

YOUTH SUMMIT 2006

*The Ballot Initiative: Too Much or Too
Little Democracy?*

Lesson Plans for Middle and High
School

A production of
CLASSROOM LAW PROJECT

In cooperation with
Oregon State Bar
US Department of Justice – Youth for Justice Program

CLASSROOM LAW PROJECT

2006 Youth Summit The Ballot Initiative: Too Much or Too Little Democracy?

GOALS

Teachers will have the opportunity to:

- Increase a student's knowledge about the initiative process as a component of direct democracy and democratic discourse.
- Help students explore the positive and negative aspects of the initiative as a style of citizen lawmaking.
- Develop a student's skills in reasoning using current events as they relate to the initiatives on the November ballot, in reading and researching information about ballot measures, in speaking as an expert on initiatives, in listening to and respecting the ideas and opinions of others, and in analyzing competing ideas.
- Provide a forum whereby students can talk to each other and to adult resources about the initiative process.
- Affect student's dispositions by considering changes or additions to current laws governing the initiative process.

As a result of using this curriculum, *students* will be able to:

- Explain the reasons for studying the initiative process.
- Contrast the ballot initiative process to the Oregon legislative process.
- Relate the current debate on initiative law making to its historic roots.
- Identify important initiatives in the U.S and Oregon and understand why these initiatives were promoted.
- Articulate the pros and cons of the initiative process.
- Take and defend a position on the benefits and problems surrounding the initiative process.
- Evaluate the role that money plays in the initiative process.
- Locate and use websites to identify political advertising techniques and campaign finance issues.
- Gain familiarity with Oregon's 10 ballot initiatives.
- Engage in a structured academic controversy about one of Oregon's ballot measures.
- Develop and practice skills needed for an in class hearing and participate in the summit.

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A note to teachers about the lessons....

1.) Structure of the lessons:

We have kept a consistent format to each lesson. We always outline the objectives and student goals at the beginning of each lesson, and then list the included handouts. Next, we suggest a warm-up activity that references the lesson before it and attempts to give students a sense of continuity and connection between lessons.

Next, we urge (well, Susie will likely beg) you to start lessons with a current events connection. We have listed the link to the Oregonian elections page on each lesson, and we think a quick visit there before you teach is essential. Connecting our content to the daily happenings will bring it to life and make it more relevant to kids. Following the current events alert are various activities. Most of these are designed to be hands-on, interactive, group activities.

At the conclusion of most lessons you will find "Extension Activities" which are optional, often higher level activities. Use these if they are appropriate for your students and if time permits. Lastly, in each lesson we include a vocabulary list and a homework/journal suggestion. Having students keep a running list of words throughout these lessons will help them establish the vocabulary they need to talk about this topic. The homework/journal suggestions are brief and ultimately a nice way for students to reflect on their work.

2.) A bit of a disclaimer:

The topic of the ballot initiative is a rich, dense topic. We are guilty of trying to squeeze quite a bit of information into every lesson. Please approach each lesson with the idea that it is **unlikely** you could get through each and every activity. The lessons are designed for you to exercise your judgment – modify, tinker and change what you need to in order to make them work for your class. We have tried to signal topics that are more supplemental by putting them under the "Extension Activity" heading. You will notice that some portions of lessons are more suited for upper level students, while the bulk of the lessons are designed to be accessible for both middle and high school. Again, use your discretion to cut and paste what portions of lessons will work best for your kids. While time suggestions can be helpful, we refrained from adding them because we imagined so much variation among classes.

3.) State Standards:

Many standards from many different disciplines apply, such as public speaking, reading comprehension etc. Some of the Oregon Social Science Analysis – Civics and Government standards are particularly on point:

Understand and apply knowledge about governmental and political systems, and the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

* Understand the civic responsibilities of U.S. citizens and how they are met.

* Understand how government policies and decisions have been influenced and changed by individuals and groups....

➤ Identify and give examples of actions citizens can take to influence government policy and decision making.

➤ Identify and give examples of how groups and organizations can influence government policy or decisions and describe how these actions can lead to such influence.

http://www.ode.state.or.us/teachlearn/real/newspaper/Newsater_Section.aspx?subjectcd=ss

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