



#8966

BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Grade Levels: 8-13+

30 minutes

VIDEO RESOURCES SOFTWARE 1999

DESCRIPTION

The disabled members of the community confront City Hall about noncompliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The city is caught between lack of finances, cutting city services, and a federal court order. After the drama, a short documentary reviews the structure of federal and state government under the Constitution. The separation of powers and the system of checks and balances guard against abuse of power by the government.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

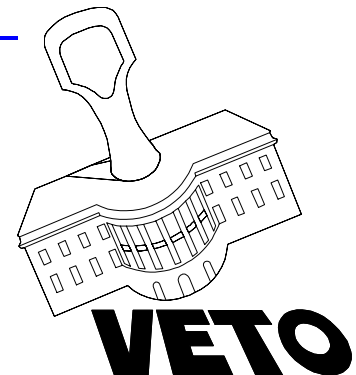
1. To learn what is meant by a federal system of government.
2. To explore the powers of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government.
3. To identify the recourse a local or state government has if unable to comply with federal law.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Between a Rock and a Hard Place is one of 15 thirty-minute episodes found in the *On Common Ground* series. *On Common Ground* is a different and exciting way to learn about U.S. history and government. Each episode includes an action-filled story and a short documentary segment. The stories show the "common ground"—the common values that people in the United States share.

VOCABULARY

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. appeal | 10. judicial review |
| 2. checks and balances | 11. legislative branch |
| 3. coalition | 12. motion |
| 4. concurrent powers | 13. obstruction of public property |
| 5. executive branch | 14. override a presidential veto |
| 6. federal guidelines | 15. ruling |
| 7. federalism | 16. separation of powers |
| 8. Framers | 17. veto |
| 9. judicial branch | |
| 10. judicial review | |



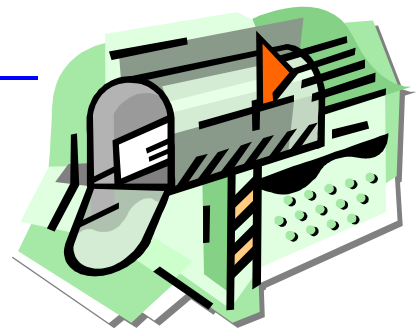
BEFORE SHOWING

1. Discuss what is meant by a federal system of government.
 - a. How is power separated among the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government?
 - b. What checks and balances do the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government exert on each other to guard against any one branch becoming too powerful?
 - c. Are local and state governments required to comply with federal law?
2. Think about the series title, *On Common Ground*, and the video title, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. What feelings and ideas do the titles provoke? Share these with the class.
3. Discuss the protection of minority rights under our Constitutional system.
4. Discuss the vocabulary words utilized in the video.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss the following:
 - a. What is government?
 - b. Why is government important?
 - c. What is meant by "common good"?
 - d. Why does the government establish law and order?
 - e. Why are individual rights important?
2. Review sections 8-10 of Article I of the Constitution, the Supremacy Clause, Article VI of the Constitution and Amendment X of the Bill of Rights.
 - a. What can be inferred about the system of federalism that was established by the Constitution from these readings?
 - b. Are there ambiguities in these articles?
 - c. Discuss the recourse state governments may take to insure that their powers are not infringed upon.



Applications and Activities

1. Research and discuss the three types of representative democracy.
 - a. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of the political structures?
 - b. Which one appears to be most efficient?
 - c. Why do you think the Framers of the Constitution favored a federal system of representative democracy?
2. Compile a list of government powers. Compare and contrast the powers of the federal government to the state governments. How do some of these powers overlap?
3. Designate a student to assume the role of Mitchell Wagner and prepare a statement outlining the coalition's response to the action of the City Council. Have the class take on the roles of members of a coalition seeking support for the rights of the disabled. Hold a meeting in which Wagner's proposals are discussed.
 - a. What options are open to the group?
 - b. What measures could they recommend to gain wider support?
 - c. How effective would it be to organize a demonstration?

- d. Under what circumstances, if any, would they resort to civil disobedience to achieve their goal?
- e. Debate the proposals considering the advantages and liabilities of each and attempt to devise a plan of action acceptable to the entire group.
- f. Debrief the role-playing exercise by asking the following:
 - 1) In our representative democracy what avenues are open to a redress of grievances?
 - 2) What is the most efficient method of garnering support for a cause?
 - 3) Under our Constitutional system, how are minority rights protected?
4. Construct a bulletin board containing newspaper articles that show how government protects the rights of people and promotes the common good.
5. Identify the needs of community members by attending a city council meeting, reading local newspapers, conducting surveys, etc. and make suggestions for how these needs can be met. Share the ideas with the class.

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- The Congress #3023
- Our Federal Government: The Legislative Branch #3066
- Our Federal Government: The Presidency #3067
- Our Federal Government: The Supreme Court #3068



World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid-safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **FEDERALISM IN THE UNITED STATES**
<http://www.min.net/~kala/fed/>
- **STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ON THE NET**
<http://www.piperinfo.com/state/index.cfm>
- **BEN'S GUIDE TO U.S. GOVERNMENT: GRADES 9-12**
<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/9-12/index.html>