



**FLORIDA JOINT CENTER  
FOR CITIZENSHIP**

**UNDERSTANDING ISSUES THROUGH MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES**

**SS.7.C.2.13** Examine multiple perspectives on public and current issues.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Lesson Summary.....2**

**Suggested Student Activity Sequence .....3**

**Student Activity Sheets & Reading Materials.....5**

**Sources .....7**

**Answer Keys.....8**

**Civics Content Vocabulary .....10**

**Essential Teacher Content Background Information .....11**

## *Lesson Summary*

### ***Essential Questions***

What are some multiple perspectives on current issues? How might these perspectives impact participation in the political process?

### ***NGSSS Benchmark***

SS.7.C.2.13 Examine multiple perspectives on public and current issues.

### ***Florida Standards***

LAFS.68.RH.1.1

LAFS.68.RH.1.2

LAFS.68.RH.2.46

LAFS.68.WHST.2.4

LAFS.68.WHST.4.10

LAFS.7.SL.1.1

LAFS.7.SL.1.2

LAFS.7.SL.1.3

### ***Overview***

In this lesson, students will learn about public and current issues through multiple perspectives and will also consider how these perspectives might shape participation in the political process.

### ***Learning Goals/Benchmark Clarifications***

- Students will identify groups that influence public perspectives.
- Students will use scenarios to understand the reaction or perspective of different groups.
- Students will examine how multiple perspectives shape participation in the political process.

### ***Benchmark Content Limits***

- Items will not ask students to make value judgments concerning public and current issues.

### ***Civics EOC Reporting Category***

Reporting Category 3 – Government Policies and Political Processes

### ***Suggested Time Frame***

- One 45-50 minute class period

### ***Civics Content Vocabulary***

- editorial, interest group, issue, nonprofit organization, perspective, political party

### ***Instructional Strategies***

Comparing multiple perspectives

Collaborative learning

### ***Materials***

Computer with projector to display lesson activity sheets

Student activity sheets:

- Issue 1 – Defense Spending
- Issue 2 – Arctic National Wildlife Refuge & Oil Drilling

### *Suggested Student Activity Sequence*

- To begin this lesson, write or project the following heading and statements on the board:

School Uniforms	
A.	By having uniforms in school, my students will focus on their academics and behavior will improve.
B.	My store would benefit if the local schools required uniforms because I have the only store in town that sells what the students would be required to wear.
C.	If the school requires uniforms, I will have to spend extra money from my paycheck so that my child has the right clothes for school each day.
D.	I definitely don't want school uniforms; my friends and I want to wear what we want at school

- Instruct students to look at each statement and independently determine who might make each statement.
- Have students share out and discuss the potential sources of each statement (A – a teacher or principal, B – a local business owner, C – a parent, D – a student).
- Pose the following questions for discussion: “How would you feel if the school decided to have uniforms? If your principal (or school board) was in the process of deciding if the school should have uniforms, would you want him or her to consider your opinion before making the decision? Why or why not? Why might it be important for the principal to get feedback from more than one source before he or she makes a decision?” Teacher note: If your school already requires uniforms, ask students if they think multiple perspectives were taken into consideration when the decision was made.
- Ask students to think about and share some national issues that they are aware of. Examples might include: the economy, jobs, the national budget, education reform, homelessness, housing issues, and health care.
- Pose the following questions for discussion: “Who do you think might have opinions on these issues? Are there individuals or groups that would make their views known in order to have an impact on the public? If one group or individual made their perspective known about an issue, what kind of impact might this have on the political process? Would other groups or individuals possibly get involved based on this perspective?”
- Make a list on the board of groups or individuals that have opinions on issues. Some examples might include: political parties, interest groups, concerned individuals, the media, nonprofit organizations, etc. Teacher note: Be sure to explain the difference between special interest groups and nonprofit organizations to students, see the Civics Content Vocabulary section for definitions.
- Pass out copies of the “Issue 1 – Defense Spending” student activity sheet. Explain to students that they will look at four different perspectives on the issue of defense spending as a whole class.
- Explain to students that in 2017, 15% of the national budget was used for defense. This spending includes the Defense Department and the military (<http://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/policy-basics-where-do-our-federal-tax-dollars-go?fa=view&id=1258>).
- Complete the activity as a whole class, analyzing each statement and instructing students to take notes on the activity sheet to summarize each perspective. Teacher note: Be sure to point out the source of each statement, explaining to students that included in this activity sheet are statements from two political party platforms, a top defense leader, and someone from a news network.
- Instruct students to write a statement on their activity sheet about what they can conclude about the issue based on the provided perspectives.
- Pose the following questions for discussion: “Based on what you know about the two major political parties in the U.S., why do you think each party has this perspective? What about the Deputy Defense Secretary? Mr. Zakaria works for one of the largest cable news networks, how might his opinion influence people and shape participation in the political process? Overall, how do these four different opinions shape participation in the political process?” Instruct students to take notes on their activity sheet in the impact section.

