NPDL Nationals & Round Robin 2026 Topics

Topics for NPDL Nationals & Round Robin 2026 Invitational will be posted here. All teams and judges should be in their virtual rooms (NSDA Campus on Saturday/Sunday prelims; ZOOM on Sunday elims) at the posted round time to conduct topic strikes.

TOPIC STRIKE PROCEDURE

1. Three topics (motions) for the round will be posted here.
2. The **Opposition** team (NEG) has **2 minutes** to strike a motion and type "we strike topic #" into the chat.
3. The **Government** team (AFF) has **1 minute** to strike a motion and type "we strike topic #, the topic to be debated is [text of the topic]" into the chat.

▸ The remaining, non-struck motion will be debated, and 20 minutes of preparation time begin as soon as the Government (AFF) team has done their strike.

- If one team is still absent at the end of their topic strike time, the other team may strike again, i.e. they may choose the topic outright.
- The judge should be present to supervise topic strikes. If the judge is absent, the debaters should email npdl.board@gmail.com to notify tab, then proceed with topic strikes and prep time on their own.

"THIS HOUSE" KEY

THS / THO = This House supports/opposes
THW = This House would
THBT = This House believes that
THR = This House regrets
THP = This House prefers

OPEN Finals (ON ZOOM)

SCHEDULED: 4:00p PT / 7:00p ET
TOPIC POSTED: 4:00 / 7:00
ROUND START: 4:23 / 7:23

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NPDL Nationals & Round Robin 2026 Topics

NPDL

1. **THR the narrative that time is a resource to be optimized.**

2. **THBT medical device regulators should presume approval absent evidence of harm.**

3. **The U.S. federal government should require the Federal Reserve to follow a rules-based monetary policy.** INFO: The Federal Reserve ("the Fed") is the central bank of the United States and conducts monetary policy primarily by setting interest rates and influencing the money supply. A "rules-based monetary policy" would require the Fed to follow predetermined guidelines when making monetary policy decisions, such as adjusting interest rates in response to inflation, unemployment, or economic growth, rather than relying primarily on policymakers' discretion.

OPEN Semis/MS Finals/RR Finals (ON ZOOM)

SCHEDULED: 2:00p PT / 5:00p ET
TOPIC POSTED:
ROUND START:

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1. **Governments in the "Lithium Triangle" (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile) should coordinate lithium production quotas.**

2. **Philanthropic organizations should prioritize funding direct interventions over efforts to improve decision-making (e.g., research, forecasting, evaluation).**

3. **The U.S. federal government should require licensing for frontier AI model training.** INFO: Frontier AI models are highly advanced artificial intelligence systems trained using large amounts of data and computational power, capable of performing complex and general-purpose tasks. Licensing refers to requiring organizations to obtain government approval before developing such models, typically based on factors like scale, capability, or potential risk.

OPEN Quarters/MS Semis/RR Semis (ON ZOOM)

SCHEDULED: 12:00p PT / 3:00p ET
TOPIC POSTED: 12:00 / 3:00
ROUND START: 12:23 / 3:23

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NPDL Nationals & Round Robin 2026 Topics

1. **Scientific funding agencies should prioritize high-variance, low-probability research projects over incremental research with predictable outcomes.**

2. **THBT individuals should have property rights over their microbiome data.**

3. **The European Commission should relax merger and state-aid rules in strategic technology sectors.** INFO: The European Commission enforces competition policy in the European Union, including reviewing corporate mergers and regulating state aid to prevent market distortions. In this context, relaxing these rules in strategic technology sectors would involve permitting greater consolidation among firms and increased government support in areas such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and clean technologies.

OPEN Octos/NOV Finals/MS Quarters (NSDA CAMPUS) + RR Quarters (ON ZOOM)

SCHEDULED: 10:00a PT / 1:00p ET
TOPIC POSTED: 10:00 / 1:00
ROUND START: 10:23 / 1:23

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1. **THR the rise of boundary-focused self-care norms (e.g. “protecting one’s peace”).**

2. **The United States should significantly increase domestic manufacturing capacity for weapons production.**

3. **FEMA’s National Flood Insurance Program should be reoriented toward massive property buyouts.** INFO: In the United States, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), which provides subsidized flood insurance to property owners in flood-prone areas. The program has historically focused on supporting rebuilding and resilience measures after floods, but not relocation tactics such as buyouts.

