



Policy Debate Intent of the Resolution

11-19-09 Revision

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.*

Intent of the Resolution:

The intent of this year's resolution is to foster debate about those United States federal policies that are specifically directed at income taxes while maintaining total tax revenue through other taxes as needed.

The resolution is not intended to focus on what is the appropriate size or role of the federal government, or how much the federal government does or 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, affirmative cases, once they have reformed income tax, may use other federal taxes to maintain 2008 revenue levels. Methods of maintaining revenue other than taxation, such as selling federal assets, are not permitted under the resolution.

Judge Instructions:

Judges will be instructed in the following manner regarding topicality:

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

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

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.

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Furthermore:

- The judges will be instructed as to the intent of the resolution as outlined above.
- The judges will also be specifically instructed that an affirmative case that attempts to maintain revenue at 2008 levels, but fails, is not subject to a topicality challenge on these grounds; this is a question of solvency.

Fiat Power:

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(s), and may include other federal tax policy(s) used to maintain FY 2008 revenue levels.
- Fiat does not extend to the states or the courts. (they are not the bodies that reform federal policy)