

# Got Interns?

## Consider Home-school Debate Students

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During the summer, interns abound at think tanks. Come fall, winter and spring it is another story. In market-speak, to maintain a more stable year-round supply, SPN state-focused institutes should consider accepting high school-age, home-school debate students as interns.

There are three reasons why these younger-than-usual prospective interns would be a positive addition to an institute. First, speech and debate programs train students in research and public policy analysis. Second, in my experience, home-school debaters (and their parents) usually favor markets and limited government. Finally, home-school students are generally mature for their age. As for the fall, winter and spring, to cite the obvious, home-school students are available year-round and their think-tank internship can count toward government and civics requirements.

Free-market organizations have long been involved with traditional-school debate programs. Beginning in the 1950s, Bettina Bien Greaves, of the Foundation for Economic Education assembled and distributed market-oriented articles on each year's national debate topic. I took over FEE's debate program for a few years beginning in 1998, and am again helping FEE develop high school and home-school debate programs. For two decades, the Mackinac Center in Michigan has sponsored workshops for public school debaters, providing the market response to the annual topic. Since 1996 the National Center for Policy Analysis has provided market-oriented topic analysis on its [www.debate-central.org](http://www.debate-central.org) site.

A new market-oriented debate league is training a small army of public policy debaters. The National

Christian Forensics & Communications Association ([www.ncfca.org](http://www.ncfca.org)) was founded in 2001. The league was originally a program of the Home School Legal Defense Association.

My first contact with home-school debate was like a dream-come-true for we who advance the principles of liberty. In 1999 an email arrived asking about a debate topic I thought impossible. I asked, who is debating this topic? "We are homeschool debaters!" was the enthusiastic reply. Their national topic called for

abolishing the income tax - Resolved: that the Sixteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution should be repealed. I doubt this has ever been considered for a public school debate topic.

Since 2000 I have been giving presentations on economics to home-school debaters, first at FEE, and since 2003 with Economic Thinking, a program of the nonprofit E Pluribus Unum Films, in Seattle. In late 2007 FEE again became interested in speech and debate and has thus far sponsored eight home-school seminars, with plans to sponsor another 30 in the coming school year. The workshops are popular; in January nearly 250 students and parents attended FEE's home-school seminar in California.

Other think tanks are getting involved. During this academic year The

Grassroot Institute of Hawaii sponsored two workshops for home-school debaters. Last July the Independent Institute in California sponsored a home-school debate workshop

Economic Thinking and FEE gain leverage by working with teachers and



home-school parents nationwide. Dozens of home-school clubs across the country have offered to host seminars; and most of the participating students and their parents would be interested in SPN member events in their area. And internships.

A recent *Washington Times* online article noted the incentives debaters have to learn economics: "As my fellow debater ... said 'Economic Thinking makes abstract economic theory into realistic applicable debate.' He and I both have an incentive to listen to Mr. Rehmke: We want to win." Intelligent students who are interested in liberty, who want to win, are who you want as interns.

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