INFO SESSION

bisf.bakerinstitute.org/policy-competition
Welcome!

So excited that you’re interested in participating in the Policy Comp!

Get hypeee
Welcome!

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About the Competition

Theme:
U.S. Election Policy and Democracy Reform
About the Competition

**Important Dates:**

**January 30** - Proposal submissions due

**March 11** - Finalists notified of selection

**March 18** - Deadline for selected finalists to confirm attendance

**April 2** - Deadline for submitting Powerpoints for presentation

**April 9** - BISF Undergraduate Public Policy Competition!
About the Competition

Choose from one of five prompts:

1. Voting Access
2. Legislative Redistricting
3. Election Confidence
4. Electoral Systems
5. Choose your own topic
About the Prompts

1. Voting Access
   a. Since the Supreme Court’s 2013 decision in Shelby v. Holder, southern states that were formerly subject to federal preclearance requirements have implemented voting restrictions in an effort to increase election security while other states take measures to increase voting access. In the past several years, states have taken aggressive measures to purge inactive voters from rolls, shrunk the number of polling places, and restricted voting rights of felons. In your paper, do one or more of the following:
      i. Analyze a specific voting restriction that has been enacted in one or more states, consider its effects on election security and voting access, and propose a policy at the state or federal level that would mitigate its deficiencies and/or emphasize its effects.
      ii. Consider the ramifications of reimposing federal preclearance at the national level and the unconstitutionality of the original Voting Rights Act. In your paper, argue for or against reimposing preclearance.
      iii. Propose a new policy aimed at increasing voter access or securing election integrity and argue for its implementation at the state or national level.
About the Prompts

2. Legislative Redistricting

a. Gerrymandering has long been a feature of the U.S. political landscape, but its potency has dramatically increased since the 2010 census as a result of asymmetric polarization and partisan sorting. Some northern and western states have implemented nonpartisan commissions, but that has only increased the partisan slant of legislative redistricting across the country towards Republicans. One of the major obstacles to fixing gerrymandering is the lack of an objective measure for how badly gerrymandered a legislative map proposal is. In your paper, propose a solution, including an objective measure for redistricting fairness, to the democratic deficit created by gerrymandering.
3. Election Confidence

a. Former President Trump’s unsuccessful attempt to overturn the 2020 election, including pressuring state and local election officials to falsify election results, exposed vulnerabilities in election administration to antidemocratic elements, especially in the federal government. Even many months after the election, polls show a majority of Republicans believe the false claim that the election was stolen. Since 2020, several states have considered or enacted legislation that takes election administration power out of the hands of local officials and into the hands of political actors. In your paper, propose a policy that would contribute to public confidence in election results or prevent stolen election.
About the Prompts

4. Electoral Systems

a. The 2020 presidential election campaign revealed a country that is starkly divided along partisan lines—not just politically, but also geographically, socially, digitally, religiously, etc. Some scholars of democracy argue that the U.S. electoral system, specifically first-past-the-post congressional elections in single-member districts (and the electoral college for presidential elections), is a major factor causing extreme polarization. In your paper, propose a change to U.S. electoral systems that would ameliorate affective polarization or generally improve democracy. Address the political and institutional feasibility of this policy, including whether it would necessitate amending the Constitution.
About the Prompts

5. Choose your own topic. Either:
   
a. Choose a specified U.S. policy that is currently in place with regard to elections, identify problems with this policy, and recommend a new course of action (reject the policy, change the policy, adopt a new policy), or
   
b. Argue for the adoption of a policy that would help address a specific problem caused by the current state of election administration at the U.S. state or national level. Identify and address potential criticisms of the new policy.

Campaign finance? Ballot design? Civics education? Media policy?
What if I have never written a policy proposal or done anything with policy?

- That’s ok!
- As long as you are passionate about election policy in the U.S. and have some ideas on how to change or contribute to that kind of policy
- And if you have any questions, feel free to ask me or any of the other BISF officers!
Components of a Good Policy Proposal

(Also in the Rulebook on the BISF website, but I’ll quickly go over it today)

At minimum you should have:

- Brief abstract
- Relevant background info about subtopic
- Statement of current policy and why it is inadequate (or beneficial)
- Statement of at least two policy options, with a brief summary of the benefits and drawbacks presented by each option
- Recommendation for specific course of action
- Explanation of why this policy is the preferable alternative, reinforced by evidence and strong argumentation that addresses possible counterarguments
- Bibliography
What You’ll Be Evaluated On

- Background (10%)
- Proposal (20%)
- Justification (30%)
- Feasibility and Specificity (15%)
- Evidence (25%)
Paper Formatting

● All papers should be formatted according to the following criteria:
  ● 2,000-4,000 words (excluding citations and graphics/appendix)
  ● Times New Roman, 12 pt font
  ● Double-spaced
  ● Page number centered in footer
  ● Standard 1 inch margins on all sides of page
  ● Consistent formatting for subsection titles (letters, numerals, etc.)
Paper Formatting

- **Page 1:** Cover Page displaying entrant’s
  - Name
  - University Attended, Expected Year of Graduation
  - Title of Policy Paper
- **Page 2:**
  - Title of Policy Paper
  - Abstract (250-350 words)
- **Page 3...:** Body of Paper
- **Last Pages:** Bibliography
- **Citations:** APA, Chicago/Turabian, MLA, and Harvard Styles will be accepted
- **Footnotes:** Times New Roman, 10 pt font, single-spaced
Resources Available to You

- **Competition website**
  - Sample papers of past winners in RJPP
  - This presentation
  - Rulebook
  - Important dates

- **Rulebook**
  - Has pretty much everything
  - Section V: Paper Evaluation Overview
  - Section X: Overview of Presentation Evaluation

- **Me/BISF officers!**
Prizes!

Bragging rights ofc

Top 3 finalists (1st, 2nd, 3rd place) will have their papers published in *The Rice Journal of Public Policy*

1st Place: $1,000

2nd Place: $750

3rd Place: $500
Any questions?
Fill out this interest form if you would like to be updated on news/info for the competition:

https://forms.gle/u1NLaGZfMXJvEitD9
Thank you for coming, and good luck on your proposals!

My email is golen@rice.edu if you want to contact me after this info session!