THE SOUTH BRUNSWICK CHAPTER *of the* JUNIOR STATE OF AMERICA 5 DECEMBER 2013

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| GENERAL MEETING AGENDA |
| 2:30 PM – 2:50 PM: Information Session |
| Welcome to our fifth general meeting of the year! We will be discussing our upcoming chapter conference, adopt a family initiative and any other pertinent information. |
| 2:50 PM – 3:00 PM: Registration |
| MOD SBJSA Exec Member |
| Please drop off your ID in the cafeteria before heading upstairs to a debate room. Upstairs, an executive member will be collecting dues ($20) from everyone and give everyone an opportunity to purchase food. |
| 3:00 PM – 3:30 PM: Debates |
| *Debate I:Thought Talk MOD* Khamis Isayeva |
| *Thought Talk: How does religion affect the scientific community?*Over the centuries, as time has progressed, mankind inevitably made new scientific discoveries, which reduced the amount of uncertainty and ambiguity in the explanation of life. Even today, scientists are constantly uncovering new facts that change our perception of the world. On the other hand, though, as humans unearth additional scientific explanations as to how the world works, these ideas seem to conflict with certain religious beliefs. The controversy over the theory of evolution best demonstrates the clash between religion and science. Many religious leaders disapprove of the theory of evolution despite numerous facts confirming it. These leaders discourage their followers from even listening to theories of evolution. This may be just one example, but in general, does religion restrict the spread and influence of scientific information? This question can even be further expanded into “Does religion restrict scientific research?” Scientific methods such as stem cell research and abortions are highly criticized by religious figures. Regardless, many religious people and leaders support scientific advancement, and Charles Darwin himself was a Christian. Some people argue that science and religion can coexist to cooperatively answer the questions we constantly find ourselves asking. So the question remains, is religion pressuring society into halting scientific advancement, or can it peacefully reside alongside it? |
| *Debate II: Standard Debate MOD* Caitlyn Fontana |
| *Resolved, that the Common Core Standards be removed from New Jersey’s public education system.*  *PRO:* Harmit Badyal *CON:* Rohan DigheThe Common Core State Standards are a set of expectations and requirements for students that clearly delineate the thresholds of proficiency for students and teachers, predominantly in the areas of language arts and mathematics. New Jersey’s governor, Chris Christie, has relied upon these standards to standardize and centralize the state’s educational system. Laws have been enacted that require public schools to provide pre-tests and post-tests measuring teachers’ abilities to meet the Core Standards. Proponents of these standards argue that they create equality across school districts to ensure excellence in education for all students. They are a tool used by the state to measure the proficiency and skills of teachers, students, and administrations. If teachers receive poor evaluations based on the test results, they can be terminated. Opponents argue that quality of teaching and intelligence of students cannot possibly be measured by a set of standardized tests. Attempting to do so undermines the efforts of teachers to provide their students with authentic, unique, specialized, and creative methods of understanding and learning. These opponents argue that the standardization of education, as well as the strict focus on language arts and math, stifle innovation and deprive students of the comprehensive educational experiences they deserve. Where should the line be drawn between standardized evaluations and creatively unique teaching methods throughout NJ’s public schools? |
| *Debate III: Standard Debate MOD* Najum Junaid |
| *Resolved, that the age at which one can legally buy tobacco should be raised from 18 to 21.* *PRO:* Jay Phansalkar *CON:* Shruty ShresthaThe federal age at which one can legally smoke tobacco is 18, while the age at which one can legally purchase tobacco varies by state. On November 19th, Mayor of New York City Michael Bloomberg signed legislation that raised the purchase age from 18 to 21. This includes the purchase of chewing tobacco, pipes, rolling papers, cigars, cigarettes, and powdered tobacco. Bloomberg claims that this type of legislation is going to save lives. Proponents of the age raise argue that it will steer teenagers away from trying tobacco while in their experimental years. The counterpoint is that they will simply have others buy it for them, but those in favor still argue that this will be an additional obstacle that could prevent them from smoking at the early age of 18, 19, or 20. It is common knowledge that nicotine, the chemical component of tobacco, is highly addictive (psychologically and physically) and extremely dangerous in that it causes a variety of cancers and weakens the immune system. Regardless, opponents of the legislation argue that the restriction will merely cause teenagers to feel a stronger desire to try it, because it could be considered more rebellious and edgy. Moreover, because one is legally an adult at 18, it seems logical that s/he would be able to make personal decisions for him/herself, and buying tobacco is a decision that should be left to the individual, not the government. Furthermore, at the age of 18, a U.S. citizen can go to war, but cannot purchase tobacco or alcohol. Do these types of laws restrict personal liberty and employ a double standard when compared to the other responsibilities of adults in the U.S., or are they a reasonable safety measure? |
| 3:30 PM – 3:35 PM: Voting Session |
| Take a vote on the resolution at hand if applicable and submit best speaker ballots.  |
| 3:35 PM – 3:45 PM: Closing Session |
| Head downstairs to the cafeteria for the announcement of best speakers and any final reminders. |

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