

# National Student/Parent Mock Election

## **Teacher's Guide to the 2009 Gubernatorial Races Virginia and New Jersey**

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# OVERVIEW: The 2009 New Jersey and Virginia Gubernatorial Races

## Guide to Off-Year Elections

### An introduction to the overlapping roles of states and the federal government

"The elementary republics of the wards, the county republics, the State republics, and the Republic of the Union, would form a gradation of authorities, standing each on the basis of law, holding every one its delegated share of powers and constituting truly a system of fundamental balances and checks for the government. Where every man is a sharer in the direction of his ward-republic, or of some of the higher ones, and feels that he is a participator in the government of affairs, not merely at an election one day in the year, but every day; when there shall not be a man in the State who will not be a member of some one of its councils, great or small, he will let the heart be torn out of his body sooner than his power be wrested from him by a Caesar or a Bonaparte."

-- Thomas Jefferson to Joseph C. Cabell, 1816.

#### Objectives:

#### Understanding:

- 1) Why off-year elections are important.
- 2) The powers of local, state, and federal governments, and what local and state officials can and cannot do.
- 3) Issues vs. appearances in some of the 2009 contests.

#### Prerequisite:

Review the powers and duties of your local and state governments, and distinguish them from those of the federal government. For more information, see:

<http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/rightsandfreedom/a/federalism.htm>

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/our\\_government/state\\_and\\_local\\_government/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/our_government/state_and_local_government/)

[http://congress.indiana.edu/lesson\\_plans/od\\_powers\\_nat\\_st\\_gov.php](http://congress.indiana.edu/lesson_plans/od_powers_nat_st_gov.php)

<http://bensguide.gpo.gov/6-8/government/index.html>

[http://www.nhcivicalliance.org/index.asp?page=lesson\\_plans](http://www.nhcivicalliance.org/index.asp?page=lesson_plans)

[http://www.nationalmockelection.org/docs/curriculum\\_reform\\_lesson\\_3.pdf](http://www.nationalmockelection.org/docs/curriculum_reform_lesson_3.pdf)

## Discussion:

Define an "Off-Year Election." See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Off-year\\_election](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Off-year_election)

In 2009, except for special elections to fill vacated seats, there will be no elections for national candidates (U.S. House, Senate, etc.). Only two states (NJ and VA) will elect Governors and some state legislators. Since all other contests will be local, for mayors, county officials, etc., why should they be of interest? See the Jefferson quote above.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of off-year elections to candidates? They normally have much lower voter turnout, and it is more difficult to ride on the "coattails" of a national candidate. However, candidates may wish to be shielded from national leaders in their own parties. Why?

If a candidate is elected to local or state office in an off-year, do they have to give up their job to run for national office in an even-numbered year? How does running for one office at a time help?

Why are many of the 2009 elections concentrating on national issues like health care or foreign policy, despite the limited ability of state or local officials to act in these areas? Do candidates and voters in off-year elections care more about actual issues, perceived issues, or candidate personalities or parties? Are there any laws that tell voters how to choose candidates? Should there be?

Are local and state offices merely training for national office? Why do some officeholders never run for "higher" office? Are they less valuable or effective as officials if they keep their present jobs? How useful is experience as a mayor for being U.S. President? Has that ever happened?

How much do the issues change in off-year elections over the years? For a humorous look at 1927, see: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,786188,00.html>

Review the structure and offices of your local and state government. For more information, see: <http://www.thegreenpapers.com/slg/>

How do state and local offices differ from those in the federal government? Compare the following:

U.S. Department of State vs. your state's Secretary of State  
U.S. Attorney General vs. your state's Attorney General vs. local prosecutors  
U.S. President vs. your state's Governor vs. your local Mayor, etc.  
U.S. Treasury Department vs. your state's Treasurer  
U.S. Congressman vs. state legislator

U.S. Department of Education vs. your state Department of Education vs. your school board

Have students make a list of the issues currently faced by our society. How is each issue addressed by each level of government, if at all? How are their efforts complementary or conflicting? What are the candidates in this election proposing for more effective government?



What are the open positions and candidates in your area for the 2009 election? Compare the candidate's platforms to the "job descriptions" in your state constitution or local charter, etc. Are the candidates taking positions on the specified responsibilities, or on other issues like political parties or national matters? Why? Are there issues that need to be addressed that are not attracting the attention of candidates on any level? Why?

How can you get involved in what Jefferson called "participator in the government of affairs" at a local level?

What are the requirements for participation? Most elective offices require a minimum age, but which positions have no minimum age limits? Many appointive or advisory positions have no specified requirements. In some cases, such as school boards, students have designated seats. Can a student council be considered a form of government? How can it be more effective?

Why are most minors not represented in government? If they can drive at 16, why can't they vote? What government offices and officials have responsibility for minors? What mechanisms do they have in place for input from minors? What others could be put in place, and how? What prevents minors from organizing to lobby for their own interests?

*"...Thank you, for all of your efforts to make the National Mock Election such an educational and rewarding process. I have been teaching history and government since 1970...and this is by far the most educational process I have been involved with. The students were actively engaged with the process and the thought provoking questions and selections... Being a small, rural school it broadened our horizons."*

Ed Harold  
Weskan, Kansas

*Photo: Flag created for the 2008 Mock Election by students at Desert Heights Elementary School, Reno, Nevada.*



# The Youth Citizen-Journalist Network and the National Student/Parent Mock Election

Teachers looking for a forum to publish their students' work and help students achieve recognition for their efforts (and provide motivation) will be pleased to find the Youth Citizen-Journalist Network (YCJN) aligned with the National Student/Parent Mock Election. YCJN is an ideal complement to middle and high school lessons regarding the gubernatorial races and much more. YCJN is a social media video and text-reporting educational project. (See [www.youthcjnetwork.org](http://www.youthcjnetwork.org) )

The National Student/Parent Mock Election, working in concert with the YCJN, is extending its focus and impact in schools with activities beyond bi-annual elections and into the daily lives of future voters and the future of democracy.

