



The Capitol Forum on America's Future

2002 BALLOT REPORT

Students worry about nuclear proliferation, support international cooperation

In the first Capitol Forum ballot since the terrorist attacks of September 11, students in six states place the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons at the top of their list of international concerns. They continue to support international cooperation as a guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy.

When considering a wide range of international issues in the context of discussing America's role in the world, high school students in Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Rhode Island, and Utah place the proliferation of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons on the top of their list of concerns. One in two (51.1 percent) select the statement that "nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons will proliferate" as one of their three top concerns out of a list of fourteen. More than a third of those participating worry that "damage to the global environment will become irreparable" (34.2 percent) and almost as many are concerned that "more Americans will die at the hands of terrorists" (33.3 percent). By a margin of more than four to one, students express strong belief in the need to work cooperatively with the international community (76.6 percent support or strongly support, while only 11.7 percent oppose).

Students expressed these views at the conclusion of their participation in the Capitol Forum on America's Future, a program that engages high school social studies students in discussion of our nation's role in a changing international environment. Students from 75 high schools in six states completed a series of lessons exploring key issues in international relations. Between March 22 and April 12, 2002, almost 500 student representatives and their teachers met at their respective state capitols to deliberate on these issues with their peers and to present their concerns to state and Congressional officials. Following the forum, student representatives returned to their schools to lead their fellow classmates in further discussion. As a culminating activity, 2,225 students completed a ballot expressing their concerns, priorities, and vision for our nation's future.



In the House Chamber of the Connecticut State House, a student expresses his views on international issues to his peers and legislators.



Meeting in the House Chamber in Springfield, Illinois, a student explains how certain U.S. policies would impact global issues such as trade, conflict, immigration, and the environment.

The Capitol Forum program has taken place annually for the last five

I realize now that issues that are being addressed in the U.S. not only affect the U.S. but the whole world, and that world issues affect the U.S. in many ways.

— Student, Eureka High School, Eureka, Illinois



Students in Connecticut explain the views of students in their class to peers at the Capitol Forum. Each class participating in the Capitol Forum creates a poster expressing its views and concerns on international issues.



In a breakout session, students at the Second Massachusetts Capitol Forum discuss possible policy alternatives for one of four global issues.

Some day we will be running this country and if we do not begin to become interested in our government and world issues now, it will be very dangerous to our democracy in the future.

—Student, Moses Brown School, Providence, Rhode Island



At the First Annual Utah Capitol Forum, a student advocates for one of four “Futures,” broad policy frameworks for U.S. policy direction, in a discussion of the U.S. role in the international system.

years. Student concern on some issues is significantly different from years past, which may be attributable to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Concern about proliferation topped the list this year (51.1 percent), while in 2001 it placed a close second to a concern that “damage to the global environment will become irreparable.” (Students selected their top three concerns from a list of twelve in 2001 and from a list of fourteen in 2002.) In 2001, one in two students identified damage to the global environment as one of their top three concerns, compared to one in three in 2002. This year, one in three selected a new concern, that “more Americans will die at the hands of terrorists,” as one of their top three.

Despite these differences, there are also many striking similarities with previous years’ results. Student support continues to be strong for “help[ing to] negotiate strict international standards to address global warming and other environmental threats” (60.0 percent support or strongly support). This policy has consistently received top billing since the Capitol Forum began in 1998. A strong majority of students continues to feel that our nation “should not be doing business with countries that grossly abuse the human rights of their citizens” (63.8 percent). Students this year remain fairly supportive of policies to “impose trade sanctions on countries that threaten their neighbors” (49.3 percent support and 32.0 percent oppose) and to “lead international military missions to stop gross human rights violations” (47.8 percent support and 31.2 percent oppose). Student support for a policy that calls for “accept[ing] fewer immigrants in addition to cracking down on illegal immigration” increased this year, though not substantially (48.5 percent compared to 44.2 percent in 2001).

Capitol Forum gives students the opportunity to develop, share and reevaluate their opinions on substantial global issues. Each year I am impressed with the students’ presentations, and I enjoy learning what Rhode Island’s young adults have to say about the important issues of the day.

— Senator Jack Reed, Rhode Island

Despite students’ strong belief in the need to work cooperatively with the international community (76.6 percent), only two in five (40.6 percent) believe we should broaden the mandate of the UN and other international organizations, and one in four students (24.6 percent) were undecided. These findings are similar to those of previous years. It appears that while students believe strongly in the importance of international cooperation, they are ambivalent about the form that it should take.

(continued on page 6)

THE TOPIC OF THE CAPITOL FORUM

The watershed events of September 11, 2001, have sparked renewed debate about America's role in the world. The Capitol Forum engages high school students in consideration of our nation's future at this demanding moment in our nation's history.

