

The Fourth Branch: YOU!

Time Needed: One Class Period

Materials Needed: Student worksheets, contact information for state or local representatives

Copy Instructions:

Student packet (*4 pages double-sided; class set*)

Active Participation Guide and worksheet keys (*teacher copy*)

Learning Objectives.

Students will be able to:

- Compare the citizen's role in each branch of government.
- Compare the impact of citizens on the President, Congress, and the Supreme Court.
- Describe the roles of the three branches
- Evaluating whether a series of communications makes correct requests of the targeted government officials.

STEP BY STEP

- ❑ **ANTICIPATE** by reviewing basic concepts with the A/B/C active participation activity (see Active Participation Guide).
- ❑ **DISTRIBUTE** one "The Fourth Branch—YOU!" packet to each student.
- ❑ **GUIDE** students through the chart on the first page with the class. We suggest going down the chart row by row, eliciting answers from the class for each question.
- ❑ **DISCUSS** the diagram at the top of the "Focus Your Citizen Power" page with students.
- ❑ **HELP** students use what they've learned to create the bar graphs at the bottom of that page.
- ❑ **REVIEW** the directions for the "Who Should You Call" exercise with students.
- ❑ **HELP** students as needed as they complete the "Who Should You Call" exercise.
- ❑ **REVIEW** the answers with the class.
- ❑ **CLOSE** by asking students to think of one issue they personally think would be important to contact their senators or representatives about. Ask volunteers to share. Then poll the class to find out which method of communication the students would feel most comfortable using: email, letter, or phone call. (Note that the website in the follow up activity also includes Twitter information, so you could include this option in your poll.)
- ❑ **FOLLOW UP** (*optional*) by giving students the name, address, phone number, and email address of their senators or Congressional representative OR by having them research this information themselves at <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml>. Ask them to contact that person about the issue they thought of and report back to the class about the response they receive.

The Fourth Branch: YOU!