Young people from middle school through high school are invited ... encouraged ... to participate as reporters and writers of factual articles and opinions ranging in length from one sentence to complete essays and articles. For the 2009 governors' races in New Jersey and Virginia and as the 2010 General Election approaches, youth journalists will write about candidates for public office, specifically the senatorial and congressional candidates who will be on their states' ballots. Students are invited to send their informed opinions about democracy, voting, national and local issues that affect them and their families and candidates for public office to: [newsroom@ycjn.us](mailto:newsroom@ycjn.us) .

## What Students Can Submit

Anything from one sentence to an essay, from a quote you have heard to a complete report on an interview is fair game with the YCJN. You can write a summary sentence of what you have written on your personal blog or website, upload a picture of a candidate visiting in your community or an interview you did with a public official. If you, as a citizen-journalist, have an idea for an article related to democracy, social issues or the importance of voting, you can use Facebook, Twitter or another service to gather quotes and facts. In this way, your effort is multiplied and the final impact of what you publish on the YCJN is even greater.



## How YCJN Will Publish Your Work

Information sent to YCJN will be "published" first within each state's collection. YCJN editors will read every "tweet," every video, every opinion. Editors and professional mentors will help youth citizen-journalists to develop, expand and fine-tune their contributions to improve communications and reporting skills.

You can go into any of the social networks, conduct a search using "youthcjnetwork" or "YCJN" and send what you have developed, whether it is text, photographs or videos. Send content to: [newsroom@ycjn.us](mailto:newsroom@ycjn.us) . YCJN editors will continuously scan the various "youthcjnetwork" and "YCJN" folders to retrieve what the nation's youth citizen-journalists have sent.



# OVERVIEW: Gubernatorial Candidates' Positions on the Issues

Use VoteSmart ([www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)) and FactCheck (<http://www.factcheck.org>) to help you prepare a booklet about the candidates and their positions that your class can share with your community (at the local library, on the web, at community centers, nursing home). Illustrate your booklet. Ask the PTA to help you with distribution if you wish. Write a story about your project for the Youth Citizen-Journalist Network. ([www.youthcjnetwork.org](http://www.youthcjnetwork.org))

(Excerpted from VoteSmart [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)):

## Candidates and Issues: New Jersey

### Education

Corzine “has championed expanding government education programs, but as part of his attempt to balance the budget he decreased funding to most programs and localities including state universities and colleges. Issue Position: Keeping Education a Top Priority -- New Jersey schools - from preschools up to universities - are second to none. The Corzine administration will continue to make sure progressive education programs are funded and our children have the chance they deserve.”

Christie: “All our current government does is simply throw more money at the problem without ever bringing about real change. Change won't come just with more money. That's the easy answer that hasn't worked for far too long. Change will only come with increased accountability and greater parental involvement.”

Daggett: “This is not just a financial and educational issue, it is a moral issue. Whatever works best for each student should be utilized - public, private, religious, charter, vocational or home-based schools. We must set rigorous standards, improve teaching, and cultivate greater parental involvement, and we must coordinate with social service agencies. We cannot accept excuses, we cannot fail, and we cannot just continue to throw more money at the problem.”



*Include in your booklet the responses of members of your class to each candidate's position. Be sure your booklet gives equal weight to each candidate and represent all points of view. Appoint a committee to evaluate fairness and objectivity.*

### Energy and Environment

Corzine: “Promote an aggressive agenda to protect New Jersey's water, air, and natural resources -- make our water cleaner by extending protections for our waterways; adopting rules to protect against low-income and urban communities being disproportionately impacted by pollution; controlling overdevelopment and preserving open space; reforming the state's redevelopment law.”

Christie: “Chris [Christie] will gut COAH (Council on Affordable Housing) and instead encourage the redevelopment of quality housing in our cities and transit centers. There's no reason to bulldoze our last acres of open space when prime, accessible real estate is available in our city centers.”

Daggett: “We need to control development in the Highlands and the Pinelands to protect our water supply, and we must live up to the promises made to those whose land value has been significantly reduced as a result. The State Plan makes sense and should be finalized and implemented. It also makes sense to re-think the mandates of COAH that have pushed thousands of units of "builder's remedy" housing into suburbs without achieving the Supreme Court's original goals, and we must start building affordable housing in our mass transit served cities and towns where jobs are located.”



*Choose the candidate whose position you support and prepare a portfolio that shows why you believe his position is right. Use a wide variety of sources to back up your argument.*

## **Jobs and the Economy**

Corzine: “Initiating a comprehensive economic stimulus program designed to bolster the state's economy through the promotion of New Jersey's high-tech industry base and skilled workforce.

”\* Develop a long-term strategy for the continued development and expansion of the state's surface transportation system;

”\* Promote the upgrade and construction of critical infrastructure;

”\* Bolster New Jersey's reputation as a center of high-technology with a highly-education workforce, and integrate it into the state's recruitment of new businesses;

”\* Establish a world-class network of technical support services for such industries of the future as biotechnology, green technology, alternative energy, and stem cell research.”

