

**LINCOLN DOUGLAS TOPIC BRIEFS
FOR CONSIDERATION 2010-2011**

The following 5 topics have been submitted for consideration for topic selection for 2010-2011.

A. AGRICULTURE: 2ND PLACE TOPIC FROM 2009-2010: Submitted by: MOSO

Statement of Significance

The arena for discussion over the next 10 plus years may very well be the discussion on the direction of the United States Federal government's role in the expanding field of agriculture. As our country has found out over the past year, the field of agriculture affects many goods and services intertwined in all of our lives. With the expansion of biofuels and the diversion of corn stocks being used to produce energy, some of the consequences for food prices and food exports have become salient issues. Market forces have dictated production; but at some level, the market failed to meet consumer demand. Furthermore, the role of the USFG in the field of agriculture has been to pass policy to ensure our nation's access to a stable food supply. The role of the government in agriculture (and energy for that matter) will take a different direction in the future because agricultural product production can now be tied to the issues of energy production, global warming, and the production of foodstuffs for the world as a whole.

Interest

As a North Dakota native, I think I have always understood the preeminent position the field of agriculture has in the United States. Clearly, there is a decided division between what the farmers, state governments, and the federal government feels the direction of agriculture should be here at home. Ask the farmers what they would like to see and they will probably tell you the government needs to leave the field of agriculture over a period of time. Departments of Agriculture at the state level will probably retort the states should be left to determine conservation reserve programs, crop rotations, subsidies for ethanol, and deciding the balance between commercial farming and the environment. Finally, there is a division between what the farming congressional delegations desire and what other areas of the country wish the future direction of agriculture in the United States should ultimately become.

Educational Value

Initially, because the geographical area of the farming economy is shrinking and tends to be regionalized, for many debaters this will be the initial foray into how the USFG tries to guide policy through the United States Department of Agriculture(USDA). Second, because of the integration between the agriculture industry and the issues of the environment, food exports, and energy policy (the big three) in the United States, many forensic participants will get a first-hand look at how the big issues interact and the consequences for making policy decisions between the big three. Above all, the issue of agriculture makes stakeholders critical think about how agriculture policy affects the decisions about what, where, when, and why we produce the products we do in this country. In the end, without the farmer, there is no food, new energy technologies, or environmental concerns.

Topic Paper (p.2)

Potential Areas

USFG and conservation reserve programs, set-asides, biofuels, check-off programs, subsidies, depreciation, corporate farms, CAFO's, GMO seeds, wind on the farm, energy alternatives, use of diesel, corporate farming laws, export controls; this list is not exhaustive, I just tried to name a few.

Resources

www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/CRP/

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/AER834/

www.ars.usda.gov/research/publications/publications.htm?seq_no_115=196537

[www.eoearth.org/article/Concentrated_Animal_Feeding_Operation_\(CAFO\) - 38k -](http://www.eoearth.org/article/Concentrated_Animal_Feeding_Operation_(CAFO)_-38k-)

www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/05/080527155540.htm

[www.extension.iastate.edu/ag/Gallagher\(Rev\)PowerPoint](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/ag/Gallagher(Rev)PowerPoint)

Planting date effects on winter triticale grain yield and yield components

Author(s): Schwarte, A.J., L.R. Gibson, D.L. Karlen, P.M. Dixon, M. Liebman, and J.-L. Jannink
Crop Sci, 46: 1218-1224, 2006

Ecological Applications, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Feb., 1993), pp. 92-122 Crop Rotation and Intercropping Strategies for Weed Management Matt Liebman, Elizabeth Dyck

www.elsevier.com/locate/agee -

Agricultural Resources and Environmental Indicators By Keith Daniel Wiebe, Noel Ray Gollehon

Contributor Keith Daniel Wiebe Edition: illustrated Published by Nova Publishers, 2007

www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/Y4137E/Y4137E00.HTM -

www.reason.com/news/show/36207.html

Of course, there are a myriad of resources available on this topic.

