

## The Resolution

How do we decide what to debate? Does each team or school get together with other teams or schools and decide what we will debate each round? No, in fact in policy debate we debate one topic all over the country and we debate that topic all year long. The framework of that topic is called the resolution. The resolution sets what we are going to debate about.

Let's take for example the resolution, "Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially change its immigration policy." The resolution, like this example, is always a statement, it is never a question. This resolution would mean that all year long we would be debating about immigration policy. For any resolution the affirmative is trying to prove that the resolution is true, while the negative is trying to prove that it is false. The most common way for affirmatives to prove the resolution is by choosing a policy that solves for a small part of the resolution. For example, in our resolution an affirmative could propose a policy in which the United States Federal Government repealed all restrictions on immigration and ensured that the United States had open borders. If the affirmative could win that this policy is a good idea, then they would have proven the resolution, "Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially change its immigration policy."

This method of debating in which the affirmative chooses a small part of the resolution as an example to prove the entirety of the resolution provides a focused debate and it ensures a great deal of diversity among affirmative policy options. Another policy that an affirmative could propose would be that the United States Federal Government could stop immigration all together. This policy too would prove the resolution true. These two policies are polar opposites but both would prove the resolution true. If all the affirmative must do to prove the resolution true is to win that their policy option is a good idea, the same hold true for the negative. For the negative to win that the resolution is false all they must do is prove that the affirmative policy option is a bad idea.

Every resolution is a should statement, not a would statement. Look back to the resolution, “Resolved: The United States Federal Government should substantially change its immigration policy.” In this resolution the word should focuses the debate on whether a substantial change in U.S. immigration policy is a good idea or not. If we were to substitute the word would for should we would find that we have a very different resolution. In this new resolution the affirmatives job would be to prove that the United States Federal Government would change immigration policy. This would require an affirmative to win that the President wants change in immigration policy and at the same time the affirmative would also have to win that Congress also supports change. This debate becomes a tedious debate about whether or not specific personalities in the U.S. government like or don’t like immigration reform. This is a model of debate that is not very educational or exciting.

The resolution is an interesting thing that can be interpreted in many different ways. This is just an introduction to concepts that you will see referenced again and again. The most important things to remember are that the resolution sets the topic which we debate all year long. The affirmative tries to prove that the resolution is true while at the same time the negative tries to prove that the resolution is not true. The resolution is always a should statement, not a would statement, this leads to debate focused on policies and avoids debate focused on personalities. These concepts may seem foreign to you, but in time they will become much clearer. The resolution is a key building block in your quest to debate deep.