13. Place students into pairs and pass out copies of the “Issue 2 - Arctic National Wildlife Refuge & Oil Drilling” student activity sheet. Instruct students to work with their partner to complete the activity sheet.
14. Briefly explain to students that the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is protected land in Alaska. There is an on going discussion in the U.S. about whether or not to open part of the land so that oil drilling can occur.
15. Provide time for the pairs to complete the activity.
16. Pose the following questions for discussion: “After viewing two issues through four different perspectives, what do you think about the issues? Why do you think political parties, nonprofit organizations, interest groups and the news media make their opinions on issues known? How does this impact participation in the political process?”
17. Checking for Understanding (Formative Assessment):  
Instruct students to write a well-crafted informative response to the following prompt:  
Prompt  
Using what you have learned during the Defense Spending and Arctic National Wildlife Refuge activities, explain how multiple perspectives on issues can shape participation in the political process.

## Issue 1 – Defense Spending

	<b>Perspective 1</b> 2012 Democratic Party Platform <i>Political Party</i>	<b>Perspective 2</b> 2012 Republican Party Platform <i>Political Party</i>
Text	In our current fiscal environment, we must also make tough budgetary decisions across the board – and that includes within the defense budget.	... severe, automatic, across-the-board cuts in defense spending over the next decade—of the nation’s military budget would be a disaster for national security...
Summary		
	<b>Perspective 3</b> Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter <i>U.S. Defense Department</i>	<b>Perspective 4</b> CNN Editorial, Fareed Zakaria <i>News Network</i>
Text	"It has enough money in it overall, but ... it does not have enough operations and maintenance money," Carter said. "This year there is a drastic shortfall in the money we need to do training and training in turn impacts readiness and readiness is our capacity to fight in other places than Afghanistan."	For too long, Congress has fattened the Defense Department, while starving foreign policy agencies. Robert Gates himself once pointed out that there are more members of military marching bands than servicemen in the Foreign Service. The result is a warped American foreign policy. It conceives of problems entirely in military terms...
Summary		
Conclusion about the issue _____ _____ _____		
How might these perspectives shape political participation? _____ _____ _____ _____		

## Issue 2 – Arctic National Wildlife Refuge & Oil Drilling

	<b>Perspective 1</b> 2012 Democratic Party Platform <i>Political Party</i>	<b>Perspective 2</b> 2012 Republican Party Platform <i>Political Party</i>
Text	Building a clean energy future means that new exploration and production needs to be approached safely and responsibly. Democrats are committed to balancing environmental protection with development, and that means preserving sensitive public lands from exploration, like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.	We support... opening the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) for exploration and production of oil and natural gas... We support this development in accordance with applicable environmental, health and safety laws, and regulations.
Summary		
	<b>Perspective 3</b> Resource Development Council <i>Special Interest Group</i>	<b>Perspective 4</b> Defenders of Wildlife <i>Nonprofit Organization</i>
Text	There are compelling national economic and energy security reasons for opening the 1002 [coastal plain area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge] area to responsible oil and gas development, including a safe and secure source of energy to the nation, create hundreds of thousands of jobs throughout the country...	One way to help preserve the refuge’s most vulnerable species is to limit oil and gas exploration and development and other activities that disturb wildlife and destroy habitat on the coast plain tundra. Drilling in...most of the refuge’s coast plain, should be permanently prohibited.
Summary		
Conclusion about the issue _____ _____ _____		
How might these perspectives shape political participation? _____ _____ _____		

