

National Town Hall Meeting Prep for the Audience

You are about to participate in one of the most important events in the election process. Your job at the national town hall meeting will be to learn as much as possible about the candidates in order to decide who should be elected president.

To prepare for the meeting, read about the positions of all six candidates and review the statistics on the four issues that they will debate. For each issue, identify the candidate or candidates whose positions particularly interest you. Record that information below. Also write a question for that candidate or candidates. Incorporate statistics related to the issues into your questions, where appropriate.

Issue	Candidates and Positions	Questions for Candidates
Foreign policy		
Crime and punishment		
Environment		
Social services for the poor		

Overview of the Candidates

Pat Donnellson (Democrat)

Donnellson wants to focus on diplomacy, rather than military action, to solve global problems. Working with the United Nations and creating a U.S. Department of Peace should be the basis of U.S. foreign policy. Donnellson wants the federal government to provide government-sponsored health care and to help more people qualify for government aid to work their way out of poverty. Donnellson wants to have all cars run on alternative fuels by 2025 and wants to tax gas to pay for research into alternative fuels. Donnellson also wants the United States to adopt a constitutional amendment banning the death penalty, invest in community policing, and outlaw the private ownership of any type of firearm.

Terry Lankan (Democrat)

Lankan wants the United States to help strengthen the United Nations so that the U.S. military will not have to act as the world's police force. Lankan wants to expand government-subsidized health insurance to cover more people and wants universal, full-day preschool and kindergarten for all children living in poverty. Lankan thinks there should be limits on how long people can receive welfare (transitional aid). The government should also offer tax credits to individuals and businesses that reduce carbon emissions or invest in alternative energy research. Lankan also wants to eliminate the death penalty except for crimes of terrorism and does not think individuals should be allowed to own handguns.

Cory Mathews (Democrat)

Mathews believes that the United States should take military action against other nations only if U.S. security is directly threatened or if the country is directly attacked. Mathews wants Medicaid to include any children who do not have health insurance, wants to roll back tax cuts on the wealthiest individuals to fund social programs and education for the poor, and wants a minimum wage hike and more job-training programs. Mathews wants the country to enact tougher environmental regulations and to develop alternative fuel sources. Mathews also wants to increase crime-prevention measures by expanding federal funding for community-policing initiatives.

Taylor Andrews (Republican)

Andrews believes that the United States must fight for freedom and democracy wherever there is a need and should not hesitate to use military action when U.S. interests are threatened. Andrews wants to allow faith-based organizations to use federal funds to provide social services for the poor and plans to enact tax cuts across all income levels and for businesses. Andrews believes that only the current environmental regulations are necessary. Rather than enacting new restrictions, the United States should focus on cleaning up areas like toxic waste sites. Andrews believes that increasing the punishment for crimes through mandatory minimum-sentencing laws will help deter criminal activity.

Casey McMahon (Republican)

McMahon believes that the United States should promote its national interests abroad, even if doing so requires military action. Instead of the federal government providing social services, McMahon wants private companies to administer government-subsidized health care programs and wants to distribute federal funds to the states. States would then be responsible for administering social services. McMahon would like to roll back current environmental regulations and instead offer businesses tax incentives for voluntary compliance with minimum environmental restrictions. McMahon wants to expand mandatory minimum-sentencing laws and retain the death penalty.

J. A. Curley (Republican)

Curley believes that the United States needs to defend the ideals of democracy and freedom wherever they are threatened and should act alone to promote the country's national interests. Curley wants to end government-subsidized health care programs, as well as all federally funded welfare programs. The United States needs to use the country's natural resources, including lands currently protected, in ways that benefit the most people. Curley thinks that the United States should not buy into the theory of global warming. Curley feels that there should be a zero-tolerance policy for criminal behavior and advocates increased penalties, expanded mandatory minimum-sentencing laws, and greater use of the death penalty.

Statistics on the Issues

The statistics below relate to the four issues that the candidates will be debating. Some of the statistics are estimates based on the most recent data available.

Foreign Policy

- Amount spent on U.S. foreign aid, 2010: \$39,400,000,000
- Percentage of U.S. federal budget spent on defense, 2010: 20%
- Defense budget, 2013: \$645,700,000,000
- Approximate amount spent on defense per person, 2013: \$2,047
- U.S. military spending as percentage of GDP, 2010: 4.8%
- World military spending as percentage of GDP, 2010: 2.6%
- U.S. soldiers killed in action, 1993–1999: 6,742
- U.S. soldiers killed in action, 2002–2008: 11,499

Crime and Punishment

- U.S. crime rate, 1960: 1.9%
- U.S. crime rate, 2009: 3.5%
- Percentage of former prisoners rearrested for new crimes within 3 years of being released, 2004–2007: 43.3%
- Percentage of U.S. population incarcerated, 2010: 0.73%
- U.S. incarceration rate ranking among documented countries: 1
- Jails in the U.S.: 1,558
- Percentage of U.S. population who have been victims of assault: 1.2%
- Percentage of U.S. population who have been victims of property crime: 10%
- Percentage of homicides that involve a firearm: 36%
- U.S. death row inmates released after evidence of their innocence emerged, 1973–2012: 142
- Prisoners on death row in the U.S. as of October 1, 2013: 3,126

Environment

- Five hottest years on record, as of 2007: 1880, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006
- U.S. rank as a producer of greenhouse gases: 2
- Percentage of Americans who are “somewhat worried” or “very worried” about global warming: 58%
- Percentage of Americans who believe global warming will cause harm to future generations: 68%
- U.S. oil consumption, as a percentage of total world oil consumption: 20.5%
- Percentage of U.S. community water systems that meet health-based standards, 2010: 92%
- U.S. land held in trust by Federal Government (national parks, national forests, etc.) 640,000,000 acres (30% of U.S. land)
- Percentage of U.S. territory protected as wilderness: 5%
- Percentage decrease in carbon monoxide in the air under the Clean Air Act, 1990–2006: 73%

Social Services for the Poor

- Percentage of Americans living below the poverty line, 2009: 14%
- Percentage of federal budget spent on aid to the needy, 2011: 13%
- Percentage of federal budget spent on Medicare and Medicaid, 2010: 21%
- Percentage of Americans under 18 without health insurance, 2009: 10%
- Percentage of Americans age 18–24 without health insurance, 2009: 30%
- Percentage of federal budget spent on Title I (education program for children in poverty), 2012: \$300 million

