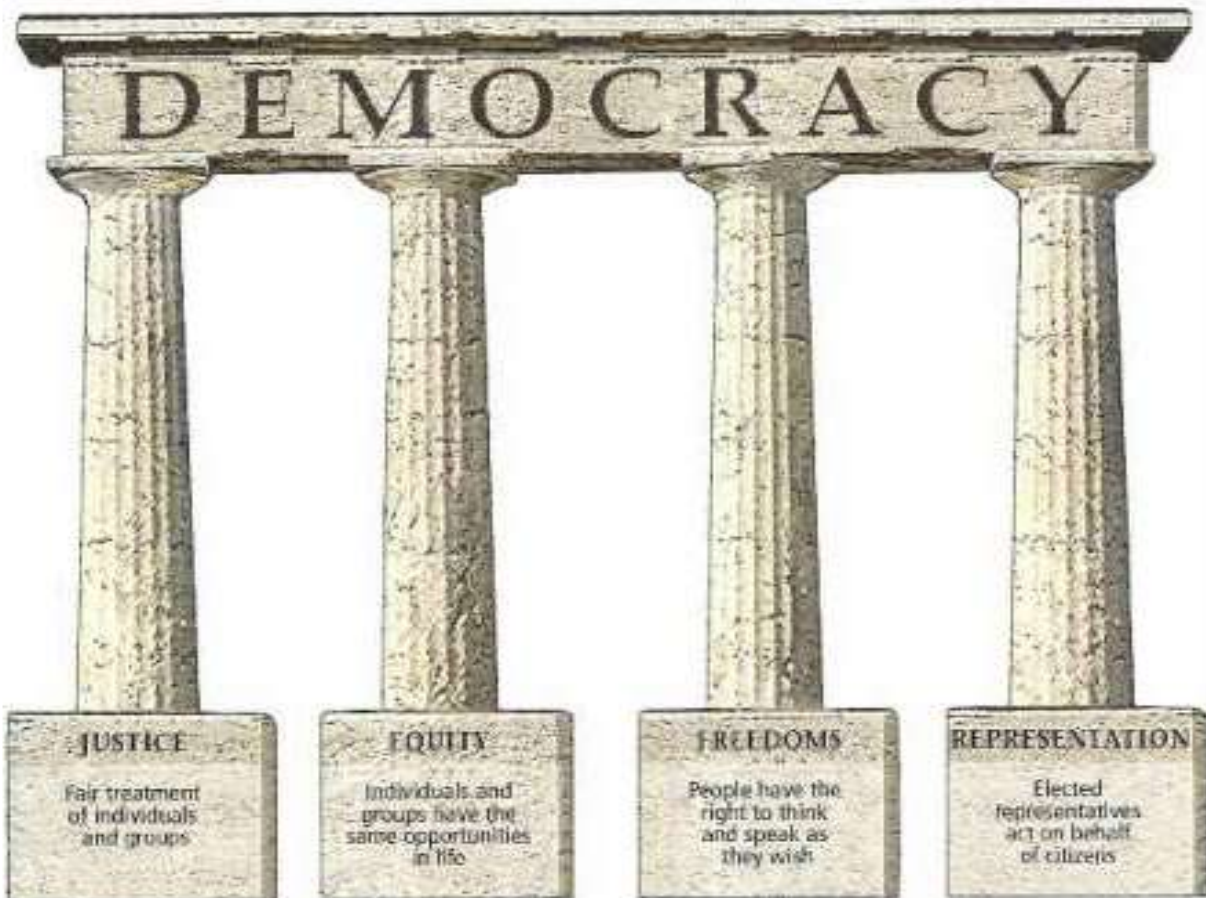


Madison High School Portfolio Projects

US Government

Citizenship in a Democracy: Finding Your Voice



"Justice Louis Brandeis called citizenship the 'most important office' in the land. Brandeis was acknowledging one of the oldest principles of American democracy, part of the nation's legacy of classical republicanism. Our nation's experiment in self-government depends foremost not upon presidents, members of Congress, or justices, but upon each of us as 'citizens'. . . Citizens are made, not born. Like the ancient Greeks and Romans, the Founders placed great importance on the role of education in preparing each generation for citizenship. Your education will help provide you with the knowledge and skills to function effectively as citizens of a constitutional democracy."

