

## Lesson Plan

### National Standards for Civics and Government

- V. What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?
- C. What are the responsibilities of citizens?

### Cartoon Title

300313 - *The governing class*



## **Materials**

Cartoon graphic

Student Response Form

## **Background Information**

U.S. citizens are not required to vote, although many groups have struggled for the right to vote. While there are age and registration requirements, there are few other restrictions on who can vote.

Allow students to discuss the effects of a citizenry which doesn't become involved in the electoral process. Students may come to the conclusion that voters should be mandated to cast a ballot. Allow them to seek ways of requiring a vote, and discuss whether any of these would be legal under our democratic system. Review voting laws in the past and how they have been used to exclude certain segments of the population and discuss why there is a continuing concern about an apathetic electorate.

The central issue is whether an apathetic populace who doesn't participate in the democratic process can be encouraged to participate in a meaningful way. In the absence of active participation, the few who choose to be involved have the ability to monopolize the political process.

## **Enrichment Activities**

Debate a new law before the senate that would require that all citizens of a voting age be required to cast a ballot in all local, state, and national elections.

Compile a list of checks and balances as outlined in the constitution that ensures the government is fair to majority even though it may be comprised of a minority group elected by a small portion of the population.

Research the last local election for the school board, or city council and create a graphic organizer depicting the number of registered voters in each district, the number of ballots cast, and the margin by which each candidate was elected.

## Student Response Form

1. Describe how voters register, and explain why this is an important process.
2. What are three reasons citizens do not participate in government either by voting or running for office?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
3. How can the democratic system be improved to encourage voters to participate in the governmental process?
4. List ways in which citizens can participate in the governmental process.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  - d.
  - e.
5. Consider three groups who were denied the right to vote and examine their current voting trends. Include statistics which show the number of people within each subgroup who are registered to vote, the issues about which they appear to be concerned, and the parties they typically support. You may find it helpful to develop a form or chart to organize your ideas.