Christie: “With New Jersey's superb location, transportation networks, and skilled workforce, manufacturing should be a key part of NJ's economy. Chris Christie is committed to get New Jersey working again by giving our state's current and future businesses a renewed competitive advantage - through deregulation and reduced tax rates - that will attract new businesses and new jobs to New Jersey.

“Chris [Christie] will revamp the tax code to bring much-needed jobs back to our cities. Urban revitalization won't happen without bringing economic revitalization, small businesses and jobs back to our cities. Christie will be a successful marketer of New Jersey - being personally involved and committed to pro-growth business policies, like other successful governors.

” ‘NJ Partnership for Action’ will act as a one-stop shop for new businesses to make opening in or relocating to New Jersey easier for companies. This agency will walk new companies through the regulatory process and assist with tax incentives to make the process more efficient. By creating these public-private partnerships to implement economic growth strategies, New Jersey will more successfully foster private sector job growth.”

”[Strategies will include] true partnership and collaboration with the private sector. CEO's and business leaders will work hand-in-hand with the Christie administration to help attract their fellow CEO's and "sell" New Jersey to their business colleagues. (And) an effective system to

help potential investors or prospective business owners obtain their lawful regulatory or other governmental approvals in a timely fashion. The partnership will ensure regulatory decisions in a reasonable time frame.”

Daggett: “The problem with being broke is that it prevents the state from making the investments needed to create high-income jobs in New Jersey...building research centers to retain and attract the cutting-edge companies that create the high-paying jobs that must be the cornerstone of New Jersey's economy. We need to make New Jersey first in the new green economy, and we can start by making our state the center of the offshore wind industry that will soon spring up along the Atlantic Seaboard from Maine to North Carolina. We need to give our pharmaceutical and biomedical companies what they need not only to survive but to thrive.”

## **Taxes**

Corzine: “Too often in a fiscal crunch decisions get made that place undue burdens on the middle class. Governor Corzine has vowed to defend the middle class and find innovative, progressive ways to generate the revenues needed to fund essential programs and balance the budget.”

Christie: “Reduce New Jersey's income tax -- It will be a priority in the Christie administration to reduce New Jersey's gross income tax during Christie's first 4 year term as Governor. Christie will seek two types of income tax reductions: One will be an "across the board" rate cut for all taxpayers. The other will be an additional cut or credit for those taxpayers who derive business income from New Jersey-based small businesses.”

Daggett: ”Between federal, state and local taxes, New Jerseyans probably bear the most punishing tax burden in the nation, especially when you factor in the high cost of living. What happens when Governor Corzine's "temporary" surcharge on the income tax goes on and on? What happens when the "one year only" elimination or reduction of property tax rebates ends? Property taxes, not state taxes - local spending, not state spending - are the biggest problems. These are self-inflicted wounds, and we need a governor willing to start talking seriously about reducing the real cost drivers of ever-rising salary, health care benefit and pension costs and the price we all pay to fund 566 municipalities and more than 600 school districts in the name of home rule.”



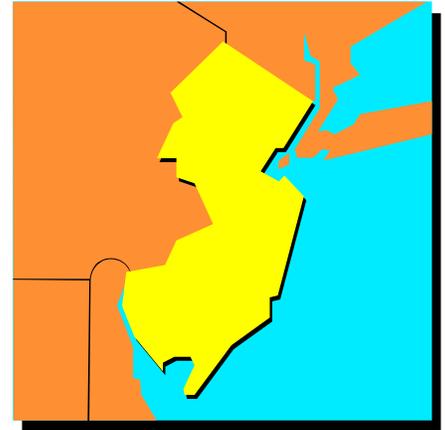
*Interview members of your family and adult friends about their views on taxes. Write a news article about your interviews and share it with the Youth Citizen-Journalist Network. ([newsroom@ycjn.us](mailto:newsroom@ycjn.us))*

*Using clippings from a variety of newspapers and magazines, prepare a school bulletin board about the economy and the candidates' positions. Consider a series of bulletin boards to cover each candidate's suggestions. Create a series of posters for display in the school cafeteria that support the candidate each student selects and gives the reason for that support in terms of the economic problems faced by New Jersey's residents today.*



## New Jersey -- questions to consider...

*As you select the issues you feel most strongly about and that you may want to focus on for the classroom activities that follow, consider which problems can be better dealt with on a state rather than federal level. Which issues can a governor take action on? Which require the state legislature to take action? Can a governor make the laws? What can he/she do?*



### Education

- How is your community's system of education funded (property taxes, sales taxes, payroll taxes)?
- Is the lack of funding a short term problem because of the economy or is the problem a long term problem?
- Is the issue about needing more money or is the educational system the issue?
- Research what each candidate is really saying in your view. Share your views with the Youth Citizen-Journalist Network ([newsroom@ycjn.us](mailto:newsroom@ycjn.us)).
- How does New Jersey compare with other states in relation to amount of money spent per student, drop out rates, college entrance percentages?
- Based on your findings, do you feel New Jersey's education issues are based on money or are the education issues based on something else?
- What would you do to fix education in New Jersey?
- Which candidate most closely matches your views?

### Energy and Environment:

- What is COAH?
- What is currently in place to protect the water, land and stop pollution?
- What is housing like in New Jersey? Is it affordable for all? Is housing clean and safe for all?
- Are proper laws in place to ensure clean air?
- Are these laws adhered to?
- What would you do to ensure a clean environment for the citizens of New Jersey?
- Which candidate's position best mirrors your view?

