



Committee: US Senate

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Topic 1:

US military intervention in foreign conflicts

Topic 2:

The imposition of stricter gun regulations

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Introduction to Committee:

As many of you might already know, the U.S. Senate is one of the two chambers of the United States congress (the other being the House of Representatives). The primary role of the U.S. Senate is to advise and consent on presidential nominations for public positions. Additionally, the U.S. Senate has the power to create, amend, and pass federal laws, which must be reviewed by the president and can potentially be overridden by congress. Overall, the U.S. Senate plays a vital role in the legislative process and serves as a check on the power of the executive and judicial branches. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the senate is composed of two senators from each state; therefore, it currently has 100 members.

To get some background information on the history of the U.S. Senate, we must consider three main events. The first one is the “Great Compromise,” in 1787, which established that states would be represented equally in the senate. Then, in 1788, the Pennsylvania legislature elected the first two senators. Finally, in 1789, the senate reached a quorum and began working as the upper chamber of the legislative branch. The first order of business of the U.S. senate was to count ballots for George Washington’s presidential victory.

Given the importance of understanding the constitutional powers of the U.S. Senate for this committee, I’ll state them here once again:

- Proposing legislation
- Drafting or amending bills
- Filibuster: That is, delay or block legislation through prolonged debates
- Oversight of the federal budget
- Approving or rejecting presidential appointees for public positions

Having reviewed the key information of the functions and power of the U.S. Senate, let’s discuss the procedure of this committee, which might somewhat vary from past committees you’ve been a part of. Keep the following in mind:

- Delegates will be referred to as “Senators.” When referring to another delegate, you must call them “Senator [last name].”
- **At the very beginning of the first session, we highly encourage you to call for a motion to elect party leadership.** For six minutes, Senators will meet with their own party. After the six minutes are up, the party must be ready with nominations for Senate leadership.
 - Each party can nominate up to three Senators for majority or minority leadership, and will vote to decide between these.
 - Each party can nominate up to three Senators for majority or minority whip, and will vote to decide between these.
 - We will then transition into a **moderated caucus**, where each nominee will have one minute speaking time to explain their candidacy. Thereafter, members of each party will cast their vote for the leader and whip of their party.
- In addition to unmoderated caucuses, this committee has “party caucuses”. What differentiates the two is that in a party caucus, you can only speak to members of your party. We’ll give guidance to any independent senator. (When calling for a motion, you’d say, “motion to break into party caucuses”)
- After debate time is allotted, senators must raise their plackets and wait to be recognized. As with any MUN committee, never interrupt a fellow delegate.
- Note: Although the normal senate has no limit in speaking time, due to time constraints, we will have a time limit of two minutes; it is not expected for you to use all the time allotted; however, you can if you wish.
- We also require that all delegates/ senators prepare opening speeches to introduce their stances on the topics at hand. We will have one opening speech for both topics.
- Also note that the rules described above are subject to change (e.g., time allotted etc.)

The information above may be useful, but note that procedures might change for the actual committee; email us if you want any clarification or have any questions.

Topic A: Is US military intervention in foreign conflicts justified?

Introduction & Historical Context:

Since its inception, the United States has been involved in over 400 foreign military conflicts, with over half of these occurring after the 1950s. Generally, there are two prevalent political viewpoints on foreign policy: Isolationism, the doctrine that the United States should not involve itself in any armed conflict on foreign soil unless its sovereignty has been directly and indisputably threatened, and interventionism, which holds that a country has a right to intervene in any foreign conflict in support of a cause that may align with the ideals of said country. These two ideologies had both been dominant in US politics for different periods of time, however, following the events of the Second World War and the rise of the Soviet Union, the United States adopted a containment policy intended to prevent the spread of communism into the rest of the globe, which gave them a justification to engage in multiple **proxy wars** in developing countries against soviet-backed forces. As a result of this policy, which the US used to justify their involvement in Vietnam and Korean conflicts, interventionism became the predominant ideology in the country's foreign policy. More recently it has also resulted in the United States' involvement in wars in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya, among others. Nevertheless, debates about whether this policy is justified have raged on in political circles, and today they have reached the United States Senate.

Key Points:

1. The 46th President of the United States, Joe Biden, withdrew all American troops from Afghanistan in 2021. He believed that the amount of resources the United States had used to remain in Afghanistan could not be justified since there was no direct or visible benefit for them to remain there, meaning that the budget allocated to the war effort was largely being wasted, the best course of action would be to withdraw all troops from the region.