Name: _____



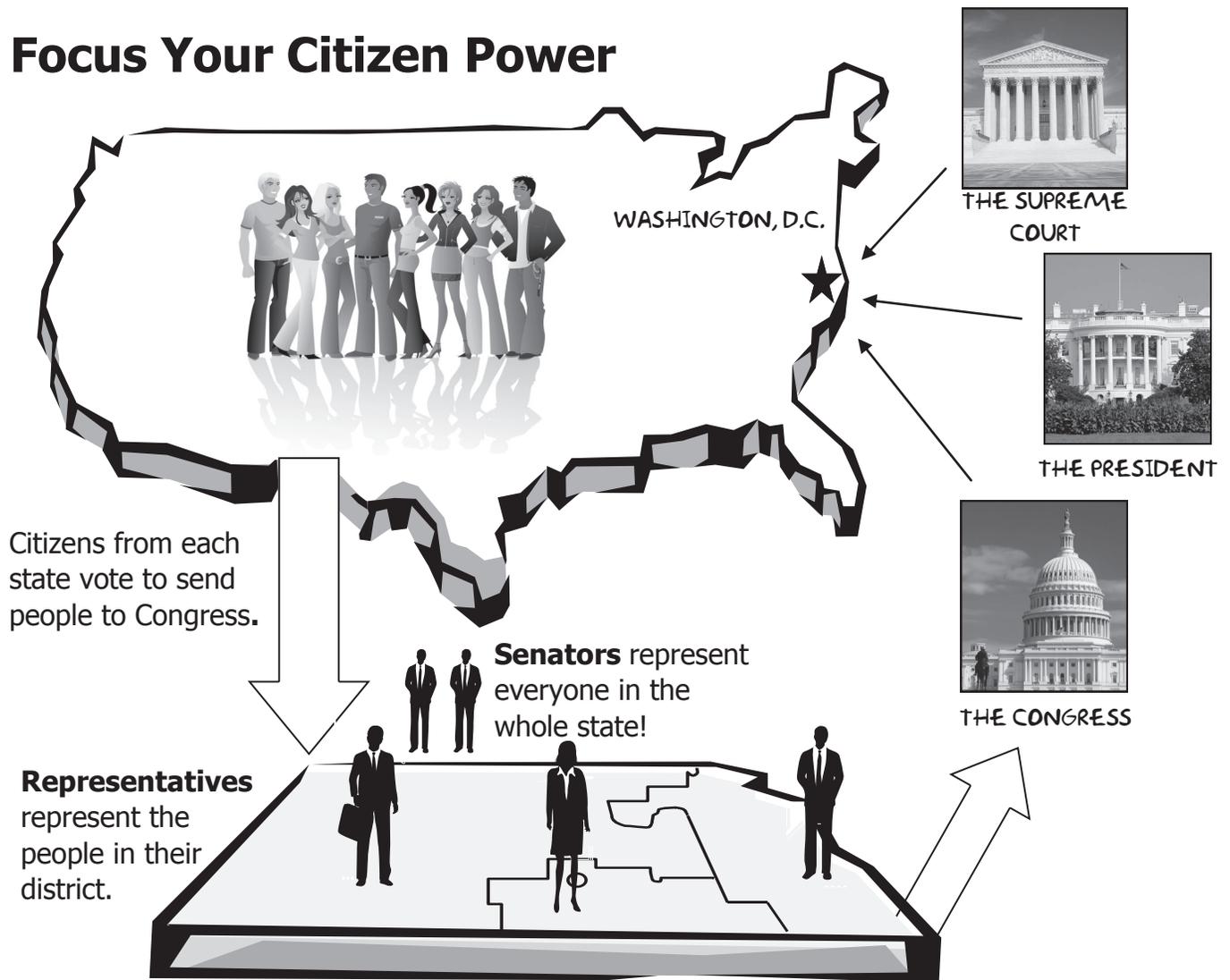
You may not feel like part of the government, but you are! The “dem” in the word “democracy” comes from the Greek word *demos*, meaning “people.” But how can one person have an impact on a government as huge as ours? By writing a letter, picking up the phone, or shooting off an email—that’s how. If you understand how the government works, and you’ve got a bit of savvy about where your opinions will have the most impact, you can be an active member of the “Fourth Branch” of our government: the citizens!

	EXECUTIVE BRANCH	LEGISLATIVE BRANCH		JUDICIAL BRANCH
		HOUSE	SENATE	
Who is involved?				
What do they do?				
Do citizens get to vote for the person?				
How do citizens’ votes count?				
Responsible to how many citizens?				
Odds of in-person contact?				
Could YOUR calls, emails, or letters change their minds?				

The Fourth Branch: YOU!

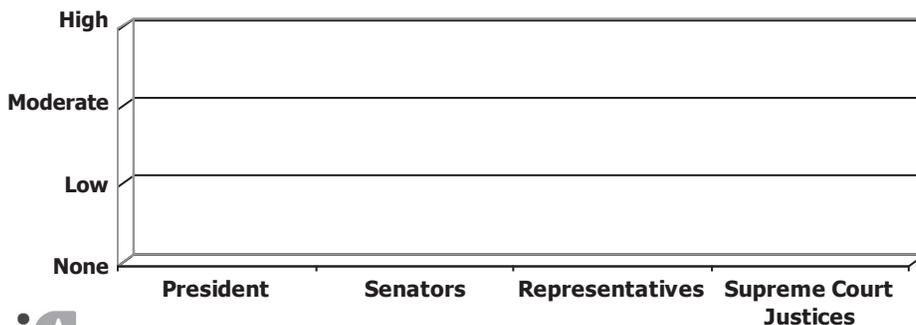
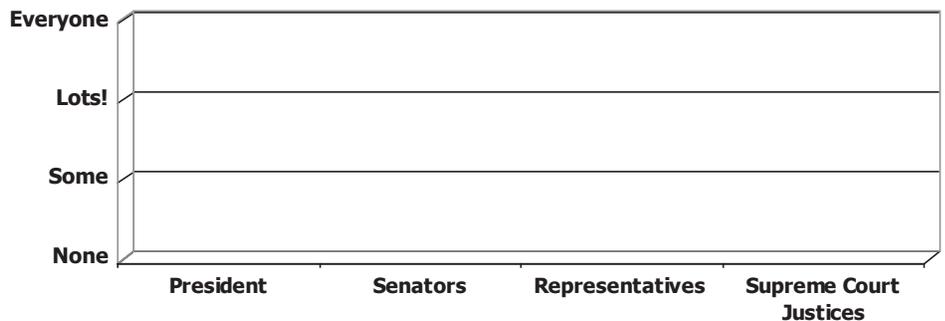
Name: _____

