

**2010 NFL Nationals**  
**United States Extemp Topic Area Analysis**  
by Logan Scisco

As was done for the Catholic Forensic League (CFL) national tournament, Extemp Central provides you with this topic area analysis for the United States extemp portion of next week's NFL national tournament in Kansas City, Missouri.

Since this is my third year writing a topic area analysis for the NFL National tournament for the website, I'll rehash my thoughts about why I think United States extemp is more difficult than International extemp. These thoughts were printed in last season's topic area analysis:

*First, it is very difficult to write thirteen rounds of questions about the United States. Yes, we are a great country and many of the things that take place here establish policy that significantly alters the globe. However, trying to come up with nearly thirty questions per round about issues only in the United States is very difficult. This is compounded by a problem all extempers are familiar with at some local tournaments: a lack of quality questions. I remember senior year the first question I drew was "Why does the right hate public education?" I also have encountered questions about whether prisoners should have to work, questions about timber companies, and questions about water problems in Utah. All of these questions show that there is a depth to U.S. extemp that can get very nit picky and there might come a time in the tournament when an extemper is going to be forced to talk about an issue they may never have heard of or not have a lot of substantial material to support a speech in their file boxes.*

*Second, most judges are more familiar with topics found in U.S. extemp rounds than International extemp rounds. If an informal poll was conducted at the national tournament, I would be willing to bet that there are more judges who know about the current Supreme Court nominee than about Britain's expenses scandal. This presents U.S. extempers with two issues. The first issue is that judges are going to be somewhat aware of what you are talking about so it is harder for those extempers to "b.s." their way through rounds (although that may work to many educated competitors advantage). Another issue is that for some topics, such as abortion, affirmative action, etc. that are quite controversial, judges have biases that are tough to shake. I remember drawing abortion, Title IX, and slave reparations in round ten of NFL my junior year and I am convinced that the bad topic draw I achieved in that round and the biases my judges were bound to have, was part of the reason why my cumulative score took a hit.*

As with the CFL topic area analysis, this topic area analysis is meant to provide some insight into the thirteen topic areas that United States extempers will encounter at the national tournament. According to some reports, a new batch of question writers will be putting together this year's topics, which will hopefully eliminate the ridiculous questions seen in last year's final round such as "Yes we can. Or can we?" Since I am putting together the USX and IX topic area analysis this year and because thirteen topic areas cover a lot of ground, this year's topic area analysis will have a brief paragraph summary explaining each topic area and then there will be bulleted points detailing issues that extempers might confront in each topic area. Keep in mind, this topic brief is not sanctioned by the National Forensic League and I am not on any panels to write questions for the tournament. My analysis of these topic areas is through my years of experience competing at the tournament and judging rounds and merely predicts what you will encounter in the prep room in Kansas City. Unlike previous years this topic brief will not contain practice questions. This is because of the timing of the release of this topic area analysis and other constraints upon the writer. Instead, this week there will be thirteen questions for USX and IX, one for each topic area. Extempers can also look back at previous week's questions on the site to help prepare them for the tournament. I apologize for any inconvenience that might cause.

## **Topic Area #1: The 2010 and 2012 Elections**

This is a generic “domestic politics” topic area that domestic extempers have been hitting all year at local and national circuit tournaments. Although there are two domestic politics topic areas in the tournament (the other one discusses local and state political issues) this one is more national in focus, with an emphasis on the 2010 midterm and 2012 presidential elections. In this round extempers will have to play the role of a political strategist and/or political scientist and explain why certain candidates are better suited to win elections, why certain candidates will lose elections, and what actions can be taken by the Republican and Democratic parties in order to shift the political climate in their favor. It would be smart for extempers to look at articles from the *Political Science Review* or articles printed by Republican or Democratic strategists like Karl Rove to get an insight into the actions of both parties. Furthermore, having polling data in your files is a necessity for these rounds in order to convince skeptical audiences. An easy resource to get this polling data is [realeclearpolitics.com](http://realeclearpolitics.com), which breaks down midterm elections races and has polling data for the 2008 and 2012 presidential contests. Polling agencies Gallup and Rasmussen also have free reports on their websites. Finally, for the 2012 part of the topic it is important that extempers know some history of presidential primary contests. With talk that President Obama might face a primary challenge in 2012, it brings to mind Ted Kennedy’s challenge to incumbent Jimmy Carter in 1980 and Ronald Reagan’s insurgent campaign against incumbent Gerald Ford in 1976. If you have a good grasp of history and a good understanding of the nation’s political climate this is one of the easier topic areas in the tournament.