THEMES IN 2001-02

To lay a foundation for student debate on the U.S. role in international affairs, the Capitol Forum highlighted four distinct themes:

- International conflict resolution
- Immigration
- Global environmental problems
- International trade

Participating teachers introduced these themes within the context of their courses prior to the Forum. Understanding these themes—their manifestations in history and implications for present day international politics—prepared students for their part in the Capitol Forum.

THE FUTURES

At the heart of the Capitol Forum is an exploration of four distinct visions — or “futures” — for the United States in the coming years.

FUTURE 1: STANDING UP FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS As the home of freedom and democracy, the United States has a special responsibility to stop the world's bullies and promote an international standard for human rights. We will need to break our alliances with governments that do not value human rights and democracy.

FUTURE 2: CHARTING A STABLE COURSE In a world that has grown dangerously unstable, the United States must strive for order and security. Our relations with individual countries should serve our economic and security needs. We should avoid letting political differences harm our important security and trade relationships.

FUTURE 3: BUILDING A MORE COOPERATIVE WORLD In today's interdependent world, we cannot separate our problems from those affecting the world as a whole. We should increase our financial support for the UN and spearhead joint efforts to address economic, security, social, and environmental problems that affect us all.

FUTURE 4: TURNING INWARD Having spent billions of dollars during the Cold War to defend and to aid countries around the world, now it is time to focus on social, economic, and security needs at home. To do this, we will need to gradually phase out our alliances outside North America and sharply reduce our military spending overseas.

WHAT MOST CONCERNS YOU?

- Nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons will proliferate..... 51.1%
- Damage to the global environment will become irreparable..... 34.2%
- More Americans will die at the hands of terrorists... 33.3%
- The United States will drain its resources trying to solve other countries' problems..... 29.7%
- A clash of ideologies and political values will fuel conflict and instability in the world..... 24.4%
- The United States will lose access to oil and other key resources abroad..... 22.2%
- Loose border controls will threaten our security..... 19.9%
- Increasing immigration will worsen strains in our society..... 18.9%
- The gulf between the developed and developing worlds will widen, making it increasingly difficult to address common problems..... 14.7%
- U.S. troops will be sacrificed needlessly in conflicts abroad..... 12.9%
- U.S. jobs will be lost to other countries..... 12.9%
- Participation in international organizations will force the United States to follow costly or risky policies.... 9.3%
- The United States will isolate itself from the international community..... 8.6%
- Expansion by China or Russia will fuel conflict and instability..... 6.2%

RANKING THE FUTURES

	F1	F2	F3	F4
1st	20.7%	33.4%	34.0%	11.3%
2nd	29.5%	29.7%	27.8%	14.7%
1st/2nd	50.2%	63.1%	61.8%	26.0%
Last	18.7%	10.5%	16.4%	53.7%

RANKING FUTURES—STATE RESULTS

	F1	F2	F3	F4
Connecticut	53.0%	57.2%	70.6%	21.4%
Illinois	47.8%	65.1%	55.5%	31.2%
Massachusetts	49.6%	66.5%	63.3%	17.7%
Nebraska	52.4%	62.9%	56.9%	28.6%
Utah	55.8%	67.4%	62.1%	15.8%
Rhode Island	48.1%	63.0%	64.8%	27.7%

[Students are considered supporters if they ranked a Future 1st or 2nd.]

Data in this report is based on 2,225 completed student ballots.
For more complete data, see www.choices.edu/cf02ballot.html

