

Post-SIM Reflection Lesson Introduction

During this post-visit lesson, students will reflect on their experience at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute. Students will have the chance to consider what it felt like to be a United States senator, what they considered when making decisions, whether the actual senator from their state would agree with the decisions they made, and more. Through this lesson, students will build upon their learning from visiting the institute and ensure they gain an enduring understanding of the function of legislators within the federal government. They'll do this by completing a worksheet to consider their SIM experience, speaking with a partner, and finishing with a class discussion where all students will be encouraged to share their voice.

- **Lesson Duration:** 50 Minutes

Lesson Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- Synthesize and reflect on the SIM experience to understand the duties and responsibilities of United States Senators
- Draw conclusions on how climate policy impacts American citizens the nation as a whole

Essential Questions

- What factors must a legislator consider when deciding on matters of public policy?
- What policies should the United States consider to combat the effects of climate change?
- What aspects of climate policy are appealing to both political parties?

Enduring Understandings

- Senators must take into account their own personal beliefs as well as those of their party and constituents when voting in Congress.
- Conflict resolution involves compromise, cooperation, and change.
- There is constant debate over the proper role of the government.

Post-Visit Lesson Plan

- **TOTAL TIME:** 50 Minutes

ACTIVITY	TIME	DESCRIPTION
Do Now	5-10 minutes	As students enter the room, direct them to sit at their assigned seats. Once students are seated, instruct them to answer the do now questions to begin to reflect on their experience at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute. Once students have had a chance to answer the do now questions, call on 2-3 volunteers per question to share their answers with the class. Do Now Questions: 1. How did you feel role-playing as a United States senator at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute? How did you feel differently, or similarly, to yourself? 2. What is one important thing you learned during your experience at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute? Why do you think that is important? 3. (optional) What comments or questions do you have about your visit to the Edward M. Kennedy Institute?
Considering My Vote Worksheet	15-20 minutes	Distribute the considering my vote worksheet (p 4) to students, or, if students are completing it electronically, direct them to the worksheet in google classroom. Tell students that they will be completing this reflection to think deeper about their experience as Senators at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute. Explain that students will have about 15 minutes to

		complete the worksheet, 10 minutes to review their thoughts with a partner, and then they will participate in a discussion to share their thoughts as a class. If needed and time allows, provide a teacher model for students on the board demonstrating how students may answer the first question. Utilize the teacher copy of the considering my vote worksheet with sample answers (p 5-6) as necessary. While students are working, circulate around the room to provide assistance as needed.
Partner Talk	5-10 minutes	Tell students now that they've had the chance to reflect on their experience at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute, they will share their opinions with a partner to get ready for a whole group discussion. Groups should take turns after sharing each question to give their partner a chance to respond to their answer. Tell students that if they think of something new as a result of their partner conversation, they should add it to their worksheet.
Whole Class Discussion	10 minutes	Direct students back to their assigned seats if they moved for the partner talk. Once students are ready, tell the class that you will now be facilitating a whole class discussion to debrief their experience at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute. Pose each of the questions from the considering my vote worksheet to the whole class and invite volunteers to share their answers. Encourage students to respond to one another and invite them to pose questions of their own throughout discussion.

STUDENT RESOURCE

Considering My Vote Worksheet

Directions: Complete this worksheet to reflect on your SIM experience. When thinking about these questions, make sure to consider your experience as a Senator as well as the factors that influenced your decision like your political party, state, and personal preferences.

1. What was your vote? What factors influenced you to vote in that way?
2. Did any of your opinions change throughout the SIM experience? If so, how did your opinions change and what factors helped to change them? If not, why do you think you kept the same beliefs throughout the program?
3. Do you think the actual senator from the state you were representing during the SIM would be pleased with the outcome of the vote? Why or why not?
4. How did you balance various interests as a senator in deciding whether or not to vote for the bill? Were there certain interests that you found more important than others? Think about party, state, and personal interests.
5. If you could go back in time, is there anything else you would have said in favor or against the bill in the senate chamber?
6. If you got the chance to vote again today, would you vote the same way you did in the SIM? Why or why not?
7. Considering both the SIM experience and the legislation you discussed, are there any other comments or questions you'd like to pose to your classmates?