*"Thank you very much for helping our school to participate in this mock election! It enabled the students to become involved in the voting process and better understand their responsibility as American citizens. Their ability to be involved in the decision seemed to increase not only their awareness, but also their desire to better understand the process, the candidates and the issues."*

Helen Machleder  
Brookside, NJ

**Jobs and the Economy:**

- Research what types of businesses are currently in the state of New Jersey (high tech, manufacturing, biotechnology)
- What types of businesses are best for the state based on the current workforce?
- Does the current workforce justify bringing new types of businesses into the state?
- What role can education play in preparing a workforce for the future? How can the education of a state’s workforce affect the economy of a state?
- Research the Secretary of State’s website to determine whether or not the current system of opening a business and how much a business is taxed deters or promotes new businesses from moving into the state. ( <http://www.state.nj.us/state> )
- What would you do to bring new business into the state?
- What would you do to keep current businesses in the state?
- How would you help current businesses grow in the state?
- Which candidate’s views most closely match your own?
- Write to the candidate of your choice and say why you support him. Share your letter with the Youth Citizen-Journalist Network and expand on your news in an editorial. ([newsroom@ycjn.us](mailto:newsroom@ycjn.us) )

*"I am proud of the educators and students who participated in the 2008 New Jersey Student/Parent Mock Election. This worthy civic exercise teaches our children the importance of voting and taking an active role in the democratic process."*

Secretary of State Nina Mitchell Wells



Use VoteSmart ([www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)) and FactCheck (<http://www.factcheck.org>) to help you prepare a booklet about the candidates and their positions that your class can share with your community (at the local library, on the web, at community centers, nursing homes). Illustrate your booklet. Ask the PTA to help you with distribution if you wish. Write a story about your project for the Youth Citizen-Journalist Network. ([www.youthcjnetwork.org](http://www.youthcjnetwork.org))

(Excerpted from VoteSmart [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org)):

## Issues: Virginia

### Education

Deeds: “Senator Deeds' priorities in education are clear: ensuring access to a quality pre-kindergarten program, increasing the number of Virginia students pursuing higher education and taking care of Virginia's teachers who spend each day in the classroom caring for our children. He has fought for these principles during his career as a legislator and will continue to fight for an even better education system in our Commonwealth as our next Governor.”

McDonnell: “Bob [McDonnell] has made higher education affordability an issue of great importance throughout his time in public service. In 1994, he co-sponsored legislation to establish the Virginia Higher Education Tuition Trust Fund to allow for advance payments of undergraduate tuition at two- and four-year public institutions of higher education in Virginia. He also co-sponsored legislation in 1999 to reduce tuition and fees by 20%. As Attorney General, Bob joined 31 other Attorney Generals in calling for the "Student Loan Sunshine Act," giving greater transparency to student loan practices. [McDonnell's] plan for higher education includes 5 major components:

1. 100,000 Additional Associates and Bachelor's Degrees over the Next 15 Years
2. Restructuring the System for Affordability and Employability
3. Targeting Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and other High-Income, High-Demand Sectors
4. Comprehensive Workforce Training/Re-Training Led by Our Community Colleges
5. Public-Private Partnerships for Economic Development, Workforce Training and Advanced Research in each Region”



*Include in your booklet the responses of members of your class to each candidate's position. Be sure your booklet gives equal weight to each candidate and represents all points of view. Appoint a committee to evaluate fairness and objectivity.*

### Environment

Deeds: “Deeds wrote and passed Virginia's land preservation tax credit program-one of the most progressive environmental protection laws in the country. Since its passage, more than 100,000 acres have been preserved. The land preservation tax credit program continues to help preserve

Virginia's natural beauty. The program has even helped Governor Kaine towards his goal of preserving 400,000 acres by 2010. Deeds will establish a bold new collaborative effort between the two schools (Virginia Tech and the University of Virginia) that will harness our natural resources to improve upon existing technologies and develop new ones to reduce Virginia's dependence on foreign oil and other fossil fuels. In homes, offices, manufacturing plants-and even government buildings-throughout the Commonwealth we can make smart investments in building materials that will pay for themselves down the road. .. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards..."

McDonnell: "McDonnell will continue to support initiatives aimed at protecting our beautiful natural resources here in the Commonwealth. He is committed to protecting our environment using innovative technology, pollution prevention programs and holding polluters accountable. His key priorities will be to:

- \* Protect the Chesapeake Bay and Virginia's Watersheds
- \* Preserve 400,000 new acres of open space
- \* Establish Virginia as a "Green Jobs Zone" to encourage renewable energy technologies..."



*Choose the candidate whose position you support and prepare a portfolio that shows why you believe his position is right. Use a wide variety of sources to back up your argument.*

## **Transportation**

McDonnell: "Bob McDonnell will form a bipartisan advisory task force...The Transportation Reform Task Force will:

"Support HOT lane projects...As Governor, Bob [McDonnell] will also work to identify an array of new projects that could provide immediate congestion relief. Electronic congestion pricing, employing market based solutions, can help finance badly needed new capacity, while simultaneously reducing congestion on the existing system.

"The innovative Capital Beltway congestion relief project is moving forward on schedule, and the contractor has powerful incentives to finish on time and under budget, given the structure of the innovative public-private partnership contract. Once completed, commuters along one of the most congested highway stretches in the U.S. will have a much better commute option every day of the week. This option will help expand economic opportunity throughout Northern Virginia and reduce congestion around Tysons Corner.

"The Commonwealth is currently negotiating an expansion of the heavily congested 395/95 corridor down to Fredericksburg. This creative HOT lane project, like the 495 project, has the potential to provide critical and sustainable congestion relief for thousands of Virginians, as well as improved transit service in this corridor."