WHAT BELIEFS DRIVE YOUR THINKING?	<i>strongly support</i>	<i>support</i>	<i>SS/S</i>	<i>oppose</i>	<i>strongly oppose</i>	<i>undecided</i>
• In today's interconnected world, many serious problems can be addressed only through international cooperation.	22.2%	54.4%	(76.6%)	10.2%	1.5%	11.8%
• Our resources should be focused on addressing problems at home, such as poverty, crime, and budget deficits.	25.3%	50.4%	(75.7%)	9.9%	2.5%	11.9%
• The United States should not do business with countries that grossly abuse the human rights of their citizens.	24.4%	39.4%	(63.8%)	18.7%	4.4%	13.0%
• Free trade and open economies are the best way to foster economic growth.	17.6%	40.4%	(58.0%)	12.6%	3.1%	26.3%
• We have no right to decide on our own to pressure another country to behave in a certain way.	18.5%	33.0%	(51.5%)	23.7%	8.3%	16.5%
• We will always have to compete with the world's other nations for power.	12.7%	33.1%	(45.8%)	32.5%	8.0%	13.7%
• Trying to make deep changes in the way the world works is naive and dangerous.	12.2%	32.7%	(44.9%)	30.9%	8.6%	15.6%
• Using our economic and military power around the world creates more enemies than friends.	12.9%	31.6%	(44.5%)	27.9%	6.4%	21.2%
• As Americans, we have a responsibility to spread democracy around the world.	7.0%	25.8%	(32.8%)	34.3%	14.9%	17.9%
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?	<i>strongly support</i>	<i>support</i>	<i>SS/S</i>	<i>oppose</i>	<i>strongly oppose</i>	<i>undecided</i>
• The U.S. should help negotiate strict international standards to address global warming and other environmental threats, even if compliance forces Americans to pay more for cars, gasoline, and other products that contribute to pollution.	21.7%	38.3%	(60.0%)	17.9%	7.4%	14.6%
• The U.S. should impose trade sanctions on countries that threaten their neighbors with aggression or contribute to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, even if such sanctions harm U.S. trade relations.	14.0%	35.3%	(49.3%)	24.5%	7.5%	18.7%
• The U.S. should accept fewer immigrants in addition to cracking down on illegal immigration, even if this deprives the American work force of the talent and ambitions of newcomers and fuels anti-American sentiments abroad.	19.2%	29.3%	(48.5%)	24.7%	11.7%	15.2%
• The U.S. should lead international military missions to stop gross human rights violations, even if this may involve U.S. troops in protracted conflicts.	12.0%	35.8%	(47.8%)	24.2%	7.0%	20.9%
• The U.S. should increase financial aid to countries that are moving toward democracy and free-market economic systems, even if money needs to be diverted from domestic programs.	8.8%	34.2%	(43.0%)	29.6%	10.1%	17.3%
• The U.S. should use military force to protect access to oil and other important raw materials, even if this puts U.S. troops at risk for protracted periods of time.	9.1%	32.6%	(41.7%)	31.2%	10.1%	17.0%
• The U.S. should support broadening the mandate of the UN and other international organizations, even if this means we are bound to contribute to efforts that Americans do not fully support.	6.6%	34.0%	(40.6%)	26.5%	8.3%	24.6%
• The U.S. should use its military abroad only as part of a multilateral force, even if this means we are restricted in how we can use our armed forces.	7.7%	27.4%	(35.1%)	28.1%	8.7%	28.2%
• The U.S. should spend what is necessary to remain a military superpower, even if this means having less domestic spending, larger deficits, or higher taxes than we would like.	10.5%	22.8%	(33.3%)	37.3%	15.7%	13.7%
• The U.S. should retaliate against countries with unfair trade practices, even if we jeopardize our overall relations with Japan, France, and other key allies.	3.7%	11.6%	(15.3%)	49.7%	21.6%	13.4%

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS IN 2001-02

CONNECTICUT

Amity High School (Woodbridge)
Bethel High School
Bristol High School
Enrico Fermi High School (Enfield)
The Gilbert School (Winsted)
Granby Memorial High School
Joel Barlow High School (Redding)
Manchester High School
Metropolitan Learning Center
(Bloomfield)
Ridgefield High School
Rocky Hill High School
West Haven High School
Westhill High School (Stamford)
Windsor High School

MASSACHUSETTS

Braintree High School
Danvers High School
Eagle Hill School (Hardwick)
Foxboro High School
Framingham High School
Murdock High School (Winchendon)
Norton High School
Plymouth South High School
Quincy High School
Quincy Heritage Program
Sandwich High School
Thayer Academy (Braintree)

NEBRASKA

Ashland-Greenwood High School
Bellevue West High School
Benson High School I (Omaha)
Benson High School II (Omaha)
Chadron High School
Duchesne Academy (Omaha)
Holdrege High School
Millard West High School (Omaha)
Valentine Rural High School
Wausa High School
Wilcox Public School

ILLINOIS

Bond Community High School (Greenville)
Carmel High School (Mundelein)
Eureka High School I
Eureka High School II
Eureka High School III
Hinsdale South High School (Darien)
Iroquois West High School (Gilman)
Judah Christian High School (Champaign)
Kenwood Academy (Chicago)
Latin School of Chicago
Lincoln Park High School I (Chicago)
Lincoln Park High School II (Chicago)
Litchfield Senior High School I
Litchfield Senior High School II
Maine South High School (Park Ridge)
Minooka Community High School
Normal Community High School
Roberto Clemente Community Academy
(Chicago)

ILLINOIS (CONTINUED)

SIU-East St. Louis Charter School
St. Ignatius College Prep. (Chicago)
Streamwood High School I
Streamwood High School II
Whitney Young High School (Chicago)
Woodstock High School

