

CAPITOL FORUM

NEBRASKA - 2017

The first years of the 21st century have been tumultuous. As Americans we are rethinking our role in the world. The Capitol Forum engages high school students in consideration of our nation's future at this demanding moment in history. At the heart of the Capitol Forum is an exploration of four distinct visions for the United States in the coming years.

WHICH STATEMENT DO YOU MOST AGREE WITH?

RANKED #4

OPTION 1 Lead the World to Democracy

Although the world is changing rapidly, the United States remains the most powerful country on earth. For years, the international community has depended on us to maintain order and to support the principles of democracy and free trade. Globalization has created new threats to the international system, and the United States needs to use its strong military to address these threats. The United States should seek to guide global economic and political policy, and transform undemocratic regimes into governments based on U.S. political principles.

RANKED #3

OPTION 2 Protect U.S. Global Interests

We live in a dangerous and unstable world. U.S. foreign policy must strive for order and security. International terrorism, poverty, and globalization have created an international minefield for U.S. leaders. We must concentrate on protecting our own security, cultivating key trade relationships, ensuring our access to crucial raw materials, and stopping the spread of nuclear weapons to unfriendly countries or to terrorist networks. U.S. citizens have no choice but to accept the world as it is and respond pragmatically with whatever actions are necessary to keep our country safe and strong.

RANKED #1

OPTION 3 Build a More Cooperative World

Today's world is interdependent and interconnected. We cannot stand alone. National boundaries cannot halt the spread of HIV/AIDS, the damaging effects of climate change, or terrorism. We must end U.S. policies that contribute to global problems, and take the initiative to bring the countries of the world together in the pursuit of global security, human rights, and equality. We should lead efforts to strengthen and reform the UN. Using the UN is the best way to maintain peace, fight terrorism, address humanitarian crises, and enforce sanctions against countries that violate the standards of the international community.

RANKED #2

OPTION 4 Focus Our Efforts at Home

The attacks of September 11, 2001 brought a new message to U.S. citizens: we are vulnerable. Since 2001, our wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan have cost over \$4 trillion. These high-profile foreign policy programs have only bred resentment against us and even fueled terrorism. It is time to sharply scale back our foreign involvement. We must turn our national attention to the real threats facing the United States: growing economic inequality, loss of jobs, decaying schools, a shaky health care system, and inadequate resources to protect us from attacks on our own soil. The well-being of U.S. citizens should be our top priority.

Ranking the Options [Based on 280 student ballots]

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
1st	12%	21%	34%	33%
2nd	19%	38%	21%	23%
1st/2nd	31%	59%	55%	56%
Last	49%	10%	16%	24%



WHAT 3 THINGS CONCERN YOU MOST?

1. Nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons will proliferate and end up in the hands of terrorists 41%
2. Billions of people worldwide will continue to suffer from poverty, hunger, and disease 39%
3. The United States will drain its resources trying to solve other countries' problems 37%
4. More U.S. citizens will die at the hands of terrorists..... 36%
5. Damage to the global environment will become irreparable and climate change will affect us all..... 27%
6. Inequality and injustice within the United States will continue to grow..... 27%
7. U.S. jobs will be lost to other countries 27%
8. A clash of ideologies and political values will fuel conflict and instability in the world 22%
9. The United States will act unilaterally and the international community will turn against us..... 15%
10. U.S. troops will get bogged down in costly conflicts abroad..... 15%
11. The gulf between richer and poorer countries will widen,..... 14%
making it increasingly difficult to address common problems
12. The United States will lose access to oil and other key resources abroad 12%
13. Participation in international organizations will force the United States to follow costly or risky policies 12%
14. The United States will be vulnerable to cyberattacks..... 10%

WHAT BELIEFS DRIVE YOUR THINKING?

Strongly Support Support Undecided Oppose Strongly Oppose

The United States should focus its resources on addressing poverty, crime, and debt at home.



The United States should not do business with countries that grossly abuse the human rights of their citizens.



WHAT BELIEFS DRIVE YOUR THINKING? cont.

Strongly Support

Support

Undecided

Oppose

Strongly Oppose

Free trade and open economies are the best way to foster economic growth at home and around the world.



In today's interconnected world, many serious problems can be addressed only through international cooperation.



The United States has no right to decide on its own to pressure another country to behave in a certain way.



As one of the richest, most powerful countries in the world, the United States has a responsibility to help improve the lives of people in poorer countries.



U.S. human rights abuses threaten the country's reputation as a great democracy and world leader.



The United States will always have to compete with other countries for power.



Any country acting alone has neither the moral authority nor the capacity to right the world's wrongs.



Using our economic and military power around the world creates more enemies than friends.



Trying to make deep changes in the way the world works is naive and dangerous.



The United States has a responsibility to spread democracy around the world.



WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Strongly Support

Support

Undecided

Oppose

Strongly Oppose

The United States should help negotiate strict international standards to address climate change and other environmental threats, even if compliance means initially paying more for “green” technology.



The United States should scale back its involvement abroad and focus on the needs of its own citizens.



The United States should increase financial aid to countries that are most affected by poverty, hunger, and disease.



The United States should commit itself to the elimination of nuclear weapons, even if this means that it will need to rethink its defense strategy.



The United States should impose trade sanctions on countries that threaten their neighbors with aggression or contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, even if such sanctions harm U.S. trade relationships.



The United States should use military force to protect access to oil and other important raw materials, even when faced with opposition from our traditional allies and the broader international community.



The United States should spend what is necessary to remain a military superpower, even if this means having less domestic spending, more debt, or higher taxes.



The United States should use its military—alone if necessary—to stop gross human rights violations, even if our traditional allies or the broader international community disagrees.

