**Subject area/course**: Social Studies/U.S. Government

**Grade level/band**: 11-12

**Task source**: Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC)

**Who Should We Ask?**

**TEACHER'S GUIDE**

1. **Task overview**:

Students first select and research a policy issue, then a corresponding interest group. Students write a 5 to 6 page 5 to 6 page proposal to their chosen interest group, suggesting which branch of government the interest group should attempt to influence and explaining why they believe that branch is the proper target for interest group activity. Using the policy objectives of the interest group, they analyze the powers and roles of each branch of government to determine which branch would be best to provide the policy solutions desired.

1. **Aligned standards:**
2. **Primary Common Core State Standards**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA‐Literacy.CCRA.R.10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA‐Literacy.CCRA.W.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA‐Literacy.CCRA.W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA‐Literacy.CCRA.W.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA‐Literacy.CCRA.W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS.ELA‐Literacy.CCRA.L.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

CCSS.ELA‐Literacy.CCRA.L.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

1. **Secondary Common Core State Standards**  
   CCSS.ELA‐Literacy.CCRA.W.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.L.6 Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

1. **Critical Abilities**

Research:Conduct sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem, narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate, and demonstrate understanding of the subject under investigation. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, use advanced searches effectively, and assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience.

Analysis of Information: Integrate and synthesize multiple sources of information (e.g., texts, experiments, simulations) presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to address a question, make informed decisions, understand a process, phenomenon, or concept, and solve problems while evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

Communication in Many Forms: Use oral and written communication skills to learn, evaluate, and express ideas for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting while considering the audience.

1. **Other standards**

*The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards:*

D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights

D2.Civ.11.9-12. Evaluate multiple procedures for making governmental decisions at the local, state, national, and international levels in terms of the civic purposes achieved.

D2.Civ.12.9-12. Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues.

1. **Time/schedule requirements:**

After students have studied all three branches of the federal government, their corresponding bureaucracies, and a variety of interest groups, plan about 2 to 3 weeks for them to complete the task. Alternatively, you may have them begin researching the policy question and interest groups prior to completing study on each branch of government. Schedule one or two class periods to discuss the task and define appropriate sources, but plan for student research and writing to be completed outside of class.

1. **Materials/resources:**

* Every American Government textbook will cover the powers of the institutions of the national government, as well as the strategies used by interest groups to attempt to influence public policy.
* Interest group web sites.

1. **Prior knowledge:**

Students should be able to:

* Explain and discuss the policy-making powers of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of government.
* Understand the role of interest groups in promoting policy.
* Write an argumentative essay.
* Use MLA style.

1. **Connection to curriculum:**

None provided.

1. **Teacher instructions:**

* Students should work independently throughout the task.
* Understanding appropriate sources for public policy analysis is often challenging for some students, so class time should be set aside to ensure that students understand how to identify unbiased political analysis.
* This task can be introduced and referenced in the course through the use of current events, which customarily arise in class discussions.
* Handout A. Students may be tempted to select a policy issue about which they are passionate. While passion can be good in terms of student motivation, it may also cause some students to overlook the primary purpose of the assignment – to evaluate the powers of the branches. This passion may lead students to turn their paper into a one-sided presentation of their opinion. It will be important to emphasize the primary purpose of the paper and the need for evenhanded presentation of information. Handout A is designed to help students see how best to assess the sources they use so as to achieve this even-handed approach. Teachers are urged to meet with students individually to go over their responses to Handout A’s questions.

1. **Student support:**

The following suggestions are examples of scaffolding that can be used to meet the diverse student needs within the classroom.

* Provide class time for research on students’ topics.
* Provide students with the rubric to be used to score their final product.
* Provide definitions of new vocabulary words ahead of time.
* For the final product, all learners will benefit from peer assistance while brainstorming their topics, as well as a peer or teacher edit of their papers before final submission.
* Some students will have good research skills, but some will need guidance in the determination of appropriate sources and where to look for them. It is important to spend class time in review of what constitutes an appropriate source in advance of students’ independent work time. One way to do this is to discuss Handout A with each student individually.

1. **Extensions or variations:**

* Students could present the results of their research to the class via an oral or multi-media presentation.
* If there is a particularly interesting and/or controversial topic, a debate could be organized where students choose sides on the topic and defend their views.

1. **Scoring:**

Student work can be scored using the College and Career Ready (CCR) Task Bank Scoring Rubric.