



From the Office of Secretary of State

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Nebraska students stick with foreign policy choice for U.S.

For a third year in a row, Nebraska students say the best future U.S. foreign policy is one that protects the homeland by limiting international involvement. That was the top selection of the more than 80 students taking part in the 15th Capitol Forum on America's Future. Capitol Forum is co-sponsored by the office of Secretary of State John Gale and Humanities Nebraska, a statewide non-profit organization.

Protecting the U.S. homeland was the top choice among students this year as they evaluated and deliberated four distinct proposals. Forty-eight percent said it is more appropriate to sharply reduce foreign involvement and concentrate on issues closer to home like the economy, health care, decaying schools and our vulnerability to terrorism.

Thirty-five percent of students thought the next best choice was one in which the U.S. worked to bring nations of the world together in an effort to address global issues. Sixteen percent felt it was imperative to protect our country through whatever actions were necessary to keep it safe and strong.

The idea that the U.S. should lead the world in the expansion of democracy remains the least popular option among students.

In addition to voting on a national foreign policy direction, students also weighed in on their top concerns when it comes to global relationships and what steps should be taken by the United States. Forty-six percent of students said their chief concern

was that nuclear, biological and chemical weapons would fall into the hands of terrorists.

Many (41%) also said they were concerned that the U.S. would drain its resources trying to solve the problems of other countries and that jobs in America would be lost to other nations (34%).

In their analysis of what foreign policy actions were most appropriate, a majority of students in Capitol Forum indicated that the top priority should be to crack down on illegal immigration and develop a policy that reduces the number of immigrants. That has been the first choice since 2009.

For three years now, students have also indicated that they supported using the U.S. military to stop gross human rights violations, even if we act alone.

Another top selection for establishing a foreign policy called for imposing trade sanctions on hostile countries, even at the expense of our relationship with other nations.

As part of this year's Capitol Forum, 84 students and 21 teachers from the following high schools gathered March 25 at the State Capitol to deliberate the four options for the future of the U.S.: Ashland, Atkinson, Auburn, Bellevue, Centura, Chadron, Crawford, Omaha, Falls City, Hampton, Hastings, Hemingford, Holdrege, Howells, Louisville, Norfolk, North Platte, Platteview, Stanton, Sterling and Wilcox. Afterwards, they returned to their schools to broaden the discussion with classmates and complete the survey. Among the topics discussed were immigration, terrorism, the environment, international trade and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Capitol Forum is a Choices for the 21st Century project, an outreach educational program of Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies. In Nebraska, the program is funded in part by the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Cooper Foundation and the State of Nebraska.

For additional information and complete ballot results, please visit the Capitol Forum page at <http://humanitiesnebraska.org/>.

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