



## The 2016 Presidential Election Simulation POLICY QUESTIONS

These are the public policy questions that candidates can use to guide the formulation of their policy positions, to make arguments that they can concisely summarize in their campaigning, and to prepare for the presidential debate on May 26<sup>th</sup>.

### Economy/Income Inequality

1. Describe the state of the current economy. Is the current economy strong or weak? In your view, is the U.S. economy going up or down?
2. What should the federal minimum wage be and why?
3. Many economists believe that innovations in the private sector – for example, new technologies – are the key to economic growth. How can the federal government drive economic growth, given this premise?
4. A growing number of Americans believe that the United States has a very serious problem with income inequality. The most affluent 20% of Americans own 84% of the nation's wealth, while the top 1% own nearly 40%. According to a recent article in *Scientific American* (Nicholas Fitz, 3/31/15) the average CEO-to-worker income ratio is 354-1, up from 20-1 in 1965. Do you believe that income inequality is a serious problem, and if you do, what would be your specific policy to address it?



5. Are policies that promote the economy and policies that protect the environment in tension with each other? Why or why not? If they are, which should take precedence?

### **Education/Social Issues**

1. Perhaps President Obama's signature achievement in K-12 education has been the adoption of the Common Core Standards by more than 40 states. What will you do with the Common Core if you become President?
2. What specific role should the federal government have in K-12 education in the United States, and what specific limits should there be on that role?
3. One of the most important issues in education today is testing and standards-based accountability. What is your position on the role of testing and accountability for schools and teachers that is attached to testing? Should schools whose students perform poorly on tests be punished? Should teachers' pay and job security be tied to student performance on standardized tests? And is there too much testing currently in schools, the right amount, or not enough?
4. In the 2015 case *Obergefell v. Hodges*, the Supreme Court decided that gays and lesbians have a Constitutional right to marry someone of their same sex. What do you think of that decision and why?
5. The majority of women in the U.S. believe that abortion is an issue of control over their own body, and that government regulations on abortion are an invasion of their privacy and a violation of their own bodily rights. Are these women wrong? Why or why not?

### **Foreign Policy**

1. How would you rank the following foreign policy threats to the United States, and justify your ranking: North Korea, China, Russia, ISIS, climate change?



2. Is climate change real? If it is real, is it caused by carbon emissions? What policy would you enact or work to get Congress to pass on climate change – if any – if you were President?

3. President Obama has said that ISIS (or ISIL, as the administration calls it) quote “does not present an existential threat to the United States.” Is he wrong about this? And how would you conduct the campaign to defeat ISIS differently from the way that this administration is conducting it, if at all?

4. China’s trade surplus with the United States is more than \$300 billion per year. What causes Chinese surpluses with the U.S. to be this high? Is America’s trade deficit with China a major problem for us? If so, what can you, and what do you plan to, do about it, as President?

5. Foreign trade has emerged as a crucial foreign policy issue in this election. What would you do with international trade deals that the U.S. is currently party to, such as NAFTA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, and how what specific guidelines would you use to forge future trade deals?

### **Immigration**

1. The language of immigration can be viewed as symbolically important, representing a candidate’s definition and core understanding of the issue. What should we call the approximately 11 million persons who are living in this country without legal immigration status, and why should we call them that? And what should be done with these 11 million persons? What is your policy position on them?

2. Do immigrants as a whole, all immigrants in this country, help or hurt the U.S. economy? Explain why, and also explain how your answer to this question jibes with your immigration position.

3. Many people believe that our immigration system is broken. Do you believe that it is broken? If so, why, and what would you do specifically to fix it.



4. One of the candidates in this race has famously called for the building of a large wall all the way across the U.S.-Mexican border, while getting Mexico to pay for it. Do you support this policy? Why or why not?
5. Syria is five years in to an immensely bloody war in which about 300,000 Syrians have lost their lives and millions of them have been displaced and are refugees. What should the U.S. be doing to respond to the humanitarian crisis of Syrian refugees? Should the U.S. be accepting more Syrian refugees into this country, and if so how many more?

### **Taxes/Debt**

1. What is your tax plan, and what impact would it have on tax fairness and on economic growth?
2. What is your view of progressive versus flat rates of taxation?
3. What are the two most important policies (taxation-related or otherwise) that you would adopt or push as President to strengthen the economy?
4. What is your position on corporate taxes in this country? Are they too high, too low, or just right? And some economists have noted that many of the largest American companies pay no, or very little, corporate taxes, despite our relatively high corporate tax rates. Why is this, and what would you do about it?
5. The U.S. budget deficit for 2015 was more than \$400 billion, and the accumulated U.S. debt is more than \$17 trillion. What level of risk does the deficit and debt pose to our economy, and what specifically would you do to address this risk in your administration?