of impact. This is a predictive part of the argument.

**Timeframe** – when the impact occurs. This is a descriptive and predictive part of the argument.

**Risk** – magnitude X probability. Risk can be a positive thing or a negative thing (e.g. risk of getting an advantage and risk of causing a disadvantage).

**Overviews** – a way for debaters to organize the extension and summarization of their arguments.