**Public Policy Project**

**Purpose**:

* To show students the importance of being responsible and involved citizens in their communities and to develop skills in being clear and effective communicators.
* Students will learn how to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship by investigating and developing an informed position on a public policy.

Through this, students will understand the rights and responsibilities of civic life and employ the skills of effective civic participation.

**Essential Question**

To what extent is a government responsible for its citizens?

* **Questions to Ponder**
* What is worth fighting for?
* What should we preserve?
* How and why do people affect change?
* What is public policy?
* What kind of world do we want to live in?
* **Topics for Public Policy Assignment**

Foreign Policy

* How should the U.S. deal with terrorists?
* Should the U.S. pay ransom for U.S. citizens taken by terrorists?
* Should the U.S. intervene in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_? (Syria, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Ukraine)
* Is the “Iran deal” a good policy for the United States?
* What should the relationship be between the U.S. and Cuba?
* What rights do enemy combatants have when they are captured by the U.S.?

(Guantanamo specific)

* Should the U.S. supply other nations with humanitarian aid?
* Is using nuclear weapons ever an option?
* How much money should the U.S. spend on defense?

Immigration reform

* Are immigrants good or bad for the U.S. economy?
* What policies need to be in place to keep America safe?
* Is it important to assist refugees who would face death in their home countries?

Gun Control

* How does society remain safe while protecting the freedom of gun ownership?
* Should all gun sales require a background check?

Poverty & Homelessness

* Should the government drug-test applicants for welfare?
* Should governments ban certain foods and/or beverages from EBT eligibility?
* Is panhandling free speech or should it be banned?
* Does providing housing for the homeless make economic sense?
* Should the minimum wage be raised?

Health Care & Medicine

* Should employers and/or insurance companies have to provide coverage for birth control? What happens when covering a procedure or medicine violates the religious beliefs of the employer?
* Should the U.S. government provide health care for all citizens?
* How could the U.S. reduce the number of abortions? Why do other countries (and some states) have a much lower rate of abortion?
* How should the U.S. or Maine deal with substance abuse disorder?
* Organ transplants - How should the limited number of organs be allocated?
* Is it ethical to test/experiment on animals if it saves human lives?
* Should a terminally ill patient have the right to end their own life?
* Should parents have the right to refuse medical treatment for their children?
* What should the government do about the high cost of prescription medications? Should the government stop companies who greatly increase the price of a drug because they know people need it?
* Health care (including mental health services) for veterans

Technology

* Should police have the right to force a tech company to unlock a cell phone belonging to someone who committed a crime? What are reasonable search and seizure rights for digital content? Should the government be allowed to read and/or listen in on your conversations?
* What can the U.S. do about foreign hackers?
* Laws around new types of commerce (like AirB&B or Uber) - what restrictions should be placed on those who rent their homes or provide rides?

Education

* Should evolution (or creationism) be taught in public schools?
* Should students be required to pass exit exams (or meet certain standards) to receive a diploma?

Common Core - good or bad for U.S. students?

* Should college tuition be free? Should it be based on family income?
* What should the government do about the high levels of student loan debt that students are accumulating and struggling to pay?
* Should schools teach sex education?
* Is school choice (vouchers) a good idea?

Politics

* Should the U.S. reform the financing of campaigns?
* Should there be term limits on members of Congress?
* Should the Electoral College be abolished?
* Should the wealthy be required to pay higher taxes?
* Should there be more (or less) government regulation of banking and Wall Street?

Environment/Conservation

* Should the Maine North Woods become a national park?
* How does Maine protect the fisheries and fish stocks? (especially Lobster, shrimp)
* Should artificial lures be banned in Maine?
* Should the government fund research into alternative forms of energy?
* Oil drilling and Fracking vs. the environmental dangers
* What should the government be doing to stop global warming?
* Hunting on Sundays

Law Enforcement/Crime

* Private prisons - good or bad?
* Does drug court work?
* Rates of incarceration - mostly male, minority - Is the system unfair?
* Should juveniles be tried as adults?
* Is the death penalty an effective deterrent to crime?
* Should the death penalty be abolished? Is execution humane?
* Should employers be allowed to drug test employees? Should schools be allowed to drug test athletes?
* Should \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ be legalized in all states? (gambling, prostitution, marijuana)
* The weaponization of state and local police departments - Does it increase the use of force?
* Should the government be allowed to seize the property of those convicted of a drug-related offense?
* What should the driving age be in the U.S. or in the state of Maine?

What is Public Policy

Criteria for Public Policy:

* Is a government involved?
* Are rules being changed or challenged?
* Is it a government’s response to current problems or issues?

The Task:

Using newspaper headlines create two lists:

List #1 – list six examples of public policy

List #2 – list six examples of public activities which are NOT public policy

Examples:

List 1 - restricting gun ownership with new federal

legislation

List 2 – deciding to eat at McDonald’s instead of Burger King

Assessment:

Your list will be reviewed for accuracy in class.