

Tennessee Secretary of State

Blue Book Lesson Plans

Your Representatives in Government & How You Can Be Involved

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Grade Level: High School, U.S. Government and Civics

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For additional lesson plans, click [here](#).



There are a limited number of hard copies of Blue Books available. To see about ordering a set for your classroom, please contact the Secretary of State's office at (615) 741-2819 or one of your local legislators. The online version of the Blue Book is also available [here](#).

Introduction:

For citizens to participate in their representative government, they must know who represents them and what they have done in elected office. In this activity, as part of the study of Tennessee government, students will learn how a citizen can locate information about their representatives, what actions their elected officials have taken, and how citizens can play an important role in the decision making process.

Guiding Questions:

- How does a citizen identify their state representation?
- How does a citizen learn about the positions and actions of their representation?
- What can a citizen do to influence or change the positions of their representation?

Learning Objectives: In the course of the lesson, students will...

- Identify their elected officials and identify what bills their representation sponsored during the current or previous legislative session.
- Describe specific ways individuals serve their communities and responsibly participate in society and the political process.
- Explain the tools citizens have available to monitor and influence state government.

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Curriculum Standards:

GC.60 - Describe how citizens can monitor and influence local and state government as individuals and members of interest groups. (P, TN)

GC.61 - Write an opinion piece with supporting details regarding the specific ways individuals can best serve their communities and participate responsibly in civil society and the political process at local, state, and national levels of government. (C, P, TN)

GC.62 - Identify current representatives (per the student's respective district) in the Tennessee General Assembly and research their past and current proposed legislation that has significantly impacted the lives of Tennesseans. (P, TN)

Materials Needed:

- 1) *Tennessee Blue Books* (PDFs provided)
 - [pgs. 2 – 141, State Legislators](#)
 - [pgs. 174 – 178, Governor](#)
 - [pgs. 407 – 448, Courts](#)
 - [pgs. 140 – 141, House District Map](#)
 - [pg. 48, Senate District Map](#)
- 2) Student internet access
- 3) Handout (see below)
- 4) Possible web site bookmarks:
 - www.capitol.tn.gov
 - sos.tn.gov
 - www.google.com



Background:

Before leading your students through this series of activities, consider exploring the various websites first to familiarize yourself with the many options available on the public websites.

Lesson Activities:

Part 1: Who Represents Me? (10-15 minutes)

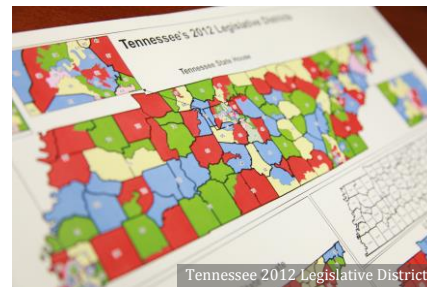
Using the Blue Book: Depending on the number of *Tennessee Blue Books*, divide the class into appropriate teams, pairs, or individually and have the students seek out who the

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leaders are that represent them in Tennessee government. Utilizing the worksheet, students should identify the name, party, and contact information for the following:

- [Individual State Legislators \(House and Senate, pgs. 2-141\)](#)
- [State Executive \(Governor, pgs. 174-178\)](#)
- [State Judiciary \(State Supreme Court, pgs. 407-448\)](#)

Note to teacher: Identifying individual legislators with the *Tennessee Blue Book* can be challenging for students if it is their first time opening the resource. Here are links to PDFs of Tennessee district maps for the [House](#) and [Senate](#) that can help locate the elected officials in a student's individual district. Teachers can also search for their specific legislators online at the Tennessee General Assembly's website (www.capitol.tn.gov) to find out their specific state legislators.



Once students identify their legislators, probe students for previous content knowledge. Has anyone met their elected officials? Heard any stories about these individuals? Can they describe what they do or what they have done for the community?

Part 2: What Have They Done? (10-15 minutes)

Using the Internet: After students share some possible previous knowledge, the next step is to utilize research resources to learn about these individuals. You may begin the search with the elected official's last election then proceed to find the individual representative on the Tennessee General Assembly's website to see what bills the individual sponsored. You may also broaden your search to find news stories or other content from an internet search engine.

