

Lesson Plan: Exploring County Ordinances

Connection to POS: Benchmark 4.25 – Powers and characteristics of local government in Virginia

In this lesson, students examine county ordinances and develop an understanding of the degree to which county government serves and regulates citizens. Students become more familiar with the services and actions the county government provides and performs.



Objectives

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- evaluate the responsibility of county government to enact and enforce local ordinances
- assess the desirability of government involvement in everyday life
- describe competing interests involved in making local political policy



Materials

- Student Handout – Real and Hypothetical County Ordinances



Time Needed

- 45 minutes (Many possible extensions could make this lesson the basis for a much longer unit.)



Procedures

1. Begin by asking students to identify local “rules” of which they are aware. Chances are they will be largely unaware of the nature and volume of such rules. At this point, provide a definition of “ordinance”.
2. Distribute Student Handout – Some Fairfax County Ordinances and give the students, working individually or in groups, time to read and discuss each ordinance.
2. Have students rank order the ten ordinances on the handout based on their view of each ordinance’s utility or desirability.
4. Lead a class discussion allowing students to compare and defend their opinions about the various ordinances. Have them speculate on what groups in the community

would likely oppose and support each ordinance. Also, make sure the students grasp the concept of competing freedoms and government's efforts to balance them.



Assessment

As a journal assignment, students defend the choices they made in step 3 in an essay on the role of local government.



Extensions

- Students could do research on an ordinance that they find to be particularly provocative or unusual. Why was it passed? Who voted for it? What pressures might those supervisors have been feeling?
- Have students compose an ordinance of their own that deals with a problem they see in the county. Help them refine it to present to their own supervisor. Lobby the supervisor to introduce it to the entire board.
- Have students attend a county board of supervisors hearing to broaden their understanding of the dynamics of board work.