Deeds: "Creigh [Deeds] will make it his top priority to find a workable, creative transportation solution that restores trust in the system and meets three basic criteria:

"The plan must be long-term in scope, with long-range, multi-modal solutions that move people and goods more efficiently; the plan must be statewide in conception, so that every part of the

Commonwealth has a stake in the outcome; and the plan must be creative in nature, incorporating innovative solutions like incentives for telecommuting and bus rapid transit.

“Bring High-Speed Rail to Virginia. High-speed rail is one of those rare technologies that could change the way we live and work. With a high-speed train exceeding speeds of 200 miles per hour, a worker could live in Blacksburg and commute to work in Fairfax. Build a high-speed rail "spur" connecting Norfolk to Petersburg. Expand Traditional Freight and Passenger Rail Service. While high-speed rail often steals the spotlight when it comes to new rail investments, we should not forget about traditional freight and passenger rail. There are several planned or ongoing rail projects across the Commonwealth that would reduce traffic on major roads and improve the flow of goods from one part of the state to another. Improve safety on I-81. The I-81 Crescent Corridor project will improve safety on I-81 and take as much as a million truckloads of freight off highways every year. Expand freight and passenger rail throughout Virginia. Extend Metro Service To Dulles Airport. The Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project will be a crucial link between parts of Northern Virginia that rely almost exclusively on auto transit. Make sure the Tyson's Corner extension is completed on time and that the phase two extension continues as planned to Loudoun County and Dulles.”



*Interview members of your family and adult friends about their views on transportation needs in Virginia. Write a news article about your interviews and share it with the Youth Citizen-Journalist Network. ([newsroom@ycjn.us](mailto:newsroom@ycjn.us))*

*"I LOVED the mock election site, the links, and the whole experience. My students were eagerly involved, and on "election day" they took the vote very seriously. Thank you for providing the opportunity to our nation's children."*

Donnetta Elsasser  
Touchet School  
Touchet, WA



## Virginia -- questions to consider...

*As you select the issues you feel most strongly about, consider which problems can most likely be better dealt with on a state rather than federal level. Which issues can a governor take action on; which require the state legislature to take action? How can the governor make the laws? What can he/she do?*



### Education

- What is of most importance to the citizens of Virginia when it comes to education?
- Research where Virginia stands as compared to other states in terms of money spent per student; drop out rates, college entrance percentages.
- Do the students of Virginia stay in Virginia to attend college?
- What is the percentage of students that are from out of state and attending Virginia colleges vs. in-state students?
- Where do you stand on education and what is most important in your view – elementary education or higher education? Does Virginia need to choose?
- Which candidate most closely matches your views?

### Environment

- Virginia is environmentally strong and one of the most progressive states in the nation when it comes to protecting the environment.
- Research what it is costing the citizens of Virginia to preserve 400,000 acres of land. Is this land usable for other things like farmland or commercial development that would create jobs?
- Do you believe these 400,000 acres of land to be preserved is mountainous and unusable anyway? Why? Why not?
- How would the establishment of Virginia as a “Green Jobs Zone” affect the environment? What is a “Green Jobs Zone”?
- What would you do to continue to keep Virginia clean and green?
- Which candidate’s views most closely match your own?

## Transportation

- Both candidates have strong plans for the transportation system in Virginia. One candidate wants to expand freight and passenger train service to take more cars off the highways to save fuel costs and cut down on air pollution, expand bus service to nearby airports. The other candidate wants to expand offshore drilling for oil and natural gas to collect more tax dollars to fund transportation investments like road widening, traffic light coordination, expand rail service to nearby airports, improve water crossings.
- Research which transportation improvements, in your opinion, would best help the citizens of Virginia in the areas of environment, jobs, quality of life.
- What would you do to improve transportation in Virginia?
- Which candidate best matches your views?

*"We had teachers...igniting that love of history and the importance of this day in their students' minds and hearts."*

Jenny Lespi  
Elvin Hill Elementary School  
Columbiana, AL



## Investigating further: Suggestions for further activities...

### ACTIVITY: Writing a personal essay

Students write an essay to their own generation -- “How should we respond to one of the issues of the gubernatorial race?” Is there a right way of dealing with this crisis?



### ACTIVITY: Invite elected officials

Invite elected officials and local business people to talk to your students about how they are affected by one of the current issues and what might be viable solutions.



### ACTIVITY: Campaign Finances – is the sky the limit?

See the LA Times story “Justices may end campaign finance ban on corporations” June 30, 2009 at <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jun/30/nation/na-court-movie30> . If the Supreme Court decides to give corporations and unions a free-speech right to spend their money to elect or



defeat favored candidates, how do you think this might affect the gubernatorial race? Try to decide which corporations or unions might be most likely to support your chosen candidate, based on the candidate’s platform. If your candidate receives an unexpected windfall of funding, what new campaign activities can you think of that your candidate could now add to his/her efforts to win the election?



## ACTIVITY: Debate

Organize a mock gubernatorial debate about what should be the state policy for one of your chosen issue. If your event becomes a school-wide or district-wide event (vs. a classroom activity), invite your local media to attend. Invite your local political news commentator to serve as moderator. For tips on organizing a large-scale debate, see <http://www.debates.org/pages/education.html> . Also see *Guide to the National Student/Parent Mock Election* at <http://www.nationalmockelection.org/TeachersGuide2.htm> .



