



Policy Debate Resolutional Intent

Dear Coaches and Students,

In an attempt to clarify the intent of the resolution, avoid confusion, refine your research, and perhaps avoid disappointment for losing topicality rulings, the Debate Committee is sending this pre-season letter of clarification.

Resolved: *The United States Federal Government should substantially reform its income tax policy while maintaining total tax revenue at fiscal year 2008 levels.*

Resolutional Intent:

The intent of this year's resolution is to foster debate about those United States federal policies that are specifically directed at income taxes.

The resolution is not intended to focus on what is the appropriate size or role of the federal government, or how much it should spend.

The resolution is intended to focus on how, and from whom, the federal government collects revenue through income taxes, the impact of those decisions, and how the federal government might better collect the needed revenue.

Because maintaining 2008 tax revenue levels is part of the resolution any advantages that flow from the affirmative case raising revenue by some tax other than income tax will be considered resolutional (i.e. they are not extra-topical advantages).

Judge Instructions:

Judges will be instructed in the following manner regarding topicality:

The affirmative team must attempt to do the following regarding topicality. (Whether or not the plan succeeds in doing these things is a question of solvency, significance, or inherence.)

- make a substantial reform
- to U.S. federal income tax policy
- maintain total tax revenue at fiscal year 2008 levels

Furthermore, the judges will be instructed as to the resolutional intent as outlined above.

The affirmative case must propose to do **all** three to be a topical case; if your case does not attempt to do **all** of these, it is not topical. Words have meaning, and if the resolution states this is what you are to do, do it and you will have little trouble with topicality. The affirmative team should enter the round prepared to show how and why their case fulfills the resolution. In the event of a topicality challenge, the affirmative must **convince the judge** that their case is topical -- it is not enough that you believe it to be so.

Fiat Power:

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Fiat is the convention in academic policy debate that, for the sake of argument, participants may assume the implementation of a reasonable policy. This allows debaters to focus on the question of whether a policy “should” be adopted and to avoid the irrelevant arguments about whether the policy “would” (or will) be adopted. The purpose of fiat is to require the debaters to debate the merits of the resolution, and not the political machinations of how one might garner the votes necessary for enactment. However, the political fallout of a plan may be subject to debate.

Take note, as well, of the limitations of fiat. The affirmative may use fiat power to focus on “should” but fiat goes no further. The affirmative may not fiat that advantages will flow from the plan; advantages must be proved. The affirmative may not fiat attitudes. For example, the affirmative may not fiat that the public will love and comply with the plan. Fiat is not a magic wand; it may not be used to make a plan work.

Fiat power as defined in the CCA Debate Glossary is as follows: “The affirmative’s authority, as defined by the resolution, to implement its plan”.

The central issue here is the phrase “as defined by the resolution”. This year’s resolution limits the fiat power of the affirmative team in the following ways:

- The agent of reform is the USFG (specifically that portion that makes or reforms the policy(s) in question)
- The reform must be of USFG income tax policy (or policies)
- Fiat does not extend to the states or the courts (they are not the bodies that reform federal policy)