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B. U.S. AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDIES: submitted by Creighton University

A statement of the significance of the topic area in current events:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is required by several farm bills to subsidize a variety of agricultural products every year. These subsidies provide ongoing support for a substantial sector of the U.S. economy. Moreover, they have significant economic consequences internationally; Substantial subsidies depress global food prices, benefiting poorer countries citizens, but also harming farmers in poor countries who do not receive agricultural subsidies. Subsidies are also utilized to stimulate agricultural research for improving crops and creating alternatives to oil, like ethanol. Ultimately, agricultural subsidies play a part in a variety of issues from global food

supplies and growth to U.S. economic strength and the search for sustainable replacements for oil.

A statement of why the topic is interesting, challenging, and/or provocative:

Not only do agricultural subsidies play an important role in a variety of events, but also there are a variety of merits to both sides of the arguments. Changing the amount, purpose, and commodities subsidies are offered for would have important domestic and international consequences. Decreasing subsidies would enable agricultural growth internationally, but leave the U.S. economy more vulnerable to fluctuations. Increasing subsidies for crops, or creating new subsidies can stimulate new products that can replace oil or increase global food security, but risk distorting international agricultural markets and ruin underdeveloped countries' agricultural industries.

A statement of the perceived educational value of the topic area for debaters:

This topic area gives debaters the opportunity to learn about an important domestic policy that has international features. The application and withdrawal of subsidies into a variety of different agricultural products allows debaters to learn about an important feature of U.S. policy on environmental and economic issues, and the use of subsidies as a tool used by the U.S. government to stimulate private action.

A brief bibliography of selected readings (5-10) that capture the nature of the controversy surrounding the area:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
<http://www.usda.gov/>

“Ten Reasons to Cut Farm Subsidies”
http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=8459

“Agricultural Subsidies”
<http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/agriculture/subsidies>

“Should the United States Cut Its Farm Subsidies?”
http://www.cfr.org/publication/13147/should_the_united_states_cut_its_farm_subsidies.html

“Agricultural Subsidies”
<http://www.globalpolicy.org/social-and-economic-policy/international-trade-and-development-1-57/agricultural-subsidies.html>

“Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO)”
[http://www.eoearth.org/article/Concentrated_Animal_Feeding_Operation_\(CAFO\)](http://www.eoearth.org/article/Concentrated_Animal_Feeding_Operation_(CAFO))

Contact information should the committee need further clarification.

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C. BANKING REGULATIONS AND OVERSIGHT: Submitted by Ohio University

A statement of the significance of the topic in current events: US Banking policy is currently at the forefront of the news, as a result of the tumultuous state of the global economy. The inability of economists to reach a consensus on the distant causes of the current recession has instead caused governments to turn their eyes to future policy action. Following the state of the union address, political pundits noted that, “the US cannot wait for the economic sun to return before it begins to repair its roof. Repairing the banking regulation that has proved so damaging in recent years appears to be Obama’s priority.¹” The continual interrogation of the necessity of banking reform is also occurring as most nations present at “the Davos meeting have called for an overarching, international banking reform.²” The current economic climate, the attempt to understand the causal role of banking oversight in creating the current economic situation, and the subsequent political move to address these issues makes US Banking policy an area of immediate significance in current events.

A statement of why the topic is challenging, interesting, and/or provocative: Because the funding mechanisms of many programs and policies are tangentially controlled by regulations on the banking industry, alterations to US Banking oversight and regulation are particularly provocative. The timeliness of these issues begs the debate community to engage the topic. And the fact that the political and economic realities surrounding Banking policy are evolving as we speak suggests the topic will be of unique interest as the year progresses.