## ***Sources***

<http://www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/policy-basics-where-do-our-federal-tax-dollars-go?fa=view&id=1258>

Issue 1 – Defense Spending Student Activity Sheet: 2012 Democratic Party Platform, Accessed February, 2013: <https://www.democrats.org/party-platform>, 2012 Republican Party Platform: <http://www.gop.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/2012GOPPlatform.pdf>, Accessed February, 2013 Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter: <http://www.military.com/daily-news/2013/02/12/odierno-sequestration-would-extend-deployments.html>, CNN Editorial by, Fareed Zakaria: <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/08/09/cut-defense-spending/>  
Issue 2 - Arctic National Wildlife Refuge & Oil Drilling Student Activity Sheet: Democratic Party Platform, Accessed February, 2013: <https://www.democrats.org/party-platform>, 2012 Republican Party Platform: <http://www.gop.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/2012GOPPlatform.pdf>, Accessed February, 2013; Resource Development Council: <http://www.akrdc.org/alerts/2011/anwrcepalert.html> Accessed February, 2013, Defenders of Wildlife: <http://www.defenders.org/>

## Issue 1 – Defense Spending – **Sample Answers**

	<b>Perspective 1</b> 2012 Democratic Party Platform <i>Political Party</i>	<b>Perspective 2</b> 2012 Republican Party Platform <i>Political Party</i>
Text	In our current fiscal environment, we must also make tough budgetary decisions across the board – and that includes within the defense budget.	... severe, automatic, across-the-board cuts in defense spending over the next decade—of the nation’s military budget would be a disaster for national security...
Summary	The Democratic Party believes, due to the economy (fiscal environment), budgets might need to be cut in all areas, including the defense budget.	The Republican Party believes that severe cuts in defense spending would create a national security issue.
	<b>Perspective 3</b> Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter <i>U.S. Defense Department</i>	<b>Perspective 4</b> CNN Editorial, Fareed Zakaria <i>News Network</i>
Text	“It has enough money in it overall, but ... it does not have enough operations and maintenance money,” Carter said. “This year there is a drastic shortfall in the money we need to do training and training in turn impacts readiness and readiness is our capacity to fight in other places than Afghanistan.”	For too long, Congress has fattened the Defense Department, while starving foreign policy agencies. Robert Gates himself once pointed out that there are more members of military marching bands than servicemen in the Foreign Service. The result is a warped American foreign policy. It conceives of problems entirely in military terms...
Summary	The Deputy Defense Secretary that the U.S. Defense Department has enough money, but there is not enough money for training and operations. This lack of money impacts the military’s ability to be ready to fight.	Fareed Zakaria believes that the there is an overall foreign policy issue. More money is given to the Defense Department than other agencies that deal with foreign policy. This creates a foreign policy issue where the first response becomes military action.
<p><b>Conclusion about the issue</b>            Defense spending is a complex issue that involves different concerns. Pros and cons have to be taken into account in order to make a decision.</p>		
<p><b>How might these perspectives shape political participation?</b>            This issue deals with the U.S. economy and the national budget, the Defense Department, other foreign policy departments, and national security. Groups or individuals with an interest in these areas might be inspired to participate and voice their perspective on this issue.</p>		

