I affirm, Resolved: In a democracy, voting ought to be compulsory.

**Observation 1:** The resolution is not normative but descriptive. This is because the resolution lacks a specific agent of action. The framers could easily have written the resolution in a way that, for example, the US should adopt compulsory voting, but this is not how the resolution is written. Thus, the resolution is asking us the proper descriptive way to design a democracy. This is real world because many emerging democracies are engaged in debating exactly how to design their governments. This is also consistent with a common use of the word ought as ought can mean moral but it can mean prudent like you ought to wear a raincoat. As the resolution lacks an agent, and as democracy is not a normative concept, but a design of government, using ought as prudent is more appropriate as democracy is a tool of governance. It makes little sense to argue that a tool has a moral obligation. A hammer cannot be moral but it can be reasonably argued that a hammer ought to be made of steel. Implications:

1. This interpretation constrains us both as neither of us can make normative arguments and can we make huge advantage versus disadvantage offensive ground. I am more constrained as I can only defend compulsory voting, the negative can defend any alternative that could be more democratic or they can just show compulsory voting is somehow undemocratic.
2. You can reject all normative arguments the nc might make as irrelevant.

**I value democracy** based on the phrase ‘in a democracy’ in the resolution as this phrase implies the teleological end the object of evaluation, compelled voting, must establish or achieve. So the resolution is asking us how to build a democracy. As this interpretation is accurate, this is key to predictability since the resolution is the only thing both debaters know before the round. Unpredictable interpretations lead to unfair debate as it puts one debater at an advantage. Fairness is key to the ballot because absent fairness, you could say embracing structural unfairness in debate will make us more likely to accept structural unfairness in society since we have accepted unfairness, ensuring injustice pervades. So we must answer how best to design a democracy.

**In design, form must follow function.**

Erin Marshall, “Form and Function: Past, Present, and Future” VLST Sector C. Senior Thesis Paper. May 2010

Expanding on this point, Sullivan says that in order to determine what form the building should take, one must consider how that building will be used, dividing it into specific functions which vary according to location within the building. He outlines these: a basement, for boilers, pipes and other mechanical features; the first floor will likely be used for commercial space, shops, and also needs a central entrance which is easy to locate and navigate; the floor above this for other commercial space; above that one, an inordinate number of floors dedicated to office spaces, uniform in nature and compartmentalized; and an attic space for additional mechanical necessities. Thus, it would naturally follow, says Sullivan, that the first two floors will be considerably loftier in height than the floors above it for office spaces, the office floors need not be different from each other, and so on. In short, the form of the building should be derived from how the building and its various components will be used. If designed in this manner, the final form will “just make sense,” as do things we see in nature.

So we must determine the function of a democracy before we can determine its form.

**The function of a democracy is that it is government by the will of the people.**

America.gov, “Democracy in Brief,” IIP Digital (State Department’s Bureau of International Information Program), http://photos.state.gov/libraries/korea/49271/dwoa\_122709/Democracy-in-Brief\_kor.pdf

Democracy may be a word familiar to most, but it is a concept still misunderstood and misused at a time when dictators, single-party regimes, and military coup leaders alike assert popular support by claiming the mantle of democracy. Yet the power of the democratic idea has prevailed through a long and turbulent history, and democratic government, despite continuing challenges, continues to evolve and flourish throughout the world. Democracy, which derives from the Greek word demos, or people, is defined, basically, as government in which the supreme power is vested in the people. In some forms, democracy can be exercised directly by the people; in large societies, it is by the people through their elected agents. Or, in the memorable phrase of President Abraham Lincoln, democracy is government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Freedom and democracy are often used interchangeably, but the two are not synonymous. Democracy is indeed a set of ideas and principles about freedom, but it also consists of practices and procedures that have been molded through a long, often tortuous history. Democracy is the institutionalization of freedom. In the end, people living in a democratic society must serve as the ultimate guardians of their own freedom and must forge their own path toward the ideals set forth in the preamble to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world.

