



DEBATING FOR DEMOCRACY (D4D)TM 2023 LETTERS TO AN ELECTED OFFICIAL REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)



OVERVIEW: Debating for Democracy (D4D)TM inspires students to become successful advocates in their communities. To encourage engaged citizenship, Project Pericles requests original letters to elected officials from teams (two or more students) at Periclean colleges and universities.

Five teams from five different colleges will win \$500 to work on their issue.

ELIGIBILITY: A student must a) be a full-time undergraduate at a Periclean campus; b) be a first, second, or third year student as defined by their college or university during Spring 2023; c) be returning to campus for the 2023-2024 academic year to ensure that winning teams can work on their issues; d) write and mail a letter to an elected official, and e) provide a project proposal.

SELECTION PROCESS: Students must submit their letter and project proposal to their Project Pericles Program Director by Friday, March 10, 2023 (you are welcome to set internal deadlines that are earlier). The Program Director will review each letter and select up to four letters and accompanying project proposals to forward to Project Pericles. By Thursday, March 16, 2023, 5 PM ET all letters should be submitted (in Microsoft Word) by Program Directors to Jan Liss (jan.liss@projectpericles.org). A copy of the letter must also be mailed by March 16 from the students to the appropriate U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, State Senator, or State Representative. The names of all of the students who worked on each letter must be clearly identified.

A committee consisting of evaluators, with significant experience in public policy will review the submitted letters and project proposals. Using the criteria below, and they will select the winning teams for the 2023 D4D competition. We will announce the five winning teams in April 2023.

IMPORTANT DATES:

March 10, 2023 — All letters due to the Project Pericles Program Director or campus representative.

March 16, 2023, by 5 PM ET — All letters must be submitted (in Microsoft Word) by Program Directors to Jan Liss (jan.liss@projectpericles.org). Each college or university may submit up to four letters to an elected official. A copy of the letter must also be mailed to the appropriate U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, State Senator, or State Representative.

April 2023 — Five winning teams announced.

AWARD:

- Project Pericles will provide a \$500 award to each of the five winning teams.
- Students can use this money to fund advocacy and educational activities including advocacy trips and workshops. Project Pericles staff will work with the winning teams to develop their advocacy and education activities. Teams that have won this award in the past have organized mobilizing campaigns on their campuses, led trainings, and offered informative events including documentary screenings, election debates, panel discussions, etc. Teams have also traveled to Washington, D.C. or to their state capital to meet with members of Congress or their legislators and their staffs to discuss the issues raised in their letters

JUDGING CRITERIA: The evaluation of each submission will rest on the students' success at conducting high quality policy analysis and research; clarity of presentation; and adherence to the guidelines detailed on pages 3. All submissions should include a project proposal that describes how the team would use an award to advance their issue.

1) Policy Analysis and Research: The most important aspect of the letter is the quality of the analysis and research (55% of the evaluation). The evaluation will rest on each team's success at identifying a federal or state policy issue in their letter, proposing a solution to the problem they identified, and conducting and interpreting research to bolster their letter.

- Does the letter present a public policy issue in a convincing manner?
- Does the letter focus on a federal or state public policy issue that impacts the student and their community and explain how this issue impacts them?
- Does the letter contain logical judgment and analysis?
- Does the letter demonstrate the use of primary (personal experience, community experts) and secondary resources (journal articles, books) to bolster their argument?
- Does the letter demonstrate an understanding of the historical context of the problem and solution being discussed?

2) Clarity of Presentation: The ability to write a clear and compelling letter will be considered. In addition to a logical argument, persuasive letters include a narrative about how the issue impacts the authors or other constituents (30% of the evaluation).

- Is the letter effective in communicating the significance of the problem and the solution?
- Do the authors offer a compelling narrative? Do the authors make a compelling case as constituents? Is there a tie-in to either the authors or other constituents from the elected official district?
- Are the letter and proposal clear and grammatically correct?