Becoming an active, involved, informed citizen involves many activities and skills. As a result of these projects, the student will be exposed to a variety of activities and projects which will help the development of those citizenship skills.

GOVERNMENT A PROJECTS (1-13)

Projects must be written in your own words and handwriting

Project 1: Watching the News - National4

Project 2: Watching the News - Local4

Project 3: Using Reputable News Sources4

Project 4: Analyzing a News Article on Foreign Affairs4

Project 5: Analyzing a News Article on a National Domestic Issue4

Project 6: Analyzing a News Article on a State Issue..... 4

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FORMS..... 11-24

GOVERNMENT B PROJECTS (15-24)

**Projects must be written in your own words and handwriting
(Only exception: Project 17 will be typed)**

Project 14: Developing a Profile of Your Congressmen 7

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Forms (for Projects 14-16) 25-28

Internet:

With the advent of the Internet there has been an explosion of information virtually at one’s fingertips. The Internet is another important tool and source of information for citizens. There are many websites that give citizens valuable information about the workings of their government. For this part of your portfolio you will be accessing several government websites. You do not need to have access to the Internet at your home. Our school library has access. If you do not have access at home, plan ahead so that you may work on it at school.

Project 18: Using the Internet – State Government.7

Project 19: Using the Internet – Political Parties 8

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GOVERNMENT A - PROJECT DETAILS

Project 1: Watching the News-National

An informed citizen must use a variety of sources to get information in order to get a balanced picture. One source of information is the national nightly newscasts. Choose one of the following national news shows and watch it for one night. **Complete Form A** as you follow the newscast and to help you in your analysis of the news.

ABC World News Tonight
NBC Nightly News
CBS Nightly News

Project 2: Watching the News- Local

It is important to stay abreast of national and foreign issues but it is also vitally important to know what is going on in your State and in your community. A good source of information for local news is the nightly local news broadcast. Choose one of the local news shows and watch it for one night. **Complete Form B** as you follow the newscast and to help you in your analysis of the news.

Project 3: Using Reputable New Sources

Our society has increasingly become a nation of internet browsers. People want their information quickly and in a concise format. However, in order to really understand the important issues, citizens must use reputable news sources to gain an accurate picture of important events and concepts.

Complete form C as you analyze a reputable news source.

Project 4: Analyzing a News Article on Foreign Affairs

For this project, use a different reputable news site you used in the previous project. Choose an article on foreign affairs and then complete **Form D** as you analyze it.

Project 5: Analyzing a news Article on a National Domestic Issue

For this project, use a different reputable news site you used in the previous project. Choose an article on a national domestic issue and then complete **Form E** to analyze it.

Project 6: Analyzing a News Article on a State Issue

For this project, use a different reputable news site you used in the previous project. Choose an article that deals with an issue in the State of Idaho and then complete **Form F** to help you analyze it.

Project 7: Analyzing a News Article on the Bill of Rights

For this project, use a different reputable news site you used in the previous project. Choose an article that deals with one of the freedoms found in the Bill of Rights and then complete **Form G** to analyze it.

