

Core Files Research Guide 2009/10

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Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially increase social services for persons living in poverty in the United States.



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Step One: Media Literacy

Policy debate rewards competitors who are knowledgeable about current events. Debaters and their coaches should expect the topic to change throughout the season in response to current events. Fortunately, keeping up with current events is also a great way for beginning debaters to learn research skills, which are among the most important tools they can take away from their debating experience. The information in this section will explain the easiest ways for beginning debaters to follow current events, analyze their implications for debate rounds, and recognize reliable versus unreliable sources.

A. Sources: Newspapers

Watching the national news will give debaters a superficial idea of what is going on in the world, which is better than nothing. Watching the local news will give debaters a superficial idea of what is going on in the local dog show circuit, which is probably not better than nothing. Watching CNN will provide some in-depth information and analysis of important issues, but viewers cannot choose their content: they must wait until the topics that interest them make an appearance. In short, there is simply no way to get the benefits of reading the newspaper without reading the newspaper.

Newspaper articles cover issues in more depth than most news programs, and readers can choose to focus on the articles that are of most interest to them. Newspapers vary in quality, but most Urban Debate Leagues are located in large cities, which means that the major paper in the home city of most debaters will be a pretty good source of information.

Fortunately for those who do not have home delivery of their city's major paper, do not live in a city with an especially good newspaper, or simply want to diversify their sources (always a good idea), most of the best newspapers in the country can be read for free online at the following websites:

The New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/>
The Los Angeles Times: <http://www.latimes.com/>
The Washington Post: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/>
The Chicago Tribune: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/>
The Dallas Morning News: <http://www.dallasnews.com/>

Many papers also make one or two weeks' worth of archives available for free online. To access these archives, or in some cases even to read the day's news, visitors may have to register. For all of the papers listed above, this is completely free, and in most cases, the registered e-mail address will not receive unwanted advertisements or solicitations. In other words, it is well worth it to take a moment or two to register and gain access to all of this valuable, free information. Registering with the New York Times even gives users the option of having the day's headlines e-mailed to them every morning, an opportunity that debaters ought to exploit.

There are several types of articles in newspapers, which have very different sources – and



varying degrees of credibility. First there are staff writers who are hired to write the basic news articles in the paper, including the front page. They are reporters, not analysts. Theoretically they deal with "facts" not their own opinions. In debate these articles are generally cited as the newspaper itself: "Washington Post," "Wall Street Journal" because the credibility of the staff writer is basically that they were hired by the paper.

Second, there are syndicated columnists, like David Broder, William Safire, Paul Krugman and George Will. Their articles typically appear on the inside back cover of the first section of the paper. These authors typically write weekly columns that are based on opinion, not reporting. In a sense they are experts – David Broder has been covering politics in Washington D.C. for decades. On the other hand they are offering merely their own opinions. Evidence from these articles should be cited by the names of the authors.

Third, there is the official editorial page of the paper. This is generally found on the page at the back of the first section that is across from the syndicated columns. The editors of the newspaper write this page. It is comprised of their opinion – it is their "editorial opinion" – and not necessarily based on factual reporting. Certain newspapers are known for their political bias. Generally the New York Times editorial page has a liberal bias, the Wall Street Journal is conservative. This is in contrast to their basic news reporting in the rest of the paper, which should be much less biased by politics.

Finally, there are letters to the editor. Newspapers publish letters written by their readers. Generally these authors are not qualified, but there are exceptions to that. In the rare case when there is a qualified letter to the editor the qualifications for that person are provided with the letter. You should not cite a letter to the editor as the newspaper. You must cite the author – for better or (typically) worse.

Another way for debaters to diversify the perspective that they get on the news is to read papers from other countries, many of which are also available for free online. Some of the best British papers are

The Guardian: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

The Financial Times: <http://news.ft.com/home/us>

B. Sources: Interest Groups and Think Tanks

Newspapers, even those described as having a liberal or conservative slant, strive to present objective, non-opinionated accounts of the facts. While it is very helpful for debaters to know the facts about what is going on in the world, they are ultimately interested in arguments. Debaters need to know more than just what is happening; they need to know what people think about what is happening, and what those people are proposing to do about it.