## ACTIVITY: Political Cartoons



Initiate a discussion of a political cartoon from your local newspaper. Consider who is represented in the cartoon, what symbols are used and what they mean, what may have inspired the cartoon. Students can then choose their own cartoons from recent newspapers for further study or create their own. Lesson plans of varying content and degree of difficulty, based on cartoons as a teaching strategy, can be found at:

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/socialstudies/Vote2004/political\\_cartoons.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/teachers/lessonplans/socialstudies/Vote2004/political_cartoons.html)

[http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson\\_view.asp?id=794](http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=794)

<http://www.sblceastconn.org/history08/Analyzing%20Political%20Cartoon%20lesson%20from%20Ben%20Scurto.doc>

*"This [2008] election project gave teachers a new perspective to teach from, another way to make history and journalism meaningful in their lives. Suddenly issues...were seen from the point of view of the teen, not the historian. It enriched all of our experiences."*

Andi Mulshine, Communications High School  
Wall, NJ



## ACTIVITY: What is important to you—as a bill-writer?

Create a bill you would like to see passed in the state legislature that you feel addresses one of the major issues of your state’s gubernatorial race. What makes a good bill? How do you convince your fellow elected officials (classmates) to jump onboard? What funding might be required in support of your bill? Where will the funding come from? Will the bill attract supporters from both parties? How does a bill become law?



*Send your bill to your state legislator and to the Youth Citizen-Journalist Network ([newsroom@ycjn.us](mailto:newsroom@ycjn.us)). Ask your state legislator to work with you introducing a bill you would like to see passed.*

### Resources

Congress for Kids:

[http://www.congressforkids.net/Legislativebranch\\_makinglaws.htm](http://www.congressforkids.net/Legislativebranch_makinglaws.htm)

New Jersey: <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/legislativepub/legprocess.asp>

[http://www.state.nj.us/hangout\\_nj/government\\_bill.html](http://www.state.nj.us/hangout_nj/government_bill.html)

Virginia: [http://legis.state.va.us/1\\_cit\\_guide/how\\_bills.html](http://legis.state.va.us/1_cit_guide/how_bills.html)



## ACTIVITY: Get out there...

Have students visit a school board meeting, town council meeting or candidate rally. Observe whether your representatives are accurately representing your views. If not, discuss your opinions with them if possible. If they disagree, are their positions based on practical considerations or politics?



*Send a report of your visit to the Youth Citizen-Journalist Network ([newsroom@ycjn.us](mailto:newsroom@ycjn.us)).*



## ACTIVITY: Environmental Treasure search on the web

Consider what agencies in your state govern the use of natural resources, what laws have been enacted to protect the environment. What guidelines are there to ensure clean air? Stop water pollution? Control development in environmentally sensitive areas? Divide into groups and create questions you feel will help you learn more about environmental issues that are important in your state. Split the questions into equal lists and work as teams to complete your internet research scavenger hunt – see which team can finish their list first!



How can you put your new knowledge to use in this election? In the future?

### Where to start:

Virginia Factsheet from the Department of Environmental Quality:

<http://www.deq.virginia.gov/info/factsheets.html>

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection:

<http://www.state.nj.us/dep>



## **ACTIVITY: Interview survey**

Younger students (elementary and middle levels) could interview their parents, relatives and neighbors in person. Since the sample would not be random, this survey would not be valid for drawing conclusions about the entire community's viewpoints. However, students would learn about public surveys and the campaign issue(s).

High school and college students, with interview training and adult supervision, could randomly select persons to ask the survey questions at a shopping mall, town square or at school, etc. Be sure that your students get permission to conduct the survey at those locations. Surveying can be done by simply asking the questions or by having survey sheets for the interviewees to complete.

After identifying your sample, you need to decide what questions you are going to ask. You can create your own questions about the issues of the gubernatorial race. Your questions are objective, not "leading questions" that suggest what the answer should be.

### **After conducting the survey:**

- Tally the survey results and note how many persons responded to each question.
- Interviewees' comments and other answers should be written in a brief narrative.
- Research the possible news media -- local newspapers, radio or community blog that might want to publish your poll results. Write a cover letter to those to whom you plan to send your results explaining how and why the poll was taken. Include the questions you asked.
- Class analysis and discussion -- What are your survey results? Are there any significant patterns in the results? How do your results compare to survey results done in your state or nationwide? Were there any surprises in your results? What might be reason for surprising results?

Adapted from David Dulio, 2004 National Student/Parent Mock Election Teachers Guide, an excellent overview about conducting a survey. Changes to his procedures are this author's responsibility.

**Note to teachers:** This is a watered-down version of how to conduct a poll. Much has been written on how to do this successfully and appropriately. This kind of poll is not like those conducted by the major media. However, it is also not like those conducted on Internet Web sites or television call- in shows: this one will be better. Please be sure to consult one of the reference books noted below with any questions, or to get a full and complete explanation of how polling is conducted in "the real world" of survey research.

For more information on polling, see one of the following references: Herbert Asher, *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know* 6th Ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2004); Michael W. Traugott and Paul Lavrakas, *The Voter's Guide to Election Polls* 3rd Ed. (Lanham, M.D.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004; or Jeffrey M. Stonecash, *Political Polling: Strategic Information in Campaigns* (Lanham, M.D.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).

## **ACTIVITY: Compare and Contrast – Gubernatorial Candidates’ Positions on the Issues of Jobs/Economy – New Jersey**

1. Research the candidates’ positions and proposals for improving New Jersey’s economy. Use their official campaign web sites and campaign literature, visit VoteSmart for nonpartisan information.