3) Quality of Related Project Proposal: The project proposal should present the authors' strategy to have a meaningful impact on the topic they tackle in the letter. As such, the proposal should clearly outline how students would use the \$500 award to instigate positive change. This section is worth 15% of the total evaluation. **It should not exceed two pages.**

- Is the project proposal creative and effective in addressing the problem presented in the letter?
- Is it feasible given time and financial constraints?

In all cases, the goal of your project should be to advance your issue. Campus events should have a tie-in to an “ask” in which you request that your fellow students or community members take an action (example: contacting their elected officials) that will advance your issue.

The award should be used for activities and/or educational events to move your issue forward. You are encouraged to think outside the box and come up with creative ideas.

Typical uses of funds include:

- Travel (lodging, meals, and transportation) costs to meet with your elected officials.
- Costs associated with campus or community activities that educate, inform, or raise awareness about your issue.
- Travel to another Periclean campus to educate their students about your issue.
- Costs associated with developing materials that educate people about your issue.
- Other (pre-approved) activities to move your issue forward.
- **Awards may not be used to pay honoraria to speakers.**

Letter and Project Proposal Writing Guidelines:

- The letter must be on a state or federal issue. Letters on local issues will not be eligible. The majority of local issues are also important federal and state issues.
- The body of the letter may not exceed **1200 words** (excluding footnotes and project proposal).
- Students must identify their elected official and their address. Since the authors will be urging their elected official to support or oppose a legislative solution, they will want to select the official who will be most responsive to their letter. [This website](#) will help identify federal and state elected officials.
- A copy of the letter must be mailed to the elected official by March 16, 2023.
- The letter must begin with the phrase "Dear Representative (last name)" or "Dear Senator (last name)" and be addressed correctly.
- The letter should begin with a sentence that tells the elected official exactly what the student wants them to do. The first sentence in the letter on page 5 provides an example.
- The letter should contain the student's mailing address so that the elected official can confirm them as a constituent and the elected official can write back.
- The students must sign and date their letter.
- All primary and secondary sources used in preparing the proposal must be cited.
- The project proposal should not exceed two pages.

Eligibility (additional guidelines):

- Two or more students **must** work on the letter and project proposal.
- Students who were finalists (meaning they received an award) in a previous year are not eligible to participate.
- No student can co-author more than one submitted letter.

ADDITIONAL TIPS, GUIDELINES, AND RESOURCES

“Letters are an extremely effective way of communicating with your elected officials. Many legislators believe that a letter represents not only the position of the writer but also many other constituents who did not take the time to write.” American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

Many federal and state policy issues are suitable for this letter. Possible issues include:
*Campaign Finance * Climate Change * Economic Justice * Education Access
Gun Control * Health Care * Immigration * LGBTQ+ Advocacy * Mass Incarceration
Public Health * Race and Inequality * Reproductive Health * Voter Engagement*

In the letter, students must identify one federal or state public policy issue to be addressed and analyze how this issue impacts them personally, people in their community, people in their state, and, if a federal issue, people across the United States. In the letter, students must recommend at least one legislative solution. The students may recommend an original legislative solution (fund a NASA mission to Jupiter) or they can support or oppose a portion of a bill that is currently pending before Congress or their state legislature. In both cases, the students must support their solution with data and examples from at least two outside sources (books, journals, reliable internet sources) and discuss why their solution is better than other options. *All outside research must be properly cited.*

SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

The following resources will assist the student in writing their letter:

- A letter written by students at Whitman College appears on pages 5-9. **This letter is an excellent model.**
When Project Pericles hosts a D4D National Conference in New York City, the student teams who wrote the top five letters present their issues at a Legislative Hearing. This was a winning letter at the 2019 D4D National Conference. (Due to covid, the last conference was in 2019.) The five letters that were finalists in 2019 can be viewed at:
https://www.projectpericles.org/uploads/1/2/2/7/122788165/2019_legislative_hearing_program-final.pdf
- Congress.gov provides detailed federal legislative information to the Members of Congress, legislative. <https://www.congress.gov>
- C-SPAN is a private, non-profit company, created by the cable television industry as a public service. Its mission is to provide public access to the political process. The C-SPAN website contains a wealth of information including videos of Congressional hearings related to a number of federal policy issues. <http://www.c-span.org>
- The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) is a bipartisan organization that serves the legislators and staff of the nation's 50 states, its commonwealths and territories. The NCSL website provides research and opportunities for policymakers to exchange ideas on the most pressing state issues. <http://www.ncsl.org/>