Focus Your Citizen Power



RESPONSIBLE TO HOW MANY?

Make a bar graph showing how many citizens each person is responsible for representing.



OVERALL IMPACT OF YOUR "CITIZEN POWER"

Make a bar graph showing where your "citizen power" has the most impact to get someone's attention on the issues you care about.

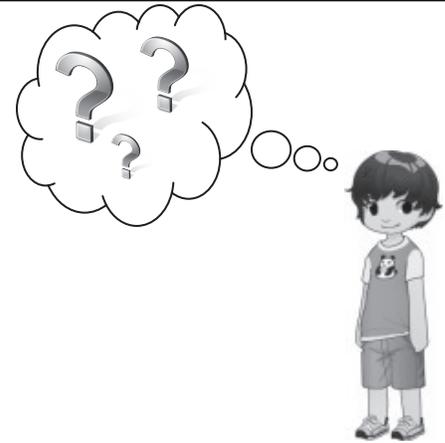
The Fourth Branch: YOU!

Name: _____

Who Should You Call?

Wally cares about a lot of issues, and he has decided to make full use of his citizen power! However . . . Wally doesn't quite understand how the federal government works. Check over Wally's letters, emails, and phone calls to make sure he targets the right people (and doesn't embarrass himself).

First, decide what Wally should do with each of his proposed communications. Tell him by circling the correct picture. If you find something wrong, tell Wally what the problem is. If not, tell him "Good job!"



Dear Mr. President:

I believe it is very important to find cures for more diseases. Too many people are suffering because there is no way to make them better. Please write a law to create a new center for researching new cures.

Sincerely,
WALLY



OR



1. Here's the problem, Wally: _____

To: bobsmith@senate.gov
From: wally@email.com
Subject: drug abuse
Senator Smith:

I am worried about some of my friends who are getting into drugs. Drug abuse is a big problem in our country and it causes problems for a lot of people. Please find a way to enforce the drug laws more effectively so dealers will be caught.

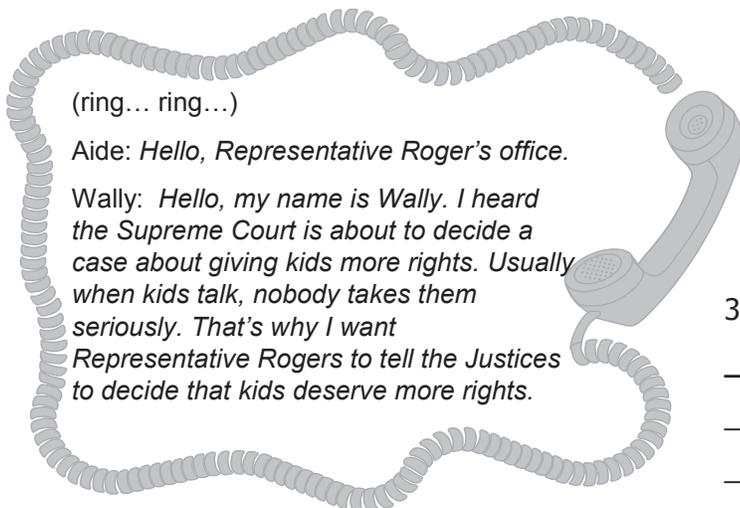
Thank you,
Wally



OR



2. Here's the problem, Wally: _____



(ring... ring...)