VoteSmart: [http://www.votesmart.org/election\\_governor\\_five\\_categories.php?state\\_id=NJ](http://www.votesmart.org/election_governor_five_categories.php?state_id=NJ)

Christie campaign site: <http://www.christiefornj.com/>

Corzine campaign site: <http://www.joncorzine09.com>

Daggett campaign site: <http://daggettforgovernor.com/...>

2. Using key words or phrases, list the major economic proposals of Corzine and Christie.

**Questions** based on your research:

1. Do Corzine and Christie have any similar views or solutions for New Jersey’s economic issues? If so, what are they, and why did they agree on those issues?

2. On what economic issues do Corzine and Christie differ the most? Describe their differences.

3. What might this comparison tell us about the differences between the Republican and Democratic parties?

4. Which candidate is more likely to believe in the following political ideas about the economy?

Write **A** for Corzine and **B** for Christie.

\_\_\_ government action can be a major force in improving the economy

\_\_\_ limited government involvement is best for business

\_\_\_ lower taxes on investors and business stimulates economic growth

\_\_\_ limited redistribution of wealth benefits the entire state



## **ACTIVITY: Compare and Contrast – Gubernatorial Candidates’ Positions on the Issues of the Environment – Virginia**

1. Research the candidates’ positions and proposals for preserving and protecting Virginia’s environment. Use their official campaign web sites and campaign literature, visit VoteSmart for nonpartisan information.

VoteSmart: [http://www.votesmart.org/election\\_governor\\_five\\_categories.php?state\\_id=VA](http://www.votesmart.org/election_governor_five_categories.php?state_id=VA)

McDonnell campaign site: <http://www.bobmcdonnell.com>

Deeds campaign site: <http://www.deedsforvirginia.com>

2. Using key words or phrases, list the major environmental proposals of McDonnell and Deeds.

**Questions** based on your research and the graphic organizer above:

1. Do McDonnell and Deeds have any similar views or solutions for Virginia’s environmental issues? If so, what are they, and why did they agree on those issues?
2. On what environmental issues do McDonnell and Deeds differ the most? Describe their differences.
3. What might this comparison tell us about the differences between the Republican and Democratic parties?
4. Which candidate is more likely to believe in the following political ideas about the economy?

Write **A** for McDonnell and **B** for Deeds.

\_\_\_ government action can be a major force in improving the economy

\_\_\_ limited government involvement is best for business

\_\_\_ lower taxes on investors and business stimulates economic growth

\_\_\_ limited redistribution of wealth benefits the entire state



## **ACTIVITY: My Opinion – Do I Agree With the Candidates’ Positions? – New Jersey**

**Directions:** Use your Gubernatorial candidate’s positions sheet for determining which candidate you agree with most in dealing with one of the issues of the gubernatorial race. (Education, Energy and the Environment, Jobs and the Economy, etc.) Write the key words or phrase representing the candidate’s position.

### **Jon Corzine, Democrat**

Agree with his position on:

Disagree with his position on:

Uncertain – No opinion:

### **Chris Christie, Republican**

Agree with his position on:

Disagree with his position on:

Uncertain – No opinion:

Your decision: Based on your research and the completed chart above, which gubernatorial candidate’s positions do you agree with most?

Explain why their plans for dealing with the issue you chose are the best for the state.

For this issue I believe that \_\_\_\_\_ has the best plans to deal with our state’s issues and problems because:



## **ACTIVITY: My Opinion – Do I Agree With the Candidates’ Positions? – Virginia**

**Directions:** Use your Gubernatorial candidate’s positions sheet for determining which candidate you agree with most in dealing with one of the issues of the gubernatorial race. (Energy, Transportation the Environment, etc.) Write the key words or phrase representing the candidate’s position.

### **McDonnell, Republican**

Agree with his position on:

Disagree with his position on:

Uncertain – No opinion:

### **Deeds, Democrat**

Agree with his position on:

Disagree with his position on:

Uncertain – No opinion:

Your decision: Based on your research and the completed chart above, which gubernatorial candidate’s positions do you agree with most?

Explain why their plans for dealing with the issue you chose are the best for the state.

For this issue I believe that \_\_\_\_\_ has the best plans to deal with our state’s issues and problems because:



## Resources for your search: website providing a goldmine of information

### 2009 Election – New Jersey Links:

Informed Democracy 101 – NJ Gubernatorial Race  
<http://www.youthcjnetwork.org/newjerseynews.html>

New Jersey Elections and Public Affairs  
<http://www.njvoterinfo.org/2009election/2009indexgeneral.php>

Politics of New Jersey  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics\\_of\\_New\\_Jersey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_New_Jersey)  
<http://www.politickernj.com>

New Jersey State Constitution  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Jersey\\_State\\_Constitution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Jersey_State_Constitution)  
<http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/lawsconstitution/consearch.asp>

New Jersey Governor Candidates  
[http://www.votesmart.org/election\\_governor\\_five\\_categories.php?state\\_id=NJ](http://www.votesmart.org/election_governor_five_categories.php?state_id=NJ)

New Jersey Supreme Court  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Jersey\\_Supreme\\_Court](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Jersey_Supreme_Court)  
<http://www.judiciary.state.nj.us/supreme/index.htm>

Governors of New Jersey  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Governors\\_of\\_New\\_Jersey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Governors_of_New_Jersey)

New Jersey Gubernatorial Election  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Jersey\\_gubernatorial\\_election,\\_2009](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Jersey_gubernatorial_election,_2009)

