

just show that the counterplan has bigger advantages than the plan? The reason is that such a standard would give no reason to reject the plan. Consider the following situation: The affirmative team proposes to increase federal funding of education claiming that a more highly educated workforce would improve the ability of the United States to compete in the international marketplace. The negative team offers a counterplan proposing worldwide nuclear disarmament, claiming the advantage of avoiding nuclear war. The negative team says that its counterplan has “net benefits” because the advantage of avoiding nuclear war is bigger than the advantage of improving the health of the U.S. economy. Yet this counterplan gives no answer to the question that competitiveness must answer: “Why not do both?” Unless there is an answer to that question, a judge would simply say that the worldwide nuclear disarmament counterplan gives no reason to reject the affirmative plan to increase educational funding. The appropriate way to evaluate net benefits is always to weigh the counterplan alone against the plan plus the counterplan. Would nuclear disarmament alone be more advantageous than nuclear disarmament plus increased education spending? The answer is no; the counterplan gives no reason to reject the plan.

To establish a net benefit, the negative team must present one or more disadvantages that apply to the plan but not the counterplan. In our education example, the negative disadvantage might be federalism—an argument that federal control of education unconstitutionally infringes on the rights of states and localities. Another negative disadvantage might be deficit spending—an argument that any increases in the already large federal deficit will cause serious economic problems. The adoption of the state counterplan could solve the harm of the affirmative case (poor educational performance) while avoiding the federalism and deficit disadvantages. Thus the adoption of the counterplan alone would be more advantageous than the adoption of the plan plus the counterplan.

Some negative teams attempt to establish competitiveness by standards other than mutual exclusivity or net benefits. Philosophical competition is one such standard. The negative team might say, for example, that the plan advocates government regulation whereas the counterplan advocates promotion of private enterprise. But philosophical competition fails to force a choice between the plan and counterplan. There is no reason that competing philosophies can’t coexist; the federal government could (and does) regulate business at the same time that it provides small business loans and otherwise promotes private enterprise.

Resource competition is another example of a weak standard. Consider the previous example of an affirmative plan proposing to increase federal funding for secondary education and a counterplan proposing increased federal funding for elementary education. The counterplan doesn’t compete because it gives no reason to reject the