

Task 1

America is often described as being in a “cost of living crisis.” The federal minimum wage has remained at \$7.25/hour since 2009, while the cost of housing, food, and other necessities has risen. Some argue that wages haven’t kept up with inflation, making it more difficult for workers to afford basic needs. Raising the minimum wage could help workers better meet these challenges. However, others argue raising the minimum wage could lead businesses to increase prices or eliminate jobs.

You are part of a federal task force reviewing this issue. Your group must decide whether to recommend raising the minimum wage, keeping it the same, or exploring other solutions. Think about how the cost of living has changed since 2009. How could raising wages help workers, but also how it might impact businesses and the overall economy. Please be prepared to defend your recommendations.

Task 2

During President Trump’s first term, NAFTA was renegotiated into the USMCA, which he initially hailed as a win for American workers. However, as he begins his second term, he has called it a failure and is seeking to renegotiate the agreement again. As citizens of a border state, the nature of these trade agreements impacts your state significantly.

As members of Minnesota’s legislature, you must analyze how the USMCA has benefited Minnesota and explore ways it could be improved to better serve the state. How has the agreement affected industries, jobs, and the economy in Minnesota? What adjustments could be made to strengthen these benefits while addressing any potential drawbacks? What role, if any, should the state government play in national trade negotiations? Why?

Task 3

The rise of global, low-cost e-commerce platforms like Temu and Shein has significantly impacted businesses and workers across the United States. These platforms provide affordable goods, but their low prices are often made possible by outsourcing production to countries with lower labor costs and standards. This has increased competition for local businesses, especially in rural communities, where small retailers

and manufacturers are struggling to compete. As members of the Minnesota State Legislature, you are tasked with analyzing how these changes are affecting your communities.

How might local businesses in your district be impacted by the competition from foreign retailers? Do you think the state government has a role in regulating this marketplace? If so, what steps can the state take to support businesses and workers? If not, why?