Project 8: Studying a Specific Issue

In order to formulate an educated opinion about a subject, the citizen must read more than just one article about the issue or problem. Choose an issue about which you would like to learn more. Collect at least 10 different newspaper (or web-based) articles about the issue or problem. The issue or problem you choose should have a specific focus. For example, all 10 articles could deal with the continuing conflict between Pakistan and India; all 10 articles could deal with cases before the U.S. Supreme Court; all 10 articles could deal with education funding in the State of Idaho, etc. Your study of a specific issue or problem should extend over several weeks in order to get a broad picture of the problem and help you understand the complexity of it. Complete **Form H** after you have collected and read 10 articles. **Follow additional instructions on Form H.**

Project 9: Analyzing a News Magazine

Choose one article from a NEWS magazine to read. Some common news magazines: *Time*, *Newsweek*, *US News and World Report*. This article should be one of the major articles and should be at least 3 pages in length. Complete **Form I** as you analyze the article. Do not attach article.

Project 10: Analyzing a Political Cartoon

Political cartoons are another way of understanding an issue and perhaps seeing different points of view. You may find political cartoons in a newspaper or online (e.g. cagle.com). Choose a political cartoon from the newspaper and complete **Form J** to help you analyze it. You should try to choose a cartoon whose message you understand. Give detailed answers, especially the background.

Project 11: Interview a Local Government Official (PLAN AHEAD!)

People who run for and are elected to local government positions live in your neighborhood, attend church in your community, and shop at local stores. It is much easier to interact with local officials than with state or national leaders. Active citizens know who their local leaders are and know how to contact them. Compile a list of the people who have been elected to local government positions for your county, city, and special districts, such as school districts, irrigation districts, library districts, etc. From your list of local ELECTED officials, contact one of them and arrange for an interview.

When you conduct your interview, be sure to follow these guidelines:

1. When you call the official, identify yourself and explain why you want to interview him/her.
2. Be flexible. The elected official may not keep regular office hours, or even have an office. Be prepared to meet with him/her at school, a restaurant, or the library after school or on the weekend.
3. Be prompt and efficient. Arrive at the interview with your questions prepared and ready to take notes.

Here are some guidelines for questions you can include in your interview:

1. What are the purposes/goals of the organization to which you belong?
2. What is your role in the organization?
3. Why did you choose to join this particular organization?
4. How many hours per week/month do you volunteer with this organization?
5. What are the main services of this organization? Where have you focused your efforts?

6. What do you find to be the most rewarding part of your volunteer work? What is the most frustrating part?

Use **Form K** to conduct your interview.

Project 12: Interview a Local Community Leader (PLAN AHEAD!)

Elected government officials are often in the spotlight in a community. However, there are many other community leaders who are not elected to a specific government office but whose work and efforts are an integral part of the community. These community leaders are often **volunteers** who donate their time and energy to improving the community and whose efforts are often overlooked by citizens. Identify people in your community who are non-governmental leaders such as members of the local Chamber of Commerce, members of a local service organization such as Kiwanis or the Rotary, the chairperson of Neighborhood Watch, etc. From your list of community leaders, contact one of them and arrange for an interview. When you conduct your interview, be sure to follow the same guidelines as in project 11.

Here are some guidelines for questions you can include in your interview:

1. When you call the person, identify yourself and explain why you want to interview him/her.
2. Be flexible. These people are volunteers and usually are employed full-time and volunteer after work.
3. Be prompt and efficient. Arrive at the interview with your questions prepared and ready to take notes.

Here are some guidelines for questions you can include in your interview:

1. If it is a religious leaders/organization, do **not** ask about their religion. Ask about their leadership and community service.
2. What are the purposes/goals of the organization to which you belong?
3. What is your role in the organization?
4. Why did you choose to join this particular organization?
5. How many hours per week/month do you volunteer with this organization?
6. What are the main services of this organization? Where have you focused your efforts?
7. What do you find to be the most rewarding part of your volunteer work? What is the most frustrating?

Complete **Form L** as you conduct your interview.

Project 13: Observing Local Government (PLAN AHEAD!)