This means that the fundamental difference between democracy and any other form of government is that within a democracy the government is said to be an expression of the will of the people. Prefer this definition because 1) It comes from the US Department of State meaning experts in governance. 2) It makes intuitive sense as voting cannot be a democracy as people vote in North Korea but the country is a dictatorship. Additionally, it cannot be protecting rights as a monarchy or oligarchy might protect rights much more effectively but they would not be a democracy. So for a democracy to actually be a democracy it must be formed in such a way as to best reflect its function of reflecting the will of the people. This is done by voting as voting is by definition a means by which preference is made known.

So the criterion for the round is maximizing voting as this maximizes the expression of preference and thus ensures form follows function.

**Sofie Marien supports the idea that maximizing voting is essential to the function of a democracy.**

Marien, Sofie, “Is Compulsory Voting a Good Idea? The Consequences of Compulsory Voting in Belgium,” Parti Rep, October 2007

This unequal participation can result in unequal influence. Participation is an important mean by which citizens can communicate their preferences to the government. If a part of the citizenry does not participate, government will not be aware of their preferences and will not take their preferences into account. To state it differently, inactivity on the part of the citizens can lead to inactivity on the part of the government. This generates a problem if active citizens find different problems important and have different policy preferences than those who are not active. Politicians seeking re-election will focus on the issues that are important to the groups that are already taking an active part in the political process and will not pay attention to the issues that are important to the citizens that do not participate in politics (Verba and Nie 1972). At last it is difficult to interpret the silence of the abstainers. Why do citizens decide to abstain? Is it because they are satisfied with the way things are going or is their silence an expression of protest? (Hill 2002).

So we must maximize voting.

**Observation 2: The plan. I defend the Belgian system of compulsory voting.**

Maria Gratschewexplains the plan “Voter Turnout in Western Europe,” The Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, http://www.idea.int/publications/voter\_turnout\_weurope/upload/chapter%203.pdf

Belgium, so far as is known, was the first country in the world to introduce compulsory voting on the national level. This happened in 1893, long before universal suffrage was introduced. Compulsory voting was introduced to avoid upper-class citizens putting pressure on uneducated or poor citizens not to vote in the elections. It applies to all elections, national and municipal as well as elections for the European Parliament. A non-voter has the opportunity to explain his or her abstention and if the reason for not voting is accepted the case is not taken any further. If it is not accepted the non-voter faces a fine of 5−10 EUR for the first offence (c. 5−10 USD as of 10 September 2003). The fine for a second offence is higher, between 10 and 25 EUR, and if a voter fails to vote four or more times within a period of 15 years he or she is excluded from the electoral register and disenfranchised for ten years. If the non-voter is a civil servant, another sanction applies as well: he or she is disqualified from promotion.

This plan is theoretically legitimate because 1) this is the oldest system of compulsory voting in existence, it is common in the literature and so very predictable. 2) Defending a plan ensures meeting the criterion is grounded in facts and not the abstract theory that compulsory voting might actually solve. 3) It is a punitive system and so is topical. 4) It locks me into an advocacy so I cannot be a moving target meaning the negative knows what to attack ensuring negative ground. Thus if the Belgian system maximizes voting then it is the proper form for the function of democracy and you can vote affirmative.

I contend the Belgian system maximizes voting.

1. **Citizens in Belgium feel a moral obligation to vote.**

Briggs, Jacqui, & Celis, Karen, “For and Against: Compulsory Voting in Britain and Belgium,” Social & Public Policy Review, University of Plymouth Press, 2010

Indeed, one might expect states that consider voting as a civic duty to adopt compulsory voting. Evidence for this can be found in Australian public opinion surveys that show that voter turnout would stay rather high in case voting would no longer be compulsory and in the Belgian case where high turnout is not due to the state sanctions: there are hardly any actions against absentees. As Hill explains, compulsion has never really bothered Australians, “… probably a function of the fact that our relationship to the state has normally been a friendly one, often characterised as either Benthamite, utilitarian or social democratic in nature. Most Australians regard voting as a fairly undemanding civic duty and tend to accept the compulsion to vote as both reasonable and legitimate.” (2001: 130). A feeling of moral obligation and tradition are also the main explanations for high turnout in Belgium (Billiet 2001: 11).

