



2025-2026
Team Policy Debate
Resolution White Papers

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Introduction

2026 is the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. ASDA has decided to recognize this milestone by choosing Team Policy and Lincoln-Douglas debate resolutions that are centered on ongoing questions that Americans face as we seek to build a more perfect Union.

Team Policy Resolution

Resolved: The United States should significantly amend the Constitution.

Resolutional Analysis

Competitors in the Team Policy event should debate in a way that conforms to the following definitions:

- “The United States” here refers to both the US federal government AND the US state governments, as both are required to successfully pass a constitutional amendment.
- “Should” here means that it would be a *good idea* for the amendment in question to be passed.
- “Significantly” here refers to the idea that the proposed amendment should alter the meaning of the US Constitution “in a way that is large or important enough to be noticed or have an effect.”¹

“Amend the Constitution” here refers to making “. . . a formal revision or addition to the US Constitution.”²

Affirmative and Negative Burdens

ASDA’s statement of policy debating norms will apply when debating this resolution.

Affirmative teams must provide the exact text of a proposed constitutional amendment and

¹ “significantly.” The Britannica Dictionary. Retrieved Sept 26, 2025.

<https://www.britannica.com/dictionary/significantly>

² “constitutional amendment.” Full sentence text: “An amendment is a formal revision or addition to the US Constitution.” Cornell Law School Legal Information Institute. Retrieved Sept 26, 2025.

https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/constitutional_amendment

argue that its addition to the US Constitution would be beneficial overall. Negative teams may not present an alternate course of action other than the current course of action (i.e. not amending the US Constitution). Competitors may not make arguments relating to whether the relevant US officials currently have attitudes favoring the constitutional amendment in question.

Sample Amendments and Affirmative and Negative Strategies

1. The 16th Article of Amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.

Affirmative rationale: The 16th Amendment was passed in 1913 and allows the Federal income tax. Income tax was specifically prohibited by the Constitution until that time. Repealing the 16th Amendment would greatly simplify the tax code, save \$600 billion/year in compliance costs and increase economic freedom.

Negative rationale: Income tax funds almost all federal programs and generated \$2.9T revenue in 2024, about 60% of total Federal revenue. Replacing this would require subsequently passing a huge new tax, which could create significant disruption, and which may not happen with the current federal gridlock. Removing the income tax would also destroy hundreds of thousands of jobs in tax accounting and law that generate \$110 billion in annual income.

2. The 17th Article of Amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.

Affirmative rationale: The 17th Amendment allows direct election of Senators, which were previously selected by State Legislatures. Repealing the 17th Amendment strengthens federalism, restores the traditional role of the state legislature, and makes Senators more accountable to their home State.

Negative rationale: This amendment was passed to reduce corruption and delay in appointing Senators. Direct elections enhance democracy and have increased voter participation. Direct election increases accountability to the citizens of the State, since they can vote the Senator out of office.

3. The President shall have no power to grant to himself a reprieve or pardon for an offense against the United States.

Affirmative rationale: The presidential power to pardon is absolute and is defined Article 2, Section 2. Limiting this power would require an amendment to the Constitution. The power of the President to pardon themselves gives them too much power and allows them to commit crimes with impunity. Impeachment is not effective, because it is too political a process.

Negative rationale: Article 2, Section 2, already includes an exception for impeachment. Congress can impeach the President in the case of abuse of power. No US President has ever pardoned himself.