While there is a great deal of attention directed toward the decisions and actions of state and national government officials, it is local government that directly affects citizens in their daily lives. Local government, such as county commission, city council, planning and zoning committees, school boards, special district boards of trustees, makes decisions that most closely affect citizens on a daily basis. Active citizens are informed about local issues and know how to impact the local decision-makers. Identify local units of government in your community, the names of the elected officials, the place and date and time of their regular meetings. It is **YOUR** responsibility to find the time and place of a government meeting to attend before the due date. Attend one of these meetings. Complete **Form M** to help you observe and understand the meeting. Attach agenda if provided with one.

GOVERNMENT B PROJECT DETAILS

Project 14: Developing a Profile of Your Congressmen

In Idaho every citizen is represented in the U. S. Congress by two U.S. Senators who represent the state at-large and one Representative who represents a Congressional district in the U. S. House of Representatives. It is important for citizens to know who their Senators and Representative are and to know their background and their position on issues. This information will be valuable when election time rolls around and you are asked for your vote. Find out who represents Idaho in the U. S. Senate and who represents you from your Congressional district in the U. S. House of Representatives. Develop a profile on each of them using **Form N** (You will need three of these forms – one for each representative)

Project 15: Developing a Profile of Your State Legislators

The decisions made by state government often impact citizens more directly than the decisions made in Washington, D. C. It is important for citizens to know who represents them in the Idaho Legislature, to know their background and their position on issues. The State of Idaho is divided into 35 legislative districts, each with one State Senator and two State Representatives. Find out in which legislative district you live and who represents you in the State Legislature. Develop a profile on each of the three legislators from your district using Form O. (You will need three of these forms.)

Project 16: Analyzing a Bill

Find a Bill from the CURRENT U.S. Congress or MOST RECENT Idaho Legislature. Search the internet for Idaho or U.S. Bills. Only select a bill that has been signed by the President or the Governor of Idaho. Study the bill and follow its life through the legislative process by completing **Form P**. Do not attach the bill.

Project 17: Writing to Your Elected Officials

It is not enough for a citizen to be well-informed about his/her government. The citizen in a representative democracy has a responsibility to be involved in the affairs of government and to make his/her voice heard. One of the best ways to influence elected officials is by directly talking to them or by writing to them. Write a letter to an elected government official.

YOUR LETTER: Begin your letter by stating your purpose. What is the subject of your letter? What is your concern? Then, clearly state your position on the subject and identify the reasons for your position. Explain how the issue affects you personally. Why are you concerned about this particular issue? Conclude your letter by thanking the official for considering your ideas and by asking the official to respond to your letter. Sign the letter and include your address and your phone number.

Be sure to check your letter for correct grammar and spelling. **YOU WILL TYPE THIS PROJECT.** (Note: This would be a good time to write a letter concerning your group's project citizen to a policy-maker who has authority over your public policy problem.)

Using the Internet – No Forms (Projects 18-24)

With the advent of the Internet there has been an explosion of information virtually at one's fingertips. The Internet is another important tool and source of information for citizens. There are many websites that give citizens valuable information about the workings of their government. For this part of your portfolio you will be accessing several government websites. You do not need to have access to the Internet at your home. Our school library has access. If you do not have access at home, plan ahead so that you may work on it at school.

Project 18: Using the Internet – State Government

On the Idaho State home page (<http://www.idaho.gov> or use Google to find), you will find links to the governor (executive), the legislature (legislative), and the courts (judicial). These links are found near the bottom of the page – under "Government." Click on to each of those three links and within each of those links, click on to several different areas. **Write three one-page summaries** (one for each of the three branches of State government.) Must be 3 full pages.

Project 19: Using the Internet – Political Parties

Go to DNC and RNC official websites (<http://democrats.org>, <http://rnc.org>) Find the **party platform** for the Republican party and for the Democratic party. The sites are set up differently so you will have to search a little to find the party platforms. Read the platform for each party and then create a **chart** that compares and contrasts the two parties in five different issues. Make sure to include specific details from the platform. (e.g. **no** points for: Pro-Life v. Pro-Choice without details/explanation in platform). Must be at least 1 full page in your own words and handwriting.

