

harms), and the need for lower energy costs (economic harms). The same pattern repeats for almost all policy resolutions; there are usually only two or three possible harm arguments that are specific to that topic. Although you might not know what particular direction their case will take, you can prepare argument briefs to minimize all the likely harm claims.

3. *Think backwards from disadvantages.* The best negative teams win debates with powerful disadvantage arguments. For each of your strategies, select a disadvantage or two that can outweigh the affirmative case. Only after you have decided upon the disadvantage(s) should you then pick the other elements of your strategy. Make sure that every other element of your strategy is consistent with your disadvantage(s).

Suppose you have decided you will defeat a national health insurance case with an unnecessary surgery disadvantage. This disadvantage claims that when health care is free, it is overused, leading to increased health problems for Americans. Thinking backward from this disadvantage, the negative team will argue that when people have to pay something for their health care they will use it sparingly—which actually leads to better health outcomes. If the unnecessary surgery disadvantage is going to headline the negative strategy, you don't want the first negative speaker to argue that uninsured Americans can now be treated free of charge in emergency rooms. Such an inherency argument would destroy the uniqueness of the disadvantage. If cost is already a nonissue for Americans seeking health care, why wouldn't the unnecessary surgery disadvantage already be happening? Similarly, the negative team would have to avoid any disadvantage claim that national health insurance would lead to long waiting lines and denial of health care. The negative team must decide whether national health insurance will lead to too much or too little health care.

4. *Limit the number of strategies.* One of the main advantages of being affirmative is that you are debating the same thing in half of your debate rounds. You naturally become more adept than the other team at arguing on ground that is familiar to you. Learn to bring that same advantage to the negative side as well. As a negative team, you should develop two or three basic strategies that will provide options against any affirmative case. Suppose, for example, you are debating the 2007-2008 resolution that the United States should increase public health assistance to sub-Saharan Africa. After researching this topic, you could have discovered that microfinance is a strategic alternative to government subsidies. Many international actors, including the World Bank and various United Nations agencies, now provide thousands of small loans to persons in developing countries to help them set up businesses and local institutions to