Considering My Vote Worksheet (Teacher Copy)

Directions: Complete this worksheet to reflect on your SIM experience. When thinking about these questions, make sure to consider your experience as a Senator as well as the factors that influenced your decision like your political party, state, and personal preferences.

1. What was your vote? What factors influenced you to vote in that way?

AYE Sample answers: My personal biography led me to be in favor of climate legislation, my state would benefit from the legislation, my political party was in favor of the bill, climate change is a serious issue and needs to be addressed, a specific provision was very important and made me choose to support the bill, I was convinced by thoughts my colleagues shared, etc

NO sample answers: My personal biography led me to oppose climate legislation, the fossil fuel industry is very important in my state, my political party was opposed to the bill, climate change is not an urgent issue relative to other topics, the bill would be too costly, I was convinced by thoughts my colleagues shared, etc

2. Did any of your opinions change throughout the SIM experience? If so, how did your opinions change and what factors helped to change them? If not, why do you think you kept the same beliefs throughout the program?

Sample answer: My opinion did change throughout the SIM experience. At the beginning of the SIM, I thought climate change was a legitimate problem but I did not think it required a solution immediately. After learning more during the morning business speeches and my committees, I now feel that climate change is an urgent concern that has to be addressed as soon as possible. This made me more supportive of the legislation.

3. Do you think the actual senator from the state you were representing during the SIM would be pleased with the outcome of the vote? Why or why not?

Sample answer: I do think the actual Senator from the state I was representing during the SIM, Massachusetts, would be pleased with the outcome of the vote. I feel this way because I voted in favor of the bill, which passed, and I remember when I was reading my personal bio that the Senator I was role playing had supported the Green New Deal which has a lot in common with the climate legislation we were voting on. Additionally, the voters of my state are in favor of renewable energy which is another reason the actual Senator from Massachusetts would be supportive of our passage of this bill.

4. How did you balance various interests as a senator in deciding whether or not to vote for the bill? Were there certain interests that you found more important than others? Think about party, state, and personal interests.

Sample answer: It was challenging to balance the different interests while I was considering my

vote. Especially when we were deciding on provisions, I found it hard to compromise with other members of my political party and the opposing political party, because I knew the citizens of my state would be in favor of a more extensive climate policy than several of the provisions we decided on. When I was considering the different interests I had to account for, I ended up focusing on my political party more than my personal or state interests. I did this because I knew if I only voted based on my personal interests and state interests, the bill may be too extreme to pass when we cast our final votes at the end of the program. So by compromising and focusing on my political party, I helped to create a bill that more Senators could agree on that would still address the dangers of climate change.

5. If you could go back in time, is there anything else you would have said in favor or against the bill in the senate chamber or at another time during the program?

Sample answer: Yes, if I could go back in time I would have said something different when we were discussing the nuclear power provisions. During the activity, I advocated for maintaining our current nuclear power plants. However, later on during the program a bunch of my colleagues made great points about how much more power we could generate by building new nuclear power plants. At the time, I was worried about the potential danger of nuclear power but my colleagues really won me over and if I could go back in time I would have spoken up to support building more nuclear power plants.

6. If you got the chance to vote again today, would you vote the same way you did in the SIM? Why or why not?

If I got the chance to vote again, I would vote the same way that I did during the SIM. I voted in favor of the bill because I felt it was essential that we do something to address the threat of climate change. I still feel that we must address climate change as soon as possible and for this reason I would still vote in favor of the bill.

7. Considering both the SIM experience and the legislation you discussed, are there any other comments or questions you'd like to pose to your classmates?

Sample Comments: I never knew how beneficial nuclear power could be to addressing climate change, I'd always thought of nuclear power as dangerous but now I feel it's really not as dangerous as fossil fuels; I thought it was really cool to play the role of a Senator, I never knew how much effort and discussion goes into different laws and I want to continue learning more about our government.

Sample Questions: Is this process similar for all bills that are voted on in the Senate? Is there currently any legislation our government is working on that is similar to the bill we voted on during the SIM? Is there anything else I can do right now as a student to combat climate change?