



A Teacher-Directed Website

C-SPAN CLASSROOM DELIBERATIONS

Senate Floor Debate Lesson Plan

1. After watching C-SPAN videos, reading linked articles, and discussing both sides of the issue, students write a brief speech/ position paper supporting either supporting or opposing the deliberation question. You may want to do the Take a Stand and/or Simulated Congressional Hearing activities before this one.
2. Show C-SPAN clips of actual Senate or House floor debates to familiarize them with the structure of a floor debate on a bill or amendment; [here's a clip](#) from a Senate debate about a flag desecration amendment in 2006; you can find more at [C-SPAN's video library](#).
3. Hold the debate in class. You can be as formal and authentic or as informal as you like. You may simply divide the class into two "parties" based on their answers to the deliberation question, then call on speakers by alternating between the parties. Student directions and rubric for this type of debate are below.

Or you may conduct a multi-day, detailed simulation with more structure and authenticity, with students playing roles including majority leader, minority leader, etc. See [C-SPAN Teacher Fellow Joe Karb's](#) website for an eight-day middle school Congressional Simulation.

Senate Floor Debate

Purpose: Deliver a persuasive speech to explain how you will vote on the proposed bill or Constitutional amendment, and explain how you decided how to vote.

Directions: Write a 1-2 minute persuasive speech including the following information:

Do you support or oppose the bill/amendment?

- a. What are the main reasons why you support or oppose it?
- b. How did you decide how to vote? Explain how much you considered each of the following factors:
 - Your personal opinion, views, and values
 - Your constituents' views/public opinion
 - Testimony from expert witnesses at the committee hearing
 - Speeches and written statements from other Senators and experts

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Persuasiveness	Very persuasive speech, clearly delivered, with strong reasoning, including multiple quotes from experts, and other sources	Persuasive speech with a few quotes or references	Basic speech lacking much support or strong reasoning	Unclear or unprepared speech
How you decided how to vote	Clearly explains how your personal opinion, your constituents, expert witnesses, and other Senators influenced your decision; includes specific examples and reasons	Good explanation of how a few different things influenced your vote	Basic explanation without much detail	Unclear how you reached your decision and how you considered others' views

Key phrases to use in your speech:

- "I rise in support/in opposition to the proposed bill/amendment..."
- "I agree with Justice _____ when he wrote..."
- "_____ made a very good point when she said..."
- "I have considered the views of my constituents on this issue, and they believe that..."
- "I urge my fellow Senators to join me in voting for/against this amendment"