Project 20: Using the Internet – Congress

Go to congress.gov

This site includes a lot of information about the U.S. Congress. Explore the site and links for several minutes. Write a one-page paper describing what is contained on this site and explain how it can be beneficial to the average citizen. Must be one full page, in your own words and handwriting.

Project 21: Using the Internet – Congressional Committees

Go to <https://www.congress.gov/committees>. When you visit the Web site, click on the name of a committee that interests you. Then, write a summary sheet for a House **AND** a Senate committee (2 total). Include the following information for each:

- Name of chairperson
- The state he/she represents and his/her political affiliation,
- How many committee members, the States they represent and their political affiliation,
- A brief history of the committee, the responsibilities of the committee, and the current issues or bills being discussed by the committee.

Must be in your own handwriting.

Project 22: Using the Internet - The Presidency

Go to www.whitehouse.gov/ This is another site to explore with a great deal of interesting links. Write a one-page paper summarizing **three** issues recently addressed by the President. In your paper, include the title of each speech or address as it is listed on the home page. Must be at least 1 full page in your own words and handwriting.

Project 23: Using the Internet - The Supreme Court

Go to <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/home>

This site contains legal information regarding recent Supreme Court cases. Choose a recent case (since 2013) and read the majority opinion as well as any dissenting opinions that were written. **Make sure the case has a majority opinion and dissenting opinion. If it does not have both, find another case.**

Write a summary of the case (in your own words) including:

- Its history
- The decision of the majority (list the justices who were in the majority)
- A dissenting opinion (list the justices who dissented).
- You must also include a quote from the majority opinion that you think highlights their decision and another quote from the dissenting that highlights the reasoning of those dissenting.

Project 24: Using the Internet - Foreign Countries

Go to: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> or Google "CIA world factbook". From the list of countries, choose two countries and compare them in five of the categories below. Create a chart that shows the comparison between the two countries that you chose to study. Do not use the United States in your comparison. Should be 1-2 pages.

CATEGORIES (select 5 of the 9):

- Geography
- People and society
- Government
- Economy
- Energy
- Communications
- Transportation
- Military
- Transnational issues

Must have detailed comparisons of the 5 categories.

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NAME _____

Form A: National News Show

Name of News Show: *Circle one*: NBC, ABC, CBS

Date of Show: _____

What was the top story of the day?

How many stories were devoted to foreign affairs? _____

How many stories were devoted to domestic issues? _____

What story related to Congress?

To the President?

To the Supreme Court?

Which story presented an issue that was most controversial?

Which story did you find to be the most interesting? Why?

About which story would you like to receive more information? Why?

Choose one of the stories reported and explain how it affects you.

NAME _____

Form B: Local News Show

Name of local News Show: _____

Date of Show: _____ Channel: _____

What was the top story of the day?

How many stories were devoted to national issues? _____

How many stories were devoted to state issues? _____

How many stories discussed issues specific to a particular town, city or community? _____

Which story presented an issue that was most controversial? Were both sides of the issue presented? What were the opposing positions?

Which story did you find to be the most interesting? Why?

About which story would you like to receive more information? Why?

Choose one of the stories reported and explain how it affects you.

NAME _____

Form C: Reputable Online News Sources

Go to NPR, Reuters, Associated Press, ABC news, NBC news, CBS news, Washington Post or New York Times and complete the following analysis form.

Circle which news website you are analyzing: NPR, Reuters, Associated Press, ABC news, NBC news, CBS news, Washington Post, New York Times

Date of analysis: _____

Which article is most prominent? Why do you think the editors chose this story?

What are the different categories of NEWS listed on main page (links to other pages)?

Titles of 4 other articles on the main page:

On the main page of the website, how many stories deal with foreign affairs? _____

How many stories deal with national domestic issues? _____

Scan the stories in the main page again.

How many stories focus on the U.S. Executive Branch? _____

How many stories focus on the U.S. Legislative Branch? _____

How many stories focus on the U.S. Judicial Branch? _____

Choose one article that interests you and write a **summary** of the entire article.