List of County and Municipal websites  
<http://www.nj.gov/nj/govinfo/county/localgov.html>

Governor Corzine Biographical Information  
[http://www.votesmart.org/summary.php?can\\_id=43268](http://www.votesmart.org/summary.php?can_id=43268)

Gubernatorial Dates and Polling  
<http://ruvoting.rutgers.edu/governor09.html>



Department of Energy Kids' Page – K-12 Lesson Plans & Activities --  
<http://www1.eere.energy.gov/education/lessonplans/>

Other sites

<http://www.lwvnj.org/links/teachers.shtml>

<http://www.state.nj.us/governor/>

**State News Sources**

[Asbury Park Press](#)

[The Press of Atlantic City](#)

[Bergen Record](#)

[Bridgeton Evening News](#)

[Bridgewater Courier-News](#)

[Burlington County Times](#)

[Business News New Jersey](#)

[Camden Courier-Post](#)

[East Brunswick Home News & Tribune](#)

[Gloucester County Times](#)

[Hudson County Jersey Journal](#)

[Hunterdon County Democrat](#)

[InJersey.com - Gannett State Bureau Report](#)

[JerseyPolitics.com](#)

[Manahawkin Times Beacon](#)

[Morris County Daily Record](#)

[Newark Star-Ledger](#)

[New Jersey Herald \(Sussex County\)](#)

[New Jersey Online \(Newark Star-Ledger & Trenton Times\)](#)

[New Jersey Public Television & Radio \(PBS\)](#)

[New Jersey Reporter \(Public Policy Center of New Jersey\)](#)

[NJ Voter Information \(Rutgers University\)](#)

[News-12 New Jersey \(TV - Cablevision\)](#)

[NorthJersey.com](#)

[North Jersey Herald News \(Passaic County\)](#)

[PolitickerNJ.com](#)

[Princeton Packet](#)

[Salem County Today's Sunbeam](#)

[Trenton Times](#)

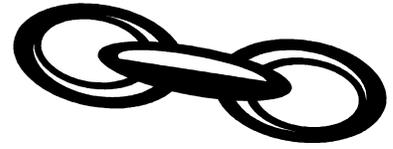
[The Trentonian](#)

[Westfield Leader](#)

[WZBN TV-25 \(Cablevision - Mercer\)](#)



## 2009 Election -- Virginia Links:



Informed Democracy 101 – VA Gubernatorial Race  
<http://www.youthcjnetwork.org/virginia.html>

Politics of Virginia  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia\\_gubernatorial\\_election,\\_2009#Regional.2FPolitical\\_Factors](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_gubernatorial_election,_2009#Regional.2FPolitical_Factors)  
<http://www.politics1.com/va.htm>

Virginia Polling  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia\\_gubernatorial\\_election,\\_2009#Polling](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_gubernatorial_election,_2009#Polling)

Virginia State Constitution  
<http://legis.state.va.us/Laws/search/ConstitutionTOC.htm>

Virginia Governor Candidates  
[http://www.votesmart.org/election\\_governor\\_five\\_categories.php?state\\_id=VA](http://www.votesmart.org/election_governor_five_categories.php?state_id=VA)

Virginia Supreme Court  
<http://www.courts.state.va.us/courts/scv/home.html>

Governors of Virginia  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Governors\\_of\\_Virginia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Governors_of_Virginia)

Virginia Gubernatorial Election  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia\\_gubernatorial\\_election,\\_2009](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_gubernatorial_election,_2009)

Local Government websites  
[http://www.virginia.gov/cmsportal3/government\\_4096/local\\_government\\_websites.html](http://www.virginia.gov/cmsportal3/government_4096/local_government_websites.html)

Department of Energy Kids' Page – K-12 Lesson Plans & Activities --  
<http://www1.eere.energy.gov/education/lessonplans/>

Other sites:  
<http://civics.pwnet.org/resources.html>  
<http://civics.pwnet.org/GOVT/GOVT.html>  
[http://legis.state.va.us/1\\_cap\\_class/cap\\_class\\_welcome.html](http://legis.state.va.us/1_cap_class/cap_class_welcome.html)  
<http://richmondgoodlife.com/specialreports/governor2009.htm> (with issues links to candidate web sites)  
[http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/fepos/Middle\\_School/11\\_Structure\\_plan.pdf](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb/fepos/Middle_School/11_Structure_plan.pdf)

## State News Sources

[Alexandria Journal / Arlington Journal](#)  
[Augusta Free Press \(Staunton/Waynesboro\)](#)  
[Bristol Herald Courier](#)  
[Charlottesville Daily Progress](#)  
[Commonwealth Conservative](#)  
[Culpeper Star-Exponent](#)  
[Danville Register & Bee](#)  
[Fredericksburg Free Lance-Star](#)  
[Lynchburg News & Advance](#)  
[Martinsville Bulletin](#)  
[Newport News Daily Press](#)  
[Norfolk Virginian-Pilot](#)  
[Potomac News \(Woodbridge\)](#)  
[Richlands News-Press / Clinch Valley News](#)  
[Richmond Times-Dispatch](#)  
[Roanoke Times](#)  
[Southside Sentinel \(Middlesex County\)](#)  
[Staunton Daily News Leader](#)  
[VApolitics.net](#)  
[Virginia Busines Online: Virginia Politics](#)  
[Virginia Political Line \(Liberal\)](#)  
[Virginia Public Access Project \(Politics\)](#)  
[Washington Post](#)  
[WWBT TV-12 \(NBC - Richmond\) - \(\*Political News\*\)](#)

