

Civics Lesson Plan

Baton Rouge Ground Water

Essential Question: What role do the media and special interest groups play in the passage of legislation dealing with the use of Baton Rouge groundwater?

Objectives:

1. Students will define independent and regulatory agencies.
2. Students will identify the government agencies responsible for overseeing Louisiana's groundwater.
3. Students will explain the role of government agencies in overseeing the use of Baton Rouge groundwater.
4. Students will explain the role of special interest groups and media on public opinions about groundwater usage.
5. Students will evaluate legislation dealing with the use of Baton Rouge groundwater.
6. Students will describe the responsibility of citizens in the passage of legislation about Baton Rouge groundwater.

Civics GLEs:

C.2.7 Explain the role of regulatory and independent government agencies in American society.

C.5.2 Differentiate between civic duties and responsibilities, including various forms of civic participation.

C.5.4 Evaluate the role of the media and public opinion in American politics, including the use and effects of propaganda techniques.

C.5.7 Explain historical and contemporary roles of special interest

Vocabulary:

media bias, independent agency, regulatory agency, special interest groups, ground water, saltwater intrusion

Anticipatory Set:

Show students the provided political cartoon about media bias (<http://www.umich.edu/~newsbias/wordchoice.html>). Have them complete the cartoon analysis sheet from the National Archives. Use the analysis sheet as a basis for discussing the cartoon as a class. Allow students to provide other examples of media bias and of media influencing public opinion.

Teacher Instruction:

PowerPoint explaining the types and roles of government agencies, special interest groups, role of media in influencing public opinion, and the use of propaganda

PowerPoint to provide background information to students about the groundwater issues in Baton Rouge.

Student Activities:

1. Vocabulary awareness- Have students complete the vocabulary awareness sheet prior to the start of the lesson. This sheet contains the key terms students will encounter during the lesson. Students read the word, and color the appropriate circle in the stop light. If they color green (they know the word), they must then write the definition in their own words in the definition blank. They must also complete the prefix and suffix column (they will write down any prefix or suffix the word contains and what that suffix means). If they color yellow (I have heard it but can't define it) or red (they have no prior knowledge of this term), they will draw a picture based on the information taught to them by the teacher (this will be done as the words are taught during the lesson). They will then write the definition in their own words. They must also complete the prefix and suffix column (they will write down any prefix or suffix the word contains and what that prefix or suffix means).
2. Case Study- Have students review Louisiana groundwater law and descriptions of the commissions that oversee groundwater usage. Use the round robin method to have students discuss the law, what the law means in real-life, and when/if government should interfere in the groundwater issue. The round robin technique requires placing students in or forming groups of three to five, then pose a problem or question and have each one go around the circle quickly sharing ideas or solutions. You can give students one opportunity to "pass" on a response, but eventually every student must respond. This technique is used most effectively when, after initial clockwise sharing, students are asked to write down on a single piece of paper each of their responses. This allows all opinions and ideas of the groups to be brought to the teacher's and the rest of their classmates' attention. It also provides a record of the group's thinking, which might be used in grading.
3. Jigsaw News articles- Place students into home groups of 4 or 5 (depending on your class size). Give each student a different article from a different news source. Allow time for students to read and annotate their article. Next, ask students to summarize the article and determine if the media was biased in any way- they should explain why and what side they showed bias towards. Then, all students who read the same article will get in a group together and discuss the article and possible bias. Students will then return to their home group and share the summary of their article as well as possible bias of the source. After all members of the home group have presented, the teacher should lead a class discussion about all of the articles, the special interest groups and commissions discussed in the articles, and the bias shown by the various sources.
4. You be the Lobbyist- Show students the Save BR Water website (<http://www.savebrwater.com/index.html>). Explain this group is a group of concerned citizens who are trying to exercise their civic responsibility to enact change. Next, discuss the industry involved in the water issue (Exxon, Georgia Pacific, and Entergy as well as the Baton Rouge Water Company). Be sure to explain these businesses are using groundwater for manufacturing and production processes, energy generation and cooling because it is abundant and less expensive than filtering river water. Also, explain that the Baton Rouge Water Company is a private, for-profit company that sells water pumps, transports, and sells groundwater to homes and businesses throughout East Baton Rouge Parish, but also to Ascension Parish. Tell students they will research the topic further and pick a side in the groundwater debate and create a

campaign (using propaganda) to lobby the public, special commissions, and the legislature to support their ideas and even enact laws that support their views. Students should be encouraged to view all or portions of the Youtube video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4UqF99wzGI>) which is a video of a recent luncheon discussion held by the League of Women's Voter's on sustainable water policy in Baton Rouge and Louisiana generally. They should also be required to use the Office of Conservation Water-Wise in BR website (<http://waterwise.dnr.la.gov>) to find more information about the issues of law and regulation. The campaign should include a visual such as a poster, a slogan, and a written component (such as a brochure or pamphlet). After students have created their campaigns, they should present them to the class. Allow the class to vote on which lobbyist did the best job of lobbying the class. Also, as a class decide which side is legally correct and which side is morally correct (this may lead to discussion about are all laws morally correct).

Closure:

Have students write one paragraph telling the pros and cons of media bias and special interest groups.