

Northwest History Consortium

Choosing a Presidential Cabinet

Darrick Hayman
11th Grade

National Standard

Era 10: Contemporary United States (1968 to the present) / Standard 1

Standard 1: Recent developments in foreign and domestic politics

Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements

Civics 1.2: Understands the purposes, organization, and function of governments, laws, and political systems.

History 4.2: Understands and analyzes causal factors that have shaped major events in history.

BACKGROUND

In 2009, President Obama is choosing members of his new cabinet. Students will be learning about cabinet level positions during this time.

This sample lesson is applicable for any new cabinet-level nominee or even Supreme Court nominations for any president.

SCENARIO

Congratulations! You have been elected as the next president of the United States. During the transition time between the election and inauguration you need to create a new cabinet.

Choosing a cabinet secretary is an important task for a new president. Candidates must be qualified and competent so that they can properly serve the president and, in turn, the country.

Some of President Obama's nominees were forced to withdraw their names because of a variety of controversies. Similarly, former Presidents, Johnson, Grant, Harding, and Nixon discovered that members of their cabinet were incompetent in their positions or even corrupt.

In your position as the president you will choose three cabinet officials and will be required to deal with possible problems that may derail the nominations of these candidates. Which cabinet-level positions you choose to fill will be up to you.

Northwest History Consortium

Choosing a Presidential Cabinet

TASK(S)

Research a few previous presidents' philosophies on cabinet officials and determine what kind of a cabinet you believe to be most effective?

Explore problems that past presidents have had with cabinet members.

As the new president, choose three cabinet-level position nominations. For this example, choose one politician (current or former) for one position, one celebrity (dead or alive) for another position, and one of your friends for the last position. Justify your choices based on the requirements of the cabinet job. Create a presentation to the United States Senate, for the purposes of confirmation, explaining your nominees. As you know, not all cabinet level positions are slam dunks. It is a good idea to have a back up for each position in case a controversy comes up during the nomination hearings.

Do not show the following to students:

Some students will be given curve balls. Through a random drawing some students' candidates will face the following problems:

- The politician you chose has not paid taxes for the past five years.
- The celebrity you chose had an extramarital affair 15 years ago.
- The friend you chose had an abortion 10 years ago.

These problems will be discovered prior to confirmation hearings, but they should be included in the presentation. Can they get past these problems; or, do they withdraw their names from nomination and force you to go with your backup?

Northwest History Consortium

Choosing a Presidential Cabinet

RESOURCES

Books

Danzer, Gerald A., et al. The Americans. Geneva, IL: McDougal Littell, 2005.

Goodwin, Doris Kearns. Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2005.

Internet

“The Grant Cabinet.” Online Highways LLC. ©2001 – 2010. Florence, OR. 21 May 2010 <<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1427.html>>.

“National Affairs: Six for the Kennedy Cabinet.” 26 Dec. 1960. Times Inc. ©2010. New York, NY. 21 May 2010 <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,895133-1,00.html>>.

“The Richard Nixon Cabinet.” Online Highways LLC. ©2001 – 2010. Florence, OR. 21 May 2010 <<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1404.html>>.

Skiba, Katherine. “Daschle’s Tax Woes Derail Nomination, Leaving Obama Healthcare Reform in Limbo.” 3 Feb. 2009. U.S. News & World Report. 2010. Washington, DC. 21 May 2010 <<http://www.usnews.com/articles/news/obama/2009/02/03/daschles-tax-woes-derail-nomination-leaving-obamas-healthcare-reform-in-limbo.html>>.

“The Washington Cabinet.” Online Highways LLC. ©2001 – 2010. Florence, OR. 21 May 2010 <<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1396.html>>.

Weisman, Jonathan. “Geithner’s Tax History Muddles Confirmation.” 14 Jan. 2009. The Wall Street Journal. ©2010 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. New York, NY. 21 May 2010 <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123187503629378119.html>>.

ASSESSMENT

Students will present their nominees to the class. The full class will serve as a mock senate. Each ‘senator’ (member of the audience) will score each candidate on three categories: trustworthiness, competency, and ability to serve without political distractions. ‘Senators’ will then provide a final up or down vote for each candidate and will include a brief description to explain his or her vote to any constituents.

Students will be graded by the instructor based upon the descriptions of each candidate, a description of what type of cabinet the president would like based on historical examples, and the descriptions of each chosen cabinet office. The instructor will also serve as a mock senator.

Final grade will be based on a combination of instructor evaluation and mock senate votes.

Northwest History Consortium

Choosing a Presidential Cabinet

REFERENCES/CITATIONS

Hayman, Darrick. "Choosing a Presidential Cabinet." NWESD Organization. 2008. Anacortes, WA. 21 May 2010 <http://www.nwesd.org/1510101216191755740/lib/1510101216191755740/10.1_PresidentialCabinet.Hayman.11.pdf>.

"History Standards for Grades 5-12 United States." UCLA National Center for History in the Schools. 2005. Los Angeles, CA. 21 May 2010 <<http://nchs.ucla.edu/standards/us-standards5-12.html>>.

OSPI. "Social Studies Essential Learning Requirements: Recommended Grade-by-Grade Sequence for Grade Level Expectations – K-12." Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. 2009. Olympia, WA. 21 May 2010 <<http://standards.ospi.k12.wa.us/ComponentListByGrade.aspx?subject=6,GLE&gl=12>>.