Debaters can find opinionated analysis of the news on the websites of interest groups and think tanks. These organizations focus on lobbying the government on issues of importance to their members. While some are explicitly liberal or conservative, many at least claim to be non-partisan. This is *not* the same as being objective. Members of these organizations likely have strong opinions on the issues they address in their writing and are not afraid to voice them. A member of the American Civil Liberties Union, for example, may be a liberal or a conservative (though the former is more likely), but in any event is likely to be strongly opposed to any attempt by the government to violate civil liberties. As long as debaters keep such biases in mind, these interest groups are a valuable source for researching arguments about current events and how the government ought to respond to them.

The following think tanks largely support the Affirmative side of the topic:

The Center for American Progress: <http://www.americanprogress.org/>

The Urban Institute: <http://www.urban.org/>

The Brookings Institution: <http://www.brookings.edu>

The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities: <http://www.cbpp.org/>

The following think tanks largely support the Negative side of the topic:

The Cato Institute: <http://www.cato.org/>

The Heritage Foundation: <http://www.heritage.org/>

The American Enterprise Institute: <http://www.aei.org/>

C. Sources: Government

Policy debate revolves around the policymaking process. Where better to get information about this process than directly from the policymaking bodies? These resources may not be ideal for day-to-day news, as the information they provide is largely unfiltered. That is, while newspapers selectively report the most important and interesting business of government, government websites often contain detailed information about even relatively trivial happenings. But when something important does happen in the halls of the Supreme Court or on the floor of Congress, debaters can get all the primary information they need, including floor speeches, the full text of legislation, and the full opinions of Supreme Court justices, from the websites associated with these institutions.

Congress: <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

The Supreme Court: <http://www.supremecourtus.gov/>

The President: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/>

US Department of Health and Human Services: <http://www.hhs.gov/>

US Department of Housing and Urban Development: <http://www.huduser.org/>

Each year, the Congressional Research Service compiles many government documents related to the year's topic in a document just for high school debaters. When the document for the 2009-10 topic is available you will find it at this URL:

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/serialset/cdocuments/debatetopic.html>.

D. Reliability: Evaluating Credibility

Just because a source has an agenda does not mean that source is unreliable. As long as the author makes a legitimate attempt to get the facts right and makes clear that her opinions are opinions, then she can be considered a reliable source. But there is no shortage of truly unreliable information out there, especially online. Some sources distort the facts to better support their arguments, in an attempt to be funny, or just because they did not do very good research themselves. There are some simple things debaters can do to avoid mistakenly using such bad information (and debaters should never deliberately use bad information!):

Get a second opinion. If anything seems suspicious, readers can “fact check” a claim with a source that they know to be reliable. For example, a debater who finds a website that claims the current President is actually an alien from outer space impersonating Barack Obama can try to find an article in a reliable source, such as one of the newspapers listed above, that corroborates this story. The President being replaced by a space alien is a big story, so if the New York Times has not mentioned it, it probably did not happen.

Look for other mistakes. If the source cites a “fact” that a debater knows to be wrong, she should consider the entire source to be highly suspect. Other mistakes also cast doubt on a source’s credibility. For example, an author who is not careful enough to avoid simple grammar and spelling mistakes has probably not researched her facts very carefully either.

Look for qualifications. Most articles will give the author’s qualifications at the beginning or the end of the piece. If the author is an expert *in the field that her article discusses*, then she is probably reliable. However, a highly qualified lawyer analyzing statistics may not be the most reliable source, not because she is an unintelligent person, but because she may not be trained in how to analyze statistics (then again, maybe she is, but if the article is about statistics and the author’s background in statistics is not mentioned in her qualifications, then she probably does not have much of a background in statistics.)

