



THE PUBLIC AGENDA

(1 hour over two days)

OBJECTIVE

Students gather and classify media coverage to determine national, state, and local issues.

MATERIALS

Newspapers and news magazines

GET READY

- ✓ Obtain copies of a week's worth of newspapers and news magazines to form a classroom resource center for students.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ For homework one night, assign your students the job of finding three articles from three different sources (newspapers or magazines). The articles should be about issues that the American people think the federal government should do something about.
- ✓ Have your students bring their articles to class. Give them time to share their articles with each other in small groups. They should specify what issue each of their articles is about and why they think these issues are important to Americans.
- ✓ Have the small groups of students sift through the additional newspapers and magazines you collected. They should continue to look for the major issues.
- ✓ Have the groups list as many important issues as they can think of. They can mention issues that their articles addressed or issues they came across in the articles you provided.
- ✓ Make a list of the major issues on the board by having your students share their lists of the issues. Students should be careful not to repeat issues already mentioned by others.

- ✓ Vote by a show of hands to determine the 10 issues the class considers the most important.
- ✓ Have your students compare their major issues list with one compiled by www.publicagenda.org. Have them go to the Web site and click on the "Issue Guides" section. They will find the major issues listed for the last year as well as the major issues for the current year.
- ✓ Have your students compare their list to the lists on the Web site.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *Different agenda items belong to different levels of government. Are there issues that belong on the state or local agenda instead of the national one? Are there "crossover" issues that belong on all three? What are they?*
- ★ *Are there items which you, as high school students, would like to place on the national agenda? How could you help to get them on the agenda if they are not already there? Is this a part of activism?*
- ★ *What could we as a class do now to influence the local/national agenda?*

MORE!

Students can continue to monitor changes and developments in the national agenda by posting articles, concerning the 10 areas chosen, on a National Agenda Bulletin Board.

VOTE QUOTE

"Political parties serve to keep each other in check one keenly watching the other."
– Dwight D. Eisenhower