

2016 LANGFAN CONSTITUTIONAL DEBATE TOURNAMENT

TOURNAMENT PACKET

Resolution

This House believes that *District of Columbia v. Heller* was wrongly decided.

Case Context

To learn more about this landmark decision on gun ownership rights, you can read it at <http://www.scotusblog.com/case-files/cases/dc-v-heller/>

How the Competition will Work

Tournament Date: Saturday, April 30th, 9:00 AM – 3:30 p.m.

Competitors will be in teams of two. Rounds will be “power-paired,” meaning that where possible, teams will debate against other teams with the same record, with the top team in each bracket debating against the lowest team. Teams will have to defend both sides of the resolution over the course of the tournament, and sides will be assigned randomly in each round. The top two teams will advance to the championship round. Lunch will be provided at the tournament.

The winning team will receive a \$3,000 prize and the runner-up team a \$1,000 prize.

Competition Schedule

9:00 AM: Check-In (Location TBA)

9:30 AM: Round 1

10:30 AM: Round 2

11:30 AM: Round 3

12:30: Lunch and Breaks Announced

1:30: Semi-Finals

2:30: Finals

How Rounds will Work

Individual rounds will have an affirmative team defending the resolution and a negative team challenging the resolution. Teams will have to debate on both sides of the topic over the course of the tournament. The order of speeches will be the following:

1st Affirmative Constructive (5 minutes)

In this speech, the first affirmative speaker will deliver a pre-prepared speech defending the resolution. It should be divided into two or three distinct major areas of argumentation.

1st Negative Constructive (5 minutes)

In this speech, the first negative speaker will both establish the negative position and attack the first affirmative speaker’s arguments. In addition to simple rebuttals to the affirmative’s

arguments, this speech should include independent arguments in support of the negative position.

2nd Affirmative Constructive (5 minutes)

This speech, delivered by the second affirmative speaker, will defend the first affirmative speaker's arguments and attack the negative's arguments. New arguments and analysis are welcome in this speech.

2nd Negative Constructive (5 minutes)

This speech, delivered by the second negative speaker, will defend the negative position and challenge the arguments of both affirmative speakers. New arguments and analysis are welcome in this speech.

Negative Rebuttal (3 minutes)

In this speech, the first negative speaker will summarize the round and explain why the negative side has won. The speech should focus on the two or three most important arguments in the round. No new arguments are allowed, but new examples are welcome.

Affirmative Rebuttal (3 minutes)

In this speech, the first affirmative speaker will summarize the round and explain why the affirmative side has won. The speech should focus on the two or three most important arguments in the round. While new examples are welcome, the only new arguments allowed are those directly responding to completely new arguments made in the 2nd Negative Constructive.

Prep Time: Debaters will be given 30 seconds between each speech to prepare the next speech. Given the shortness of this time, debaters should be taking notes and preparing their remarks throughout the round.

Time Limits: Each speech is allowed a 30 second grace period. Each speaker will be signaled with a single pound when they have reached the end of their allotted team, and once those 30 seconds is over, the judge will pound them down.

How Rounds will be Adjudicated

In each round, judges will decide the winning team, will assign speaker points to each debater on a scale of 23 to 27, and will rank the debaters from 1 (best) to 4 (weakest). The ranking of teams in the tournament will be determined first by win-loss record, then by the highest collective speaker points, then by lowest collective ranks.

Though evaluation of a debate round is unavoidably subjective, judges will look for the following characteristics when assigning wins, speaker points, and ranks:

Quality of Argument

Arguments should provide clear legal reasoning and strong defense of the debater's position. Arguments should not be overly technical or full of jargon and should aim to convince a generally well-informed layperson that is not an expert in constitutional law.

Responsiveness

Judges will expect debaters to provide clear rebuttals to their opponents' arguments and will reward debaters who help create clear clash between the two sides. Debaters need not address the arguments in any particular order but should explicitly address all of their opponents' major arguments at some point during the speech.

Rhetoric

Judges will consider the persuasive value of the speech in terms of rhetorical style. In other words, the more enjoyable a speech is to listen to, and the more compelling its delivery, the higher the speaker points it will receive.

Additional Notes

Explanatory Note

This should not simply be a debate on the wisdom or efficacy of the act itself. While our opinions as to the nature of the case may differ, all arguments should ultimately be related to the justification of the decision constitutionally. In addition, debaters will not be held to judicial precedent. While the logic of the opinions in relevant court decisions can serve as the basis for arguments, those arguments will be evaluated on their own and not as binding precedent. In essence, each judge will place him or herself in a position of an unbiased jurist being presented with two different and conflicting ways to interpret the Constitution and will choose between them according to which is the more compelling constitutional argument.

On Previous Debate Experience and Speech Structure

This competition is structured to be accessible to students both with and without competitive forensics experience. Certainly, skills learned from previous debate or speech experience will be applicable to the competition, but judges will not be adjudicating rounds with any expectation of a specific structure for speeches (i.e., there is no expectation to follow "the flow"). Rather, judges will place themselves in the position of unbiased citizens who are generally well informed but without constitutional expertise. From this position, they will evaluate which side made a more compelling defense of its position. While debaters may choose to address arguments in the order that they were made, it may be just as effective to group them in a different way. All that will matter is that debaters are providing compelling arguments for their side and effectively engaging with the arguments of the other side. The specific organizational structure for those responses will not be considered by the judges except insofar as the organization has persuasive value.

On Using Empirical Evidence

Following the wishes of the donor who is funding this tournament, the focus of the debate will be on constitutional legal analysis. Related to this specific resolution, what this means is that the debates ought not be about gun control in the abstract. Rather, the focus should be on what powers the Constitution gives citizens to own guns, based on precedent, and whether the Constitution grants citizens a right to self-defense. While the practical effects of each side may be considered, each side must ultimately relate any practical arguments to a normative legal argument about how the Constitution should be interpreted. Ultimately though, neither side will be required to use empirical evidence, and such evidence will only be considered insofar as it bolsters an underlying normative argument about constitutional interpretation.

Registration

The tournament is open to all novices in the Chicago Debate Society and all non-debate participators within the College.

Please register your team by no later than April 28th, through one of the following methods: emailing egreenberg@uchicago.edu or completing this form <http://goo.gl/forms/itnics2W9E>

Contact Information

If you have any questions at all, please feel free to contact any of the organizers below:

Eric Greenberg, Langfan Competition Coordinator: egreenberg@uchicago.edu

Jing Chai, President of the Chicago Debate Society: jchai@uchicago.edu

Sarthak Agrawal, Vice President Operations for the Chicago Debate Society: sarthak@uchicago.edu



Chicago Debate Society