

Mock Legislative Hearing

Source:

Written by Margaret Fisher, Institute for Citizen Education in the Law, Seattle, WA. Staff at the Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) updated the lesson in 2012. For more information, contact AOC Court Services, 1206 Quince Street SE, PO Box 41170, Olympia, WA 98504-1170. For an electronic copy of this lesson, or to view other lesson plans, visit Educational Resources on the Washington Courts Web site at: www.courts.wa.gov/education/.

Objectives:

1. Students will express their opinions about a current issue.
2. Students will explain and justify their opinions.

Grade Level:

Grades 9-12

Time:

One class period (approximately 50 minutes)

Materials:

Copies each of [Handouts](#) 1-5

Procedures:

1. **Tell students** they will be playing the roles of legislators, concerned citizens, and experts in a mock legislative hearing about a proposed solution to the problem.
2. Note: The classroom teacher should prepare students for this lesson by explaining the legislative process in Connecticut and the purpose of a legislative hearing.

Provide some background information on the issue. **Explain status quo.**

Proposed Law: If the proposed amendment to the Connecticut Constitution passes, the restrictive language regarding voting laws will be removed. However, Connecticut General Statutes will remain in effect unless changed by the legislature. The citizens in favor of the proposal will be offering suggested changes to the current law regarding absentee ballots and early voting options. Citizens testifying against the proposal will be arguing for keeping the current laws as they are.

Tell students that you will need approximately six to seven legislators on the committee that is considering this law, and the rest of the class will be divided into citizens testifying in favor and against the proposed law.

3. **Ask for volunteers** or select six-seven students to be legislators. Divide the rest of the class into four groups – two groups of citizens in favor of the proposed law and two against. Pass out Handout 1, a copy of the proposed law, to the legislators. Also give Handout 2 to one of the citizen groups in favor of the law and Handout 3 to the other group in favor. Give Handouts 4 and 5 to the two groups opposed to the law. (Each citizen group has a different individualized role.)
4. **Tell students** that they have 15 minutes to prepare for the hearing. Their instructions are on the Handouts, but review them briefly before the students break into groups. (See handouts.)
5. **Arrange the room with a table in the front** for the legislators and chairs for those who will be testifying. Remind students that each speaker will have two minutes to speak.
6. **Turn the hearing over to the chairperson** of the committee, who should call the hearing to order and ask for testimony from the citizens.
7. **After all testimony, ask the committee to debate** the bill in front of the rest of the class and to vote on the bill. They may also make amendments. Advise students that they will have 10 minutes to debate and amend the bill.

HANDOUT 1

Instructions for Legislators

First, select a chairperson. The chairperson is responsible for seeing that each committee member's views are heard during committee meetings, for chairing the hearing, for calling witnesses to testify, and for announcing the committee's decision. During the hearing, the chairperson should make sure that speakers do not take more than their allotted time and keep order.

Committee members should review the proposed law below and prepare questions for the witnesses whose names are listed below. Each legislator should have at least one question prepared to ask one witness.

Each witness will have up to two minutes to speak, plus time for questions.

1. As a legislator, how would you vote on this law? Be ready to explain your answer.
2. What other arguments can you think of either for or against this proposed law?
3. Can you think of other possible solutions to this problem? Should you amend the law?

HANDOUT 2

Citizens in Favor of Proposing Changes to the Current Laws

Select one or two spokespersons. You may create an additional role if you wish. Work together to prepare a two-minute argument that best expresses your views and any additional arguments you can think of to support why this law should be passed.

1. What other arguments can you think of either for or against this proposed law?
2. Can you think of other possible solutions to this problem?

HANDOUT 3

Citizens in Favor of Proposing Changes to the Current Laws.

Select one or two spokespersons. You may create an additional role if you wish. Work together to prepare a two-minute argument that best expresses your views and any additional arguments you can think of to support why this law should be passed.

1. What other arguments can you think of either for or against this proposed law?
2. Can you think of other possible solutions to this problem?

HANDOUT 4

Citizens Against Proposed Changes to the Current Laws

Select one or two spokespersons. You may create an additional role if you wish. Work together to prepare a two-minute argument that best expresses your views and any additional arguments you can think of to support why this law should be passed.

1. What other arguments can you think of either for or against this proposed law?
 2. Can you think of other possible solutions to this problem?
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HANDOUT 5

Citizens Against the Proposed Changes to the Current Law

Select one or two spokespersons. You may create an additional role if you wish. Work together to prepare a two-minute argument that best expresses your views and any additional arguments

What other arguments can you think of either for or against this proposed law?

Can you think of other possible solutions to this problem?