**This is supported by Birch who explains that Belgium’s citizens feel a civic duty to vote.**

Birch, Sarah, “Full Participation,” United Nations University Press

Stengers (1990: 105) writes that once compulsory electoral participation was introduced in Belgium it became a way of life, and compliance was due more to social norms than to actual sanctions, which were in any case only sparingly applied; he notes that ‘it is more a matter of habit than of obligation (1990: 105). Belgians simply got used to voting and took it for granted that if an election were held, they would be expected to turn up at the polls. This view is conﬁrmed by Pilet, who reports that in Belgium in 1985, only 62 of 450,000 non-voters were punished (Pilet, 2005: 20). Similarly, Lieven de Winter and colleagues point out that in 1999 the chances of being subject to a ﬁne were only 1 in 10,000, and they note that ‘Given its scarcely civic behaviour in many domains, and given the tradition of impunity before the law, the massive electoral participation of Belgians is surprising to say the least (de Winter et al., 2003: 58). The fact that turnout in Belgian elections remains well over 90 percent must therefore be accounted for by other factors and should not be taken as an indication that the law is strictly enforced.

This means that the existence of compulsory voting maximizes voting as it encourages citizens to see voting as a duty.

1. **Repealing compulsory voting would send the opposite message as studies suggest that if the Belgian government repealed compulsory voting, turn-out would drop.** Marien, Sofie, “Is Compulsory Voting a Good Idea? The Consequences of Compulsory Voting in Belgium,” Parti Rep, October 2007

In short, compulsory voting increases turnout. Reversing this argument, several studies have found that an abolishment of compulsory voting in Belgium would lead to a decrease in turnout. Table 1 shows the results of the Belgian election studies (1991-2003) regarding the question “if compulsory voting was abolished in Belgium would you still go to vote?”. On average forty per cent answered that they would always vote. 14.0 per cent would vote most of the time and 12.9 per cent would vote sometimes. On average a fourth of the respondents would never go to vote ranging from 30.5 per cent in 1991 to 21.5 per cent in 1999. We can conclude that after the abolishment of compulsory voting in Belgium the turnout rate would drop by at least 20 per cent.

This means a lack of compulsory voting laws would undermine the idea of voting as a civic duty and would lead to a significant drop off in voting meaning voluntary does not maximize voting and so this is another reason to affirm.

1. **The Belgian system maximizes voting and reveals voter preference sufficiently.**

Marien, Sofie, “Is Compulsory Voting a Good Idea? The Consequences of Compulsory Voting in Belgium,” Parti Rep, October 2007

The IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) calculated that in countries where a system of compulsory voting is enforced the turnout level is more than 15 percent points higher than in countries where citizens are not obliged to vote (Pintor & Gratschew 2002). In Belgium the average turnout level of all the parliamentary elections from 1945 till 2001 is 84.8 and therefore Belgium is ranked in the top 20 countries in the world with the highest turnout. The system of mandatory voting thus increases the turnout rate to a level that is higher than the average level of turnout in the world. The Belgian level of voter participation is similar to Scandinavian levels of turnout, in spite of the fact that the Scandinavian countries have higher scores than Belgium on all other political participation variables (Hooghe and Engelen 2007). As a consequence there is no major silence that needs to be interpreted. Satisfied citizens can support the government. Dissatisfied citizens can support the opposition, cast a protest vote, leave the ballot blank or spoil the ballot (Hill 2002).

This means the Belgian system maximizes voting because it sufficiently reveals preference and so you can affirm.

1. **The Belgian plan is efficient and easy.**

Marien, Sofie, “Is Compulsory Voting a Good Idea? The Consequences of Compulsory Voting in Belgium,” Parti Rep, October 2007

The Belgian government however tries to make voting as easy as possible. Eligible Belgian citizens do not need to register but they automatically receive an invitation to vote with the recommended hour and place where they have to vote that is as close as possible to the residence of the citizen. A large number of voting booths are provided and Election Day is always on Sunday when citizens normally do not have to work.

This means that compulsory voting allows citizens to vote and express their opinion in the simplest and easiest way possible and so you can affirm.