

## Lesson Plan: Influencing the Agenda: The Impact of Interest Groups on Policy Making

### **Connection to POS: Benchmark 4.28: Citizens' Influence on County Government**

This lesson is an extension of one listed under Benchmark 4.27, a mock Board of Supervisors meeting. In this lesson, students consider the impact of lobbying efforts by interest groups and citizens.



### **Objectives**

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

- Explain the ways individuals and groups can have an impact on County government
- Analyze the effectiveness of efforts to influence County government



### **Materials**

- Student Handout – Board of Supervisors Meeting Scenarios



### **Time Needed**

- 90 minutes



### **Procedures**

1. Refer back to **Lesson Plan: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors Meeting** under Benchmark 4.27. Assign remaining students, who are not role-playing as supervisors, to assume the role of concerned citizens and representatives of interest groups.
2. Among the many interest groups you might include are:
  - The Fairfax Education Association or the Fairfax Federation of Teachers
  - A member of the Police Union
  - A representative of Catholic Charities, or an advocate of the homeless
  - A commercial developer
  - The American Automobile Association
  - A residential developer
  - An alternative sentencing advocate, representing recovering drug abusers

- A neighborhood association concerned about high traffic
  - The Chamber of Commerce
  - One or two “everyday citizens”
3. After the Board Chair has presented each scenario listed on the Student Handout, invite comments from the citizens and interest groups. Allow each to speak for no more than three minutes in favor of or opposition to any of the 10 proposed amendments.
  4. After each board member has also had an opportunity to speak, the Board Chair calls for a vote.



### **Assessment**

For supervisors, have students write an evaluation of whether their votes would have been changed on any of the amendments due to the impact of citizen input. They must defend their answers. For the citizens and interest group representatives, grades can be based on their research and presentations.



### **Extensions**

As in the earlier lesson, you could invite a Board of Supervisors member to your school. This time, you also could invite a representative of an interest group to your school to speak on effective citizen participation.