Example of a Winning Letter and Project

WHITMAN COLLEGE

A Letter to Introduce New Legislation to Prohibit Insurance Companies and Employers from Discriminating Against Workers Who Seek Compensation after an Injury, Based on Immigration Status

Date: January 30th, 2019

From: Salma Anguiano & Ameliz Price-Dominguez 420 NE 7th St. Hermiston, OR 97838 Whitman College 280 Boyer Ave. Walla Walla, WA 99362

The Honorable Ron Wyden
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Senator Wyden,

We write to urge you to introduce new legislation that prohibits insurance companies and employers from discriminating against workers seeking compensation after an injury, based on citizenship status. In 2018, Florida introduced Senate Bill 1568, which addresses this issue in the state of Florida. Unfortunately, the bill died in committee. Since workers compensation laws differ from state to state, workers in the US would benefit from a clear federal law that prohibits these discriminatory actions.

It is unlawful to hire undocumented immigrants in the United States, although many companies knowingly do so. According to the Migration Policy Institute, there are over seven million unauthorized workers employed in America (MPI). Travis Putnam Hill of the Texas Tribune asserts that this phenomenon occurs because, “Employers skirt culpability by accepting fake documents that they are not required to verify” (Hill). The conditions in which illegal immigrants work are very unsafe, and employers do not make an effort to protect their workers. Instead, employers benefit from cheap labor and workers suffer the consequences of these hazardous working conditions. According to a study conducted by University of Southern California, “... men ages 18-64 who are Latino Immigrants have the highest average workplace injury rate at 13.7 per 1,000 workers... other ethnicities have a rate of around 11 per 1,000 workers”(Gersema). Treacherous immigrant working conditions often lead to serious employee injuries, and rather than pay insurance fees through worker’s compensation, companies save money by having their employees deported. President Donald Trump’s executive order to remove all undocumented people who have, “engaged in fraud”, makes it much easier for employers to deport their injured workers without fairly compensating them for their medical expenses by falsely claiming that they had no prior knowledge of their hires’ citizenship status. In an NPR and ProPublica review of the application of Trump’s executive order in Florida’s Insurance Fraud Unit, it was found that, “more than 99% of the workers arrested under the statute were Hispanic immigrants working with false papers” (Grabell). The disproportionate weaponization of Trump’s executive order proves the legislation to be highly discriminatory against injured workers, who are often left to suffer in silence out of fear of deportation. This ploy to refuse workers their right to compensation in cases of workplace injury must be addressed, and legislation in support of fair medical coverage is the only way to ensure these discriminatory practices cease.

Many companies who regularly hire undocumented individuals use their citizenship status as a method of denying rights to the workers they employ. This occurs because it is easier to disprove an employee’s citizenship status rather than challenging the validity of their injuries. Employers actively hire illegal workers to assert legal control over their employees’ potential worker compensation claims by using their citizenship status as a tool to keep them from vying for fair compensation. Some such cases are highlighted in an article published by NPR stating that insurance companies such as SouthEast, “...sign up these companies [employers] knowing full well that 95% of the employees are immigrant workers... only after an

accident occurred do they determine they're going to do an investigation and check that social security number" (Grabell). The actions taken by insurance companies shed a light on the pointed intentions of both employers and their affiliates from the very beginning, Before an actual accident even takes place, these companies create systems which subject their employees to unfair injury compensation processes. David Michaels, a former head of the federal Occupational Safety Health Administration, comments that, "It's infuriating to think that when workers are hurt in the United States, they're essentially discarded... If employers know that workers are too afraid to apply for worker's compensation, what's the incentive to work safely?" (Grabell) There exists no incentive for these companies to create a sustainable work environment for workers that employers view as disposable labor. It is paramount that the humanity of these workers be maintained, and that legislation be put in place to protect all workers' right to medical treatment for injuries that occur on the job.