Aide: Hello, Representative Roger's office.

Wally: Hello, my name is Wally. I heard the Supreme Court is about to decide a case about giving kids more rights. Usually when kids talk, nobody takes them seriously. That's why I want Representative Rogers to tell the Justices to decide that kids deserve more rights.



OR



3. Here's the problem, Wally: _____

The Fourth Branch: YOU!

Name: _____

To: maryjones@house.gov
 From: wally@ourcourts.org
 Subject: college loans

Representative Jones:
 I heard that Congress might pass a law that would make it harder to get a loan for college. That is a terrible idea. People already have a hard time paying for college. Please veto that law so it doesn't pass.

Thank you,
 Wally



4. Here's the problem, Wally: _____

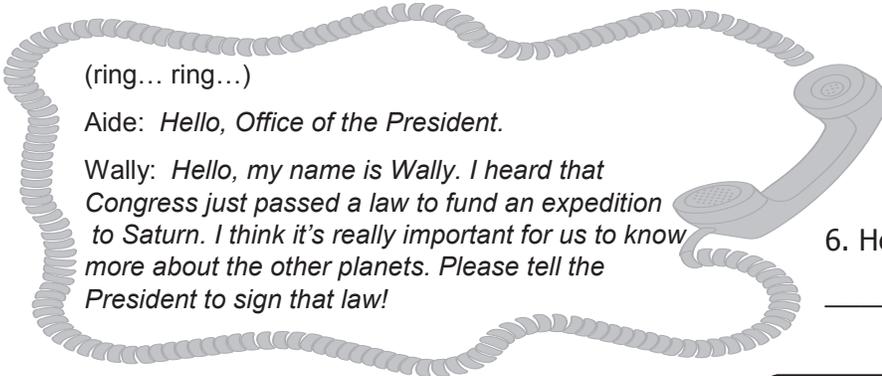
Dear Justice Martin:

I understand the Supreme Court is about to decide a case that could limit the rights of homeless people. I think homeless people will have a hard time solving their problems if their rights are limited. Please decide in favor of the plaintiff in this case.

Sincerely,
 Wally



5. Here's the problem, Wally: _____



(ring... ring...)

Aide: Hello, Office of the President.

Wally: Hello, my name is Wally. I heard that Congress just passed a law to fund an expedition to Saturn. I think it's really important for us to know more about the other planets. Please tell the President to sign that law!

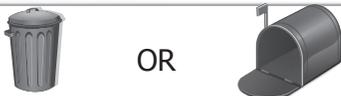


6. Here's the problem, Wally: _____

Dear Senator Thomas,

I am afraid of what will happen to my town if a natural disaster strikes, such as a tornado, earthquake, or flood. Please introduce a law to make it easier for towns to get help after a natural disaster.

Sincerely,
 WALLY



7. Here's the problem, Wally: _____

To: tommiller@house.gov
 From: wally@ourcourts.org
 Subject: Internet access

Representative Miller:
 A lot of people in my area do not have Internet access at home. Please get all the Representatives to sign a law that will make it easier for people to afford the Internet.

Thank you,
 Wally



8. Here's the problem, Wally: _____

A/B/C Activity

On the board, write the following:

A	B	C
Executive Branch	Legislative Branch	Judicial Branch

Tell the class you are going to read a series of government functions. For each one, they should say A, B, or C, depending on which branch has that function.

- 1)Writes laws (B)
- 2)Signs laws (A)
- 3)Creates agenda for the whole nation (A)
- 4)Decides whether laws are constitutional (C)
- 5)Votes to pass laws (B)
- 6)Vetoes laws (A)
- 7)Carries out laws (A)
- 8)Hears court cases (C)
- 9)Introduces laws (B)
- 10) Enforces laws (A)

The Fourth Branch: YOU!