Issues you might confront in this topic area include:

- Who will challenge Obama in 2012? Sarah Palin, Newt Gingrich, Mike Huckabee, Mitt Romney, Ron Paul, Tim Pawlenty, or someone else?
- The potential for Hillary Clinton or Evan Bayh to challenge Obama for the Democratic nomination in 2012
- How many seats the Republicans will gain in 2010 and how many the Democrats will lose
- The impact of the tea party movement on the 2010 elections
- What the biggest issue of the 2010 elections will be
- The impact of health care reform, the Gulf oil spill, etc. on the 2010 and 2012 contests
- What the biggest Senate race will be in 2010
- The impact of the Internet on the 2010 and 2012 elections
- Explaining if Obama is an asset or a detriment to Democratic candidates in 2010 and why his 2008 magic hasn’t rubbed off on other candidates so far

## **Topic Area #2: The American Economy: Economic Theory and Core Economic Policymaking**

This is the first of two economic rounds in this year’s tournament and my prediction is that this one will center more on macroeconomic policymaking by the federal government while the “banking crisis and American business” topic area will be about microeconomic issues in the economy (i.e. those dealing with one particular sector like the automotive industry). The first thing that I would recommend extempers do for this round is to acquire an economic textbook from your high school, read a few chapters about basic economic theories of supply and demand, Keynesian economics, laissez faire, comparative advantage, etc. Then, I would recommend that extempers take that textbook and put it in your files for the tournament. Since the textbook is a published source you are allowed to have it in the prep room but I would not recommend that you cite it in a round because one of my extempers got in trouble for citing a textbook in the CFL final round in 2007 (Jason Warren I’m looking at you). All kidding aside, having this resource available might ease some of your anxiety about this round. As with all economic rounds, make sure that you have statistics available on these major economic indicators: the

current growth rate of the U.S. economy, the growth rate of previous quarters during this season, the current unemployment rate, and the current interest rate level. You will likely need to cite one or more of these in a speech during this round so it's best that you commit them to memory. A final recommendation for this round is that if you have to explain an economic theory make sure that you allocate sufficient time to get it across to your audience. Audiences hate speakers that talk over their heads so when you explain these theories if you have an example that illustrates your theory then you will be better off. Also, when citing statistics, make sure you provide some analysis to go with those statistics. Saying that the unemployment rate is 9.7% and providing no analysis as to how that impacts the economic system won't gain you any points among judges.

Issues you might face in this round include:

- If Obama will raise taxes in the next few years
- If a VAT tax would be good or bad for the U.S. economy
- If America's budget deficit is sustainable
- If America's budget woes will lead to a Greece-type situation in the next decade
- How America should conduct its trade relations with China
- If outsourcing has been good or bad for the U.S. economy
- If the U.S. should pass more free trade deals
- How the U.S. government can help lower the unemployment rate
- If the economy needs another stimulus package and if the first one worked or failed