When in doubt, throw it out. Debaters can always make arguments in their own words. The purpose of evidence is to add the weight of expert opinion to these arguments. Evidence from questionable sources, then, is not very valuable, because there is no weight behind it. The argument may still be true, but the debater might as well make it in her own words as read a piece of evidence from a questionable source. In a worst-case scenario, debaters could even lose a round based on unethical use of evidence if they are citing false “facts” from unreliable sources. Thus, it is best simply to avoid using sources whose credibility is in doubt.

E. Keeping Up-to-Date: Stories to Watch

Although almost every major news story could affect a debate in some way, it is very important for debaters to keep an eye on certain stories. While others will undoubtedly appear throughout the season, there are many issues related to poverty and the economy that are already making headlines everyday and will continue to do so:

Presidential Popularity, Political Capital, and Agenda In many debate circuits, disadvantages relating to the popularity and political strength, or capital, of the President are part of most Negative strategies. Thus, debaters must be aware of the items currently on the President's agenda. With Democrats now in control of Congress, President Obama will be looking to pass a very broad agenda that includes health care, renewable energy, immigration, and economic stimulus. Debaters will need to know the arguments for and against items on his agenda as well as the likelihood of their passing. The first year of a president's term has historically been the best window of opportunity to push through new policies.

Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan Troop commitments and strategies in Afghanistan and Iraq loom large over virtually everything the US does these days. Developments in the war will affect relevant topics such as America's credibility and standing in the world, the budget deficit, military commitment levels, and the President's focus.

The State of the Economy Much of the social services topic is related to the overall trends in our national and global economy. Keeping up to date with the latest economic reports is important for effectively debating certain issues.



Step Two: Background Reading

It takes more than knowledge of current events, Harms areas, and Disadvantage links to do well at debate. Understanding the arguments that win debate rounds requires understanding the history and context of many topics. A number of these topics are listed below, along with questions about each topic and some resources to help debaters get started on their research. In this exercise, debaters should research answers to each of the questions, but instead of simply writing the answer, they should “cut” a piece of evidence that contains the answer, remembering to provide a full citation for each “card”.

Poverty

1. What is the overall trend in poverty in the United States?
2. How is the Official Poverty Rate calculated, and is it a good measure?
3. How do the living conditions of the poor in America compare to the poor in other nations?
4. Can we solve poverty?

The Economy

1. What are the most recent indicators of how the economy is doing?
2. How is the state of the overall economy related to this debate topic in areas such as harms and disadvantage uniqueness?
3. Will President Obama’s stimulus package work?
4. How are states and local communities budgets affected by the economy?

Race Relations

1. Are race relations improving in the United States?
2. Did the election of President Obama represent a turning point in our nation in terms of race relations?
3. Will President Obama reverse policies of President Bush that had negative impacts on people of color?
4. Does poverty impact certain racial groups more than others, and why? If yes, does that mean our solutions to poverty should be race-conscious?
5. How are some racial groups, such as those of Latino/a origin, impacted differently than other racial groups such as African Americans?

President Obama

1. How is President Obama doing in his office in the opinion of the public?
2. Will the President and Congress be taking steps to address some of the problems identified in our affirmative cases, such as homelessness?
3. How will the affirmative plan fit in with the rest of what the President is doing?



Step Three: Going Beyond the Core Files

The Core Files are not perfect, and even if they were, there would still be value to updating them with independent research. More important than the strength of an argument in its own right is the depth of a debater's understanding of that argument. No matter how well a debater may understand an argument researched by someone else, she will always be more familiar with those that she found herself. Researching forces debaters to go through a very valuable process of thinking about their evidence in context and learning the warrants for their arguments inside and out. This portion of the Research Guide will help students to recognize ways that they can improve upon existing Core Files arguments with independent research.

A. Finding More Recent Evidence

Some arguments are very time-dependent. That is, they are true at some times but not at others. The claim, "The President's popularity is at an all-time high" may be true this week, but by next week his poll numbers may have dropped. The claim, "Torture is immoral," may be true or false, but in any case its truth is not time-dependent. If torture is wrong now, then it was wrong a month ago and five hundred years ago.