Name: ****TEACHER GUIDE****



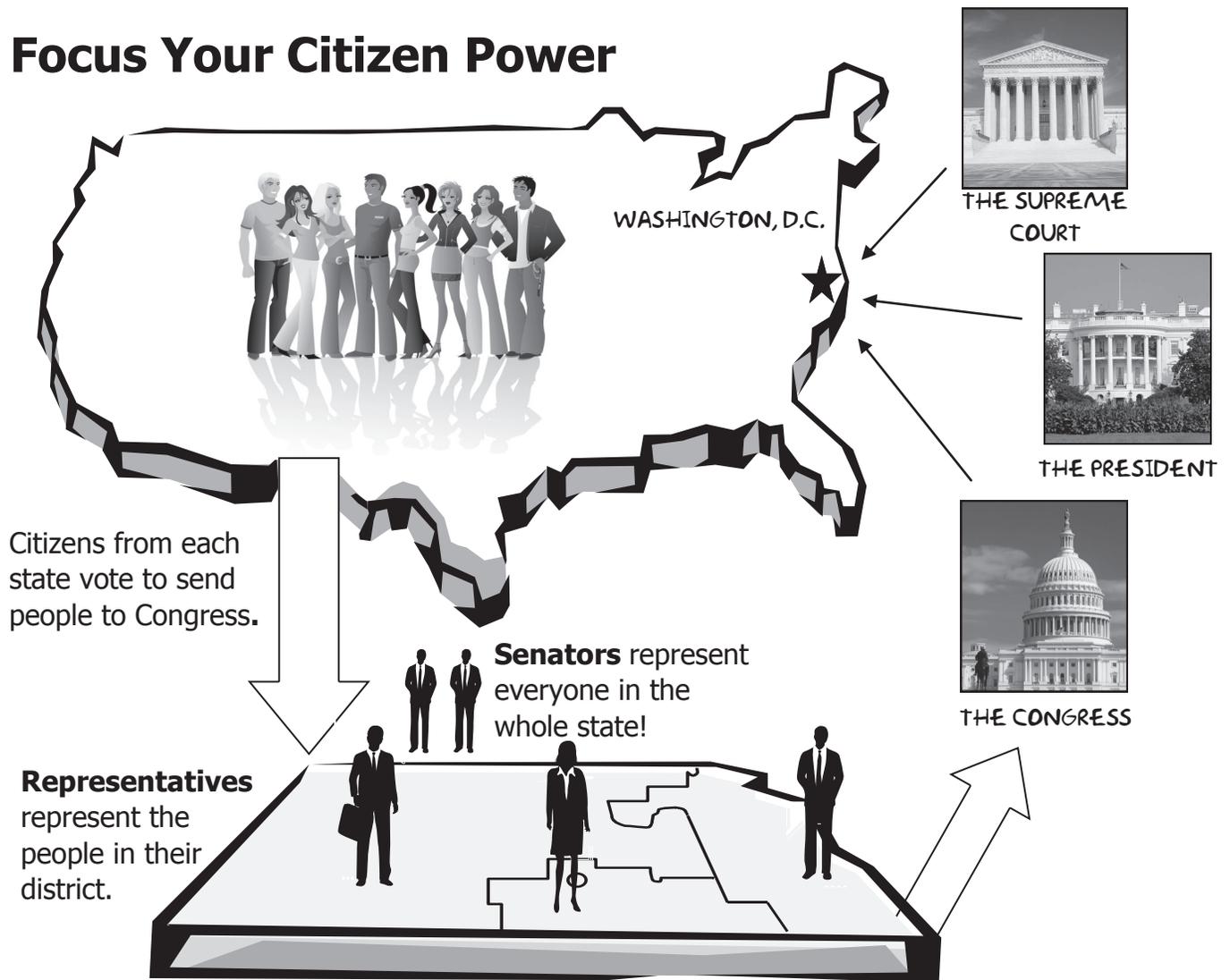
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	EXECUTIVE BRANCH	LEGISLATIVE BRANCH		JUDICIAL BRANCH
		HOUSE	SENATE	
Who is involved?	<i>President</i>	<i>Senators</i>	<i>Representatives</i>	<i>Supreme Court Justices</i>
What do they do?	<i>Make agenda Sign/veto laws Carries out laws Enforces laws</i>	<i>Introduces laws Writes laws Vote for laws</i>	<i>Introduces laws Writes laws Vote for laws</i>	<i>Hear court cases to decide whether laws are constitutional</i>
Do citizens get to vote for the person?	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
How do citizens’ votes count?	<i>All of a state’s electoral votes go to the candidate who wins a majority in the state.</i>	<i>Vote directly for the candidate</i>	<i>Vote directly for the candidate</i>	<i>No voting</i>
Responsible to how many citizens?	<i>Entire U.S.</i>	<i>Entire state</i>	<i>Citizens living in the representative’s district</i>	<i>Entire U.S.</i>
Odds of in-person contact?	<i>Low. May appear at an event with thousands of people</i>	<i>Moderate. Appears at state events with many people</i>	<i>Better. Often appears at local events</i>	<i>Very low. (You might not even know if you saw them on the street!)</i>
Could YOUR calls, emails, or letters change their minds?	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>