### **Topic Area #3: American Foreign Policy: Theoretical Questions and Ongoing Foreign Engagements**

During Barack Obama's first term the United States has seen some major shifts in its foreign policy. President Obama has taken a firmer stance towards Israel and has tried to take a more conciliatory path with our allies and enemies in the global community. In this round, extempers will need some of their international files. Don't make the mistake that I made in 2004 and think that you don't have to cut international issues because that will come back to haunt you in this round (it put me out of the 2004 NFL national tournament so take it from someone who knows). One thing to keep in mind about U.S. foreign policy, which some policy debaters are already figuring out as they research the 2010-2011 topic, is that American foreign policy is dictated by the bureaucracy as much as it is the White House. The State Department, the Central Intelligence Agency, and other foreign bureaus greatly affect how American foreign policy is implemented. If you don't understand the dynamics of the State Department (which tends to slant in a liberal foreign policy direction) and its role in foreign policy, your speech will fall short among content judges at the tournament. Keep in mind that the press is doing a much better job than they were in 2000 of covering international issues and that your judges will have at least a basic level of knowledge about major conflict zones like Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, North Korea, Mexico, and maybe even Venezuela. This forces you to come up with an interesting slant in your analysis that they may not have heard before. For example, judges know that Afghanistan is a corrupt and poor nation, but do they know that Afghanistan used to be one of the world's biggest export markets of vegetables before the Soviet invasion in 1979? Think tanks and institutions associated that are concerned with American foreign policy are excellent resources for this round. These include the Council on Foreign Relations, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Foreign Policy in Focus, the Cato Institute, and the Heritage Foundation. The popular bi-monthly journal *Foreign Affairs* is also an excellent resource. Lastly, keep in mind that this round says you might get "theoretical questions." This implies that some questions will ask you to predict the future and in order to predict the future you need to know about what actions have been taken in the past and the outcome of those actions. You also need to know why the U.S. is currently pursuing the actions that it is right now. You could get a

question about whether the U.S. should bomb Iran's nuclear installations or what might happen if the United States supported Russia's bid to join the WTO. If you don't know why the U.S. hasn't attacked Iran yet or why we don't support Russia's WTO bid, there is very little analysis that you can bring to the table in answering your question. Oh, and those tricky foreign names? Check out the Voice of America's online pronunciation guide to get them down.

Issues you might face in this round include:

- If Obama's engagement with Israel has been beneficial or hurtful for America's efforts in the Middle East
- How the United States can improve relations with the Muslim world
- If the U.S. relationship with Turkey is deteriorating
- How the U.S. should restrain Venezuela's influence in Latin America
- How America should interact with international institutions like the United Nations
- How the U.S. can persuade China to take a firmer stance towards North Korea
- If America should let Russia into the WTO
- How America's withdrawal from Iraq will impact the balance of power in the Middle East

#### **Topic Area #4: America: The Path from 2000 to 2010**

I have received several e-mails from extempers asking my opinion on this topic area and they make me feel old. I started extemp in the 2000-2001 season, so this topic area covers almost all of my extemporaneous speaking career as a competitor and as a coach. Honestly, I'm not sure where this topic area is going and your guess is as good as mine. This topic area could ask you to compare events happening right now with events over the last decade or it could be an "NFL retrospective" round like the Montgomery Bell Extemp Round Robin utilized in its Exhibition Round this year. This "NFL retrospective" round saw extempers speak on questions that came from past NFL final rounds that are still relevant today. For this topic analysis, I'm going to lean towards my first inclination and argue that this round is going to ask you to compare events of the past with events of the present. Although the extempers competing at this year's national tournament were less than ten years old when the 21<sup>st</sup> century began, this round will not be as hard as it seems because most of the articles that you have to read on a daily basis break down past events and policies. You might not have been extemping when President Bush was handling Katrina, but if you read about some of the rebuilding taking place in New Orleans of the current Gulf oil spill you will notice that reporters discuss some details of the administration's response to that disaster. Similarly, articles on President Obama's national security strategy have drawn parallels between his actions and those of President Bush. Keep in mind that if this round does have a lot of comparison questions that you will need to give equal time to the items that you need to compare. For example, if you get a question that asks you to explain how the Supreme Court has shifted over the last ten years, you need to give equal time to the Rehnquist Court that started the century and the Roberts Court of today. If you don't then you are not fully answering the question and you open yourself up to get dropped in prelims or elimination rounds.

