



NEW Leadership™ New Jersey

2007 POLITICAL ACTION PROJECT

During the NEW Leadership™ summer institute, you will be working in a small group of five or six people on a political action project. The action project is a role playing exercise, during which you will research an issue and work with the group to prepare a presentation on your assigned position.

The topic for this year is Global Climate Change, with a particular focus on local and regional policy initiatives to encourage conservation, create sustainable energy, and reduce pollution. For this exercise, each group will be assigned a particular position on the issue. You may be assigned to a group that takes a position or approach that you would not take in “real life.” *This is a learning exercise!* It is important, especially in politics, to try to understand the perspectives and strategies of your opposition.

The action project will involve several skill-building aspects:

- Working in a group across differences
- Researching the issue
- Identifying constituencies, coalition partners, opponents and allies
- Crafting a message to articulate your position
- Preparing an issue brief

Action project schedule

- Saturday morning June 9: Each student will be assigned to one of six groups.
- Sunday morning June 10: Meet in groups to discuss the assignment, begin researching the issue and developing your group’s strategy and message.
- Sunday afternoon June 10: Question and answer session with policy experts.
- Monday evening June 11: Computers and printers will be available to complete the assignment.
- Tuesday morning June 12: Each group will make a final presentation in support of their position on the issue.

As you proceed with this exercise, please keep the following things in mind:

People are likely to be articulating arguments and using research that they don’t necessarily support or believe. *Although you may disagree with the opinion expressed, please always show respect for the individual.*

Work hard to produce an excellent action plan. *However, we all understand that in this short time, it is not possible to make everything perfect.*

Be creative! Use your imagination! Have fun!

Topic 1: Global Warming Response Act, A3301/S2114

The Global Warming Response Act is sponsored by Linda Stender and Valerie Huttel in the New Jersey Assembly and Buono and Tom Kean in the State Senate. The act will require a reduction in greenhouse emissions (carbon dioxide and other gasses) to 1990 levels by 2020. The act requires the establishment of an emissions monitoring program, as well as of short-term target reductions by January 2008.

Group 1

You are members of a committee of the New Jersey State Legislature which will be presiding over a public hearing on the issue of global climate change. The committee will be hearing testimony on the Global Warming Response Act. You will hear testimony from groups 2 and 3. After listening to each presentation you will have 5 minutes to ask questions.

To prepare for this hearing each legislator should familiarize herself with the issues and begin to identify her position. In real life, the legislator would have staff to research these issues. However, for this exercise you will be your own staff. The goal of your research is to familiarize yourself with the key points of the bill and *craft pointed questions* for lobbyists, activists, and other community leaders that appear before you at this hearing.

Group 2

You are representatives of the New Jersey Business and Industry Association (NJBIA), NJ Chambers of Commerce, and utility companies who are lobbying against the bill. Your organizations want to make sure that industries and businesses are not hurt economically by the strict regulations the Act will implement.

The opponents of this bill argue that energy policy should be made on a national, rather than state level. The NJBIA warns that New Jersey industries pay the fourth highest electric rates in the country, and that further increases that would result from the Global Warming Response Act's may drive businesses and industries out of the state. Furthermore, enacting tougher emissions standards may also increase the cost of living in New Jersey relative to that of surrounding states.

Group 3

You are representatives from a coalition of environmental organizations who are lobbying in favor of the bill. Your primary focus is on the long-term advantages of the Global Warming Response Act.

Assemblywoman Stender points out that the benefits of the Act are twofold: first, while the bill will cause an initial outlay of funds, it may save money for New Jersey residents in the long term. By investing in clean energy now, rather than when a shift is mandated by the federal government or by increasing prices of fossil fuels, New Jersey can position itself as a leader in a new, clean energy economy. Second, New Jersey's \$16 billion dollar tourism industry is heavily threatened by rising sea levels. The higher sea levels which could result from global warming will permanently inundate 1-3% of the state. The Global Warming Response Act will help preserve coastal regions.

Topic II: Improving air quality in New Jersey – regulating school bus emissions

The emissions from diesel engines are significant sources of fine particle (aerosol) pollution, and are also sources of 40 separate substances classified as hazardous by the EPA. Diesel particles are linked to certain cancers, as well as heart problems and aggravated asthma. Recent EPA standards require significantly cleaner diesel fuel, as well as particulate matter filters (PM filters), which will reduce emissions by 90% or more. However, these PM filters will only be installed on new engines, and currently existing diesel engines will still be in use for 20 to 30 more years.

One potential solution for these problems is the use of biodiesel, a fuel made from soy and other vegetable oils. Biodiesel has three major advantages: it's a renewable resource, it has significantly lower emissions for carbon dioxide, aerosols, and sulfur, and it is usable in diesel engines with no other alterations. However, biodiesel is not a cure-all. Biodiesel is also roughly \$0.20 per gallon more expensive than diesel fuels, and conversion to biodiesel can also reduce total gas mileage.

Group 4

You are members of the Elizabeth, NJ School Board who are holding a public meeting to discuss the proposed school budget which includes the cost of refitting the school buses to minimize harmful emissions. You will hear testimony from groups 5 and 6. After each presentation, you will have 5 minutes to ask questions of the group.

To prepare for this hearing, you must familiarize yourself with the issues and begin to identify your position. As members of the school board, you want to create a school budget that will both do what's best for the school district and also please as many of your constituents as possible. You must research the issue to determine your position and be able to justify it. The board members should be prepared to *craft pointed questions* for the community leaders who will appear before you.

Group 5

You are a group of concerned citizens, parents, and environmental activists who support the change in school buses and are working to educate the community about the issue and in support of the proposed budget. You want to improve public health by putting in place regulations that will result in cleaner air.

Asthma rates are on the rise in New Jersey, and that increase is linked to a decrease in air quality. School bus particulate emissions are of particular concern. Children and bus drivers are exposed to diesel fumes each morning and afternoon while getting on and off school buses, and also while on board buses with the engines running. Furthermore, exhaust from school buses can accumulate in and around school areas and can even permeate the school buildings themselves.

Group 6

You are a group of citizens, teachers and members of the Elizabeth chamber of commerce who oppose the proposed school budget because of the prospect of higher taxes and potential cuts in school programs. While cleaner school bus emissions are a worthy goal, where will the money come from to pay for the bus retrofitting? The only apparent alternative to higher taxes is cutting in other school programs. You want to ensure that Elizabeth's students have access to as many high-quality educational programs as possible and a stable cost of living for residents.