- **How much did they win by in the last general election?** (www.sos.tn.gov)
 - Go to <http://www.sos.tn.gov>
 - Look at the top of the website and find **ELECTIONS**.
 - Click on **ELECTION RESULTS** under "Most Viewed."
 - Click on **STATE COUNTY TOTALS** from the most recent election (students may have to go back a cycle or two depending on the office).
 - Within the list of races search for your elected official's last name by pressing **CTRL** and **F**, type the last name, then **ENTER**.

- **What bills have they sponsored since the last election?** (www.capitol.tn.gov)
 - Go to <http://www.capitol.tn.gov>
 - Move your cursor over the word **LEGISLATORS** and click on either **HOUSE** or **SENATE MEMBERS**.
 - Find your legislators name and click on it.
 - Towards the right side of the member page click on the word **BILLS**.
 - **BILLS SPONSORED & BILLS CO-SPONSORED** will provide a list of bills that individual legislator has either sponsored or co-sponsored during the current legislative session.
- **Has their name come up recently in the news in the last 12 months?** (www.google.com)
 - Go to <http://www.google.com>
 - In the search bar type in the full given name of the legislator you want to search and hit **ENTER**.
 - Click on the **NEWS** link at the top and scroll through the most recent stories to see if there are any specific to your legislator.

At the teacher's discretion, stop the research and discuss the students' findings. Brainstorm how this new information may or may not change students' points-of-view. What should citizens do with this information or how might this information encourage or discourage participation?

Part 3: Pay Attention, Make Connections, and Participate (10-15 minutes)

Getting Involved: Now that you have the content, students should come together to discuss how they can use this new information to participate in their local government. Students should be allowed to walk through these steps, discussing what outcomes may happen based on the different types of involvement.

Some ideas, though not all, that teachers can offer (if not already provided by the students) include:



- **Seeking Out More Information**

- Google Alerts: Students can set a Google Alert with the representative's name so that when news stories or other internet information is posted about the representative, the student will get an alert to check out the new information.
 - Go to <http://www.google.com/alerts> (NOTE: You must have a Google account and be signed-in to your account in order to create an alert)
 - Type in the full given name of your legislator in the CREATE AN ALERT ABOUT... box.

- **Direct Connections**

- Phone/Email/Visit: Personal connections with local leaders allow constituents to have direct contact and influence with their elected officials. These can range from a simple phone call or e-mail, to visiting the elected official in his or her office in the district or at the State Capitol.

- **Building Out (Participation and Involvement)**

- Volunteer
 - Phone Banking – Making phone calls on behalf of a candidate.
 - Door Knocking – Talking to neighbors and others directly in the community with a face-to-face conversation.
 - Attend Events – Showing up for important events and rallies across the district.
- Candidacy
 - **YOU can run for Office**

Homework: What Do YOU Think Works Best?

Write an opinion piece (1-2 pages) with supporting details regarding the specific ways you can best serve your communities and participate responsibly in civil society and the political process at the state or local* level. Be sure to include at least one step that you intend to complete before the end of the school year.

*Teachers should feel free to go outside the scope of this lesson and modify the steps to include or focus on local elected officials if direct involvement is more accessible for student participation at the local level.

Option for extension: Invite state legislators or local elected officials to come speak to the classroom about their role in government.

MY STATE REPRESENTATIVES

STATE (LEGISLATIVE)

Senator: _____ DISTRICT #: ____ PARTY: _____

Contact Address: _____

Contact Phone Number: (_____) _____ - _____

Year of Last Election: _____ Election Results (% of Victory): _____

Sponsored Legislation

House: _____ DISTRICT #: ____ PARTY: _____

Contact Address: _____

Contact Phone Number: (_____) _____ - _____

Year of Last Election: _____ Election Results (% of Victory): _____

Sponsored Legislation

STATE (EXECUTIVE)

Governor: _____ PARTY: _____

Contact Address: _____

Contact Phone Number: (_____) _____ - _____

Year of Last Election: _____ Election Results (% of Victory): _____

Supported Legislation

STATE (JUDICIAL)

Chief Justice: _____

Justice: _____

Justice: _____

Justice: _____

Justice: _____