The topic also provides for a reasonably balanced literature base both calling for and decrying increases in banking regulation and oversight. For every article that seems to suggest the current recession was caused by the “Financial Services Modernization Act of 1999 [which] represented the most sweeping banking deregulation bill in American history and effectively did away with the famous Glass-Steagall Act (1933) which separated commercial and investment banking,³” there is a corresponding article that insists, “the prevailing idea that greed plus deregulation explains this mess is wrong. Punishing the banks and turning back the clock is not

1 Ramsey, R. (2010, January 27). Obama must begin his roof repairs now, and top priority will be banking reform. *The Belfast Telegraph*. <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/business-news/obama-must-begin-his-roof-repairs-now-and-top-priority-will-be-banking-reform-14653388.html#ixzz0eANAEsSm>

2 Mijuk, G. (2010, January 30). DAVOS: IMF’s Strauss-Kahn expects fragile, asymmetric recovery. *Wall Street Journal*. http://online.wsj.com/article/BT-CO-20100130-700417.html?mod=WSJ_latestheadlines

3 Ramsey, R. (2010, January 27). Obama must begin his roof repairs now, and top priority will be banking reform. *The Belfast Telegraph*. <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/business/business-news/obama-must-begin-his-roof-repairs-now-and-top-priority-will-be-banking-reform-14653388.html#ixzz0eANAEsSm>

the answer. ⁴

This diverse literature base suggests that interested students will have a variety of positions to engage in as the year progresses. Possible areas of affirmative argumentation include student loan regulation, home mortgage regulation and commercial and investment banking oversight. Possible areas of negative argumentation include free market politics, capitalism, corporate responsibility and international economic relations.

A statement of the perceived educational value of the topic for debaters: This topic will allow NFA-LD competitors to begin a new dialogue about US Banking policy. The NFA-LD community has occasionally framed itself as one that considers both domestic and international policies with relatively even balance; however, little effort has been made in the past to balance the policy area discussed. Never has the NFA debated an economic topic from a regulatory perspective in the same way we have debated multiple justice topics, multiple topics pertaining to the environment or multiple topics related to foreign aid. The opportunity to engage a highly current topic that the community has never before examined in depth provides the opportunity for the NFA-LD community to generate a brand new base of knowledge that can uniquely contribute to the value competitors take from the event.

A brief bibliography of selected readings that capture the nature of the controversy surrounding the area.

Barth, J.R., Caprio G., and Levine, R., (2006). Rethinking bank regulation: Till angels. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

Barth, J.R., Caprio G., and Levine, R., (2008). Bank regulations are changing: For better or worse? World Bank Policy Research Working Paper Series.

Calomiris, C. (2009). Bank regulatory reform in the wake of the financial crisis. In *Change we can afford*. Hoover Institution.http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTFR/Resources/Charles_Calomiris.pdf

Kashyap, A. K., Rajan, R. G., and Stein, J. C. (2008). Rethinking capital regulation. Federal reserve bank of Kansas symposium on “Maintaining stability in a changing financial system.” <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~econandy/files/econ611/Papers/Kashyap%20%282008%29.pdf>

⁴ Crook, C. (2010, January 18). Smarter ways to punish a banker. *The Financial Times*. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/1f40f02c-0386-11df-a601-00144feabdc0.html>

Rochet, J. (2008). Why are there so many banking crises: The politics and policy of bank regulation. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

The National Bureau of Economic Research. <http://www.nber.org/>

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D. DISCRIMINATION: Submitted by St. Anselm College

1. A statement of the **significance** of the topic area in current events.

Discrimination affects everyone; either directly or indirectly. The rights of everyone are at issue when anyone's rights are challenged. Discrimination affects people at their very core and their most central values.

There is discrimination based on age, gender, sexual orientation, race, disability and religion in this country on a daily basis. How the US chooses to deal with discrimination is a clear indicator of who we are as a people and provides us with a projection of the nation's future. The US legal system has sources at both the Constitutional and statutory levels for dealing with discrimination. Fundamental principles of equality and civil rights are at the heart of this debate.

2. A statement of **why** the topic is **interesting, challenging, and/or provocative.**

The topic would require debaters to address issues that are often considered emotional and be forced to confront them from a rational perspective. Our underlying beliefs would be called into question and the proper role of legal authority would become a central nexus for the argumentation.

There is evidence of widespread discrimination as well many descriptive narratives of individuals who have faced discrimination. Everyone knows someone who has been discriminated against. The community would be enlightened to hear the stories of those who face discrimination and see the world from new perspectives. Likewise, judges would be forced to put aside their personal beliefs and fairly adjudicate rounds based on the arguments they heard. All of us would be challenged and through the process of that challenge, we would grow.

