

“You’re Not the Boss of Me” - Socratic Seminar



Instructions: In small groups, discuss the topics below. Remember to use each other’s names as you consider opposing viewpoints. Throughout your discussion, remain supportive, inclusive, and professional.



1. In 2021, a 1.5 trillion dollar federal infrastructure bill was introduced to upgrade and repair America’s roads, bridges, and other various infrastructure elements. Farm groups expressed excitement about how the bill would meet rural infrastructure needs, but also voiced concern that some portions of the bill could hurt rural America.

- a. What might be the benefit of such a bill? What might be some drawbacks?
- b. What department(s) in the Executive Branch might want a say on how this bill is implemented? Why?
- c. In discussing the pros and cons, would you support such legislation? Why or why not?
- d. What are some rules and regulations that might be put in place to support the integrity of the bill? What department, or agency, might hold the oversight for these entities?

2. During the COVID-19 pandemic, fewer cars were on the road; however, this did not translate to safer driving. In fact, Texas saw a 6% increase of car crash fatalities in the first three months of the pandemic in 2020.



- a. Why? What would cause this increase? (THOUGHT: There could be multiple factors at play causing this rise - think of how those factors might compound the situation)
- b. If one of the roles of government is to keep its people safe, how could the state of Texas have avoided this statistic?
- c. In moving forward, what can you do as a citizen to help lower crash fatalities?
- d. Is there a bureaucratic department that could have stepped in to help with this issue? If so, which one(s)?



3. According to the CDC, the use of seatbelts substantially reduces car crash fatalities and various additional costs associated with motor vehicle collisions. In fact, Texas was one of the first states to pass mandatory seatbelt laws in 1985. Conduct an internet search to better answer the questions offered for consideration below:

- a. What is the CDC and what is their objective?
- b. Who is the current head of the CDC?
- c. Are they a department of the US Government? Or an Independent Agency?
- d. After a quick Google search on the CDC, what additional details did you discover?

4. The invention of self-driving autonomous cars is causing a disruption to the transportation market and forcing Americans to debate the pros and cons of these vehicles' existence.



- a. What might be some of those pros and cons?
- b. If you were a concerned citizen with a strong desire to address this issue, what government agency might you contact? Why?
- c. What US Senate, or House Committee might you contact to voice your concern? Why that one? (NOTE: There are certainly more than one committee that might hold a strong interest in your opinion on the matter - be sure to clearly explain why you picked the committee you picked.)
- d. What kind of regulations may be necessary in the future?



5. The legalization of hemp and marijuana to varying degrees in various states has greatly affected the day-to-day practices of law-enforcement agencies and prosecutors across the country.

- a. Should local law-enforcement agencies across the state (such as city police departments) be in agreement on how to enforce the laws?
- b. When should officers make an arrest if they do not have a way to test the substance during a traffic stop?
- c. Do you think marijuana should be a local, state, or federal issue? Why?
- d. What kind of regulations may be necessary in the future?

Resources for future exploration:

1. **How the \$1.5 trillion infrastructure bill would impact rural America:**
https://www.capitalpress.com/ag_sectors/rurallife/how-the-1-5-trillion-infrastructure-bill-would-impact-rural-america/article_e6ace322-b6fa-11ea-936c-df62cc567f61.html
2. **Fatal car accidents spike in Texas during COVID -19:**
https://www.capitalpress.com/ag_sectors/rurallife/how-the-1-5-trillion-infrastructure-bill-would-impact-rural-america/article_e6ace322-b6fa-11ea-936c-df62cc567f61.html
3. **Article from the CDC regarding seat belt laws. Uploaded in 1998:**
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00000596.htm#:~:text=Two%20states%20>
4. **Autonomous driving vehicles:**
<https://www.ncsl.org/research/transportation/autonomous-vehicles-legislative-database.aspx>
5. **Marijuana / Hemp: ??????**
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/27/health/marijuana-hemp-delta-8-thc.html?auth=link-dismiss-google1tap>