RHODE ISLAND

Burrillville High School I
Burrillville High School II
Burrillville High School III
Classical High School (Providence)
East Greenwich High School I
East Greenwich High School II
Johnston High School
Moses Brown School (Providence)
North Kingstown High School I
North Kingstown High School II
North Smithfield High School I
North Smithfield High School II
Smithfield High School
Toll Gate High School (Warwick)
Warwick Veterans High School
Wheeler School (Providence)

UTAH

Beaver High School
Box Elder High School (Brigham City)
Christian Heritage (Riverdale)
Clearfield High School
Granger High School (West Valley City)
Granite High School (Salt Lake City)
Navajo Mountain High School (Tonalea)
North Sevier High School (Salina)
San Juan High School (Blanding)

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National Office: Choices for the 21st Century Education Program, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University
The Capitol Forum on America's Future is endorsed by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS).

To bring the Capitol Forum to your state, contact the Choices Education Program (401) 863-3155 • choices@brown.edu
You can visit the Capitol Forum on the web at www.choices.edu/capitolforum.html



Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) talks with students about their opinions on the direction of U.S. foreign policy.

sistent over the past five years, and events of the last year do not seem to have significantly altered this. Students are evenly split between two divergent Futures. One in three (34.0 percent) select as their first choice a Future of international cooperation in which we would “increase our financial support for the UN and spearhead joint efforts to address economic, social, and environmental problems around the world.” Another third (33.4 percent) identify as their first choice a Future in which we would “strive for order and security,” shaping our relations with other countries to “serve our economic and security needs.” A Future calling for the U.S. to recognize a “special responsibility to stop the world’s bullies and promote an international standard for human rights” continues to draw significantly less support from students (20.7 percent). Most students in all six states were unsupportive of a Future that calls for the U.S. to “gradually phase out our alliances outside North America, sharply reduce our military spending,” and “focus on social, economic, and security needs at home.” This Future was selected first by



Students at the Fourth Annual Nebraska Capitol Forum address their concerns to their U.S. senators who met with them via teleconference.

In a dramatic change from past years, three out of four students this year expressed a strong belief that “our resources should be focused on addressing problems at home, such as poverty, crime, and budget deficits” (75.7 percent support or strongly support, compared to 52.8 percent in 2001). Analysis of other parts of the ballot suggests that this does not reflect a significant shift toward addressing domestic over international policy issues, but rather a recognition that, in the wake of September 11, international concerns have come home to our shores. Although the list of “problems at home” does not include terrorism, this may have been assumed by many.

The Capitol Forum asks students to grapple with one central question: “What role should we play in the changing international environment of the 21st century?” They do so by considering four “Futures,” broad outlines of possible directions for U.S. policy. Student views on the Futures have been quite consistent over the past five years, and events of the last year do not seem to have significantly altered this. Students are evenly split between two divergent Futures. One in three (34.0 percent) select as their first choice a Future of international cooperation in which we would “increase our financial support for the UN and spearhead joint efforts to address economic, social, and environmental problems around the world.” Another third (33.4 percent) identify as their first choice a Future in which we would “strive for order and security,” shaping our relations with other countries to “serve our economic and security needs.” A Future calling for the U.S. to recognize a “special responsibility to stop the world’s bullies and promote an international standard for human rights” continues to draw significantly less support from students (20.7 percent). Most students in all six states were unsupportive of a Future that calls for the U.S. to “gradually phase out our alliances outside North America, sharply reduce our military spending,” and “focus on social, economic, and security needs at home.” This Future was selected first by less than 15 percent of participating students. The lack of support for this Future contrasts sharply with the overwhelming support expressed for a belief that “our resources should be focused on addressing problems at home, such as poverty, crime, and budget deficits” (see above). However, this contrast seems to confirm that students consider terrorism to be among the problems at home that require our attention and resources.

Student responses to the Futures varied by region. Of particular interest, 35 to 43 percent of students in New England states favored a Future of international cooperation, while in Illinois, Nebraska, and Utah, that Future was preferred by only 27 to 29 percent of students.

A breakdown of data by state is available on the Capitol Forum web site: www.choices.edu/cf02ballot.html.

2002-03 CAPITOL FORUM ON AMERICA’S FUTURE

The Capitol Forum on America’s Future is planned in Connecticut, Illinois, Indiana, Nebraska, Rhode Island, Utah, and Wisconsin in 2002-03. Additional states are considering the program. Information on all Capitol Forum programs is available on the program web site at www.choices.edu/capitolforum.html.

For additional information about this program, contact the national office:

Choices for the 21st Century Education Program
Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, Box 1948, Providence, RI 02912
(401) 863-3155 • choices@brown.edu • www.choices.edu/capitolforum.html