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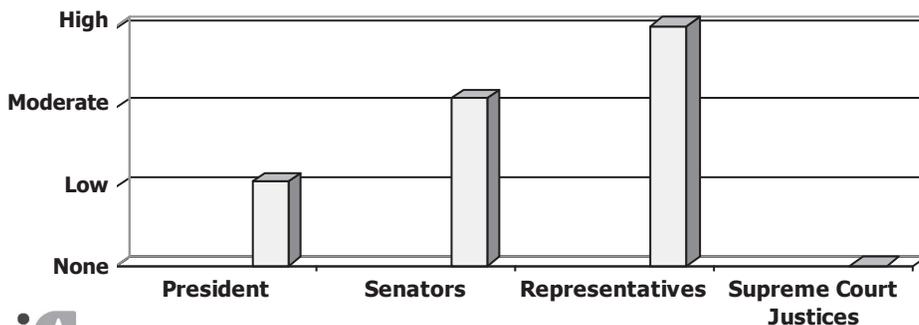
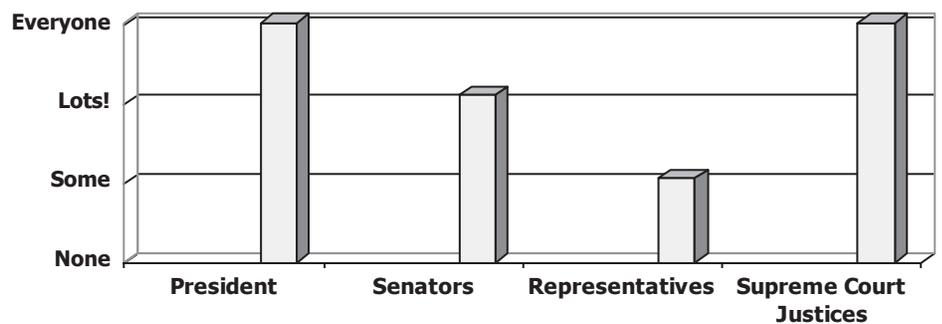
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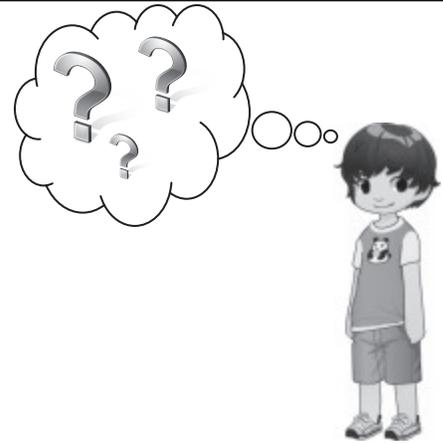
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Dear Mr. President:

I believe it is very important to find cures for more diseases. Too many people are suffering because there is no way to make them better. Please write a law to create a new center for researching new cures.

