

Dear NCFCA Students:

Congratulations to all the participants in the NCFCA National Championship. Learning to engage in civil and reasoned debate is important to citizenship in a free society. I hope that in the next few days you will compete hard, win with grace, and lose with dignity.

As John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon wrote in *Cato's Letters*, for which the Cato Institute is named, "Without freedom of thought, there can be no such thing as wisdom; and no such thing as publick liberty, without freedom of speech. . . . Whoever would overthrow the liberty of the nation, must begin by subduing the freedom of speech; a thing terrible to publick traitors."

More than 200 years ago Thomas Jefferson and the other signers of the Declaration of Independence committed themselves to the cause of American liberty with these words: "And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor." Since that time our republic and our world have made great progress, in science, technology, commerce, medicine, and morals. We have extended the promises of the Declaration of Independence – life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – to people to whom they had long been denied. Around the world, more people in more countries than ever before in history enjoy religious freedom, personal freedom, equal rights, civility, respect, a higher standard of living, and a longer life expectancy. War, disease, violence, slavery, and inhumanity have been dramatically reduced.

But today we see threats to freedom and progress in too many countries and from factions across the political spectrum. Soon it will be your job to defend liberty and constitutional government from those old enemies, socialism, autocracy, ethnic nationalism, and predation. I hope that your experience as debaters – learning to get the facts, see through falsehoods, define principles, and make arguments – will serve you well in that endeavor. Have a wonderful week!

Sincerely,

David Boaz
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