

The Final Round¹

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Connecticut Debate Association

Fairfield Warde High School

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Resolved: The government should not fund reconstruction of private property after natural disasters.

A Note about the Notes

I've reproduced my flow chart for the final round at Fairfield Warde High School augmented by what I remember from the debate. The notes are limited by how quickly I could write and how well I heard what was said. I'm sure the debaters will read them and exclaim, "That's not what I said!" I apologize for any errors, but I hope debaters will appreciate this insight: what a judge hears may not be what they said or wish they had said.

There are two versions of the notes. The one below is chronological, reproducing each speech in the order in which the arguments were made. It shows how the debate was actually presented. The second is formatted to look more like my written flow chart, with each contention "flowed" across the page as the teams argued back and forth. It's close to the way I actually take notes during the debate.

The Final Round

The final round at Fairfield Warde was between the Daniel Hand team of Cathy Guo and Henry Cohen on the Affirmative and the Simsbury team of Matt Shaw and Kevin Gyurco on the Negative. The debate was won by the Negative team from Simsbury.

1) First Affirmative Constructive

- a) Introduction
- b) Statement of the Resolution
- c) Definitions
 - i) "Government" is the Federal Government
 - ii) "rebuild" means to replace exactly as before
- d) A1²: Reconstruction promotes personal and economic recklessness
 - i) Many are "repeated loss" structures, re-built and then re-damaged
 - (1) \$12 Bn spent by FEMA on these since 1978
 - (2) 16-20% of spending in some years

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² "A1" indicates the Affirmative first contention, "N2" the Negative second contention and so forth.

- ii) People are moving to coastal neighborhoods, 300 per day
 - (1) \$10.2 trillion in residential value
 - iii) Why do they migrate? Low flood insurance premiums and gov't paid reconstruction
 - (1) Sweeney (pg. 1) "Putting things back the way they were is throwing good money after bad."
 - e) A2: Reconstruction is not economically feasible
 - i) Federal government has a fiscal problem
 - ii) FEMA spending \$18Bn on one disaster
 - iii) Spending adds to the national debt
 - iv) It's not feasible to continue
 - f) A3: We should focus on prevention not reconstruction
 - i) For example, shock-resistant foundations, water barriers
 - ii) Finite resources means we should invest in prevention
 - iii) Private sector won't invest in protection because there is no profit in it
 - iv) Federal Gov't are the appropriate to invest in prevention
 - g) Neg will say this policy is cruel and cold-hearted
 - i) This isn't true. There is humanity in insisting on personal responsibility and decreasing recklessness
 - ii) We would still provide relief, just not reconstruction
- 2) Cross-Ex of First Affirmative**
- a) Who is responsible for a natural disaster? That's a good question
 - b) Is it the people's fault? No
 - c) Does any part of the US have zero risk? No
 - d) How can one be personally responsible if any home can be destroyed? Some areas are more at risk than others—Florida is more risky than Arizona.
 - e) Is extreme weather becoming more common? To a degree, so prevention is a better idea
 - f) Why not pursue both? We have finite resources
 - g) What about those whose homes are destroyed? Insurance
 - h) How can they afford it, flood insurance is expensive? Most subsidies now go to vacation homes. Poor get gov't relief.
 - i) What is an individual to do? They get relief, and there is private charity
 - j) Do you think relocation is the same as reconstruction? No they are different
- 3) First Negative Constructive**
- a) Intro
 - b) Resolution
 - c) N1: Gov't can focus on long-term policy
 - i) Gov't responsibility to bring construction up to code
 - (1) 1960's construction less resilient than today
 - ii) Storms area chance to enhance and retrofit
 - iii) Private insurance has profit as a goal
 - iv) Gov't can plan for the future
 - (1) E.g. Netherlands after the 1953 flood
 - d) N2: Areas not prone to disaster need assistance
 - i) Aff focuses on disaster prone areas, e.g. coast susceptible to flooding

