

HMH ELECTION CONNECTION 2016

Campaign Finance Laws

Introduction

In 1971 Congress passed the Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA) Its purpose was to reduce the influence of “big money” on political activities. In 1975 the Federal Election Commission (FEC), an independent regulatory agency, was created to administer and enforce the act. The FECA limits the sources and amounts of the contributions used to finance federal elections, requires public disclosure of campaign finance information, and provides for the public funding of Presidential elections.

Congress has amended the FECA several times in an effort to reduce the influence of high spending on political campaigns. Despite the changes, concerns continue. The public and politicians continue to consider ways to reform campaign finance laws.

Task

You are a staff member of the FEC. You learned recently that you will testify before a Congressional committee investigating calls for campaign financing reform. Your supervisor has instructed you to prepare for the testimony by creating answers for questions that committee members are likely to ask. This preparation will help you respond quickly and accurately about the FECA and the suggested reforms. You will hold a mock committee hearing to present the information.

Process & Resources

Step 1

Review the text pages 371–372 so that you are familiar with the basic ideas about campaign financing.

Step 2

Go to the research links below to help you to find information about the FEC and its enforcement of the FECA.

Federal Election Commission

<http://www.fec.gov/>

This is the FEC’s home page. Go to the Quick Answers section to get information about the activities of the commission.

Step 3

Use the research links below to help you to find information about reform proposals from a variety of groups.

League of Women Voters

http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Campaign_Finance_Reform

Use the links on this page to discover proposals for reforming campaign financing.

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Open Secrets

<http://www.opensecrets.org/news/disclosure.php>

This site will help you understand reform issues and the impact reform might have on the political process.

Common Cause

<http://www.commoncause.org/>

This political organization has been fighting for years to reform campaign finance laws. Look at the article, “Money in Politics.”

Step 4

Create five questions that you think the congressional committee members might ask you about campaign financing and reform proposals.

Step 5

Draft answers to each of the questions you created.

Step 6

Ask a classmate or two to act as members of Congress and pose the questions to you in a mock committee hearing. Respond with your drafted answers.

Conclusion

Your investigation should have helped you understand the complicated nature of campaign reform. Voters and political leaders hold conflicting views about the solutions to the problems presented by campaign financing. In addition, the issues may differ in local, state, and federal elections.

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Evaluation

The rubric, or chart, below is how you and your group will be evaluated on your mock testimony before a congressional committee. Ask your teacher to explain anything on the rubric that is not clear.

	5	4	3	2	1	Points
Question Relevance	Questions reflect a clear understanding of the issues.	Questions show a good understanding of the issues.	Questions show a fair understanding of the issues.	Questions are lacking in depth or understanding.	Questions do not adequately reflect the issues in campaign reform.	
Answer Content	Answers show that extensive research has been done. They include both depth and breadth of coverage.	Answers show that some research has been done and that the questions are clearly understood.	Answers are adequate to answer the questions with some degree of understanding.	Answers are at the basic level.	Answers show little understanding of the issues.	
Answer Clarity	Answers are clearly and logically presented and go beyond the draft answers.	Answers are clearly and logically presented.	Answers are for the most part clear but may lack logical progression.	Answers are minimally clear but lack focus and clarity.	Answers are unclear and disorganized.	
Presentation	Presentation clearly answers the questions and goes beyond the drafted answers if necessary.	Presentation clearly answers the questions following the draft answers.	Presentation mostly answers the questions following the draft answers.	Presentation is barely adequate. Responses seem unclear.	Presentation is disorganized or difficult to hear and understand.	
						Score

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Teacher Notes

Synopsis

In the Webquest *Campaign Finance Laws*, a small group of students will present testimony to a mock congressional committee investigating campaign finance reform. Students will prepare possible questions and draft answers to those questions. Then they will present their answers in a mock committee hearing.

Objectives

Students who do exemplary work on this WebQuest will learn about

- the history of campaign finance reform
- the current issues being raised about campaign finance reform
- viewpoints of several different organizations about campaign finance reform
- some suggested changes to how politicians finance campaigns