Issues you might face in this round include:

- How the Supreme Court has changed over the last ten years
- If America's environmental protections standards have improved over the last ten years
- If America's commitment to space is deteriorating
- How America's national security strategy and foreign policy have evolved over the last ten years
- Parallels between the federal response to Katrina and the Gulf oil spill
- America's attitude towards racial categories and the election of Barack Obama

- What has caused the American political climate to grow more partisan
- The growth of America's public sector and if it has become too large

### **Topic Area #5: The American Judiciary: Nominations, Recent Cases, and Theoretical Approaches**

Much of this round will center on the actions of the United States Supreme Court, but extempers should not turn on their blinders to lower courts and state courts in this round. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals on the West Coast is known to make some controversial rulings, such as its ruling that saying the Pledge of Allegiance in school was unconstitutional. Also, based on recent history, most of our Supreme Court nominees have come from lower courts so presidential appointments to those courts are becoming more crucial and have triggered a firestorm between both political parties. Remember that President Bush had some of his judicial picks for lower courts like Miguel Estrada and Charles Pickering filibustered by Democratic members of Congress during his presidency. Near the end of last year, President Obama complained that less than thirty of his lower court nominees had been confirmed by Congress so lower court nominations might emerge in this round. As I've recommended for previous rounds, knowing your history of Supreme Court confirmations is critical here, especially if you get a question about Elena Kagan. A great speech will draw parallels to easy confirmation fights like Ruth Bader Ginsburg's and bitter ones like Robert Bork, Clarence Thomas, and Samuel Alito. Also, having a good knowledge of the U.S. Constitution is essential for these rounds. I would recommend that you print off a copy of the U.S. Constitution or get a pocket copy of the Constitution and place it in your files. After all, how can you give a speech on the eighth amendment if you don't understand what the eighth amendment says? Knowing major Supreme Court decisions of the past like *Griswold v. CT*, *Roe v. Wade*, *Simmons v. Roper*, etc. will help because you can draw parallels between those cases and how the Supreme Court should react to future cases. You can also use these prior cases to explain why the Supreme Court made the decisions that it made on some controversial issues recently like Miranda rights, freedom of religion, and political speech. The "theoretical approaches" part of this round might present you with a sample case or a case that the Supreme Court may have to decide on in the future, such as the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), so knowing your Supreme Court precedents would greatly help you in this round.

Issues you might face in this round include:

- The pace of confirmation for Obama's lower court judicial picks
- Elena Kagan's nomination to the Supreme Court (impact, if she will be confirmed, if she was a good choice, and why the public does not strongly support the pick)
- Recent Supreme Court decisions on Miranda rights, the Mojave cross case, juvenile life sentences, and its controversial decision in *FEC v. United*
- How the Supreme Court will rule on Chicago's hand gun ban
- How the Supreme Court might rule on a challenge to the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA)
- Whether Obama will get another Supreme Court pick and who it might be
- Who the next Supreme Court justice to step down might be
- If growing state challenges to abortion rights will lead to an overturning of *Roe v. Wade*

### **Topic Area #6: The Banking Crisis and American Business**

This is the second economic topic area of the tournament and as I previously explained, I see this as more of a microeconomic topic area. It is still important that you know the vital economic statistics that I mentioned for the second topic area but for this one you will also need to know about the health of several sectors of the economy. You need to know about the performance of small businesses, the commercial sector, the automotive sector, the health of America's banks, etc. An easy place to find this information is

in the “business” sections of major papers like *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *The New York Times*. *Business Week* is also not a bad source of information about this. Extempers will also want to know their history of the banking and subprime mortgage crises because those will be questions in this round. Putting those crises in layman’s terms will be no easy task, but if you are going to win over your judges then you have to if you want to win this round. With unemployment being as high as it is, it might be a good assumption that all of the judges that you are going to run into at this tournament will know someone who has been negatively affected by the economic downturn. If you have an example of an individual who has been impacted by the financial crisis (but not a personal example) and/or can make your economic statistics and explanation of the crisis encompass individual anxieties and concerns you are going to have a powerful speech in this round. The economic crisis is real and impacts millions of Americans so make sure that comes through in your speech.