ROUND 6

SCHEDULED: 8:00a PT / 11:00a ET
TOPIC POSTED: 8:03 / 11:03
ROUND STARTS: 8:26 / 11:26

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NPDL Nationals & Round Robin 2026 Topics

NPDL

1. **African governments should ban foreign ownership of agricultural land.**

2. **THBT the expectation that work should provide meaning leads to worse career outcomes than treating work instrumentally.**

3. **THS detracking in K-8 public education in the United States.**
   INFO: "Tracking" refers to the practice of separating students into different classes or academic levels based on perceived ability or achievement. "Detracking" in K-8 public education means reducing or eliminating these divisions so that students of different academic levels are taught together in the same classrooms.

ROUND 5

SCHEDULED: 4:30p PT / 7:30p ET
TOPIC POSTED: 4:30 / 7:30
ROUND STARTS: 4:53 / 7:53

1. **The United Arab Emirates (UAE) leaving the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) will do more harm than good.**

2. **During breaking news events, social media platforms should prioritize preventing viral misinformation over maximizing real-time information sharing.**

3. **The United States should prioritize economic interdependence with China over strategic decoupling.** INFO: Economic interdependence refers to maintaining and deepening mutual trade, investment, and supply chain ties between countries, such that their economies become closely linked. Strategic decoupling refers to deliberately reducing economic ties—particularly in critical sectors like technology, manufacturing, and infrastructure.

ROUND 4

SCHEDULED: 2:30p PT / 5:30p ET
TOPIC POSTED: 2:30 / 5:30
ROUND STARTS: 2:53 / 5:53

1. **THS the normalization of separating the art from the artist.**

2. **The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) should automatically recognize drug approvals from the European Medicines Agency.**

3. **The U.S. federal government should significantly invest in Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).** INFO: Small modular reactors (SMRs) are a class of nuclear fission reactors

designed to generate electricity at a smaller scale than traditional nuclear power plants, typically producing up to about 300 megawatts per unit. They are called "modular" because key components can be factory-built and transported to a site for assembly, rather than constructed entirely on-site.

ROUND 3

SCHEDULED: 12:30p PT / 3:30p ET
TOPIC POSTED: 12:30 / 3:30
ROUND STARTS: 12:53 / 3:53

1. **Public utilities commissions should adopt performance-based regulation instead of cost-of-service regulation for utilities.**

2. **The United States federal government should prohibit colleges and universities from considering legacy status in admissions decisions.**

3. **As the Dungeon Master, THW fudge.**
   INFO: In the popular game Dungeons & Dragons, the Dungeon Master (DM) runs the game world and adjudicates the rules. Players often use the same characters over long campaigns that develop a shared story over months or years. For the purposes of this debate round, you are the DM, and all of the characters in a year-long campaign are very likely to die in an impending routine battle, due to both bad luck and poor decisions by the players. If they all die, there is no way to bring them back, effectively ending the game. As the DM, you could "fudge" – which means bend, break or ignore the rules to help them survive, thereby continuing the game.

ROUND 2

SCHEDULED: 10:30a PT / 1:30p ET
TOPIC POSTED: 10:30 / 1:30
ROUND STARTS: 10:53 / 1:53

1. **THBT consumer and corporate pressure is preferable to state regulation for improving animal welfare.**

2. **THP policies that prioritize non-lethal coexistence with apex predators over policies that allow the selective killing (culling) of apex predators.**

3. **THR France's ban on cetacean shows.**
   INFO: In 2021, France passed legislation banning the use of cetaceans (including orcas and dolphins) in entertainment shows. Marineland Antibes, France's largest marine park, closed in January 2025 following declining attendance and the ban's implementation. Two captive-born orcas, Wikie and her son Keijo, remain at the facility while France considers relocation options, including transfer to another marine park or to a planned open-water sanctuary in Nova Scotia, Canada.

