

Teacher Notes



How a Bill Becomes a Law: The Process of Legislation

Activity 2 What Should Become a Law?

Activity Overview

In this activity, students investigate what should become a law. At the beginning of this activity, the teacher gives the students ten different prospective laws. The students must answer, in secret ballot format, whether they would favor this legislation or oppose it. The students then interview

Activity at a Glance

- ◆ **Subject:** Social Studies
- ◆ **Subject Area:** Civics/Government
- ◆ **Category:** The Federal Government
- ◆ **Topic:** How a Bill Becomes a Law
- ◆ **Grade Level:** 9 - 12
- ◆ **Prerequisites:** Students should be familiar with the different branches of government and their role in our society. Students should also understand that these branches of government all share in the responsibility of creating a more fair and democratic society.
- ◆ **Total Teaching Time:** 90 minutes

Materials

- ◆ TI-83 Plus
- ◆ TI External Keyboard
- ◆ LearningCheck™, NoteFolio™, and CellSheet™ applications installed on each TI-83 Plus handhelds
- ◆ Computers with Internet access
- ◆ TI-Navigator™ classroom network (optional)
- ◆ TI Connectivity Cable, unit-to-unit cables
- ◆ Resource File: **YourVote.edc**, **Votes.8xv**
- ◆ Student Work Sheets: **Your Vote** (optional), **Researching Laws**
- ◆ Teacher Guide: **Discussion Points**

other voters (students) to determine their stance on this new legislation. When this poll is completed, the students independently research what groups of people influence the legislative process. Once the class reconvenes, the teacher examines how the students voted compared with all of the voters. To complete this activity, the teacher leads a “substantive conversation” about the prospective laws and the groups that influence these laws.

Tip

This activity requires that students access the Internet for research purposes. If this access is not possible, then the teacher will have to limit some of this research to the textbook.

This activity also incorporates the TI-Navigator™ classroom network into the classroom. If this system is not available, the teacher will have to collect work sheets for some activities as outlined in the directions.

Directions

Before the Activity Begins

1. Make sure each student has a TI-83 Plus loaded with both the LearningCheck™ and CellSheet™ applications.
2. Make enough copies of the Student Work Sheet, **Researching Laws**, so that each student can have a copy.
3. Using the TI Connectivity Cable or the TI-Navigator™ classroom network, transfer the AppVars (files), **YourVote.edc** and **Votes.8xv**, to each student.

Note: If the TI-Navigator™ system is used, students will vote electronically on whether certain issues should become laws. These votes will be collected electronically for review. To do this, the students will use the LearningCheck™ file, **YourVote.edc**, to vote on the laws. If the TI-Navigator™ system is not available, then the teacher can use Student Work Sheet, **Your Vote**, to let the students vote on paper. These votes will be collected and tabulated manually.

If possible, reserve time in the school’s computer lab to enable the students to use the Internet to research different viewpoints on the different issues they are to research.

During the Activity

Begin the activity by instructing students to either open the **YourVote.edc** file on the TI-83 Plus or by handing out the Student Work Sheet, **Your Vote**. This part of the activity is done individually. Make sure the students do not share their answers with others. Tell them that the entire class will discuss this later.

When they have completed their vote on the issues contained in the file or work sheet, pass out the Student Work Sheet, **Researching Laws**. Review the instructions contained on the sheet, and answer any questions the students may have regarding this assignment.

At this point, allow the students to use the computers and Internet to research various positions on the laws proposed on their ballot.

After the Activity

About five minutes prior to the end of class, use the TI-Navigator™ system to transfer student responses to the **YourVote** file. If the TI-Navigator™ system is not available, then have the students turn in their completed **Your Vote** work sheet.

Review the students' progress on the assignment. The students should conduct their interviews as homework. Use the instructions that follow this section to review the use of the CellSheet™ application.

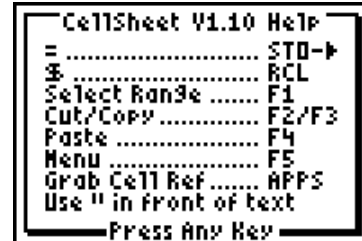
Inform the students that the class will have a substantive conversation about the issues contained in the vote as well as the different positions on each of the issues. During this conversation, the class will be videotaped. To successfully complete this task, students must come prepared for this conversation and add insight to the group discussion.

CellSheet Instructions

1. Press **[APPS]** to view the application menu. Use the **▲** or **▼** keys to highlight CellSheet. Press **[ENTER]** to start the CellSheet™ Application.



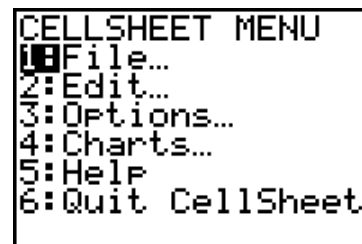
2. Press **[ENTER]** (or any key) to continue past the information screen.



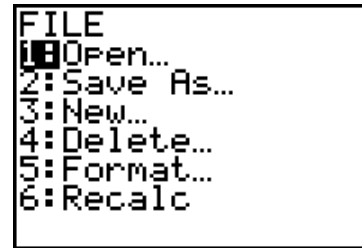
3. Press **[ENTER]** (or any key) to continue past the CellSheet™ Help screen.