- a. This move from Biden was highly controversial, with some claiming it was a brave step away from the long dominant theory of interventionism, while others attacked the move by labeling it as a cowardly abandonment of US allies in the region. While both these arguments hold some form of merit, two indisputable facts are true when facing this issue:
 - i. As a result of Biden's withdrawal, the Taliban terrorist group was quickly able to seize control of the Afghani government, the incident the US was trying to avoid with their involvement in the first place.
 - ii. The United States had been involved in Afghanistan for over 20 years, a time period during which they spent over \$2.3 trillion dollars on the war, taxpayer money which could have undoubtedly been spent on the internal development of the country.
2. While most of the United States's involvements in foreign conflicts has had some form of prior justification, Former President George W. Bush used the doctrine of *preemptive war*, which essentially states that a country can justify any invasion of a foreign country if they have proof that said country has developed plans to strike them first. The use of pre-emptive war as a justification for foreign military intervention has set a distinct precedent, where the threshold for intervening in foreign countries has depreciated.
3. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, many have begun to call for US military intervention in the conflict as a means to persevere Ukraine's sovereignty, believing it a cowardly act on the part of the developed world to leave a country as small as Ukraine to defend itself against a country as powerful as Russia. Those who oppose this proposal defend their stance by claiming that involving the United States in a war between Russia and Ukraine could potentially offset a greater conflict between the two global superpowers, which could, of course, result in the use of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, the United States and its allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have opted to supply Ukraine with a great deal of military and financial aid, to further equip its military to battle the Russians. They have also imposed a great deal of economic sanctions, which, combined with military aid have become new tools for developed countries to influence foreign conflicts.

- a. The United States has imposed multiple economic sanctions on countries with authoritarian governments that are governed by principles that stand in direct contradiction to American principles. These economic sanctions have gone a long way in weakening the governments of its recipients, but have done little to bring about significant changes in them. Proponents of isolationism have labeled them as another tool in the arsenal of interventionism.
- b. As for military aid packages, the United States supplies multiple countries that currently find themselves in armed conflicts with military aid packages. These countries often have governing systems that are similar to the American way of governance. Some examples of these are: Israel, Egypt and Ukraine, among others.

Current State of Affairs:

Considering the Biden administration's withdrawal in Afghanistan, it is difficult to label his government as one of pure isolationism or interventionism, especially given the fact that his administration has continued to use other economic tools to assert itself in some of global conflicts. Bearing this current state of ambiguity, the Senate must finally address the question of foreign intervention directly, seeing as neither side of this argument is content with the status quo. Republicans are far more inclined to support interventionism, with the party standing as one against the Afghani withdrawal, while Democrats are keen on supporting a turn towards isolation, though some continue to support intervention by economic means, which has created an inner-party rift between the party's centrist and leftist factions, the latter of which support a complete transition towards isolationism.

Guiding Questions:

1. Why should the United States get involved in proxy wars?
2. Do the benefits of involvement outweigh the costs?

3. Which large-scale benefits emerge from American involvement in proxy wars?
4. Should the United States even get involved in such conflicts?

References:

1. <https://history.state.gov/countries>
2. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/R44891.pdf>
3. <https://web.archive.org/web/20161103150300/http://www.publicagenda.org/pages/reports-and-surveys?qfilterissue=9&x=24&y=6>
4. <https://cdn.factcheck.org/UploadedFiles/2020-Democratic-Party-Platform.pdf>
5. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/2016-republican-party-platform>

Useful Links:

1. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Ukraine/The-Russian-invasion-of-Ukraine>
2. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Afghanistan-War>
3. <https://www.cfr.org/us-foreign-policy>
4. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/07/14/united-states-needs-new-foreign-policy-pub-82295>
5. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/ei/rls/dos/107330.htm#:~:text=Promoting%20freedom%20and%20democracy%20and,States%20was%20founded%20centuries%20ago.>

Topic B: Should stricter gun regulations be imposed in the United States?

