

Lesson 7

Citizen's Role

Citizens must be cognizant of what their rights are, how the Court has acted to protect them, and why they must be engaged politically and civically to support the Constitution and its just enforcement.

Objectives: Evaluate the role of the citizen in influencing the selection of Supreme Court justices.

Handouts: Various news articles about interest groups: (1) *Both Sides Step Up to the Battle*, Washington Post; (2) *Politicization of the Confirmation Process*, NewsHour; (3) *Big Biz*, CNN/Money; (4) *Liberal Advocacy Group*, Washington Post.

Extension: See factcheck.org for verification of special interest groups' claims. Example: "NARAL Falsely Accuses Supreme Court Nominee Roberts," www.factcheck.org.

A. Daily warm-up and current events alert!

Check National Constitution Center's website for relevant and timely current event news alerts. www.constitutioncenter.org.

B. Brainstorm

Who are some of the interest groups that care deeply about the selection and nomination? Consider issues such as: privacy, church v. state, minority rights, death penalty, assisted suicide, property rights, free speech, prisoner's rights, national security, students rights.

C. Citizen's Role

Where does the citizen fit in the nominating process? Why does it matter?

Article II, Section 2(2), the article about the powers of the President says: "He shall have Power, ... by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate, shall appoint Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, Judges of the supreme Court, and all other Officers of the United States..." What is the connection between this provision and the role of citizen?

The handouts include two articles about various groups weighing in on the process, Handouts 1 and 2. The next two handouts are examples of articles describing the (perceived) positions of conservatives and liberal positions, Handouts 3 and 4, respectively. Students may review them as homework, small groups, or scan as a group activity.

“Stand up for your rights” strategy where every student gets up and talks about how citizens can make a difference.

After hearing from each other, students write a letter to their U.S. Senators. Include what you would ask the nominee if you were on the Judiciary Committee.

Contact information:

Hon. Ron Wyden
United States Senate
516 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0001

E-Mail:

<http://wyden.senate.gov/contact/>

Hon. Gordon Smith
United States Senate
404 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-0001

<http://gsmith.senate.gov/webform.htm>

D. Role of the "Fourth Estate"

Learn how the media impacts the process. Invite a journalist to class or ask students to interview a journalist about role and responsibilities.

E. Vocabulary

Fourth estate, opinion polls, political action committees (PACs)

F. Extensions / Journal Entry

Extensions

Pick any concerned group and research its position on the nomination e.g People for the American Way, Progress for America, Alliance for Justice.

Look at media coverage of the Supreme Court. What effect does it have on your opinions?

Verification claims made by special interest groups. Example: "NARAL Falsely Accuses Supreme Court Nominee Roberts" where an attack ad says he supported an abortion-clinic bomber and excused violence. In fact, Roberts called clinic bombers “criminals” who should be prosecuted fully. August 9, 2005. Modified: August 12, 2005.
www.factcheck.org.

Homework / Journal Entry

Write an editorial or op-ed about the nomination process for Supreme Court justices. Should there be changes?

Or, write about an issue you feel strongly about. How does the Supreme Court play a role in that issue?