A debater reading evidence that is several months old about the President's popularity is wasting her time. Thus, it is important for debaters to identify time-dependent arguments in their files so that they can update them before competitions. As a general rule, arguments that describe the *status quo*, such as Uniqueness and Inherency, are most likely to be time-dependent.

Following are some examples of time-dependent arguments from the Core Files:

The Obama Agenda Disadvantage Debaters must update issues such as what items are on the President's agenda, how likely they are to pass, whether they would be a good idea or not. Also the state of President Obama's support among the American people and Congress requires constant updating. Even the impact of this disadvantage – the state of the economy – needs updating from time to time

Military Readiness Uniqueness Various factors influence whether the armed forces can meet their recruiting targets, and those factors change all the time. The Pentagon reports on enlistment rates several times of the year, so attention should be paid to the latest reports.

Rates of Poverty and Homelessness The economic recession has an impact on the poverty rate and the extent of homelessness. These are key affirmative harm areas. Both affirmative and negative debaters need to be aware of the latest trends in how the overall state of the economy is impacting their case advantages. Another example of this is the state of recovery for the City of New Orleans.

State Government Budgets While this may seem obscure, one of the most popular negative strategies on this topic will be the State Counterplan. One of the primary

arguments against it will be that states do not have enough money and would be forced to raise taxes or cut important spending to fund the counterplan. Almost every state is in dire economic times right now, so it pays off to follow that in the news for the latest information.

Late Developing Policy Changes One aspect of debating right after a new President is elected is that many policies are in a state of flux. For example, President Obama's policy toward the homeless may be radically different from that of President Bush. Even within the Obama Administration's time in office there have been changes in his policy toward Housing Vouchers in New Orleans. You have to follow the news to know what is going on. The most recent evidence usually wins these clashes in a debate.

** How to Find More Recent Evidence

Cutting more recent evidence to support existing Core Files arguments is a natural extension of the basic research all debaters should be doing anyway to keep up with current events. That means that majority of this evidence can come directly from the newspaper or an update provided by an interest group website. At the very least, current events research should 'tip off' debaters to important arguments for which they will need to do a more targeted search. For more information on conducting current events research, see Step One of this guide.

B. Finding More Reliable Sources of Evidence

In addition to finding more recent sources, a second way to improve upon existing evidence is to find a better source that makes the same claim. In some cases, the source for an argument simply may not be an expert in relevant subject matter. One example is a journalist or staff writer for a newspaper. This individual is likely to be relatively intelligent and well informed about the issue on which she is writing, but nonetheless her knowledge of the topic pales in comparison to someone who has spent her professional life studying it. In other words, evidence from an expert in terrorism that indicates another attack is inevitable would be more compelling, on balance, than the same argument made by a staff writer for the New York Times.

Keep in mind that other factors, such as the quality of the warrants used to support the claim, may still make the New York Times evidence on-balance better. However, all other things being equal, an expert source is preferable to a non-expert, or 'lay person', source.

Another factor to consider is a source's potential bias. Evidence from an industry representative or lobbyist may be biased since it is the job of these individuals to advocate for policy that will benefit their industry.

It is important to recognize, however, that an opinion does not necessarily mean bias exists. The National Alliance to End Homelessness is likely to argue strongly in favor of more resources being spent on supportive housing, but that does not mean the authors' motivation is solely by financial interests or that their claims do not reflect their true opinions.

Following are some examples of Core Files arguments that might benefit from evidence from a different source:

Source that has less of a direct interest The solvency evidence for the Single Stop affirmative is from an author who works for that nonprofit organization. It would be better to have a source that was independent of the group who spoke on behalf of its effectiveness.

Source that has more direct personal experience In the Poverty Negative file, one author makes the claim that living conditions for the poor are not so bad. It would be more credible if an author making that claim had ever actually lived in poverty.

Source that is more qualified Some of the link evidence for the Military Readiness disadvantage comes from a web site called Wallet Pop. It would be more credible if the author was someone we knew to be an expert on the motivations of people who join the armed forces. Along the same lines, one of the authors on the evidence for the Dream Act is a law student writing in a law review. This evidence would be more credible coming from a law professor.

