



**CLASSROOM LAW PROJECT**  
**PRESENTS**

# **ELECTION 2022: ENVISIONING OREGON'S FUTURE**

## **Section 5: The Election Classroom Hearing**

# The Election Classroom Hearing

## Essential Questions

- What issues are most important to my community?
- How do I create and deliver public testimony to make my voice heard effectively?
- What are the public spaces for community input?

## Objectives

Students will:

- create public testimony that demonstrates what they have learned about election issues
- argue for a position based on evidence and understanding through an active simulation of a legislative hearing

## Vocabulary

hearing

testimony

## Activity 5.1

# Developing Testimony

### Overview:

The study of this year's elections will culminate in a mock legislative hearing in which students present their views on an issue they have studied through previous activities. A simulated legislative hearing is a way for students to demonstrate what they have learned, and set forth their opinions in an open, civil environment. For the hearing itself, adult community members can stand in as members of a mock legislative body. In the first step of the legislative hearing process, students create their own 2-minute testimony where they can demonstrate what they have learned about an issue.

### Opener:

Share one or more examples of legislative testimony with your students. Some possible testimony may include:

- Trace Terrell, Youthline Intervention & Outreach Specialist student representative (from La Pine, OR), testifying in February 2022 about children's mental health before the Senate Finance Committee (length- 5:07, starting at 19:25 and ending at 24:32):  
<https://www.c-span.org/video/?517889-1/hearing-childrens-mental-health>
- Taraji Henson, actor and activist, testified before the Congressional Black Caucus Emergency Taskforce on Black Youth Suicide and Mental Health in 2019:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uIMf0YfWqBQ>
- In 2021, Marichelle Gurski, a dual-enrolled student from OSU-Cascades and Central Oregon Community College, testified before the Oregon Legislature in support of a bill to provide free menstrual products to students in all Oregon public schools:  
<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/16468>
- Honorable Kristen Clarke speaking in 2021 before the Senate Judiciary Committee on the John Lewis Voting Rights Act (length- 5:23, starting at 30:15 and ending at 35:38):  
<https://www.c-span.org/video/?515179-1/senate-hearing-john-lewis-voting-rights-act>
- Jon Stewart, comedian and host of the current Apple TV show, *The Problem with Jon Stewart*, testified in 2019 before Congress in support of the September 11 Victim Compensation Fund:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2R47Mr--NQA>

As they watch, ask students to consider the following questions (aloud, as a class, or in writing, depending on the teacher's preference):

1. What is the main idea this speaker is trying to convey?
2. What types of evidence (statistics, examples, stories) to prove their argument?
3. How does the speaker use her or his voice (pace, volume, clarity) to support their point?
4. How persuasive did you find this testimony to be? Why or why not?

## Main Activity

After viewing examples of testimony before Congress, students will develop their own 2-5 minute testimony. Teachers should set a length for the speeches that is appropriate for students' age, skill levels, experience with public speaking, and time available to complete this activity.

Distribute the handout entitled "Writing Your Testimony." Students may prepare their testimony individually, in pairs/small groups, or larger teams. Use your discretion based on the culture of your classroom to decide what the most effective grouping will be. In the end, however, this activity works best if each student prepares and delivers their own testimony.

Typically, students should be able to create their testimony within one class period. If students finish early, encourage them to pair up and practice their speeches with one another.

# Writing Your Testimony

## Hearing Questions:

You will develop 2-5 minute testimony that addresses some combination of these questions:

1. What advice would you give Oregon's candidates for governor this year? *AND*
2. What advice would you give Oregon on one of this year's ballot measures? *OR*
3. Explain in your own words the importance of one of the following (you may take any position you want):
  - 16 year olds should have the right to vote
  - restoring voting rights to ex-felons
  - establishing independent redistricting commissions

All students will respond to Question 1 and then answer Question 2 *OR* 3.

## Your Testimony

You are playing the role of an expert witness and should demonstrate to the community panel what you have learned.

