

RICHMOND WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL

HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY COMPETITION

America in the World

The Richmond World Affairs Council invites high school students to examine how U.S. foreign policy shapes the environment in which American businesses, entrepreneurs, workers, and consumers operate - and how entrepreneurship and free enterprise can contribute to America's economic strength and global competitiveness.

Eligibility

Open exclusively to students currently enrolled in grades 9-12.

Essay Prompt

How should the United States balance its foreign-policy objectives with the principles of entrepreneurship and free enterprise in order to strengthen America's economic prosperity and global competitiveness?

Select one significant foreign-policy issue facing the United States and examine how U.S. policy in that area affects American businesses, entrepreneurs, and the broader economy.

Your Essay Should

- Explain the foreign-policy issue and why it matters to the United States.
- Analyze how current or proposed U.S. policies could affect American businesses, entrepreneurs, workers, or consumers.
- Consider the role of free enterprise, competition, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
- Consider more than one perspective and support the analysis with credible evidence.
- Propose a specific policy recommendation and explain its potential effects on the American economy.

Pre-Essay Planning Requirement

Before beginning the final essay, each student must prepare a brief Essay Research & Policy Framework and review it with a faculty advisor, economics/finance teacher, history teacher, government teacher, business teacher, or other appropriate faculty member. The advisor should confirm that the student has a reasonable and academically appropriate plan for researching and analyzing the topic.

The advisor's signature does not indicate agreement with the student's conclusions or policy position. The ideas, analysis, research, and final essay must remain the student's own work. The completed planning form with Advisor's signature on page 2 should be submitted with the final essay.

Possible Topics

International trade and tariffs; U.S.-China economic relations; artificial intelligence and technology competition; semiconductor policy; energy security; critical minerals; economic sanctions; immigration and skilled labor; supply-chain security; or another relevant foreign-policy challenge connected to American business and the economy.

Essay Requirements & Evaluation

Length: 1,000-1,500 words.

Sources: At least TWO credible sources.

Original work: Student's own analysis and writing.

Format: Title and bibliography/works cited.

Deadline: January 10, 2027

Submission: LAUREN@RICHMONDWORLDAFFAIRS.ORG

Essays should demonstrate clear reasoning, thoughtful engagement with competing considerations, effective use of evidence, understanding of the relationship between foreign policy and the American economy, and a well-supported policy proposal.

STUDENT ESSAY PLANNING & FACULTY ADVISOR APPROVAL FORM

Complete this form before drafting the final essay. Submit the signed form with the essay.

Student Name:

School:

Grade:

Faculty Member:

Advisor Title / Department:

Date Reviewed:

1. Foreign-Policy Issue

What issue will your essay examine, and why is it important to the United States?

2. Connection to American Business

How does the issue affect American businesses, entrepreneurs, workers, consumers, or the broader U.S. economy?

3. Free Enterprise & Entrepreneurship

How might free enterprise, competition, innovation, or entrepreneurship relate to the issue?

4. Perspectives & Policy Alternatives

Identify at least one perspective or policy approach you intend to examine.

5. Preliminary Research Plan

Identify 1-2 publications you expect to consult.

6. Proposed Essay Framework

Outline your planned structure: context/problem -> business and economic impact -> evidence
-> proposed policy approach.

Faculty Advisor Review

By signing below, I confirm that I reviewed the student's proposed framework and believe it provides a reasonable and academically appropriate plan for researching and analyzing the selected topic. My signature does not indicate agreement with the student's conclusions or policy position. The final analysis and writing remain the student's own work.

Faculty Signature:

Date:
