Selecting a Public Policy Problem

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*Project Citizen* is a public-policy, process-based program to help students grades 3-12 learn about the political process and to develop a commitment to active citizenship.

- Provides the knowledge and skills required for effective citizenship participation.
- Involves students in learning about and improving their communities.
- Develops an understanding of the importance of citizenship participation.
A study by the LBJ School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas found that students who participated in *Project Citizen*:

- developed a greater understanding of the complexity of public policy
- developed a commitment to active citizenship
- learned important communication skills
Identify possible problems for class study
Students identify possible problems

Issues may range from local to global, such as:

• A school policy
• An unsafe street corner
• Teenage vaping
• Unemployment during the pandemic
• High costs of pharmaceuticals
• Income Inequality
• Environmental degradation
• Climate change
Select a problem to study

- Have your students gather some basic information about each problem
- For each problem, determine whether it is important and whether a solution is feasible
Is it important?

• You are bothered by something that is not being done right, needs to be changed, or deserves the attention of policy-makers.

• Are there others who also believe that the problem is an important one?

• Are important values or resources threatened?

• Who created this problem and, equally important, who can do something about it?

• Consider four factors: **scope, intensity, duration** and **resources**.
Is it important? Are human rights involved?

Our ideal of public education is one in which students are engaged in reflection and action that constantly encourages them to move America toward a “truer” democratic society, in which all people have enforceable, inalienable rights.
Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948
Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Art. 1—All human beings are free and equal
Art. 2—No distinction as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status
Art. 3—Right to life, liberty and personal security
Art. 4—Freedom from slavery
Art. 5—Freedom from torture, or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
Art. 6—Right to recognition as person before the law
Art. 7—Right to equal protection of the law
Art. 8—Right to effective remedy by competent national tribunals
Art. 9—Freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention or exile
Art. 10—Right to fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal
Art. 11—Right to be considered innocent until proven guilty
Art. 12—Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy
Art. 13—Freedom of movement
Art. 14—Right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution
Art. 15—Right to nationality
Art. 16—Right to marriage and family
Art. 17—Right to own property
Art. 18—Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
Art. 19—Freedom of opinion and expression
Art. 20—Freedom of peaceful assembly and association
Art. 21—Right to take part in government
Art. 22—Right to social security
Art. 23—Right to work, free choice of employment, equal pay for equal work, join trade unions
Art. 24—Right to rest and leisure
Art. 25—Right to adequate standard of living for health and well-being of self and family
Art. 26—Right to education
Art. 27—Right to participate in cultural life of the community
Art. 28—Social and international order in which rights can be fully realized
Art. 29—Duties to the community
Human Rights

• The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

• Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is not itself enforceable, international treaties protecting individuals and groups against human rights abuses are enforceable by requiring reparations.

• HRE USA offers a series of lesson and ideas about teaching human rights at https://hreusa.org/
Is it feasible?

Is there enough information available?

Is the problem narrow enough for students to be able to address it?
Is it important/feasible?

- Violence on school campuses
- Budget cuts in school funding

Consider:
- Scope?
- Intensity?
- Duration?
- Resources at stake?
- Human rights involved?
- Information available?
- Sufficiently narrow?
Select a problem to study
Gather Information

- Identify sources of information
- Public policy makers and interest groups
- Telephone calls
- Interviews
- Letters
- Libraries, newspapers, websites
## Federalism and Separation of Powers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Legislative</th>
<th>Judicial</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Government</strong></td>
<td>President</td>
<td>Congress: Senate and House of Representatives</td>
<td>• U.S. Supreme Court</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Appellate Courts</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Federal District Courts</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>State Government</strong></td>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>State Legislature: Senate and Assembly</td>
<td>• NJ State Supreme Court</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• NJ Appellate Courts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• NJ Superior Courts (by County)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>County Government</strong></td>
<td>County Executive</td>
<td>County Board of Commissioners</td>
<td>No separate courts (see above)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>President</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Municipal Government</strong></td>
<td>Mayor</td>
<td>Town council</td>
<td>Municipal courts (limited jurisdiction)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Board</strong></td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>School Board</td>
<td>Administrative Office of the Courts—Commissioner of Education</td>
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# Federalism and Separation of Powers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Air pollution</th>
<th>Gender Pay discrimination</th>
<th>Homeless</th>
<th>Gun control</th>
<th>Immigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Government</td>
<td>State and Federal</td>
<td>State and Federal</td>
<td>Local, state and federal</td>
<td>State and Federal</td>
<td>Federal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>EPA DEP</td>
<td>State Legislature and Governor Congress and President</td>
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Project Citizen materials are available:

• For middle school (yellow) and high school (blue) classes
• From the Center for Civic Education
• https://store.civiced.org/projectcitizen.html
Showcase video on Classroom Close-Up

http://link.brightcove.com/services/player/bcpid616303324001?bctid=671097321001
- **Project Citizen** lends itself to inquiry-based learning, on-line student work as well as interdisciplinary work

- It takes a minimum of 6 weeks, or one day a week for four months, to do a project

- If you have any questions, contact Arlene Gardner at arlenega@sas.rutgers.edu or Robert O’Dell at ro205@scarletmail.rutgers.edu