Sincerely,
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OR



1. Here's the problem, Wally: _____
The President does not **write** laws.

To: bobsmith@senate.gov
From: wally@email.com
Subject: drug abuse
Senator Smith:

I am worried about some of my friends who are getting into drugs. Drug abuse is a big problem in our country and it causes problems for a lot of people. Please find a way to enforce the drug laws more effectively so dealers will be caught.

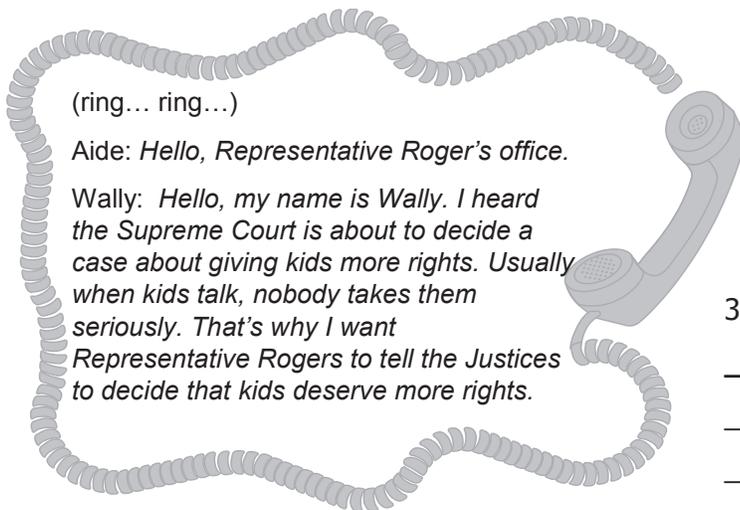
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2. Here's the problem, Wally: _____
Senators do not **enforce** laws.



(ring... ring...)

Aide: Hello, Representative Roger's office.

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OR



3. Here's the problem, Wally: _____
A) Representatives cannot tell the Supreme Court what to do.
B) The Supreme Court cannot be influenced by citizens.

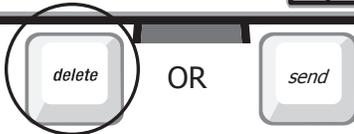
The Fourth Branch: YOU!

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Thank you,
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4. Here's the problem, Wally: _____
*Representatives don't **veto** laws—
 that is the President's job!*

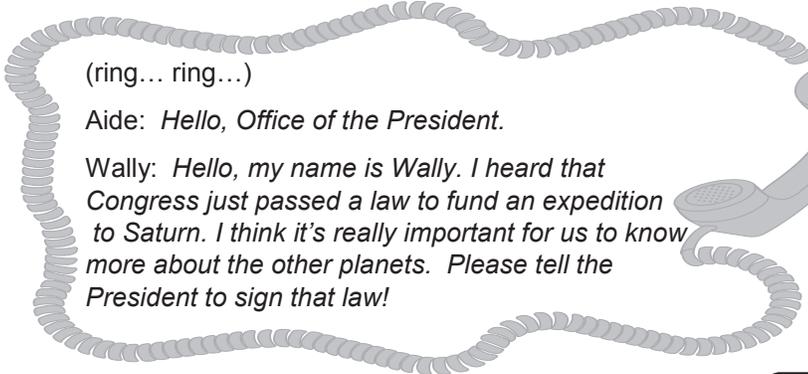
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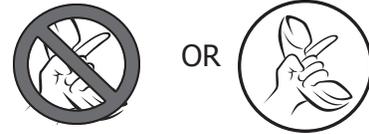
5. Here's the problem, Wally: _____
*The Supreme Court Justices are not
 influenced by citizens' opinions.*



(ring... ring...)

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No problem, Wally! Good job!

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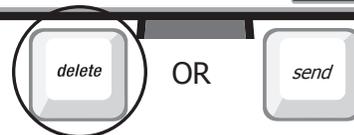


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8. Here's the problem, Wally: _____
*Representatives don't **sign** laws.
 They vote for or against laws.*