Issues that you might face in this round include:

- Who was most responsible for the subprime mortgage crisis
- If more reforms of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are needed
- If the federal government should have bailed out General Motors and Chrysler
- The current state of the automotive sector
- Toyota’s sudden acceleration problems
- The current state of unionization in the private sector and the use of “card check” to enhance union membership
- Craig Becker’s controversial appointment to the National Labor Relations Board
- If the recent financial regulation bill in Washington will prevent a future economic crisis
- How the newspaper industry can save itself

### **Topic Area #7: Education**

This is the first time that I can recall that education does not have the “issues of youth” label beside of it, which is probably for the better. A major piece of advice that past readers of these topic analysis have read a million times by now, is that all of your judges in some way shape or form will have a stake in the American education system. You are a part of it as a student, your coaches are parts of it because they teach you and likely teach for a living, and some of the judges you will run into are parents whose children are part of the public or private education system. Because of this dynamic you cannot go into rounds and merely bash the entire education system. Yes, you may not like it but you have to portray a balanced approach. If you were a teacher you would not like a student coming and telling you that what you do on a daily basis is wrong or a waste of time so unless you want a quick exit from the tournament in Kansas City tread carefully in this round. Before heading to the tournament, I would recommend that extempers visit the Department of Education’s website and print and read any reports on where the United States stands compared to other nations around the globe in subjects like math, science, and reading. It would also be wise to print off summaries of reports on strategies to improve American education. Think tanks like the Cato Institute and Heritage Foundation have occasional pieces that talk about improving American education and since these are written by respected scholars they are credible pieces of evidence. In any speech involving education, make sure you discuss the bureaucracy involved. Most teachers would agree that they are being swallowed by red tape and the bureaucracies that states have to erect to satisfy requirements in No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and other state standards are drying up funds that are meant to be given to teachers in their classrooms. If you don’t address some of the bureaucratic problems in the education apparatus and place all of the blame with teachers then you are completely off the mark in this round and you are similarly off the mark if you believe that more funding is the easy cure-all for America’s woes. Finally, be aware of the growing socioeconomic gaps in the American education system. In the 2008 presidential contest Senator John McCain called education reform “the

biggest civil rights issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” and those words were warmly received by the African-American and Latino communities. Although *Brown v. Board of Education* began the process of desegregating American schools, some fear that poorer students are being trapped in poor schools and richer students are in better schools that are attracting better teachers. A “one size fits all” approach to reform in American education would be misguided right now because of different student populations, different levels of community involvement, and different standards in each of the fifty states. I don’t like a lot of education speeches because extempers think that one solution will solve all of America’s problems and they never reflect on local concerns. Have local examples in your speeches and address these various concerns in American education if you want to leave this round with a good rank.

Issues you might face in this round include:

- The use of merit pay for teacher’s
- If charter schools are better than public schools
- If American students need to go to school more days
- If there should be national standards for education instead of state standards
- What changes should be made to No Child Left Behind
- How much control states and local communities should have over education
- If school vouchers are good for minority and low income students
- How America can improve its math and science scores relative to other nations
- Texas controversial social studies curriculum and Arizona’s ethnic studies ban (although these might come up in the state and local issues topic area)

### **Topic Area #8: Energy & the Environment**

I like this topic area this year because it makes sense. I remember in the past that energy and the environment were placed with the media as a topic area and it was a question of “which of these doesn’t belong?” If I were to do a quick survey of domestic extempers on what issue they felt they were most likely to see in this topic I imagine that the Gulf oil spill would win by a mile and rightfully so. However, you are not going to get fifty questions on the Gulf oil spill in this round because first, the topic writers aren’t that stupid or sadistic and second, your judges wouldn’t want to hear ten speeches about the Gulf oil spill in rounds (since the NFL prelims are flighted and judges watch two sections of five speakers in one round). In fact, since the Gulf oil spill is constantly in the media I might recommend that extempers NOT take a topic on it because it will help you stand out if everyone else chooses to talk about it. Just like I recommended for the education topic area above, extempers should go to the Department of Energy, the Department of the Interior, and the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) websites and print off summaries of current actions that these agencies are participating in. You always have to remember the bureaucracy when confronting government policymaking in these areas and there have been criticisms from Republicans in recent years that the EPA is making environmental policy without Congressional approval, notably on carbon emissions which the EPA has classified as a threat to public health. If you have to talk about alternative energy resources, don’t forget that there is a lot of skepticism about these energy sources. How much will they cost? Can they effectively replace fossil fuels? How will it impact the way that Americans live? I find that a lot of time extempers gloss over all of these factors and merely discuss the benefits of alternative energy without addressing the economic implications of replacing fossil fuels whether it be in terms of cost, economic growth, or jobs. Addressing these economic concerns would greatly enhance a speech about alternative energy sources and help you avoid falling into this trap.

