

What are some common arguments on the 2008-2009 topic?

The Resolution This year's resolution is **Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase alternative energy incentives in the United States.**

Sample Affirmative Arguments

- Cap and Trade** The federal government is doing very little to combat global warming. If we do not listen to Al Gore and work to slow the rate of CO₂ production, the earth will warm, the sea levels will rise, fish in the oceans will die, and a chain reaction could threaten us all. By limiting the amount of CO₂ companies can emit, and allowing them to trade credits with other companies, we can slow the rate of warming enough to avoid the environmental disasters that could result from climate change.
- Brownfields** Inner city "brownfields" are underdeveloped, environmentally dangerous areas that reflect and promote urban decay. These abandoned areas are heavily polluted, undermine the tax bases in major cities, and ultimately these urban wastelands allow populations living there to be further marginalized. By promoting the redevelopment via "brightfields" which give companies incentives to create green zones and establish alternative energy technologies in these areas, these harms can be avoided.

Sample Negative Arguments

On-Case (direct attacks on the affirmative's own arguments--the negative's **defense**.)

- Harms** The problems the affirmative is talking about are not serious ones. For example, the threat of climate change is often exaggerated.
- Inherency** The current system can/will take care of the problem on its own. For example, there are many efforts to promote cleaner fossil fuel usage (clean coal, natural gas, etc.).
- Solvency** The affirmative plan cannot solve the harms. For example, even if the US curbs emissions, if major polluters such as China and Russia do not also curtail their CO₂ production, global warming will continue. Also, environmental regulations are often under enforced.

Off-Case (negative attacks on issues besides those in the affirmative case—the negative's **offense**.)

Disadvantages

Business Confidence—The affirmative plan will be expensive for businesses. Investors will react to the new burdens, worsening our economy. This will snowball, leading to a global economic depression and — you guessed it—war!

European Soft Power— The plan, by expanding US global environmental leadership, advances US soft power at the expense of European hegemony. Europe assuming a stronger global role. If this role is undercut by the US, Europe will not have the influence to be able to effectively deal with many global threats, including nuclear proliferation and terrorism.

Politics— complex argument, but a favorite of the negative. This can take many forms, from presidential popularity to congressional elections. Basically, the argument is that the passage of the affirmative plan effects the popularity, and therefore political agenda, of those in power. One version might say that the affirmative plan will trade off with other political priorities. If we pass a national service plan, we won't be able to advance some other important agenda item. For example, Bush is trying to pursue a policy that will increase support for tools to fight the war on terror. The plan may prevent him from being able to accomplish this.

Topicality The affirmative plan is not within the resolution because it violates a particular word in the topic. For example, the affirmative increase is not "substantial" because substantial must be large in scope, and the affirmative only curtails federal power a small amount.

Counterplan A negative plan offered as an alternative to the affirmative plan. When the negative runs a counterplan, they may give up their right to defend the status quo. The judge must decide if the counterplan forces a choice between options. Counterplans like funding schools in the US may not compete with (force a choice) the affirmative plan. A counterplan, which said the 50 states should adopt the same type of plan, will be a common negative strategy. The affirmative question is often, "why not do both?" Negative's arguing the States counterplan will often answer this question by arguing that if court acts, even in conjunction with the 50 states, there are drawbacks (like undermining the principle of federalism or disrupting the national political climate). Thus, state action alone might be the better policy option.

Kritik The philosophical underpinnings of the affirmative case are flawed. For example, the affirmative assumes it is important for the government to hold corporations accountable. The negative might argue this serves to scapegoat individual responsibility, and that we must rethink the role each of us has as individual consumers, rather than blame companies and institutions. Alternatively, the affirmative might make assumptions about the ability of traditional debate to be a useful educational tool. The negative could critique the current practices in debate, suggesting that, as they stand, they advance a male Eurocentric perspective, and that we must change the way we debate so that it is a better activity for empowering participants.