



Ronald Reagan

DEBATE SERIES

THINK CRITICALLY. SPEAK FREELY.

PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK



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Dear Participant,

Welcome to the Ronald Reagan Debate Series, hosted by the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute. We are excited to have you join a program that celebrates the values President Reagan championed.

This program gives students the opportunity to develop meaningful communication and leadership skills while engaging in a thoughtful civil discourse. Whether this is your first debate experience or you are a returning competitor, you will learn how to think critically and speak with confidence.

Coaches, parents, and guardians play an important role in this journey. Thank you for encouraging your student to engage in civic learning and leadership development.

We look forward to supporting you throughout the process and cheering you on at your regional competition.

Sincerely,

Reagan Education Team

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute

★ Debate Topic ★

2027 Regional Topic

Resolved: The primary responsibility for disaster preparedness and response in the United States should rest with state and local governments rather than the federal government.

About the Topic

This year's resolution asks students to examine the roles of federal, state, and local governments in preparing for and responding to natural disasters. Competitors may consider how different levels of government can work together to protect communities before, during, and after disasters.

Because communities across the United States face different risks, competitors are encouraged to consider examples from their own states and regions. Hurricanes, wildfires, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, and other disasters can create different challenges for communities and emergency management agencies.

As you prepare for the debate:

- Research both sides of the resolution.
- Consider the roles of federal, state, and local governments.
- Use credible evidence and relevant examples.
- Be prepared to respond to opposing arguments.
- Communicate with clarity, civility, and confidence.
- Use storytelling, personality, and humor when they strengthen your message.



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COMPETITION ELIGIBILITY

Regional Competition Rules

- Competitors are allowed to compete in one geographic regional competition and/or the nationwide online regional competition.
- Each student at an in-person qualifying competition must be under the immediate supervision of an adult who may be their coach, parent, or other adult approved by the high school administration. Students competing online must have a supervising adult judging and/or otherwise immediately available.
- A contestant who does not appear at the scheduled time to speak will forfeit.
- If a student does not meet the judge obligation (2:1), they will not be able to participate in the competition.
- Only students enrolled in grades 9-12 are allowed to compete. Middle school students are not eligible to compete.
- After competing in the final round of debate at the regional level, one winner from each region will qualify for the National Championship. Each finalist will receive flight and hotel room for themselves and one chaperone.

COMPETITION EXPECTATIONS

Conduct & Professionalism

- Debaters are expected to conduct themselves with civility, professionalism, and decorum throughout all programming.
- Aggressive, disrespectful, or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated.
- Participants are expected to engage respectfully with opponents, judges, staff, and fellow attendees at all times.
- Participants should arrive on time and prepared for all scheduled rounds and activities.

Competition Materials

- All speech documents and research materials must be printed and brought in physical form (paper documents, note cards, or handwritten notes).
- Electronic devices, including laptops and tablets, may not be used during competition rounds.
- Cell phones may only be used for timing purposes.

Debate Timing & Procedures

- Each debater is allotted two minutes of optional preparation time to use at their discretion throughout the round.
- Debaters are responsible for keeping their own time.
- After each use of preparation time, debaters should clearly state how much time has been used and how much remains.

Judging Standards

- Judges evaluate each round using the official Ronald Reagan Debate Series rubric.
- Judges are instructed to evaluate rounds from the perspective of the average American voter.
- Use of excessive debate jargon or highly technical competitive debate terminology may negatively impact scoring.
- Judges assign speaker points to each competitor and determine a winner.
- Debaters may not receive identical scores.

Tournament Administration

- All rulings made by tournament administration are final.
- Tournament schedules and procedures may be adjusted at the discretion of event staff.
- Questions regarding rules, logistics, or disputes should be directed immediately to tournament administration.

Participation Requirements

- Each student must remain under the supervision of their approved adult chaperone throughout the duration of the regional tournament.

Ronald Reagan Debate Structure

STRUCTURE	TIME
AFFIRMATIVE OPENING STATEMENT	5 MINUTES
NEGATIVE OPENING STATEMENT	5 MINUTES
CROSSFIRE	3 MINUTES
AFFIRMATIVE REBUTTAL	4 MINUTES
NEGATIVE REBUTTAL	4 MINUTES
MODERATOR QUESTIONING	3 MINUTES
AFFIRMATIVE CLOSING STATEMENT	3 MINUTES
NEGATIVE CLOSING STATEMENT	3 MINUTES
PREP TIME PER DEBATER	2 MINUTES
TOTAL DEBATE TIME	30 - 40 MINUTES

Moderator Questioning Guide

- Unique to the Ronald Reagan debate format, judges, also known as moderators, ask the debaters questions just like a real presidential debate!
- The purpose of this period is an opportunity for debaters to show their breadth/ depth of knowledge or clarify their points.
- There are no “gotcha questions,” questions that argue against, or criticize the debater.
- There should not be any yes or no questions.
- Judges should ask each debater an equal number of questions.
- Engaging questions encourage the debater to think critically about what they are arguing and apply their knowledge.
- Judges can ask the same question to each debater.

Example Questions



Could you further elaborate your point about _____?



How would this impact you and me personally?



How would this impact our community?



What do you believe is your opponent's strongest point?



Why should I care about this issue?

Ronald Reagan Debate Series Rubric

CATEGORY	1- POOR	2- FAIR	3- GOOD	4- VERY GOOD	5- EXCELLENT
LIKENESS TO RONALD REAGAN Much like President Reagan, competitors should present their ideas with a variety of ways including storytelling, humor, charisma. Debaters should aim to connect with their audience.	Debater showed no personality and uniqueness and/or was disrespectful.	Debater showed little personality and minimally incorporated Reagan.	Debater incorporated some but not all elements of Reagan's speaking style.	Debater incorporated all aspects of Reagan's speaking style, but can have a more polished style.	Debater excelled at incorporating the attributes of Reagan's speaking
ORGANIZATION AND CLARITY A successful debater communicates ideas with clarity, organization and eloquence. Competitors should appeal to the Average American voter and enunciating clearly.	It was impossible to follow the debater's speech and logic.	Only people with technical knowledge can understand the debater/ unreasonable speaking pace was used.	Debater was somewhat organized, but can greatly improve clarity	Debater was decently organized, and most people can understand.	Anyone could have understood this debater/well-organized.
KNOWLEDGE OF THE TOPIC Skilled debaters should demonstrate their knowledge of both the topic in both moderator and competitor questioning periods. They should be able to competently answer a question.	Debater demonstrated little to no topical knowledge/ was completely dependent on notes and speech documents.	Debater did not have a firm grasp on the topic and relied heavily on notes and speech documents.	Debater somewhat understood the topic but could have been less dependent on notes and speech documents.	Debater demonstrated subject competence and did not rely heavily on notes and speech documents.	Debater demonstrated a strong grasp of the subject at hand and was not dependent on notes.
PERSUASIVENESS Competitors should use a balance of storytelling, logic, and evidence to make their points. While quality evidence should be used, win/loss should not be determined by evidence alone.	Debater made no arguments/ had no balance of storytelling, logic, and evidence/ used flawed logic/evidence.	Debater used some but not all of the elements of persuasion/ ideas were limited in scope.	Debater used storytelling, logic, and evidence, but wasn't persuasive enough in doing so.	Debater was persuasive and effectively used all elements.	Debater was very persuasive and used all elements to present a better case.
REBUTTALS (RESPONSE TO OPPONENTS' ARGUMENTS) Rebuttals include all responses to opponents' logic. Debaters should respond to all major arguments given by opponent.	Debater did not address/ counter any of their opponent's main arguments.	Debater only minimally addressed/countered some of their opponent's main arguments.	Debater only addressed/countered some of their opponent's main arguments.	Debater addressed/countered most of their opponent's main arguments.	Debater successfully addressed/ countered all of their opponent's main arguments.
CONDUCT AND CIVILITY Debaters are expected to model the civility, respect, and courtesy exemplified by President Reagan throughout his life. This includes respectful engagement with opponents and judges and active listening, appropriate body language.	Debater was disrespectful, dismissive, or hostile toward their opponent or the judge: demonstrated poor sportsmanship or inappropriate behavior.	Debater had noticeable lapses in civility or professionalism; may have interrupted, rolled eyes, or demonstrated frustration.	Debater was generally respectful and professional, though some minor lapses in tone or demeanor may have been present.	Debater was consistently respectful, professional, and courteous, showing clear understanding of the competition.	Debater was a model of civility and sportsmanship, demonstrating respect, humility, and encouragement toward others.



RONALD REAGAN Debate Series

JUDGE BALLOT



DEBATE INFORMATION

Judge Name: _____

Round: _____

Room: _____

Affirmative Speaker: _____

Negative Speaker: _____

CRITERIA	AFFIRMATIVE SPEAKER	SCORE	NEGATIVE SPEAKER	SCORE
 Likeness to Ronald Reagan	1 2 3 4 5	_____	1 2 3 4 5	_____
 Organization & Clarity	1 2 3 4 5	_____	1 2 3 4 5	_____
 Knowledge of Topic	1 2 3 4 5	_____	1 2 3 4 5	_____
 Persuasiveness	1 2 3 4 5	_____	1 2 3 4 5	_____
 Rebuttals	1 2 3 4 5	_____	1 2 3 4 5	_____
 Conduct & Civility	1 2 3 4 5	_____	1 2 3 4 5	_____
TOTAL		/30		/30

JUDGE NOTES (OPTIONAL)





RONALD REAGAN Debate Series

WRITTEN FEEDBACK



DEBATE INFORMATION

Judge Name: _____

Round: _____

Room: _____

Affirmative Speaker: _____

Negative Speaker: _____



AFFIRMATIVE SPEAKER FEEDBACK

What did this speaker do well? What could they improve?



NEGATIVE SPEAKER FEEDBACK

What did this speaker do well? What could they improve?



THANK YOU FOR YOUR THOUGHTFUL FEEDBACK!

Your evaluations help students grow and support civility, clarity, and strong ideas.

Schedule

ROUND	TIME
WELCOME & CHECK-IN	8:00 AM
ROUND 1	9:00 AM
ROUND 2	10:00 AM
ROUND 3	11:00 AM
LUNCH	12:00 PM
ROUND 4	1:00 PM
QUARTERFINALS	2:00 PM
SEMI-FINALS	3:30 PM
FINALS	5:00 PM

This schedule is tentative. Timing may fluctuate based on regional location.



MEDIA RELEASE FORM

This form must be completed by all participants and, if under 18, signed by a parent or guardian. By signing, you grant permission to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute to use photographs, video recordings, and audio recordings of the student for educational purposes, promotional materials, social media and marketing, and event documentation and archival use.

Scan the QR code to access the media release form.



RESOURCES

- Website: www.reaganfoundation.org/debate
- Judges Video: <https://vimeo.com/1146680404/a68f59d680?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci>
- Ronald Reagan Debate Series Championship:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kk6Q1qcxWzg>
- Tabroom: <https://www.tabroom.com/index/index.mhtml>
- How to Set Up a Tabroom Account Training Video:
<https://reaganeducation.box.com/s/4xzxu6lcp7oc9e9gkpypc88dezs7mx29>
- Other leadership development opportunities & scholarships:
<http://www.reaganfoundation.org/education>

