

# No-Theory-First Shell

## Interpretation:

Teams should not read theory in a round where theory *hasn't* already been read, meaning teams should never read theory *first*.

## Violation:

They read a theory shell at the top of \_\_\_\_.

## Standards:

### ***First*** → ***Norm-Setters***

Public forum traditional debate has seen an explosion in participation due to its argumentation style, real-world relevance, and expanding access. Unfortunately, the theory they try to normalize isn't something you would know about without the help of coaches or camps, since other activities do not debate in-round rules. This biases the ability to successfully debate theory towards the privileged, and being a precondition to norm setting, means the norms set are at best paternalistic and at worst actively self-serving.

### ***Second*** → ***Those Pushed to the Side***

Norm setting through theory only sets norms for those plugged into the national circuit and those with enough experience to be familiar with progressive arguments. For people just joining debate, they should not lose on rules or norms they never knew even existed.

## Voter:

### ***Access*** →

Prioritize access over any questions of the quality of debate. ***Three*** warrants.

- a. The substantial benefits someone gains from four additional years of debate participation is more impactful than any marginal benefits they gain from improving the quality of debate in a single round.
- b. Minimizing entry barriers maximizes the various perspectives being included in discussions on how to improve debate as a whole.
- c. Expanding access dictates who participates in debate. On the other hand, prioritizing quality creates an insular, ivory-tower activity, which only benefits wealthy debaters from large-schools, predisposed to debate.

Their shell should be an R.V.I.

Four Warrants:

- 1) Since theory debates are questions regarding the norms of the activity, if they lose the theory debate, you should vote them down to discourage their model of debate.
- 2) If R.V.I.s do not exist, just by running theory, they have two paths to the ballot, while we only have one. This, on net, destroys fairness.
- 3) If they can win off of theory, they should be able to lose off of it as well, since theory is a reciprocal debate argument. This makes theory a back and forth debate, which means teams engage more heavily in the discussion of norms. With NO R.V.I.s, one side is always incentivised to keep the round focused on substance, which disrupts meaningful dialogue regarding norms.
- 4) If they can't lose on theory, nothing is stopping them from running it to just waste our time or gain another path to the ballot with *zero* consequences. In our world, when theory becomes a risk, teams save theory arguments to instances of true abuse.