- ii) Climate change is spreading damage
 - (1) E.g. tornadoes in Springfield, MA
 - (1) Large hurricanes in CT
- ii) We can't move people away from everywhere
- b) N3: Eliminating relief would hurt US economy
 - i) Areas affected are economically important
 - (1) E.g. New York City is a financial center
 - ii) If we don't rebuild, we lose these businesses
 - iii) Tourism is a critical industry
 - (1) No one will invest in disaster prone areas w/out Gov't assistance
- c) We should rebuild, but bring up to code and provide preventative measures
- 2) Cross-Ex of First Negative**
 - a) If there is no insurance, then there would be no incentive to move into the area?
 - Yes, so less investment
 - b) Isn't it wrong to encourage people to live in risky areas? Any place can have a disaster
 - c) So every place would have the same problem? There's a chance
 - d) But not the same chance? They could still lose their home
 - e) Do businesses pay taxes? I don't see the relevance of the question
 - f) Does paying taxes hurt more than natural disasters? Natural disasters
 - g) So if natural disasters are worse than taxes, how is it a fiscal burden? Businesses would rather pay more than be destroyed
 - h) Why is rebuilding better? After a disaster, buildings have to be brought up to code
 - i) Are you changing the Aff definition of "reconstruction"? Your definition involves reconstruction
 - j) Isn't our definition, "to rebuild the same as before"? You can't. That's not legal.
- 3) Second Affirmative Constructive**
 - a) Intro
 - b) Resolution
 - c) Negative misconception
 - i) They have to defend the status quo
 - ii) In the status quo, the gov't funds reconstruction
 - iii) Our response to Katrina and Sandy are inefficient
 - iv) It's a stretch to say the gov't can rebuild
 - d) A1: It is reckless and destructive to rebuild in a risky area
 - i) Some areas are more risky than others, e.g. New Orleans vs. Utah, e.g. near fault lines
 - ii) Climate does not put everyone at risk
 - iii) Neg believes we can defeat Mother Nature
 - iv) Lives are at risk if we rebuild in the same place
 - e) Economics
 - i) Natural disasters don't compare to the nation's debt or the fiscal cliff
 - (1) No hurricane started the Great Depression
 - ii) Rebuilding deals with the symptoms
 - (1) Leaves the owners at risk

- (2) We've seen we can't protect these places
 - iii) It's reckless and fiscally irresponsible
- f) Destroy and rebuild?
 - i) Some of the destroyed properties were already up to code
 - ii) Rebuilding in the same area puts lives at risk
- 4) Cross-Ex of Second Affirmative**
 - a) Isn't the local economy wiped out? That is a local or state problem. This debate is about the Federal gov't.
 - b) Don't natural disasters overwhelm state and local gov't? Yes
 - c) Doesn't Utah have natural disasters? No idea
 - d) In its 200 year history there must have been some disasters? Utah hasn't been part of the US for 200 years
 - e) Don't disasters hit new places? I suppose in Utah there are landslides. Rebuilding under a cliff would be bad.
 - f) What about the areas not prone to disaster? Private insurance
 - g) How much would it cost? Depends on the home and location
 - h) Would you say \$50,000 for flood insurance? I don't know
 - i) Isn't the tourist industry on the coast important? In Jaws the Mayor insisted on keeping the beach open and people died
 - j) So you would close it? It's not worth risking lives
 - k) So rebuilding is risking lives? (time)
- 5) Second Negative Constructive**
 - a) Intro
 - b) Resolution, restated in the negative
 - c) Burden argument
 - i) Aff must prove an absolute, that funding reconstruction is always bad
 - ii) Neg only has to show that sometimes it is good
 - iii) So even if rebuilding in a disaster prone area is bad, rebuilding elsewhere is good.
 - d) A1: the real issue is that some places are more reckless than others
 - i) Some areas are disaster prone
 - ii) But all areas have some risk
 - iii) People have to live somewhere
 - iv) We all have to live somewhere, and that isn't always reckless
 - e) A2: Aff focuses on repetitive losses
 - i) We agree that it's not economically feasible to keep rebuilding these
 - ii) But properties that are rebuilt once or twice are okay
 - iii) Remove the frequently destroyed areas that cost FEMA \$12Bn, and flood insurance on the rest is practical
 - f) A3: We can't prevent all disasters
 - i) Flood insurance is capped at \$100,000 for a business and \$50,000 for a home
 - ii) Federal gov't subsidizes this insurance
 - iii) Private insurance can't fill the void
 - g) N1: Aff definition of rebuild as "same way" is a problem
 - i) Legally reconstruction is bound by the building code
 - ii) Bringing structures up to code will help

