

Political Issue B: Quality of Life

It has been reported that Athenians have used money from the Delian League treasury to beautify Athens and support the arts. This treasury money was meant to be used for protection of the Delian League's citizens, but the Athenians claim to have used it to improve all citizens' quality of life. The representatives from Athens and Sparta will now explain why each feels the quality of life in their city is better.

Athens

The quality of life in Athens benefits all members of the Delian League. It's true that we have used some of the money from the Delian League treasury to rebuild parts of our city that were destroyed during the Persian Wars. However, there were good reasons for this. In the first place, it is the duty of all Greeks to ensure that the Gods are properly honored. Therefore, we had to restore the many beautiful temples that the Persians destroyed. In addition, spending money on cultural improvements benefits both Athens and its allies. Our spectacular monuments, works of art, and educational institutions draw visitors from across Greece and lend prestige to the Delian League. Citizens of our member city-states are welcome to visit our beautiful city and to take part in its exciting, intellectual life. Furthermore, we used only 1/60 of the total league revenues for rebuilding, a very small amount. This amount did not decrease the security of the league members, who are more than adequately protected by our combined military forces. Finally, we are sure that if you come to Athens, you will be inspired to redesign and rebuild your city too, and improve the quality of life of your people.

Sparta

If you choose to join our Peloponnesian League, you will never have to worry that we will use your money to selfishly beautify our own city. We have no interest in building huge statues or temples, or wasting money on the arts. Besides, the arts only benefit the privileged class. We Spartans reject all outward displays of wealth. We will not allow anything to distract us from achieving our highest goal—maintaining a powerful military force that can protect our city-state and our allies. Our educational system, unlike the one in Athens, includes only subjects that will produce courageous warriors. When Spartan boys are seven years old, we send them to a military school. They learn to read, write, and use weapons. These are useful skills that will help them become good political leaders and soldiers. Our military experience makes Sparta better suited to protect the rest of Greece from foreign attack, and from Athenian imperialism. We Spartans are proud of our simple and practical way of life. Join our league and follow our example, and you will be proud, too.

Critical-Thinking Question B: Now that you have heard the two viewpoints on quality of life, do you want to remain with the league you chose, or change your alliance? What other city-states would also benefit by being a member of the league you chose?