



DEBATING FOR DEMOCRACY 2007-2008 LEGISLATIVE HEARING

REQUEST FOR LEGISLATIVE PROPOSALS

Background: Debating for Democracy (D4D) is a Project Pericles initiative in which Periclean students research, advocate, and defend their opinions on significant current issues of public policy. D4D brings together Pericleans from across the country to discuss their thoughtful and challenging agreements and disagreements. The current D4D program “Democracy at Risk” began in September 2007 and will conclude in December 2008 following the election. The goal of the National Office of Project Pericles and the faculty and administrators who are working with the students at the participating campuses is to inspire and encourage all D4D participants to become successful and resourceful advocates in their community.

On April 3 and 4, 2008, student leaders from each of our participating member Periclean colleges and universities will attend the 2008 D4D National Event in New York City. The event will consist of workshops, keynote addresses, and panel discussions that will introduce the students to experts on the D4D topics.

In 1885, future President Woodrow Wilson said, “Once begin the dance of legislation, and you must struggle through its mazes as best you can to its breathless end – if any end there be”. One of the activities during the National Event will be a series of “legislative hearings” that will allow students the opportunity to participate in the “dance of legislation”. Legislative hearings provide a forum where citizens can testify before lawmakers on pending legislative proposals. The etiquette and protocols involved in testifying before a committee of lawmakers is challenging, and providing informative testimony is a critical step in the legislative process.

The legislative hearings at the National Event will allow student leaders a forum to present their solutions to some of today’s most pressing public policy issues. Following the hearing, we anticipate that many students will meet with their elected officials to discuss their legislative proposal.

Overview: Project Pericles is requesting original legislative proposals from groups of students at Periclean colleges that will be presented at the legislative hearing. Students from each participating D4D campus will be encouraged to research and write an original legislative proposal related to the D4D topic their campus selected. A list containing each college’s topic appears on page 3.

On April 3, 2008, participants will gather for a series of six “legislative hearings”. During each hearing, the main student responsible for the proposal will present it to a “legislative committee” consisting of former elected officials. The student will have five minutes to present the proposal. The legislators will then have 15 minutes to ask questions about the proposal before voting on

whether or not to support it. The vote will be based on whether or not the student made a compelling case that his or her legislation should be enacted into law. The hearing will take place in front of an audience of students, faculty, Periclean Board members, and other interested individuals.

Student Announcement: Periclean colleges and universities that wish to participate in the D4D National Event and legislative hearing should post or circulate an announcement to faculty, administrators, and students as soon as possible.

Eligibility: In order to be eligible to participate in the legislative hearing, a student must be a) a full-time student at one of the 22 Periclean campuses; b) active in one or more of the following types of activities: campus clubs or organizations that focus on political and public policy, off-campus community service, non-profit and government internships, and political campaigns for political candidates; and c) an active member of their D4D chapter by February 1, 2008. **Students selected to participate in the legislative hearing may not be seniors who will be graduating in the spring of 2008.** Seniors are strongly encouraged to work on the proposals with their classmates.

Proposal Due Date: Students must submit their proposals to their Project Pericles Program Director by Friday, February 29, 2008. Each college or university may submit a package of up to 5 student proposals. Proposals must be emailed as Word or Adobe attachments to projectpericles@gmail.com. The title line of the email should read 2008 Student Legislative Proposals. **All proposals must be received by 3 pm EST on March 4, 2008.** Students planning to submit a proposal should meet with the Program Director as soon as possible. A list of Program Directors for every college is attached to this RFP and available on the Project Pericles website- www.projectpericles.org.

Award:

- 1) Every college or university that submits at least one legislative proposal and meets other criteria will be able to bring two students to the event. Project Pericles will pay the airfare, room, and board for these students. These students will be selected by the Program Director at each college or university.
- 2) Project Pericles will pay the airfare, room and board for the six students most responsible for preparing each of the six legislative proposals that are selected by experts to participate in the legislative hearing. Therefore, six colleges or universities will bring three students.
- 3) Project Pericles will provide a \$4,000 award to the D4D chapter at the college that submits the best legislative proposal as determined by a panel of former elected officials. In consultation with Project Pericles, the D4D chapter can use this money to fund advocacy and education activities including lobbying trips and workshops.

Important Dates:

January 24, 2008—Colleges will provide update on D4D activities on campus to Project Pericles. A template will be provided by Project Pericles.

March 4, 2008—Proposals will be due by 3 pm to Project Pericles.

March 14, 2008—By this date, a panel of experts will review the proposals and select **six** for the legislative hearing. All participating campuses will be notified.

April 3, 2008—Participants will gather for the six “legislative hearings” at the D4D National Event in New York City.