- h) N2: Some areas are not disaster prone
 - i) Destruction is bad luck, not recklessness
 - ii) Private insurance and charity are often not enough
 - iii) Feds have a responsibility to help
- 6) Cross-Ex of Second Negative**
 - a) How is it punishment not to rebuild a destroyed home? Sometimes it's the result of recklessness, but often it's bad luck and no one's fault
 - b) Why is it punishment? If the gov't knows it's no one's fault and doesn't help it's punishment
 - c) What was done wrong?
 - d) Isn't taxing some to rebuild another's beach house? We often pay taxes that go to help others
 - e) But these are beach houses, second homes? It's not a lot of money
 - f) In your first contention you say the gov't can focus on long-term policy, and in your second you mention climate change? Our second contention notes there is a risk of destruction everywhere
 - g) So it's omnipresent and unpredictable? Not omnipresent. You could always get hit by lightning, but it's not very likely
 - h) You would tax to cover the damage? It's only 1/18th of a cent of our taxes
- 7) First Negative Rebuttal**
 - a) Intro
 - b) Aff has to show an absolute, Neg only has to show it's valid sometime
 - i) E.g., a house in Vermont destroyed by a blizzard, owner can't rebuild, no insurance, no charity
 - ii) Gov't must help—in some cases it is needed.
 - c) N1: law requires rebuilding to code
 - i) This conflicts with the Aff definition
 - d) N2: Everyone is exposed
 - i) E.g., CT has few hurricanes, but it does have some
 - ii) There is a case to rebuild in non-disaster prone areas
 - e) N3 vs A2
 - i) Eliminating reconstruction is infeasible
 - (1) Tourism is an important industry, and is located at the seaside
 - (2) Major cities have a lot of economic activity
 - ii) It's feasible to pay taxes to support reconstruction, but can't pay taxes if you are wiped out
- 8) First Affirmative Rebuttal**
 - a) Intro
 - b) Resolution
 - c) Neg is trying to shift the burden of proof
 - i) E.g., free speech is repressed at times
 - ii) Exceptions matter, Aff doesn't need to show every case
 - iii) Burden is to show costs outweigh the benefits
 - d) A1: most aid is given to second homes in disaster prone areas.
 - i) Neg argues for long-term prevention
 - ii) Climate change means risks and costs will rise

- e) N3: National debt is worse than natural disaster
 - i) Tourism shouldn't be a reason to rebuild
 - ii) The point is to deter investment
 - iii) It's reckless to mask risk
- f) This debate is about responsibility vs recklessness

9) Second Negative Rebuttal

- a) Intro
- b) Burden
 - i) Aff must prove resolution is always true
 - ii) Neg has given examples that show rebuilding is reasonable
 - (1) Preventive measures to reduce risk of loss
 - (2) Non-disaster prone areas
 - iii) Gov't step in to help those without insurance
 - (1) E.g., tornadoes in upstate New York
 - iv) This justifies continued Federal help
- c) Businesses can't pay taxes if they are destroyed
 - i) We don't spend a lot—doubling FEMA spending would not be significant to the deficit
- d) A1: Money doesn't go mostly to vacation homes
 - i) Most money goes to people with nowhere else to turn
- e) You must accept the Neg case!

10) Second Affirmative Rebuttal

- a) Intro
- b) I'd like to thank my opponents for a good debate
 - i) But their biggest skill is bending the truth
- c) Neg must defend the status quo, not change it
 - i) Their hypotheticals don't exist in practice
 - ii) They have few facts supporting their case
- d) Government rebuilding has not been effective
 - i) Katrina
 - ii) Neg confuses aid with rebuilding
 - (1) Rebuilding is not a government responsibility
 - (2) Private property means it is a private responsibility
- e) Statistics
 - i) Flood insurance receives \$9.3 million in premiums and pays \$72.2 million in benefits
 - ii) Neg is making up a hypothetical universe of effective programs
 - iii) It raises taxes for everyone
- f) Death and taxes
 - i) Neg advocating reckless behavior through gov't support