



Contest topics: Please select ONE of these topics.

Climate change

The U.S. pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030. As we shift away from burning fossil fuels toward more renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, the critical minerals needed for various renewable energy technologies are in high demand. Yet, mining poses its own problems for the environment and for communities located near mines. How can the U.S. meet its emissions goal without causing further harm?

- *Understanding of the issue (40 points total)* – Describe the benefits and challenges of a nationwide shift away from fossil fuels. How are critical minerals connected with this shift? How are ecosystems and human communities in the U.S. and around the world affected by the increased push to mine for critical minerals?
- *Problem solving (40 points total)* – What are alternatives to burning fossil fuels? What are ways to address climate change that follow principles of climate justice? Outline U.S. policies or laws would help bring about a fair and just transition away from fossil fuels. How should our Christian and Anabaptist values influence our views on these issues?
- *Letter to Congress (10 points)* – Write a letter to your members of Congress (see tips below) that describes why you feel strongly about the issue you have chosen. Ask them to consider your policy recommendations (maximum 200 words). Please submit as a separate page at the end of your essay.
- *Writing style (10 points)* – Essays will be granted up to 10 points for writing style, grammar, spelling, citation, creativity and coherency.

Immigration

Immigration continues to be a polarizing issue in the United States. But, if we could for a moment ignore the politics and the rhetoric on all sides, what would we find at the heart of the debate? Why do people migrate to the U.S.? What factors influence this decision? What policy changes should we make?

- *Understanding of the issue (40 points total)* – Interview an immigrant in your community. When, why, and how did they come to the U.S.? How does this immigrant's story compare with (1) the common reasons people migrate to the U.S. today; (2) stories of migration in the Bible; and (3) the stories of your ancestors or yourself?
- *Problem solving (40 points total)* – What federal government policy changes should be made to address (1) problems with our current U.S. immigration system; and (2) the root causes of migration to the U.S.? How should our Anabaptist values and Christian faith influence our recommendations?
- *Letter to Congress (10 points)* – Write a letter to your members of Congress (see tips below) that describes why you feel strongly about the issue you have chosen. Ask them to

consider your policy recommendations (maximum 200 words). Please submit as a separate page at the end of your essay.

- Writing style (10 points) – Essays will be granted up to 10 points for writing style, grammar, spelling, citation, creativity and coherency.

Social change

Youth and young adults are increasingly engaged in actions to bring about positive change on issues such as racism, gun violence, wealth inequality, and on global issues such as violent conflict, climate change and migration. How are youth and young adults making their voices heard in schools, campuses and communities? What does it mean to be a peacemaker and change agent in these times?

- *Understanding of the issue (40 points total)* – What local, national, and global issues are youth/young adults currently facing? What tools/actions are being used by youth/young adults to create change? How effective are these actions and why? Describe a youth-led movement (however small or large) in your school or community. What was the issue and how did young people take action? What was the result?
- *Problem solving (40 points total)* – What are some challenges and opportunities for youth/young adult-led activities for social change? What are some ways these challenges can be overcome? How should Christian and Anabaptist values influence the ways young people work for change? Choose an issue that faces society today and outline a very basic plan of action to engage with it. Include a recommendation for government policies or legislation that would help support that change.
- *Letter to Congress (10 points)* – Write a letter to your members of Congress (see tips below) that describes why you feel strongly about the issue you have chosen. Ask them to consider your policy recommendations (maximum 200 words). Please submit as a separate page at the end of your essay.
- *Writing style (10 points)* – Essays will be granted up to 10 points for writing style, grammar, spelling, citation, creativity and coherency.

Guidelines for writing letters to Congress (maximum 200 words)

mcc.org/resources/advocacy-toolkit-us

- **Introduce yourself:** Include details such as grade/age, school, and city. You can include other details, for example, that you are a “Christian,” “follower of Jesus,” or “person of faith.”
- **Describe the problem(s):** Explain, briefly, what problem(s) you are trying to solve. Make clear how the problem is causing human suffering.
- **Make your “ask:”** Be clear what action you are asking the member of Congress to take (e.g., co-sponsor a particular piece of legislation, vote yes on an upcoming bill). Cite the bill number when possible. Explain why you think this will solve the problem.
- **Personalize your message:** Describe how your experience, observations, and/or

Christian faith shapes your viewpoint on this concern. Include connections to your home community when possible.

- **Repeat:** Briefly repeat your “ask” in one short sentence and end with a “thank you,” “sincerely,” or other polite sign-off.

Mail or email your letter to the members of Congress who represent you!

[congress.gov/members/find-your-member](https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member)