** How to Find More Reliable Sources of Evidence

Though far from perfect, print sources such as books, magazines, and newspapers are much more likely to be reliable than are online sources. Most of these publications include an "About the Author" section at the beginning or end of the piece that detail the author's qualifications. Many also contain Endnotes or a Bibliography that references other works on the same topic. Debaters who are looking for a more qualified source that makes the same argument as a source they have now can check to see if the current author has cited any other sources that would be worth exploring.

Although websites are less likely to be professionally edited and fact-checked than are print sources, there are still plenty of reliable sources of information. The safest bet is to stick with sources that have 'name recognition', such as CNN or the United Nations. Some online sources may contain Endnotes or Bibliographies that reference other authors, but many websites also have a "Links" section that connects researchers to like-minded sources and organizations. If a debater is looking to find a more reliable source for an argument she got off of the internet, she should check to see which other sites the original author links on her website.

C. Finding Evidence with Stronger Warrants

A “warrant” is the reason that an author gives to support one’s claims, and are the backbone of any argument. When debaters first begin their careers, many prefer evidence that is highly rhetorical; that is, they love to read cards that make strongly worded claims. More sophisticated debaters recognize, however, that the best evidence is that which offers strong warrants to support the central claims. Debaters seeking to improve Core Files arguments, then, would do well to seek out evidence that contains different, stronger warrants than those they currently use.

Following are some examples of Core Files arguments that might benefit from evidence with different warrants:

Education Affirmative Racism Harm Evidence The Barndt card is one of the most popular pieces of debate evidence because it contains some pretty flaming rhetoric linking racism to global destruction. It is, however, short on warrants, which is to say there is very little explanation of *how* racism will lead to global destruction. Debaters looking for an impact that can stand up to intense scrutiny may want to find one that is a bit smaller but more compelling. In this case, the claim in question is “Racism is bad,” and the warrant being replaced is “Racism leads to global destruction.” In other words, debaters are not likely to find another author who argues that racism leads to global destruction, but they should be able to find different reasons for why racism is bad.

Katrina Solvency Evidence The di Silva solvency evidence does an outstanding job connecting the need for expanding social services as a means of helping New Orleans recovery. Unfortunately the date of the evidence is 2005, which means it originates from immediately after the storm. The warrant would be stronger if the evidence was more recent as the need for social services may have changed dramatically since that unique time.

New Philanthropy DA Internal Link Evidence The Brooks evidence does an excellent job of connecting the government provision of social services to discouraging – crowding out – private philanthropy. But the warrant would be stronger if the evidence indicated how much crowding out occurred. Is it dollar-for-dollar, or does it crowd out some much smaller percentage?

** How to Find Evidence with Stronger Warrants

There is no simple solution for how to find evidence with better warrants than those in the Core Files. After all, if we had one, those arguments would already be in the Core Files! Some of the passages above contain suggestions about where to find evidence relevant to that particular topic. As a general rule, longer sources are more likely to contain multiple, strong warrants for their claims than are shorter ones. So, articles from academic journals will be more helpful than newspaper articles, and books may turn out to be the most helpful.

A “warrant” is the reasoning or support behind the claim you are making. If you are

claiming that the President is unpopular, your warrant might be a recent public opinion poll showing his approval rating is falling. Evidence should have warrants, otherwise is it just someone's conclusion based on little support.

Your evidence should contain claims and warrants, but generally you want your evidence to have only one or two warrants per card. If you find a paragraph that has four or five reasons (warrants) for its conclusion, cut that paragraph into separate parts, so that you will have multiple pieces of evidence, each with a distinct warrant.

Do not cut your evidence down so that it is too short. There is a virtue to full explanations because it adds credibility to your claim. A piece of evidence that is one sentence long is probably too short. Generally you need a sentence with your claim (conclusion) and a sentence providing the warrant (support). Remember that you can always highlight evidence to be shorter. Cut your evidence long at first, you can highlight it down later.

On the other hand, evidence that takes up an entire page is probably too long. Usually that card could be divided up into several pieces of evidence, each with separate warrants. You will find it easier and more powerful to use your evidence this way. As a general rule a piece of evidence should have from two to four sentences.

