

The Final Round¹

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THW match small donor contributions to political campaigns.

A Note about the Notes

These are my notes from the varsity final round at Joel Barlow on October 19. They are limited by how quickly I could write and how well I heard what was said. They are not verbatim transcripts but rather summarize what was said as I understood it. I apologize for any errors, but I hope debaters will appreciate this insight: what a judge hears may not be what the debater said or thinks they 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 presented. The second is formatted to look more like my written flow, structured to follow arguments from one speech to the next. It looks like my written notes from the debate, cleaned up and formatted.

The Final Round

The final round at Joel Barlow was between the Stamford High School team of Ryan Khessibi and Sabrina Morency on Government and Stamford team of Meher Jain and Aryeh Pollack on Opposition. The debate was won by the Government team in a split decision.

1) Prime Minister Constructive

- a) Introduction
- b) Statement of the Motion
- c) G1²: Matching small donor contributions (MSDC³) will propel minority candidates and small voices.
 - i) Corporations spend a lot on candidates
 - ii) Matching allows individuals to compete
 - iii) Minor candidates with grass-roots support benefit
 - iv) E.g., MSDC led to increased numbers of women and people of color on the New York City Council
 - v) E.g., state-wide analysis of New York showed MSDC increased the proportion of small donors in total funding from 11% to 7%
- d) G2: MSDC leads to more diverse and competitive elections
 - i) Few third-party candidates: most are Democrats (Dem) or Republican (Rep)
POI: Won't these programs fund Dems/Reps?
 - ii) Not just, but 3rd parties and small candidates

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² "G1" indicates the Government first contention, "O2" the Opposition second contention and so forth.

³ This introduces "MSDC" as an abbreviation for "matching small donor contributions".

- iii) E.g., Bernie Sanders in 2016 had less funding than Hillary Clinton
- iv) E.g., NYC Council saw more female, LGBTQ, people of color
- e) G3: MSDC levels the playing field versus PACs
 - i) Corporations give \$millions
 - ii) E.g., in 2022, 100 people donated \$1.2 billion vs \$747 million from small donors
 - iii) This results in voters, candidates and parties not being heard
 - iv) MSDC will force candidates and parties to listen to voters.

2) Leader of the Opposition Constructive

- a) Intro/Motion
- b) Definitions
 - i) “This House” are state and local governments
 - (1) This means Federal Government does not provide funds
 - ii) “Small donors” are contributions in the \$80-100 range
- c) Weighing mechanism: which every side protects democracy and is best for voters.
- d) O1: MSDC is not representative
 - i) Everyone, even non-citizens, non-voters, non-party members funds the program through their taxes
 - (1) No one has a choice
 - ii) Candidates need reach fewer individuals
 - (1) 1 donor now equals 2 or 3 from before
 - iii) This allows candidates to ignore many voters
 - (1) Most small donors come from the extremes
- e) O2: MSDC will increase polarization
 - i) Most donors have extreme views
 - (1) Donors are more certain of their candidate
 - (2) Candidates will cater to these extremes
 - ii) Don’t turn tax money into political donations
 - (1) Better to give money to interest groups
- f) O3: There are better uses for the funds
 - i) State and local gov’ts have deficits and would struggle to fund
 - ii) Money would have to be diverted from other uses
 - POI: Aren’t interest groups behind the PACs in the status quo?***
 - (1) Interest groups are larger groups, not corporate money, more diverse
 - iii) While diversity is good, spending on diverse candidates would result in cuts to program funding

3) Member of Government Constructive

- a) Intro/Motion
- b) We agree with the Opp definitions and weighing mechanism
- c) O1: Opp claims MSDC is unfair to unaffiliated
 - i) MSDC incentivizes candidates to reach out to these
 - ii) Citizens can direct funding to issues they care about
 - iii) Better than a candidate relying on a two PACs
 - iv) Candidates have to prove their worth to get funded

POI: Moderate voters take a while to decide, but candidates need funds early in the process?

- v) The indecision is because there are only two parties
- vi) MSDC will increase choice and therefor increase interest from moderates
- d) O2: This leads to the issue of extremism
 - i) 20 states now have some sort of matching program, helping to reduce extremism
 - ii) PACs and interest groups lead to polarization in the status quo
 - iii) Opp won't solve this; MSDC will
- e) O3: More variety/choice leads to better policy and better officials
 - i) A more democratic society is more likely to solve its problems

POI: Aren't minority candidate proposals expensive?

- (1) Yes, but providing campaign funding isn't
- (2) 20 states have some sort of program already
- f) G1: MSDC diverts funding from the two-party system
 - i) Voters see better candidates, elect better officials
 - ii) Votes become more involved when they see their votes count
 - iii) Helps minorities
- g) G2: Diversity increases participation
 - i) Elections become more competitive
 - ii) This leads to wider representation
- h) G3: Compare this to PACs today and the wealthy 1%
 - i) Small groups get representation
 - ii) Opp supports PAC status quo

4) Member of the Opposition Constructive

- a) Introduction
- b) Weighing: Civilians and democracy
 - i) Diversity vs. corruption and polarization
 - ii) Opp: spend money on programs, better diversity
 - iii) Gov: inability to pay for the program means it will fall short
- c) G1: MSDC propel minorities?
 - i) Real problems linked to social issues like education, discrimination
 - ii) Gov will take money from useful programs
- d) G2: We agree we need more candidates
 - i) Gov won't fix
 - ii) Opp will spend on social issues

POI: How does funding education increase representation?

- (1) Gov hasn't provided a funding mechanism
- (2) Stamford is having trouble funding education, and this harms minorities
- (3) Gov MSDC will need lots of \$
- e) O1: Moderates only come in late in the election process
 - i) This supports O2, increased polarization
 - ii) No increase in the middle ground
- f) O2: Larger issues than PACs
 - i) People are limited by the major parties
- g) Opp means increased funding for social issues

- h) Gov \$ propel polarization, costs too much
- i) Issues weigh in Opp's favor
- j) Repeat O1, O3

5) Leader of Opposition Rebuttal

- a) Elections and democracy are about choice
 - i) Taxes give you no choice
 - ii) How is it democratic to use taxpayer money for elections?
 - iii) Right to vote isn't about donating and directing funds
 - iv) Becomes earn a vote to earn funds
- b) Voters decide late in the process
 - i) Candidates need funding early
 - ii) Money given to candidates before voters decide
 - iii) This is undemocratic
- c) Third parties are often the most extreme
 - i) Most donations go to Dem/Rep
- d) Voters and diversity?
 - i) Real problem is education, health, housing, discrimination
 - ii) MSDC takes funding from real problems
- e) Gov world: solve diversity with MSDC
 - i) But big corporations and donors still exist
- f) Opp world: fund social programs

6) Prime Minister Rebuttal

- a) Democracy?
 - i) How is it democratic now when only some voices are heard?
 - ii) Education is not a cure all for this
 - iii) Gov gives small voices a fair shot
 - iv) First step in needed reforms
 - v) Helps average voters express themselves
- b) Cost?
 - i) Fundamental: one person, one vote
 - ii) Using others tax dollars?
 - (1) In your interest to have your voice heard
 - (2) MSCD creates real change that benefits all
 - iii) Pro's outweigh con's on cost
- c) Fix education?
 - i) Won't happen without better candidates and politicians
- d) Repeat G1, G2, G3
 - i) More voices will be heard
 - ii) More will show up to vote
 - iii) More will think about running
 - iv) These outweigh the \$ cost of the MSDC