VOTE	A	B	C
1	ISSUES	MALE Y	FEMAL
2	ISSUE1		
3	ISSUE2		
4	ISSUE3		
5	ISSUE4		
6	ISSUE5		
A1: "ISSUES			[Menu]

4. If the **VOTES** file does not display, press **[GRAPH]** to display the CellSheet™ Menu.



5. Select **1:File** by pressing **1** or **[ENTER]**, and then select **1:Open**. Highlight **VOTES** from the list and press **[ENTER]** to open it.



Day 2

Refresh the class' memory about the homework and prior day's activities.

Have each student use their CellSheet™ file to produce a graph of their interview results.

Note: If you have the TI-Navigator™ classroom network, collect the students' research result files.

Have the students meet in their groups from Activity 1. Students within their groups should compare their research results graphs with one another. Each group should compare their results and note any surprises. For example:

- ◆ Among the group members, which proposed laws did most students favor?
- ◆ Among the group members, which proposed laws were most evenly split?
- ◆ In looking at each other's research results, which law or laws were voted down that perhaps individuals in the group were sure would be adopted?
- ◆ How did the research results differ from the students' results?

For Teachers with the TI-Navigator™ classroom network:

While the groups meet and discuss their findings, teachers with the TI-Navigator™ system should compile the students' file results for display and discussion. When the class is reconvened, display the compiled results, if possible, for the students to view. If no projector is available to show the results from the computer, then the teacher can print several copies for the students to view and share.

When the groups have discussed their findings, reconvene the class. If compiled class results are available from the teacher's computer (and TI-Navigator™ system), display a compiled graph for the class to view. Briefly compare and contrast the results from the group versus the overall results obtained by the class. This brief discussion should lead into the general discussion promised at the end of the first day's work. Use the Teacher Guide, **Discussion Points**, to help start the discussion and keep it substantive.

Student Work Sheet

Name: _____

Your Vote

Date: _____

Directions:

The following is a list of possible laws that could be introduced into the United States Congress. Your task is to vote yes or no for each law. Do not share your answers with others. We will discuss them at a later time.

<i>Yes</i>	Should women be eligible for the draft?	<i>No</i>
<i>Yes</i>	Should water from the Great Lakes be utilized for dryer, western states?	<i>No</i>
<i>Yes</i>	Should male and female sports receive equal funding?	<i>No</i>
<i>Yes</i>	Should the drinking age be lowered to 18 years of age?	<i>No</i>
<i>Yes</i>	Should marijuana be legalized in all states for medicinal purposes?	<i>No</i>
<i>Yes</i>	Should affirmative action be utilized in universities and the workplace?	<i>No</i>
<i>Yes</i>	Should all males and females have mandatory military service after high school?	<i>No</i>
<i>Yes</i>	Should school prayer be adopted in schools?	<i>No</i>
<i>Yes</i>	Should schools require uniforms for students?	<i>No</i>
<i>Yes</i>	Should Native American mascots be utilized for sports teams?	<i>No</i>
<i>Yes</i>	Should smoking be banned in public restaurants and bars?	<i>No</i>

Student Work Sheet

Researching Laws

Name: _____

Date: _____

The purpose of this project is to allow you to see the different viewpoints on laws. Earlier in this class, each student decided in a secret ballot whether certain issues should become a law. At the conclusion of this lesson, we will evaluate whether the majority of people that you interview would agree with you.

1. Using the Internet as a resource along with your textbook, try to find out what groups affect the legislative process outside of the government. Who decides what is important enough to be a law?
2. Find at least four groups that heavily influence laws that are created in the United States. For each group, record the name of the group, the purpose of the group, and legislation that they typically fight for in the government.

Students should also review Web sites about special interest groups and lobbyists. Sites that may be useful are: www.commoncause.org and www.opensecrets.org/lobbyists/index.asp. Use a new NoteFolio™ file to record your notes during your research.

Homework

1. As homework, find ten people to interview about the laws that we briefly discussed. Interview five females and five males for each law that is labeled. Using your TI-83 plus and the CellSheet™ program, **Votes**, you will keep a running total of the votes. In this CellSheet file, there is one row for each prospective law, and for each of these issues, there are six categories:

Male Yes (Votes)

Female Yes (Votes)

Male No (Votes)

Female No (Votes)

Total Yes (Votes)

Total No (Votes)

This data is to be entered by you and ready for class tomorrow.

2. At the end of the day, check your CellSheet™ program to make sure you have all information recorded correctly. You do not have to interview new people for every law.
3. Also, interview at least one adult and try to find out what types of laws they would create. Make sure you ask why they would create this type of law, and how they would go about doing this. Record this information in a NoteFolio™ file.

4. Plug your TI-83 plus into the Navigator system so the instructor can download the results of your interviews. Skip this step if there is no TI-Navigator™ System.
5. Create a bar graph chart on your TI-83 plus.
6. As you and your classmates look at the data, try to determine if there are any surprises that arose from this interview. For example, was a law voted down that you were sure would be adopted?

Teacher Guide

Discussion Points

The following is a list of questions that an instructor can use to help focus students on a substantive conversation.

1. What was the most surprising result for any of the laws that we examined?
2. Why do you think people favored or opposed this law?
3. What were some of the reasons that you voted for or against this law?
4. Does it make a difference if the voter is male or female?
5. Does it make a difference when the voter is not from Michigan?
6. What are some of the groups that influence legislation?
7. What are some of the strongest public interest groups?
8. Where do these public interests groups get their funding?
9. How do you think public interest groups influence legislators?
10. How can a normal citizen influence legislators?
11. What type of legislation would you like to see in Congress?

These questions are to serve as a starting point and may not be utilized at all if the class is focused on this topic.