D. Evidence Must Have Complete and Accurate Citations

Every piece of evidence must have a correct and complete citation. That means the evidence must include: Author, Qualification, Source, Complete Date, Page/URL.

The **author** is the person or group who originally wrote the evidence you are cutting. The author could be a person, such as a professor or news reporter, or a group such as a think tank or government office. If the author directly works for a newspaper or think tank it is still important to cite the author along with their employment status as part of their qualification.

The author's **qualification** refers to the credentials of the author of your evidence, generally proving her/him to be an expert in the area of your argument. An example might be that your author is a university law professor, or maybe a federal district court judge.

The source qualification can be a crucial attribute of your evidence. There may be direct clash on a given point in the debate, with opposing evidence. If one team can prove their author is more qualified (or unbiased) they would have a definite edge.

Source qualifications are increasingly important given the prevalence of evidence that originates from online sources. In the past, to have your opinions published required a bit of expertise or credibility. Not just anyone could get a publisher to publish a book, or find a journal to publish an article. The prominence of internet communication has changed all of that. Basically the only qualification one needs to publish one's opinions online is a keyboard.

Every time you cut an article, book, website you need to consider who the author is. Generally the author's qualifications are stated in close proximity to the article itself, at the beginning, end or the first footnote. But if you can't find the qualification in one of those places you can do an online search to find more information about the author. Just be sure that it is the same person, not someone different with the same name.

The **source** is the primary description of the location of the evidence. The source could be any of these things: book or report title, journal title, newspaper title, the name of a think-tank or group, and the Congressional committee name.

You should always cite the most **full and complete date** possible. Not only does this help in the evaluation of the credibility of the evidence – when it is a time-sensitive claim – but also it helps other people be able to look up and track down your research. A book or a report generally has just a year for the complete date, although reports sometimes have months. A journal article almost always should include the month or season it is published. A weekly magazine, such as Time or Newsweek should be cited with the week date. A daily newspaper should be cited by the specific day it was published. As a rule, the citation should have as specific of a date as the original source does.

Websites sometimes present challenges in dating. Many sites have copyright dates at

the bottom. Some have “last modified” or “last updated” dates. But sometimes there is simply no date listed with a website, in which case you will have to cite it as “no date available” – and you’ll have to evaluate for yourself on a case-by-case basis how much this undermines the credibility of the evidence.

When you are accessing evidence on the internet you should cite the date the evidence was published, not the date you accessed it. Similarly, if you are quoting a transcript of a TV broadcast you should cite the date it was originally broadcast, not the date of a rebroadcast, or the date it was transcribed.

Every cite must include the **page number or URL** where the evidence was found. This applies without exception to evidence from a book, a report in PDF format, a journal article, and even when evidence comes from a newspaper. If your evidence comes from a website, you do not need a page number but you must include the full URL.

The guiding question you should ask yourself when figuring out whether or not to include something in your cite is this: will it help someone find the evidence? If the answer to that is “yes” then include it.

Step Four: Researching a New Position

The most rewarding projects are those where students, themselves, conduct the whole research process, from beginning to end, and produce an entirely new argument of their own creation. Provided that the debater already has some basic research skills and does not undertake a project that is too complex, this does not have to be as difficult as it may sound.

This portion of the Research Guide will walk debaters through the creation of a new disadvantage modeled on the Obama Agenda Disadvantage, only more specific.

Researching an Obama Cap-and-Trade Disadvantage:

Summary: The basic premise of the Cap-and-Trade (CAT) disadvantage is that Obama is pushing hard right now to secure the passage of a CAT policy. He needs to use all of his strength, referred to often as political capital, to get it passed through the Congress. The affirmative plan, however, would be a very controversial law to pass – because opponents would spin it as a welfare giveaway and big spending bill – and therefore drain some of Obama’s capital. If the negative could prove the affirmative plan was unpopular, they could also win that it would hurt Obama’s approval ratings and that would also weaken him. The impact is that without the CAT legislation, global warming will cause enormous negative consequences worldwide.

