

# Judging Debate: Team Policy

YouTube Video Link: [https://youtu.be/o6DTlzuof\\_o](https://youtu.be/o6DTlzuof_o)

**Thank you** for agreeing to judge Team Policy debate!

This event challenges both students and judges to **think critically** about laws, regulations, and policies. It requires debaters to **identify problems** with current conditions (often referred to as the status quo) and **weigh the advantages and disadvantages** of making a policy change.

In each round, one team of two debaters (the Affirmative Team) affirms the resolution while the other team of two debaters (the Negative Team) negates the affirmative position.

Throughout a tournament, debaters have to alternate between affirming and negating the assigned resolution for the season. The Resolution for this season is:

**The United States Federal Government should significantly reform Congress.**

Therefore, Team Policy debate rounds should be about reforming the U.S. the House of Representatives and/or the Senate. When we are assigned to the Affirmative side we will propose a plan for reforming these legislative bodies and/or processes in some way. When we are assigned to the negative side, we will argue against the affirmative team's proposal for reform.

The teams competing in NCFCA vary in their age, level of experience, and skill, but you can expect to see certain things from well prepared and experienced policy debaters.

- Expect us to **explain the logical connections** between arguments and how those arguments support our positions. It's our job to make arguments clear and understandable.
- Expect us to **support claims** we make with examples, analogies, our own analysis, logic, or evidence from cited and quoted sources.
- Expect us to **answer our opponent's most important arguments and defend our own positions** regarding those points.

There are also some things you should not expect.

- **Do not expect a perfect plan.** No policy is perfect, so the Affirmative Team should not be held to an unreasonably high standard for what a proposed policy change will achieve.
- **Do not expect perfect preparation from Negative Teams.** It is entirely possible for the Negative Team to hear a policy proposal idea for the first time during the first Affirmative speech. We still have to convince you that the plan should not be adopted, but we may have to rely on probing questions, logical assessments, appeals to common sense, and generic arguments to do so.
- **Do not expect answers to EVERY argument.** With limited time, we must often choose which arguments to prioritize, so ignoring or “dropping” a lesser argument that is outweighed by a more important one should not necessarily be considered a losing move.

Choosing the Winning Team can be a challenge in close rounds. Even experienced judges may disagree about who won. We simply ask that you decide who was most persuasive to you. Here are some things to consider.

- **Assess the quality** of the Affirmative Team’s plan for reform against the counter arguments presented by the Negative Team. You can ask yourself the following four questions:
  - **First,** Is reform needed? Did the Affirmative Team convince you that there is a real need to reform? If not, then there is no need to affirm the resolution.
  - **Second,** Will it work? If reform is needed, did the Affirmative Team also present compelling arguments that their plan would work to meet that need? If not, it doesn’t make sense to implement the proposed policy.
  - **Third,** Is it worth it? Even if the plan seems workable, did the advantages presented by the Affirmative team seem to outweigh any disadvantages alleged by the Negative Team? If not, it may not make sense to vote to implement the plan.
  - **Fourth,** Is it on topic? Does the plan fit within the topic of the resolution? If the proposed reform does not fit within the scope of the resolution, it should not earn a judge’s vote.

If we take an approach that doesn’t fit with this video, it’s up to us to convince you that our approach is legitimate, and you can decide as you see fit.

You can also consider all of the following issues, especially when you don't have a definite yes or no to the four questions about an Affirmative plan.

- **Logic.** Which team made the best logical connections between key arguments and the issues in the round?
- **Argumentation.** Which team presented the best quality and depth of arguments in favor of their position?
- **Evidence.** Which team provided the best support or evidence for critical points?
- **Clarity.** Which team was easier to follow and understand?
- **Conduct and ethics.** Debaters who plainly behave in a deceitful or rude manner toward an opponent should not be granted a win.

We're confident that you will be able to make a solid decision simply based on listening to the arguments the debaters present, but if you have any questions, you can reach out to our tournament staff after the round.

If you also plan to judge Lincoln-Douglas Value debate, you can find a separate video orientation for that event.

**Thank you** for your part in helping our students learn key communication and analysis skills!