

## HIGHEST WIRE

### Introduction

In 1788, James Madison said,

*A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prologue to Farce or Tragedy or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own Governors must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.*

The health of a democracy rests on the ability of its people to deliberate controversial issues in a free press. In this activity, you will assume the roles of writer and editor in creating a class news journal where you determine the issues that Michigan people read about. You will also examine the criteria that you used in making these determinations as they relate to core democratic value and other media sources. By the end of this activity, you will be able to explain why people may agree on democratic values in the abstract but disagree when they are applied to specific situations.

### Directions

1. Divide into group of 2 to 3 people. Your group will be assigned a topic to report on. Please write your topic down here:
2. Search a variety of media and Internet sources in order to determine the issue that people in Michigan are most concerned about within the confines of your topic.
3. Prepare a news article on your issue. News articles should include all of the information outlined below. Divide these items fairly among the members of your group so that every person is responsible for writing about at least one of them.
  - A detailed description of the issue including its relevant history and current events related to the issue.
  - An explanation of the arguments for the different sides and of the core democratic values that are in conflict.
  - A persuasive rationale for why their group selected this issue as an issue that people in Michigan would be concerned about as opposed to other

issues. Rationales should be supported with polls, statistics, and/or expert testimony verifying that this is an issue of concern in Michigan.

4. As a group, prepare a brief oral report that explains your issue to the class and convinces them that your issue deserves to be published in the class news journal. Reports should be well practiced, feature each member of your group in a speaking role, and be no longer than two minutes in length. Be prepared to answer questions about your issue following your report.
5. As groups present their issues, assume the role of editor where you must decide the top 3 stories to put in the news journal. Remember, you should select articles with issues that you believe are most important to Michigan people.
6. Using HANDOUT #4 BALLOT, vote on your top 3 articles for publication.