Uniqueness: The negative will have to prove that Obama is going to get the CAT bill passed in the status quo. He will not be distracted by health care, the economy, immigration or anything else that is likely to come up this summer. To research this you would have to do a search for super-recent evidence, probably from newspapers that proves that status of the CAT law in the Congress. Compare that to the Walsh evidence that is in the shell of the Obama Agenda DA now. So ideally you would look for a DA impact, like CAT, where it appears highly likely the law is going to pass in the status quo.

Link: The negative will have to prove that the affirmative plan is controversial. Ideally they can find evidence that the public or an important segment of the Congress opposes the specific plan that the affirmative is endorsing. Often, finding extremely specific evidence is difficult because many affirmative plans are not debated in front of Congress, so no one writes about their popularity. The negative has a few other research strategies they can try. They could look for evidence about public attitudes toward those in poverty, in general. They could look for evidence about “welfare programs” and then describe the plan as a welfare program. They could look for evidence about the harm area – for example, that the public does not care about homelessness. To research this your search terms should include words such as “public opinion” or “popular”. Compare that to the Cancian evidence in the current Obama Agenda DA that talks about Congressional attitudes toward new poverty spending proposals.

Internal Link: The negative will need evidence that proves the CAT will not pass without Obama’s political capital pushing it. If the CAT is not going to pass no matter what, or if it is going to pass inevitably, then Obama does not play a crucial role. A

common search term strategy would be to include “Obama” with “political capital” and “cap-and-trade”. The Wall Street Journal evidence in the current shell plays that role.

Impact: Finally, the negative will need evidence that describes extensively what the adverse consequences would be if the CAT did not pass. In other words, that global warming would be disastrous. To search for this you would ask yourself, who would have the most incentive to advocate the strongest in favor of CAT? Clearly, environmental groups would be your first choice for evidence concerning the impact of global warming. You should have a handy list of the names of pro-environment groups, such as the Natural Resources Defense Council or the Worldwatch Institute. In the case of the Obama Agenda DA, Paul Krugman provides the impact evidence. He is a liberal economist who supports larger stimulus policies. He would be very likely to make the strongest case for the need for those policies.

Answering Cap-and-Trade

Uniqueness: The affirmative would look for very recent evidence on whether or not the CAT was going to pass in the status quo, hopefully finding evidence that it will not pass. They can also look for other ways that Obama’s agenda might get tripped up. There are two ways to go about this. They could read the papers and look for recent controversies that Obama was involved in and claim that event should have weakened the President. Or they could find evidence predicting something like that in the future. This evidence has to be extremely recent, so likely from newspapers or web sites that are frequently updated.

Link: The affirmative could look for evidence that their plan is popular. Again, if there is no specific evidence on their plan they would try to find evidence about something similar. Or they could search for evidence related to their advantages, for example saying that the public was in favor of taking steps to solve hate crimes (case), even if that evidence was not specific to the affirmative’s education policy (plan). This evidence would likely be found in the policy literature concerning the affirmative plan, or on some public opinion web sites.

Internal Link: The affirmative could research recent evidence about the President’s political power and how well he is doing with it. There is always evidence about how the President has no chance of passing a certain bill, so you would look for evidence that was specific about his weakness in that area. There is also general evidence about how the President’s popularity with the public doesn’t get him anywhere with the Congress. This evidence tends to come from political analysis web sites and also from newspaper commentators.

Impact: The affirmative could find evidence proving the impact was inevitable – in this example, that global warming was already here and there was nothing we could do about it. They could also find evidence that the CAT legislation is so weak that it has no chance of solving the impact. In fact, there is already evidence that the CAT legislation in the House of Representatives was too watered down. Finally, the affirmative could try an impact turn strategy by arguing that global warming and high levels of carbon dioxide are

actually good – possibly because they stimulate agricultural production, which feeds starving people around the world. This evidence would come from think tanks with a specific point of view. For example the fossil fuel industries fund certain sites that publish evidence skeptical of the impact of global warming.