Issues you might face in this round include:

- If wind, solar, nuclear, or biofuels are good alternative energy sources and what America can do to encourage more innovation of alternative energy sources
- The impact of a cap and trade bill on the U.S. economy
- If the U.S. Congress will pass a cap and trade bill
- What role America should play in the international community in dealing with global warming
- The Gulf oil spill (impact, what should be done to clean it up, how should BP be held liable, etc.)
- If America should drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
- If America should ban plastic bags at grocery stores (California is thinking of this)

### **Topic Area #9: Health Care Reform**

If your file on health care reform is exploding then please sub-divide it before nationals because if you have a file that has 100+ articles in it you will not give a good speech in this round. I would recommend subdividing it into files that discuss the number of uninsured Americans, the political fallout from reform, the deals that had to be made to make reform work, the economic impact of reform (good), the economic impact of the reform (bad), the cost of reform for the federal government, etc. Health care reform dominated the political landscape for most of this extemp season and I'm sure there are a great deal of extempers out there that don't want to talk about it anymore. Well guess what? You will have to talk about it in this round but don't confine yourself to the healthcare legislation that Congress passed. Medicare, Medicaid, prescription drug costs, doctor's salaries, the number of health care professionals currently practicing, and innovations in health care technology are all areas of concern in this topic area as well. Not all of these concerns were addressed by Congress's legislation and will likely have to be part of a future reform effort. Since extempers won't have the time to read the lengthy health care reform bill and don't have room for it in their files they should get a quick summary of the bill. If you go to a think tank to get a summary make sure you note its political leaning and you might want to print off summaries from various think tanks and compare them. You'd be amazed at some of the crazy interpretations out there about the bill...or maybe not based on the lack of civil political discourse concerning the legislation. Since there will be constitutional challenges to the legislation by states, this is another reason for you to have a copy of the Constitution with you. For the constitutional argument, make sure you have a good understanding of the commerce clause and the Supreme Court's interpretation of it because that will be the ground that the federal government tries to use in arguing that the bill is constitutional. If extempers can find any medical journals for this topic area that would help them out as well because judges usually perk up when they hear sources they have never heard of before. Believe me, citing the *Psychiatric Times* helped me win a round in Salt Lake City in 2004. As a final word of advice, make sure you bring the impact of the reform effort down to the audience's level. Show how health care reform (or the lack thereof in certain areas) will impact regular people and how it will or will not improve their quality of life. Two or three analogies of this type in a round will help you stand out, especially as the tournament whittles down and everyone is largely equal on delivery.

Issues you may face in this round include:

- The constitutionality of the health care reform bill
- How the health care reform bill will impact the number of uninsured in America
- Reforms to Medicare and Medicaid to make them sustainable
- How prescription drug prices can be lowered for seniors
- If America is doing enough to help those with mental health disorders
- If America should legalize marijuana and other narcotics
- The cost of the health care bill and how it will impact the U.S. economy
- If the Republicans will succeed in repealing the health care reform bill if they win the 2010 midterms



- How the American government can encourage doctors to work in low income communities