Title of article: _____

Summary (on back of page):

NAME _____

Form D: Analyzing a News Article on Foreign Affairs

For this project use a different reputable news source than you used for the previous. Choose an article on foreign affairs, read it, and complete the following analysis form. Attach the article to this form.

Name of news site: _____

Date accessed: _____

Title of article: _____

Briefly summarize the contents of the ENTIRE article.

How do the events in this country or the actions of this foreign country affect the United States?

How do you think the United States should respond or what actions should the U. S. government take?

How might these events affect your life?

NAME _____

Form E: Analyzing a News Article on a National Domestic Issue

For this project use a different reputable news source than you used for the previous.. Choose an article on a United States domestic issue and then complete the following analysis form. **Attach the article to this form.**

Name of news site: _____

Date accessed: _____

Title of article: _____

Briefly summarize the contents of the article.

Which **branches** of the federal government are mentioned in the article (directly or indirectly)? What role does each play in this instance?

How do you think the issue should be resolved or the problem solved?

How can the ordinary citizen impact the decision-makers regarding this issue or problem?

How does this issue or problem affect you?

NAME _____

Form F: Analyzing a News Article on a State Issue

For this project use a different reputable news source than you used for the previous project. You may want to choose a state or local news organization for this project. Choose an article that deals with an issue in the state of Idaho and then complete the following analysis form. **Attach the article to this form.**

Name news site: _____

Date accessed: _____

Title of article: _____

Summarize the contents of the ENTIRE article.

Which branches of the state government were mentioned in the article? What role does each branch play in resolving this issue?

How do you think the issue should be resolved or the problem solved?

How can the ordinary citizen impact the decision-makers regarding this issue or problem?

How does this issue or problem affect you?

NAME _____

Form G: Analyzing a News Article on the Bill of Rights

For this project use a different reputable news source than you used for the previous project. Choose an article that deals with one of the freedoms found in the Bill of Rights and then complete the following analysis form. **Attach the article to this form.**

Name of news site: _____

Date accessed: _____

Title of article:

This article relates to which freedom(s) found in the Bill of Rights?

In which amendment(s) is this freedom found?

Summarize the contents of the ENTIRE article.

Which **branches of government** are mentioned in this article (directly or indirectly)? What role does each branch play in the context of this issue?

Which levels of government are involved in this issue? (Think Federalism)

What is the significance of this issue with regard to American citizens' rights and liberties

What is your opinion regarding this issue?

NAME _____

Form H: Studying a Specific Issue

List the title, source, and date of all the articles and the sources in which you collected. **Attach all ten articles to this form.**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

In one sentence, explain what the issue or problem is that you studied:

INSTRUCTIONS: Write one page of the pros and the cons concerning your issue. Make two columns on your paper:

- In one column you write the pros and in the other column you write the cons
- List enough to fill both columns
- Write a two-page position paper on your chosen issue or problem
 - Be sure to explain the issue including any historical background that is needed for the reader to understand
 - Include the positions of all parties involved in the issue or problem.
 - Explain what your position is or how you would resolve the issue or conflict now that you have studied the issue in detail.

NOTE: You will hand in 10 articles, 3 handwritten pages (1 page pro/con and a 2 page position paper) as well as this form. Must be hand written in your own words.

Name: _____

Form I: Analysis of a News Magazine Article

Choose one article from a news magazine to read. Some common news magazines: Time, U.S. News and World Report, and Newsweek (can use their website). This article should be one of the major articles and should be at least 3 pages in length. Do not attach the article.

Name of news magazine: _____

Date of news magazine: _____

Title of article and author(s): _____

In one sentence, explain the subject of the article.

Explain any historical background that was given in the article about this issue.

What are the different aspects of this problem or the different positions taken by people on this issue?

What are some of the obstacles that must be resolved or overcome in order to resolve this issue?