3. A statement of the perceived **educational** value of the topic area for debaters.
Students would be compelled to do a great deal of legal and sociological research to substantiate their arguments. Many debaters will go on to careers in law and this would give them a great head start on that education. Additionally, it would force students to understand the fundamental, yet complex, underpinnings of our legal system. As well, this would serve to educate all of us on a personal level.
4. A brief bibliography of **selected readings** that capture the nature of the controversy surrounding the area.

Employment discrimination: http://employeeissues.com/discrimination_laws.htm

Disability discrimination:
<http://www.ncd.gov/disabilityrights.htm>

Race discrimination:
<http://www.aclu.org/human-rights/new-aclu-report-details-pervasive-racial-discrimination-america>

Gay/Lesbian discrimination:
<http://www.hrc.org/>

5. Contact information should the committee need further clarification.

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E. U.S. MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES: Submitted by Creighton University

A statement of the significance of the topic area in current events:

Mental health services are important because an individual's mental well-being is important to their general well-being, and the well-being of other individuals in the person's life. A variety of challenges exist for current mental health services like overcoming the existing stigma of mental health issues, providing adequate services, making the services more accessible to demographics like the homeless, and improving the effectiveness of mental health services.

A statement of why the topic is interesting, challenging, and/or provocative:

Mental health is an important facet of the public's health with significant social and economic ramifications for individuals who experience psychological issues. On the other hand, there are several difficulties surrounding the provision of mental health services; Mental health services are only one of many social services that states and the federal government distribute, often on very tight budgets where an increase in one services decreases the availability of another. The

provision of mental services is controversial politically, and significant changes could alter the political landscape that states and the federal government currently navigate. Last, increasing the federal role in the provision of mental health services can further complicate an already confusing variety of services available and muddle the relative responsibilities of the federal and state governments.

A statement of the perceived educational value of the topic area for debaters:

This topic area has considerable educational value in two areas: First, mental health issues are heavily stigmatized today, and learning about mental health allows debaters to develop informed opinions that reject the stigma surrounding mental health. Second, mental health services give debaters the opportunity to learn about the specific challenges mental health services experience, and the general area of domestic social service policy, while keeping the topic area manageable.

A brief bibliography of selected readings (5-10) that capture the nature of the controversy surrounding the area:

“Adequacy of the Mental Health System in Meeting the Needs of Adults Who Are Visually Impaired”

<http://www.afb.org/JVIB/jvib001313.asp>

Although the article focuses on the difficulties the visually impaired face in mental health services, the introductory description of the current state of the mental health service system clearly explains the systems current systemic shortcomings.

“Disparities in Mental Health Treatment in U.S. Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups: Implications for Psychiatrists”

<http://psychservices.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/full/56/12/1600>

“Inadequate Mental Health Care Plagues Rural America”

<http://www.cfra.org/newsletter/2009/06/inadequate-mental-health-care-plagues-rural-america>

“Prison Mental Health Crisis Continues to Grow”

<http://pn.psychiatryonline.org/content/41/20/1.1.full>

National Institute of Mental Health

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/index.shtml>

National Mental Health Information Center

<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/>

Contact information should the committee need further clarification.

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**NFA BALLOT: LINCOLN DOUGLAS TOPIC AREA
SELECTION FOR 2010-2011**

ONE BALLOT PER SCHOOL!

**Please rank order the following three topic areas by ranking them 1st, 2nd, 3rd.
All areas must be ranked.**

**BALLOT SHOULD BE SENT TO DR. VICKI KARNES
(vkarns@suffolk.edu) AT SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY BY
FEBRUARY 28TH..**

_____ **A. Agriculture**

_____ **B. U.S. Agricultural Subsidies**

_____ **C. Banking Regulations and Oversight**

_____ **D. Discrimination**

_____ **E. U.S Mental Health Services**

SCHOOL: _____