ROUND 1

SCHEDULED: 8:30a PT / 11:30a ET
TOPIC POSTED: 8:30 / 11:30
ROUND STARTS: 8:53 / 11:53

1. **On balance, the benefits of publicly emphasizing worst-case existential AI risks outweigh the costs of potential overstatement.**

2. **The Supreme Court should rule that AI-generated outputs are not protected speech.**

3. **New York City should resume plans to open the Next Generation Technology High School.** INFO: New York City education officials recently canceled plans to open the Next Generation Technology High School in Manhattan after opposition from parents and community members, including a petition calling for limits on AI use in schools. The proposed school would have integrated artificial intelligence into its curriculum alongside subjects like computer science and robotics.

Common “This House” Phrasings — Concise Reference Guide

1. This House Supports / Opposes (THS / THO)

Typical Type: Value-based
Function: Evaluate whether an existing or likely phenomenon is good or bad.
Focus: Moral, social, or philosophical evaluation of the status quo or its likely form.
Example: *This House supports lifting the ban on GMOs in Kenya.*

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2. This House Would (THW)

Typical Type: Policy-based
Function: Proposes a specific action or reform.
Focus: Whether implementing the policy would be beneficial overall.
Example: *This House would legalize all drugs.*
Note: The Government defines and models the policy; the Opposition may counter-model or defend the status quo.

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3. This House Believes That (THBT)

Typical Type: Analytical or value-based
Function: Tests the truth or validity of a claim or principle.
Focus: Philosophical or evaluative reasoning, not implementation.
Example: *This House believes that human cloning is immoral.*

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4. This House Regrets (THR)

Typical Type: Retrospective or analytical
Function: Argues that a past or current phenomenon should not have occurred or existed.
Focus: Comparison between the actual world and a plausible alternative.
Example: *This House regrets the rise of the gig economy.*

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5. This House Prefers (THP)

Typical Type: Comparative
Function: Weighs two possible worlds or systems.
Focus: Which state of affairs is preferable, given their likely characteristics.

Example: *This House prefers a world where people hold multiple part-time jobs to one with full-time employment.*

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6. This House, as [Actor], Would

Typical Type: Actor-specific (policy or analysis)
Function: Argues from the perspective of a defined entity (e.g., a country, organization, or individual).
Focus: What that actor should rationally do, consistent with their interests and values.
Example: *This House, as China, would renounce claims to the Senkaku Islands.*

Understanding "This House"

Meaning:
In parliamentary debate, *"This House"* refers to the debating body itself—the imagined parliament or deliberative chamber. What "the House" supports or believes is determined by the outcome of the debate.

Definition Responsibility:

- The **Proposition (Government)** supports the motion and must define ambiguous terms.
- The **Opposition** challenges or negates the Proposition's interpretation.
- The **first Proposition speaker (Prime Minister)** provides definitions and context but does **not** define "This House" itself—it is already understood as the debate chamber.

Clarifying Actor or Perspective:
If a motion requires an actor, specify this through phrasing (e.g., "We stand for the U.S. federal government…"), not by redefining "This House."

Clarifications and Comparisons

- **"THBT X should do Y" vs. "As X, THW do Y"**
    - *"THBT X should do Y"* names an actor but no specific viewpoint.
    - *"As X, THW do Y"* assigns both an actor and a perspective.
- **"This House Regrets" Motions:**
  Imply preference for a world where the regretted phenomenon did not occur. Teams

may—but are not required to—describe the counterfactual world explicitly.

- **Motion Types and the "Trichotomy":**
  "This House" motions can fall under any category:

  - **Policy:** *THW ban private prisons.*
  - **Value:** *THW choose death over dishonor.*
  - **Fact:** *THP economies dominated by small businesses over big businesses.*
    The prefix ("THW," "THBT," etc.) signals structure, not content type.

- Classifying motions in the trichotomy is independent of the TH prefix, and debaters must analyze the wording of the topic itself to make that determination. Not all motions actually fit in the trichotomy.

Practical Notes for Debaters

- Do **not** define "This House."
- When opponents do, engage substantively or challenge only if it distorts fair ground.
- Treat definitional misunderstandings as good-faith errors, not rule violations.

Round

SCHEDULED: PT / ET
TOPIC POSTED:
ROUND STARTS:

TOPICS

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3.