What is your position on this issue? Explain why you took the position you did.

NAME _____

Form J: Understanding Political Cartoons

Choose a current (no older than 2 months) political cartoon from the newspaper or the internet and attach it to this form. You should try to choose a cartoon whose message you understand.

Complete the following analysis form.

Name of newspaper or URL: _____

What is the subject of the political cartoon (Give details)?

Identify the people in the cartoon.

Identify any objects or symbols in the cartoon that are relevant to the cartoonist's message.

What techniques did the cartoonist use in his/her drawing? (exaggeration, caricature, slang, etc.)

How do the written words relate to the characters in the cartoon?

What position did the cartoonist take on this subject? (Give details and background of subject)

NAME _____

Form K: Interview of Local Government Official

Name of Official: _____

Elected Office: _____

Year elected to office: _____ Number of years in office: _____

Educational background: _____

Family background: _____

Previous government service: _____

List the questions you want to ask this official (at least eight questions). Record his/her responses on the back or on a separate sheet of paper. After the interview, have the official sign this form.

Elected Official's Signature:

NAME _____

Form L: Interview a Local Community Leader

Name of Community Leader (Volunteer): _____

Organization (NOT employment): _____

Number of years active in this organization: _____

Family background:

Number of years a member of this community: _____

Other activities and membership in other organizations:

List the questions you want to ask this person (at least eight). Record his/her responses on the back or on a separate sheet of paper. After the interview, have the community leader sign this form.

Community Leader's Signature:

NAME _____

Form M: Observing a Local Government Meeting
(Page 1 of 2)

Identify the government meeting you attended: _____

Identify the date, time, and place of the meeting:

Names of the elected officials:

Names of appointed officials present:

How many citizens were present at the meeting? _____

What was the order of business for the meeting?

What was the major issue discussed while you were in attendance?

Were there any controversial issues discussed? What were the pros and cons of the issue? Did citizens address the elected officials?

Form M Continued (Page 2 of 2)

What issue addressed interested you the most and why?

Choose one issue on the agenda and explain how that issue affects the community.

What would you change about the way this meeting was conducted?

What issue would you like these elected officials to address?

(ATTACH AGENDA IF ONE WAS AVAILABLE)

Name: _____

Form N: Developing a Profile of Your U.S. Congresspersons
(you will need 3 of these forms)

Name of elected person: _____

Elected office: _____

Age: Birthplace: _____

Home: _____

Religious Affiliation: _____

Marital status: _____ Occupation: _____

Educational background: _____

Political party: _____ Number of children: _____

Political experience before serving in Congress: _____

Committee assignments: _____

Leadership positions: _____

Major bills authored or sponsored (3 or more):

List the sources you used to develop this profile.

How did your Congressperson vote on three bills before the 114th Congress? (briefly describe each bill and how they voted)

NAME _____

Form O: Developing a Profile of Your State Legislators
(you will need 3 of these forms)

Name of State legislator: _____

Elected office: _____

Legislative district number: _____

Home address: _____

Occupation: _____

Educational
background: _____

Political party: _____ Number of years in Legislature: _____

Political experience prior to serving in the Legislature:

Committee assignments:

Leadership positions:

Choose three recent State of Idaho bills. Each bill should deal with a different area of State government (education, transportation, agriculture, health care, prisons, etc.)

- How did your legislator vote on each of these bills?

List the sources you used to develop this profile.

NAME _____

Form P: Analyzing a Bill

Bill number: _____

Was the bill introduced into the House or the Senate? _____

Who sponsored the
bill? _____

To which committee was it
assigned? _____

What is the subject of the
bill? _____

What is the purpose of the bill?

What would be the fiscal impact of the bill?

What is your position on this bill? Explain why you support it or oppose it.

Follow the life of bill using the Legislature's website. The bill must have been signed by the President of the United States or by Idaho's Governor. (May use the back of this form if needed.)