### **Topic Area #10: National Security and Homeland Security**

Arguably no other cabinet department this year has had as many problems as the Department of Homeland Security. Amid criticisms about immigration policy, the underwear bomber, the Times Square terror plot, and the Fort Hood attack, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano has been pressed to resign by the Republican Party for the better part of 2010 (so look for that as a question). Also, the Director of National Intelligence Admiral Dennis Blair resigned last month and that has led some Washington observers to speculate that there is a turf war in the national intelligence community that is harming national security. Unsurprisingly, this topic area could turn into a second foreign policy round if the national security part of the question concerns America's alliances abroad and its cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and other countries to protect its economic interests and contain the threat of Islamic fundamentalism (i.e. Somali piracy). For sources, extempers should check the Department of Homeland Security's website and print summaries of its policies and objectives. Furthermore, online records of some of the Congressional testimony of Homeland Security officials and security experts can be found online. The National Intelligence Council's (NIC) prognostication of threats confronting America by 2015 is worth a read and is available here: [http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC\\_globaltrend2015.html#link12a](http://www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_globaltrend2015.html#link12a). As with the American judiciary topic area, knowing your Constitution is important here in case any constitutional questions arise concerning the rights of terror suspects who are not American citizens. In this topic area you will likely have to gauge the success of security policies that have been implemented or recommend solutions to national security problems. In answering either question, you need to clearly explain what is being done about the problem or not being done. For example, if you are talking about the use of full body scanners at airports you need to explain why they are implemented and how they work. This demonstrates that you have a good command of the subject and are aware of why the government has justified their use. Sometimes in homeland security rounds you have to take risks. In 2002 at the Charlotte nationals I had a question about how airline safety could be enhanced and I recommended a plan that included behavioral profiling. I had to walk a fine line in that speech so that my analysis of behavioral profiling did not become racial profiling, but the risk paid off and I went straight 1's for the round. You're audience will know basic facts about current security policy and will have left or right-wing biases on the subject. It is best to fight these biases by bringing a myriad of perspectives into your speech and showing why one is better than the other based on current circumstances. Even if judges disagree with your conclusion, you have a better chance of winning their rank if you include their view in your speech and prove your argument.

Issues you may face in this round include:

- America's military presence on Okinawa
- America's military actions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and South Korea
- America's role in stopping Somali piracy
- The constitutionality of using full body scanners at airports
- If Janet Napolitano should resign
- How secure America's borders are (north and south)
- What the biggest threat to American national security is
- How America can best combat the spread of Islamic fundamentalism
- If America has any major domestic terror threats and what it should do about them
- How Denis Blair's resignation will impact the intelligence community
- If the Patriot Act should be repealed

### **Topic Area #11: The Obama Administration**

This is a yearly topic area at NFL and they merely switch out the name of the president in question. For this round you need to be aware of all of the major figures in the Obama administration. This deals with officials that are not major cabinet officials. David Axelrod, Rahm Emanuel, and Robert Gibbs and Obama's controversial "czars" fall into this category as well and will arguably be a bigger focus within this topic area than other cabinet officials. If you are unaware of what the chief-of-staff, White House press secretary, senior advisor, and these czars do then you need to find out before you go to Kansas City. Find brief descriptions online, read them, and then put them into your files because you might have to recall that information. You also need to be able to characterize Obama's leadership style in this round. Based on his actions so far, Obama seems to be a delegation-type president as opposed to a micro manager. Some conservative publications like *The Wall Street Journal* have tried to paint Obama as a micro manager, but that was merely because he tried to tackle a ton of controversial issues at once, which isn't the same as micro managing them. However, an extemper might be able to craft a convincing argument based on their evidence that Obama is a micro managing president because the jury is still out on that subject. I can't stress enough that you can ill-afford to bash Obama or his officials in this round. Yes, you can point out their faults and explain why they are bad but you need EVIDENCE to prove your point. You may hate Obama, but if you don't have facts and just assert things left and right you will alienate your audience quickly. Based on my experiences, most judges in the speech community are liberal or lean left, so that gives you another reason to be careful in this round. Again, this doesn't mean that you have to take a pro-Obama stance on any issues dealing with the competency of his cabinet or on his actions so far, but you need to have evidence that proves your anti-Obama stance, and make sure it's a mixture of evidence from papers of various political persuasions, so you don't come off as a right-wing ideologue.