**Issue 2 – Arctic National Wildlife Refuge & Oil Drilling – Sample Answers**

	<b>Perspective 1</b> 2012 Democratic Party Platform <i>Political Party</i>	<b>Perspective 2</b> 2012 Republican Party Platform <i>Political Party</i>
Text	Building a clean energy future means that new exploration and production needs to be approached safely and responsibly. Democrats are committed to balancing environmental protection with development, and that means preserving sensitive public lands from exploration, like the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.	We support... opening the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) for exploration and production of oil and natural gas... We support this development in accordance with applicable environmental, health and safety laws, and regulations.
Summary	Democratic Party feels that exploring new energy sources needs to be dealt with safely and responsibly. The Democratic Party feels that the ANWR should not be open for oil drilling.	The Republican Party feels that the ANWR should be open to oil drilling and it should be done while making sure that all laws are followed.
	<b>Perspective 3</b> Resource Development Council <i>Special Interest Group</i>	<b>Perspective 4</b> Defenders of Wildlife <i>Nonprofit Organization</i>
Text	There are compelling national economic and energy security reasons for opening the 1002 [coastal plain area of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge] area to responsible oil and gas development, including a safe and secure source of energy to the nation, create hundreds of thousands of jobs throughout the country...	One way to help preserve the refuge’s most vulnerable species is to limit oil and gas exploration and development and other activities that disturb wildlife and destroy habitat on the coast plain tundra. Drilling in... most of the refuge’s coast plain, should be permanently prohibited.
Summary	The Resource Development Council feels that the ANWR should be open for oil drilling because it will provide a safe and secure source of energy and will create jobs for the country.	The Defenders of Wildlife believe that in order to preserve wildlife and nature, oil drilling should be banned.
<p>Conclusion about the issue                      Oil drilling on the ANWR is a complex issue that involves different concerns. Pros and cons have to be taken into account in order to make a decision.</p>		
<p>How might these perspectives shape political participation?                      This issue deals with energy, job creation, and the environment. Groups or individuals with an interest in these areas might be inspired to participate and voice their perspective on this issue.</p>		

### *Civics Content Vocabulary*

<b>Word/Term</b>	<b>Part of Speech</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>editorial</b>	noun	an opinion based item generated by the editor or editorial board of a newspaper or other media.
<b>issue</b>	noun	a subject that is under debate by two or more parties
<b>nonprofit organization</b>	noun	a group organized on a local, national or international level to perform a variety of services related to an issue or variety of issues; funding goes toward the issue instead of making a profit
<b>perspective</b>	noun	point of view
<b>political party</b>	noun	an organization that tries to get political power by electing members to public office so that their political ideas can become laws or policies
<b>special interest group</b>	noun	a group of people who are concerned with a particular issue and who try to influence legislators to act in their favor, also known as an interest group

## *Essential Teacher Content Background Information<sup>1</sup>*

### **This section addresses the following issues:**

1. Discussion of Current Events and Controversial Issues
2. Multiple perspectives in educational settings
3. Multiple perspectives in the classroom
4. Conclusions

### **1. Discussion of Current Events and Controversial Issues**

Political controversy is ever-present in democratic nations, and that is as it should be, since controversy is an intrinsic part of the political process and is necessary for the very survival of democracy. But civic learning often fails to reflect or include such controversy. As a result, young people may not learn how to engage productively with the issues and events that animate our political system today and will continue to do so in the future. To ensure that school-based civic learning is authentic, we need to dramatically increase the attention given to discussing controversial political issues—meaningful and timely questions about how to address public problems. Students should learn that such issues are fundamental to the nature of a democratic society, that they can be discussed in civil and productive ways, that there are strategies for engaging in such discussion, and that these issues deserve both their own and the public’s attention.

We have even more evidence now than we did a decade ago that high-quality and inclusive discussion of important current issues and events is a critical component of civic learning. Such discussion helps young people develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for effective political and civic engagement, and it also teaches them intrinsically significant content. Research has added a sophisticated picture of how the most skilled teachers promote these discussions and how students experience and learn from them. Moreover, it is now clear that discussing current issues engages young people; numerous studies have demonstrated that students are more interested in, and say they have learned more from, civics classes that include frequent and high-quality issues discussions than those that do not.

