SAMPLE STUDENT SPEECH (CASE)

What follows is an example of a Lincoln-Douglas debate case. The affirmative speech was prepared by Seth Halvorson of Apple Valley High School, Minnesota. The resolution was “Resolved: in the United States, the right to beg on public transit systems is a warranted infringement on the right of privacy.” The negative case would follow the same format.

The Affirmative Case

As Daniel Webster stated, “Justice is the great interest of man on earth. It is the ligament which holds civilized beings together.” And because the ligament that ties society together is one that upholds democratic and ethical standards, I stand resolved: In the United States, the right to beg on public transit systems is a warranted infringement of the right to privacy.

Before I begin, I’d like to define a few key terms:

*Beg:* “to ask for alms or charity” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary, p. 133*).

*Warranted:* “something serving as a reason, justifiable, right.” (*Webster’s Third World Dictionary, pp. 2577-2578*).

*Infringement:* “impair” (*Webster’s Third World Dictionary, p. 1116*).

*Right to privacy:* “the right to be left alone” (Judge Louis Brandeis, *Olmsted v. United States*, 1928).

*Public transit system:* transportation for the use or benefit of all, such as subway, bus, or airport systems.

The value premise I will uphold is justice, because as Justice Lucilius A. Emory stated, “There is no virtue as truly great and godlike as justice.”

The criterion I offer for weighing the resolution is the preservation and protection of justice, defined as that which upholds democratic and/or ethical standards. In order for an act to be warranted, we must determine whether it preserves and protects justice in terms of democratic and/or ethical standards.

To substantiate my value premise and criterion, I offer that the right to beg on public transit systems is a warranted infringement of the right to privacy.
My First Contention

1. It upholds democratic standards. This is true for two reasons.

   A. Inherent in begging is the supremacy of First Amendment rights. Our democratic standards hold the highest regard for freedom of speech. These standards hold true for the beggar’s speech.

      As Helen Hershkoff and Adam Cohen explain in the February 1991 issue of Harvard Law Review, “...like solicitation for charities, begging involves communication of information, the dissemination and propagation of views and ideas, and the advocacy of causes” (p.905). As they state, “It provides information about poverty and the lives of poor people” (p.899). This sends the message that there are people in the community who need help.

      Begging is speech, and with the outstretched hand and the beggar’s plea comes a message that is political and social in nature – it speaks about society’s treatment of the poor.

      This becomes even more significant because the beggar has no other effective means of expression available. No publishing house knocks on their door; no television stations allow their views to be aired; they have no place to live, so they can’t even vote – that’s the way this infringement is warranted in the public transit system. It is there that the fringes of society come into frequent, extensive contact with the mainstream.

      In weighing this resolution in terms of the first amendment, we can’t advocate the right to privacy …, in other words, the right to live in a human bubble. We don’t have the right to be so detached from the disadvantaged and society’s problems that we feel we can ignore them the minute we step foot inside the door of
the public transit system. Whether in the streets or in the public transit system, the supremacy of the First Amendment must be upheld.

B. A second reason that the right to beg is warranted in this area is that the beggar’s speech is vital to democratic decision making. [affirmative then continues explaining this subpoint of first contention, including sources/research with citations].

My Second Contention

2. It upholds ethical standards. This is true for two reasons.

   A. Inherent in the right to beg is the critical nature of survival. As Richard Rogers explains in The Invisible Homeless, 1988, the very survival of beggars is dependent upon the right to beg (p. 59). For example, according to a study by Burt and Cohen of the Urban Institute, the homeless are going hungry (p.41). [Additional discussion continues for this subpoint.]

   B. It upholds social responsibility. As members of a society, we are a community. With membership in a social system comes social responsibility. Supporting the right to beg over the right to privacy in the public transit system upholds this responsibility. [affirmative then continues to explain this subpoint, including sources/research with citations].

In closing, in America, we cannot continue to stigmatize the poor. Being poor is not a crime. It does not constitute a boundary line at the door of the public transit system. In the public transit system, the beggar’s speech brings the two together in a forum of understanding.

Because we can see that through the affirmation of the resolution justice is preserved and protected on a political and ethical level, I stand to affirm the resolution.

[Attach, on a separate page, your Works Cited (bibliography) for the case. Be sure it follows MLA-style formatting.]