Legislative Proposal Criteria: During the fall, each participating campus selected one of the three overarching D4D topics. Throughout the three semesters of D4D, participating students will educate themselves and their community on policy issues related to this topic. A list of the topics and the schools that selected each topic is listed below:

Democracy at Risk: Race, Income, and Access in the United States

1. Bates College
2. Berea College
3. Bethune-Cookman University
4. Dillard University
5. Elon University
6. Hampshire College
7. The New School
8. Pace University
9. Spelman College
10. St. Mary's College of Maryland

Democracy at Risk: Energy and the Environment

1. Allegheny College
2. Chatham University
3. Hendrix College
4. Macalester College
5. Occidental College
6. Pitzer College
7. Swarthmore College
8. Ursinus College
9. Wagner College

Democracy at Risk: Privacy and Free Speech in the Internet Age

1. New England College
2. Rhodes College
3. Widener University

Any group of undergraduates at a participating campus may submit a legislative proposal. Each participating group of students will work with faculty, administrators, community leaders, elected officials, and others to research and write a proposal related to their school's D4D topic. A legislative proposal is defined as a proposal for a) a new law or b) an amendment to an existing law or c) the repeal of an existing law. The proposal must focus on a public policy issue that has significance to the federal government or to the state government where the group's college is located. There is an example of a legislative proposal at the end of this document.

The group's legislative proposal should consist of three sections: Problem, Solution and Resources. The group should utilize insights gained from research—historical, judicial, sociological, economic, etc.—in their proposal. **The proposal may not exceed 1200 words.**

The **Problem** section must identify one public policy problem to be corrected and analyze the causes of the problem and the reason it needs to be addressed.

The **Solutions** section must recommend a solution to the problem. The solution section should be objective and contain logical judgment and analysis. To strengthen their proposal, the group

should discuss other alternative solutions that they considered. Although groups only need to recommend one solution, they should carefully consider every possible solution objectively.

The **Resources** section must list the human (faculty, elected officials, community leaders, etc.) and scholarly resources (articles, books, websites) the students utilized in identifying the problem and solution.

Each proposal should list the names of all of the students who worked on the proposal. The student who played the leading role in preparing the proposal must be identified. The proposal should be addressed to the appropriate elected official.

The selection of the six proposals to participate in the “legislative hearing” will be based on the development of a diverse set of proposals as well as such factors as feasibility and originality.

Website: Project Pericles has developed a website (www.projectpericles.ning.com) that contains a number of resources to help students prepare their proposals. Students should also consult with elected leaders, faculty members, administrators, community leaders, and librarians during the process of preparing their proposal.

Final Product: Project Pericles will prepare the principle products of this endeavor: a Compendium of all of the legislative proposals that each of the participating colleges submit. A printed version of this compendium will be distributed at the National Event and an electronic version of the compendium will be available on the D4D website.

*****EXAMPLE*****

Universal Voter Registration
Ensuring Full and Accurate Voter Rolls Through 100% Voter Registration
Source: FairVote State Legislative Action Proposal <http://www.fairvote.org/>

Date: November 28, 2008

To: Governor Woodrow Wilson

From: Yosemite Sam, Daisy Duck, and Sylvester the Cat, Loony Tunes University

Subject: Ensuring Full and Accurate Voter Rolls Through 100% Voter Registration

Problem: Both voter turnout and voter registration percentages are unsatisfactorily low in the United States. As of 2004, only 72% of the population was registered to vote, according to experts' best estimates based on U.S. Census surveys. While there have been several efforts to raise this number, none encompass the entire population. As a result, voter rolls are spotty and error-ridden, with voters appearing multiple times on rolls in different counties and states and far too many not at all. This situation with our incomplete and inaccurate voter rolls both enhances the chances of election administration problems occurring (such as long lines and improperly processed voter registration forms provided shortly before the election) and for the possibility of fraud to emerge. It also means that unregistered adults do not receive voter guides or other information that would have helped them prepare to vote and know where to vote.

Solution: The international norm, universal voter registration would be the most direct means to establish full and accurate voter rolls, simultaneously creating new access to voting for nearly a third of eligible voters while also enabling election officials to run more efficient, effective elections. State governments have the power to implement compulsory voter registration laws to achieve universal voter registration in a manner similar to state laws that require all car-owners to have auto insurance and all residents to obtain health insurance policies. To survive a first amendment challenge, legislation requiring voter registration should incorporate an opt-out provision for those who object to registration for political, religious, or other reasons. Nevertheless, compelling voter registration in a constitutional and otherwise legal fashion could be accomplished by requiring all residents to take some form of action on voter registration — they would either have to register to vote or explicitly decline. In return, the state ideally would make opportunities for secure voter registration very easy and accessible.

Under FairVote's proposal, citizens would be required to assume the responsibility to register and would thereafter be responsible for providing proof of registration – twinned with policies making access to secure registration easy. Registered voters would be responsible for keeping their registration updated, although state policies could allow the state to assume that burden.

Sources: In preparing our proposal, we met with Professor Elmer Fudd from the History Department, and Mr. Wile Coyote, the Executive Director of the Warner County Office of Voter's Rights. We used the book "The Voting Rights Movement in Road Runner County" by Dr. Porky Pig for our data on voting rights.