The need to include controversial political issues in school-based civic learning has a new urgency because of the increased vitriol of contemporary public policy discourse and migration among many American adults to ideologically homogeneous communities. As a result, many Americans increasingly talk primarily with people who share their own views, access media that reinforces their own prior beliefs, and generally confine themselves to an echo chamber of like-mindedness. Yet research shows that “cross-cutting” political talk—in which citizens engage in discussions about important issues and events with people who disagree—develops tolerance for others and builds understanding of the range of views about how to best solve public problems.

### **2. Multiple perspectives in educational settings**

Schools are particularly good venues for such discussions because they already include important deliberative assets, including student populations that reflect a greater range of ideological diversity than most people encounter in the world outside school. Recent professional development programs that have been shown to improve teachers’ effectiveness in using issues discussions share three notable characteristics:

- A. They engage teachers in examining students’ learning (as opposed to focusing only on teachers’ practices);
- B. They provide a good mix of content and method, so that teachers develop their own understanding of issues while learning how to engage students in discussion;
- C. They extend long enough to allow teachers the time necessary to become skilled at this kind of challenging teaching.

Highly engaging and intellectually powerful curriculum materials that work well with students have also been developed. Some textbooks now include attention to current, controversial issues, although that is

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools*. Gould, J., Jamieson, K.H., Levine, P., McConnell, T., & Smith, D.B. (Eds.). (2011). The Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools.

still relatively rare. We still need a greater number and variety of materials, including materials that focus on local, state level issues (or state-level applications of national issues), materials written at a variety of reading levels, and materials in multimedia formats. These curricular materials require qualified teachers to carry them out, and research has shown that teachers who effectively promote discussion share a number of characteristics:

- A. They select issues that are important, are linked to core curricular goals, and already are, or have the potential to be, interesting to students.
- B. They can articulate to parents, administrators, and the general public their rationale for including these issues, and they can explain how instruction meets important civic and curricular goals.
- C. They draw from a range of discussion models to explicitly teach students the skills they need to participate.

### **3. Multiple perspectives in the classroom**

When young people have opportunities to discuss current issues in a classroom setting, they tend to have greater interest in politics, improved critical thinking and communications skills, more civic knowledge, and more interest in discussing public affairs out of school. Conversations, however, should be carefully moderated so that students feel welcome to speak from a variety of perspectives. Teachers need support in broaching controversial issues in classrooms since they may risk criticism or sanctions if they do so. Teachers accomplish these goals by:

- A. Developing firm ground rules to ensure that discussions are inclusive and productive, and they cultivate a climate of respect and civility.
- B. Seeking out or create learning materials that provide students necessary background information, and they make sure students have thoughtfully considered multiple perspectives before discussion. Without such background and preparation, students are unlikely to engage in high-quality discussion.
- C. They help students understand an issue or event well enough to form their own opinions, rather than pressuring students to adopt their views.
- D. They make sure that materials provide the best arguments on varying sides of an issue, that multiple points of view receive a “best case fair hearing,” and that students engage with multiple and complex perspectives.
- E. They recognize the ethical dilemmas involved in teaching about controversial issues. For example, they understand the multiple valid reasons for and against disclosing their own point of view to students, while recognizing the inappropriateness of trying to push their views on others or belittling those who disagree.

### **4. Conclusions**

Teaching young people how to engage in discussions of controversial political issues and important current events is a critically important component of civic learning—and one that is needed now more than ever. Although there is still much to be learned from research about this practice, it is clear that such discussions can help young people understand issues facing our society and can build skills and dispositions for thoughtfully considering future issues. Moreover, young people appreciate and enjoy the chance to take part in robust, high-quality discussions of important issues. They know that these issues are important and want to be part of the public conversation about them.