Issues you may face in this round include:

- The recent controversy over job offers to Joe Sestak and Andrew Romanoff and if the Department of Justice should have an independent inquiry into the matter
- If Robert Gibbs is an effective press secretary for the White House
- The constitutionality of Obama's various czars
- The impact of the Blagojevich trial on the Obama administration
- Complaints that Eric Holder is exercising too much of a role in national security policy
- The ability of the Obama administration to react to a crisis
- Who the best cabinet official is in the Obama administration
- If Obama needs to shake up his economic policy team

### **Topic Area #12: State and Local Politics: Major Elections, Budgets, Welfare, and Immigration Issues**

Whew, this is the longest topic area of the bunch and there are tons of issues that extempers can confront in this round, which I will list below. This is the second domestic politics topic area and this one will be concerned with local races in 2010, notably for governor's seats in states like California, Texas, and New York. Overall, there will be 39 governor's races in 2010 and I would recommend extempers go online and look for a survey of all 39 races. Last year, the University of Virginia broke down many of them but if that report is no longer available you can use Wikipedia to give you a quick overview of the subject. Just don't take any information on there as the ultimate truth unless its cited and you have checked the citation. Since the national economy is in terrible shape it is not surprising that states budgets are in terrible shape as well. If you don't have a "state economies" folder in your file box then you need to spend the next few days putting one together. There have been several articles published this year about states collective budget deficits and how their chances of being bailed out by Washington D.C. are slim

because Washington D.C. is out of money. This topic area used to be referred to as “state and local issues” and was usually a bad topic area to run into. There used to be questions about things like Utah’s water problem and although those questions might exist, with lots of actions on the state level this year that have attracted attention like Arizona’s immigration law, Los Angeles boycott of Arizona over that law, Chicago’s gun ban controversy, etc. there are a lot of issues that extempers can play with. I’d recommend that domestic extempers spend a day going to local papers like *The Arizona Republic*, *The Houston Chronicle*, *The Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, *The Charlotte Observer*, *The Miami Herald*, and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* and seeing if there are any worthwhile stories that should be cut for this round. As a fair warning, this topic area does not usually come up in prelims and I can almost guarantee you that you will hit it in the elimination rounds. Since the elimination rounds only factor into your cumulative score and prelims are discarded this is not a round to take lightly.

Issues that you might face in this round:

- State budget deficits (especially California and Connecticut’s recent credit downgrade)
- Arizona’s immigration policy and spat with Los Angeles
- Texas social studies curriculum and Arizona’s ethnic studies ban
- What role states should play in immigration policy
- The role of sanctuary cities and their impact on national immigration policy
- Water problems for Western states and the Great Lakes
- The Asian carp problem in the Great Lakes
- Governor’s elections in major states like California, New York, and Texas
- 2009 governor’s elections in New Jersey and Virginia and what they say about the political landscape

### **Topic Area #13: U.S. Policies, Programs, and Regulatory Policy**

This topic area encompasses anything and everything about the United States and there’s a reason for that. You know what it is? My prediction, with which I have nearly 90% certainty, is that this is the topic area for finals. If you have seen previous national final rounds (and if you haven’t you should view at least one of them with NFL.tv) you will notice that they are a hodgepodge of U.S. domestic policies dealing with social and economic issues. This is where you run into your questions about poverty, teacher pay (if you didn’t hit that in the education round), Social Security, etc. Since this topic area is so broad there isn’t a lot of advice to offer that hasn’t been offered in the other topic areas so far. All that I can say is that knowing the history of various social programs can greatly help you. If you know when a program was founded, what its initial goals were, and how those have changed you can paint a better picture of if that program has been successful and whether certain modifications need to be made to it or not. Also, keep in mind that political forces and special interest groups like to manipulate Congressional policy so those forces need to come into play if you discuss what legislation Congress will pass in the future concerning a certain policy issue (i.e. financial regulation). I’d also recommend that extempers read 2006 United States Extemp National Champion Colin West’s article about keeping judges attention in the November 2008 edition of *The Ex Files* for tips on handling questions for this round.

Issues that you might face in this round:

- The financial regulation bill
- Reforming unemployment benefits
- Social Security reform
- How America can help those who live in poverty
- If the U.S. should continue foreign aid to other nations because of the economic crisis

- New campaign finance reform
- Comprehensive immigration reform
- Cap and trade legislation
- Future bailouts in the economy for sectors like the news industry