(Salma's speaks on her father's work injury) After returning home from work, my father sat down at the dinner table, and we began having our daily conversation. I could clearly see how tired he was after working a fourteen-hour shift. He proceeded to tell me that he didn't enjoy his new job, mentioning how the working conditions were unfavorable, and the pay was too little. He stressed to me, "Salma, make sure you continue to do well in school." During my father's third day on the job, he was injured in a car accident. The vehicle he was in was driven by his supervisor. The supervisor was speeding and driving recklessly with a van full of employees. After running a stop sign, a vehicle coming from the right side struck the van, where my father was located. The driver lost complete control and the van began to roll over. His actions had made it clear that his workers were seen as nothing more; than just cheap labor. When my father became quadriplegic, I had to make significant adjustments. After the accident occurred, my mother and I became his caretakers, a sacrifice made by both my parents as we now lacked the income from both sources. Before my father could return home, I had to take care of many preparations which included finding a doctor, creating an accessible home, and finding therapists. Items that should have been addressed by the insurance company were placed on my family, when we were still trying to comprehend what had just happened. My family of course, was afraid of confronting workers compensation, because they knew my father was an illegal immigrant. Despite having multiple doctor's referrals for medications, supplies, rehabilitation, and caregiving, they repeatedly told us they would only provide what they thought was "necessary." Due to their knowledge of my father's citizenship status, workers compensation discredited father's needs by only supplying the bare minimum and at times, nothing at all. I became a caregiver for my father while my mother worked. I learned to use special equipment to transfer my father into bed from his wheelchair. I also had to administer his medication and ensure that he was stable. My family was affected by this accident in many ways, but perhaps the hardest part was realizing that our lives could never be "normal" again. Although my father continues to receive workers compensation, there may be a day where something changes, and he is deported or further denied his rights.

Work injuries such as this can change a person's life drastically. These workers go out every day and do their jobs, we should encourage companies to create safe working conditions, so that accidents are avoided. Every worker deserves the right to be protected, regardless of whether or not they are a U.S. citizen. As a Senator who has supported immigrants throughout your career, we hope that we can count on your support to push this new legislation and bring awareness to this issue. We thank you for your time and we hope to hear back from you soon.

Sincerely,

Salma Anguiano & Ameliz Price-Dominguez

Citations

Grabell, Michael, and Howard Berkes. "They Got Hurt At Work - Then They Got Deported." NPR, NPR, 16 Aug. 2017, www.npr.org/2017/08/16/543650270/they-got-hurt-at-work-then-they-got-deported.

Gersema, Emily. "Minorities, Latino Immigrants Face the Greatest Risk of Workplace Injuries." USC News, University of Southern California, 9 Feb. 2017, news.usc.edu/116138/minorities-latino-immigrants-face-the-greatest-risk-of-workplace-injuries/.

Hill, Travis Putnam. "Big Employers No Strangers to Benefits of Cheap, Illegal Labor." The Texas Tribune, Texas Tribune, 19 Dec. 2016, www.texastribune.org/2016/12/19/big-name-businesses-exploit-immigrant-labor/.

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Sanchez, Tatiana. "E-Verify Doesn't Prevent Many Companies from Hiring Undocumented Workers." The Mercury News, The Mercury News, 24 Jan. 2018, www.mercurynews.com/2018/01/20/e-verify-doesnt-prevent-many-companies-from-hiring-undocumented-workers/.

"The Florida Senate." Calendar for 5/3/2018 - The Florida Senate, Florida Senate , 1 Oct. 18AD, www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2018/1568/ByVersion.

