

Arthur Vandenberg:

Putting America First Through Conflict and Compromise

Kyle Korte and Claire Parish

Senior Division

Group Website

Original Words: 1,200

Media: 1:40 minutes

Process Paper: 500 Words

Arthur Vandenberg was a central figure in post World War II America but is often overlooked. We discovered him individually; one of us first took interest in researching the United Nations and soon came across a United States senator from Grand Rapids who played a key role in its creation, while the other stumbled upon Hendrik Meijer's recently published book on Vandenberg. Both of us, because of our interests in international affairs and involvement in Model United Nations, became attached to the idea of a local senator who had shaped world peace after World War II. Although we both planned to write Individual Papers, we ultimately decided to work together rather than to compete against each other.

We began our research at the Mary Idema Pew Library at Grand Valley State University. There, we checked out books and ordered more from the Michigan E-Library. We read and exchanged these books over the next couple months. We also visited the main branch of the Grand Rapids Public Library, where we read the *Grand Rapids Herald* on microfilm. The majority of primary sources, however, were at the Bentley Historical Library on the University of Michigan campus. It was only open for five hours on weekends, but we worked the entire time that was available to us. We made two trips before the regionals competition and one of us returned during a family vacation to Ann Arbor. In addition, we listened to Vandenberg biographer Hendrik Meijer speak about Vandenberg at the Grand Rapids Public Library, arrange an interview with him, and listen to another speech at the Grand Rapids Economic Club. We also interviewed Lawrence Haas, another Vandenberg biographer and a Senior Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Center, through email.

We both have participated in National History Day but have only written papers in the past. One of us had considered creating a website before, and with papers restricted to individuals, we decided to take this chance to branch out. Although the word limit for websites is only half the length of a paper's, it gave us an opportunity to use quotes, photographs and

videos to further develop our position. The format of a website also allowed us to change fonts and colors to better integrate our sources and ideas. In addition, we were able to work separately online while still collaborating together to edit the project.

Arthur H. Vandenberg was an agent of compromise during a time of great conflict. He put American needs ahead of political motivations even when he was forced to turn against previous ideals. He strove for cooperation during various international conferences despite the conflicts that usually characterized such events, and he was willing to compromise with both enemies and allies in order to shape a global peace after World War II. However, he recognized the limits of compromise, standing firm despite conflict when he reached these limits. Vandenberg's compromises triumphed over conflict, and molded the post-war world to protect American interests while ensuring a greater peace.