

Analyzing the Local Impact of Environmental Legislation

The chief function of the state legislature is making state laws. Many of these laws impact your local environment. The first step in passing a law is the introduction of a proposal called a bill. Who are your state representatives? What are some of the bills they are currently debating?

In this activity, you will research and analyze a bill that has been voted on in your state during the past year. You will identify your state legislators and organize data about their votes on this environmental issue. Finally, you will analyze the impact of passage (or lack of passage) of this environmental legislation on your local community.

OBJECTIVES

Gather information about your state legislature.

Summarize one state-level environmental bill.

Organize information about the voting records of your state lawmakers.

Predict the impacts of specific environmental legislation on your local community.

MATERIALS

- internet access, if available
- reference materials about state government
- state map showing legislative districts

PROCEDURE

1. Every state legislature is organized differently. Use reference materials to learn how your state legislature is organized. Describe this organization below. How is your community represented?

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- 2.** Who are the lawmaker(s) that represent your community at the state level? If you don't know, use the materials provided by your teacher or use the Internet to find out. Write the names below.

- 3.** Research one environmental bill that was debated and voted on in your state within the last year. Record the bill's name below, and write a brief description of the bill.

- 4.** Describe the results of voting on this bill. What was the total vote count for the bill? How many lawmakers opposed the bill? How did your state legislator(s) vote on each bill? Make a table to organize the information.

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5. Consider citizens in your community who would be interested in this bill. List groups or individuals in your area who would be most affected by the passage or nonpassage of this bill.

Analysis

1. **Examining Data** Compare the votes for and against the bill. Did the bill pass or fail by a large or small majority?

2. **Analyzing Data** Identify key aspects of this bill that may have caused it to pass or fail.

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3. Identifying/Recognizing Patterns Analyze the votes of your representatives. Did they vote with or against the majority? Do they seem to have a bias for or against environmental bills?

Conclusions

4. Making Predictions Make predictions about how the passage or lack of passage of this bill will impact your local community. Consider economic, social, political, and educational factors in your response.

Extension

1. Research and Communications Do you agree with the way your state representatives voted on the bill you studied? Write a letter to your representatives expressing your opinion. Be sure to include facts to support your opinion.