Project Proposal

Overview:

Immigrant workers are greatly and disproportionately impacted by Donald Trump's executive order regarding fraud-based deportation of immigrants that deters them from claiming workers compensation out of fear of being deported. This injustice has ruined countless lives and torn families apart under the guise of protecting against fraud. By introducing new legislation that protects all workers regardless of citizenship status, we can ensure that all workers are protected in the event of injury on the job. The new piece of legislation that we are proposing will put an end to the epidemic of companies using illegal immigrants to make a profit and then denying them their rights as workers. We plan to bring awareness to this issue by holding meetings at Whitman in partnership with affinity groups like Borders as Method (B.A.M.), which is a club committed to educating our communities about immigration issues, and challenging traditional notions through a focus on intersectionality. Furthermore, we will use the funding provided to us by Project Pericles to cover travel expenses to visit with Senator Wyden at his Oregon office. We will present him with our case for introducing a bill to protect immigrant workers' rights and convince him to help build support for the new legislation in Congress. By garnering local and congressional backing for the new legislation we will be able to accomplish our goals of bringing widespread awareness to this issue and making sure that all workers injured on the job are permitted to claim the worker's compensation that they owed.

Goal:

Undocumented workers live in constant fear of being deported, perhaps, now more than ever before under the Trump administration. Having grown up living in communities made up of immigrants, we understand the powerful potential of this new legislation to be instrumental in protecting the workers' rights of undocumented persons. Our main objective with this project is to bring awareness, create transformative legislation, and foster a safe space for immigrants living and working in our community by hosting events to inform them of their rights. The Whitman College campus is located in a region built off of the labor of immigrant workers, and it is essential for every one of them to know their rights and have a safe work environment. Through the cultivation of a unified immigrant support group we will gather personal narratives of people affected by lack of access to worker's compensation that will strengthen our advocacy for this new piece of legislation. Holding events to bring together immigrants and allies while advocating for this new legislation will work to end the unfair treatment immigrant workers face when attempting to claim workers compensation.

Target Audience:

Our target audience includes members of Congress passionate about addressing the concerns of their constituents and allies of the immigrant community that are interested in making active change in the lives of their undocumented neighbors. We also intend to attract the attention of undocumented members of our community for the purpose of educating them on their rights and creating a safe space for them to find resources to address their concerns. In partnering with Borders as Method and other affinity groups on campus we will amplify the reach of our project by consulting with the widest range of the constituency possible to create robust change through the introduction of this new legislation.

Activities:

In order to achieve our objectives in their entirety, we plan to carry out two different activities that will work in tandem to generate awareness of this issue and garner the congressional support necessary to enact our proposed legislation. The first event will host a local immigration lawyer who specializes in workers compensation law and the Borders as Method club, along with a group of undocumented individuals and their allies. Promotion of the meeting will include advertisement in venues and broadcasting systems that attract our target audience such as churches, restaurants, and local radio stations. The purpose of this meeting would be to gather a group of people who are passionate about immigrant workers' rights to share experiences and write letters of support to local legislators. The second aspect of our plan involves advocating for this legislation in-person with Senator Wyden in his Oregon office located in Portland, to make travel expenses less prohibitive. We will use our visit to urge Senator Wyden to introduce a bill that would guarantee undocumented employees' right to workers compensation in all cases of on-the-job injury. Our advocacy efforts will begin locally and move to incorporate the voices of the region and an entire demographic of workers across America that are not covered for the medical bills may be accrued in unsafe work environments. Undocumented workers are entitled to coverage for on the job injury and they should be able to claim what rightfully belongs to them without fear of being deported. A combined effort of Borders as Method, allies of the immigrant community mixed with immigrant testimony, and Senator Wyden's endorsement of this bill will generate the major, long-lasting change we seek to accomplish by moving forward with this project.

Budget:

Activity	Supplies	Cost
1. Meeting in our Community	- Posters - Advertising	\$0 (Printing is free) \$90
2. Meeting with Senator Wyden	- Fuel cost - Food - Hotel Stay	\$200 \$60 \$150