Introduction & Historical Context:

Enumerated in the second amendment of the United States constitution and ratified by Supreme Court Cases, *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008) and *McDonald v. Chicago* (2010), every American has a constitutional right to own a firearm, and this right cannot be infringed by any individual or institution unless an individual has committed a crime and has been deemed unfit to own a weapon. This controversial right has turned the United States into the country with the highest number of guns in the world, with an estimated 120.5 guns per 100 citizens existing across the country. Defenders of the second amendment believe that the right to gun ownership for purposes of self defense and/ or hunting is completely justified, and should thus be maintained and enforced to the greatest possible extent, and this has largely been the governing viewpoint in the United States throughout its existence. However, a prolonged epidemic of tragic public shootings has brought the issue of guns into the forefront of the American political climate. Tragic shootings have occurred all across the country, particularly in schools, where children and young adults make up a large percentage of the victims to these crimes, making shootings the predominant cause of death for American children in the United States. Other heartbreaking statistics, such as the fact that every day, an average of 12 kids die from school shootings, highlight just how much of an issue this has become. The simple fact is, these unspeakable tragedies are beyond unacceptable, and the United States Senate must take action to halt them at once.

Many have been quick to blame the great accessibility Americans have to guns as the principal cause for these shootings, and have begun to advocate for greater gun control and regulations as an effective tool to prevent these tragedies from happening. Supporters of the second amendment, however, have been quick to defend their constitutional rights, claiming that most gun owners use their weapons in completely legitimate ways, and that those that seek to obtain weapons to harm others will likely be able to do so via illegal means. Therefore, many have turned their attention to addressing mental health issues that might drive people to commit

these atrocities, but the question of whether or not restricting access to guns would be an effective way to reduce shootings remains prevalent, with a consensus largely going unreachd.

Key Points:

1. Complete abolition of the second amendment is a stance held by few Americans, none of which have a voice in congress. However, many democrats do advocate for extensive reforms to the current laws on guns, with some of the more radical proposals including an optional buy-back program for all automatic weapons and extensive background checks being added to the process of buying a gun, which would make the process more tedious and lengthy, but would result in people with a known history of mental health issues being unable to access guns. Proponents of the second amendment argue that these reforms would greatly limit the accessibility of Americans to guns, which would essentially accomplish the same goal as a complete abolition of the second amendment.
2. In spite of the fact that public opinion is shifting against gun ownership and the second amendment as a whole, the Supreme Court recently struck down a state law that would ban concealed carry, a practice in which a gun owner takes a firearm to a public place and hides it from others' view. Stances on concealed carry are less varied, but there are extremist Republicans that believe that abolishing concealed carry laws would effectively eliminate an individual's right to carry a gun in public, which they believe would allow individuals to respond to crimes around them in a much quicker manner.
3. All in all, the issue of whether individuals' access to guns should be restricted remains a controversial issue in the United States, and one in which Democrats and Republicans struggle to find agreement.

Current State of Affairs:

The Biden Administration recently passed the first significant piece of gun control Legislation in the last thirty years, obtaining bipartisan support as he did so. His bill, while tame in action, included further background checks in the process to buy a gun for all individuals and

created mechanisms for people to be stripped of their gun ownership if deemed a threat by their community. Nevertheless, most democrats would like to take these reforms one step further, creating even more barriers for gun ownership that greatly reduce the amount of guns on the streets. Republicans, meanwhile, largely find that any further action would be an assault on the citizenry's constitutional rights, and that no matter what, all Americans should continue to have access to gun ownership if they so desire, given that it is their inalienable right according to the nation's founding document. However, as debates ensue, it once again becomes clear that just as always, everyone remains largely unsatisfied.

Guiding Questions:

1. Are There Countries With as Many Guns as the U.S. but With Less Crime?
2. How Often Do Gun Owners Actually Prevent Crimes?
3. Do States With Strict Gun Control Laws Have Less Gun Violence?
4. Is prohibiting gun ownership compatible with the 2nd Amendment?

Useful Links:

1. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/09/13/key-facts-about-americans-and-guns/>
2. <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/25/1107626030/biden-signs-gun-safety-law>
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-62157480>
4. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/971473/number-k-12-school-shootings-us/#:~:text=As%20of%20June%202022%2C%20there,2018%2C%20with%2011%20active%20shooter s.>
5. <https://www.republicanviews.org/republican-views-on-gun-control/>
6. <https://democrats.org/where-we-stand/the-issues/preventing-gun-violence/>

Resources:

1. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/OTUS/shootings-shaped-gun-control/story?id=16863844>
2. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/04/20/amid-a-series-of-mass-shootings-in-the-u-s-gun-policy-remains-deeply-divisive/>
3. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2018/02/15/its-time-to-bring-back-the-assault-weapons-ban-gun-violence-experts-say/>
4. https://books.google.com.co/books?id=h4aWFrgW74YC&pg=PA93&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false
5. <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/11/us/how-criminals-get-guns-in-short-all-too-easily.html>
6. https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/second_amendment