Each testimonial speech will include the following points. Use the space below to fill in information that you want to include in your speech:

<b>Introduction</b> (make a brief opening statement in which you introduce yourself and state any overall points you'd like to make)
<b>Response to Question 1</b> (include at least two points and explain why those points are important) a.  b.
<b>Response to Question 2 or 3 or 4</b> (have a main point, along with two pieces of support for your point)
<b>Concluding Statement</b> (summarize your main points and thank the committee for the opportunity to speak)

After delivering your testimony, there will be time to respond orally to questions from the panelists.

## Activity 5.2

# The Legislative Hearing

### Overview:

The Legislative Hearing gives students a chance to deliver testimony before a mock Congressional panel. If there is time, panelists might also question the speakers. When they are not speaking, students will complete a **Hearing Flow Chart and Reflection**.

### Pre-Work:

Before the hearing day, invite adult guests to serve on a panel that will take students' testimony. Guests will act as legislators conducting a hearing: listening, commenting, and asking questions. Invite school administrators, board members, community leaders, parents, CLP staff, or other teachers. Remind them that they should aim to give positive feedback whenever possible; reiterate this with your panelists again on the day of the presentations.

Set your classroom up to model a legislative hearing. The classroom should have a table or row of desks in the front facing the classroom for the legislative committee to sit and "take testimony." A table or podium can be set up facing the panel's table (depending on whether you have group or individual testimony).

The hearing itself should be well organized and flow smoothly. Plan ahead so that all students have a chance to speak, or divide the hearing into multiple days (potentially with different panelists on each day).

### Process:

Create a speakers list by having students sign up to speak as they enter the classroom or assign the speaking order in advance. (To save a little time, if you want students to take questions from community members, have students approach the podium in groups, and cluster questions into a short block of time following several students' testimony—otherwise the process will easily get bogged down.)

Introduce the hearing by calling the legislative session to order. (Pro tip: find a gavel or something that can stand in for a gavel to give the hearing an air of formality.)

When students come up to speak, they should proceed immediately to the podium and step back/sit down after they have spoken. Determine how you will keep time, and hold students to their allotted speaking length.

Students will complete a **Hearing Flow Chart** (Make as many copies of this form as needed). Panelists will complete the **Hearing Evaluation Form** for each student, or, to keep things moving, jigsaw the assignments and have each panelist evaluate every other speaker.

Before the next speaker begins their testimony, leave adequate time for students and panelists to jot down their notes.

At the end of class, collect evaluation forms and gavel the hearing out of session.

Have students sign thank you notes to send to the volunteer panelists.



# Hearing Evaluation Form

Speaker's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Panelist's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The most interesting pieces of information I learned from this testimony were:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Follow up questions I have for the expert witnesses:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How this testimony helped me think about the election:



# Hearing Evaluation Form

Speaker's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Panelist's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. The most interesting pieces of information I learned from this testimony were:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Follow up questions I have for the expert witnesses:
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. How this testimony helped me think about the election:



## Activity 5.3

# Reflection

### Overview:

This activity offers some different ways to engage students in reflection about the legislative hearing, as well as what they learned during the entire process.

### Activity Suggestions:

There are many ways to reflect on the experience of participating in the legislative hearing—as well as to do a wrap up of students’ entire study of the 2022 Election. Here are a few ideas that allow the class to reflect on different elements of the process:

1. Distribute panelist feedback forms to students. Ask students to provide a **3-2-1** response: (a) Write down **three** things you thought they did well in your testimony; (b) **two** things you would improve upon next time; and (c) **one** piece of feedback from the panelists that made you think more deeply.
2. Form a circle, and hand back the Hearing Flowchart to each student. One by one, have students share out loud with another student a point from the second column. (If it’s a question, encourage the other student to answer the question.)
3. Return to the questions that students answered in their pre-election survey and have them answer the questions again to assess their major learning from throughout their study of the election . If you prefer to have students complete the survey in writing, a copy of the Post-Election survey is provided on the next page. The questions may be discussed as a full class as well/instead. (Another option: return their original pre-election survey to them at the beginning of the discussion so they can refer back to what they thought prior to participating in these election activities.)

