

## **Beyond Personalities: Examining the Issues and Positions in the 2012 U.S. Presidential Election**

This mini-lesson is designed to help students focus on the issues and the political positions rather than the personalities in the 2012 election. The activities were developed using information from [IndyKids.org](http://IndyKids.org).

*Activity 1: What do you think you already know?* Use the Student Activity Sheet 1. Ask students working in small groups to review the positions on the economy, education, the environment, health care, immigration and war. Ask students to match the position with the candidates, based on what they believe they already know. This can be a warm-up to a larger discussion about the platforms and the candidates.

*Activity 2: Create your own party platform.* Use the Student Activity Sheet 2. Ask students to review the positions on each of the issues and evaluate which position comes closest to their own opinions and write the reasons why. Afterwards, reveal the positions of the national candidates to see how the students' opinions align with existing platforms. Ask the students if the outcome surprised them. Did their opinions align with the party they thought it would? Did they align with different parties depending on the issues? What are the pros and cons to have more than the two parties we typically hear about in the mainstream press? Why do we only hear about two parties in the mainstream press?

*Activity 3: Election Jeopardy.* You could create a Jeopardy game using the positions as clues to reveal the candidates.

Please note that this activity has not been field tested yet. Therefore we welcome your feedback on how it worked, how you improved it, and any corrections that are needed. Please send feedback to [dmenkart@teachingforchange.org](mailto:dmenkart@teachingforchange.org) or give to Ms. Stubbs.

## TEACHER ANSWER SHEET

### ECONOMY

*Unemployment remains high: 8.3 percent of Americans don't have jobs. Half of American households hold only 1 percent of the country's wealth.*

**Obama:** Create new jobs and decrease the taxes of people who work by asking the wealthy to pay more in taxes.

**Romney:** Cut the rate of taxation across-the-board; eliminate the inheritance tax and would keep taxes most big businesses pay the same as they are now.

**Stein:** Guarantee the right to a job at a living wage for every American willing and able to work. Supports changing the financial industry so it serves people and communities.

**Johnson:** Does not believe the federal government should spend any money on stimulus or transportation. Believes businesses should not be taxed, as that would help them create jobs.

**Goode:** Budget should be balanced now by cutting agency funding. Against bank bailouts, as well as the stimulus bill for jobs and energy.

**Lindsay:** Supports making a job a Constitutional right; will defend unions and the right to organize. Favors taking over the banks and ending our capitalist system.

### EDUCATION

*More than 4,500 public schools shut down since 2007. Today, students still face segregation and racism with the school system. The country's high school graduation rate is 75 percent and the average college graduate finishes school with more than \$20,000 in debt.*

**Obama:** Make U.S. the top in math and science, and fund early childhood education for all. Will also add 25,000 teachers to high-need areas. The federal government will run and provide loans as part of the federal college student loan program.

**Romney:** Says teachers' unions hinder student achievement. Supports Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, as well as English immersion and abstinence education.

**Stein:** Wants free college education for all, as she believes the current system traps people in debt; believes decisions concerning education should be at a more grassroots level than currently.

**Johnson:** End federal involvement in education. Use more of the money obtained through funding for programming.

**Goode:** Allow school prayer on a voluntary basis. Close down the Federal Department of Education. Provide vouchers to help families pay for public school.

**Lindsay:** Make education free—cancel all student debt.

### ENVIRONMENT

*Humans burning fossil fuel for energy has released chemicals into the atmosphere that have warmed the planet, which has contributed to extreme weather patterns across the world, from droughts to hurricanes.*

**Obama:** Rejects drilling for oil in some environments, and takes the prevention of global warming seriously in his policies.

**Romney:** Believes in a market approach to solving environmental problems and wants to explore domestic oil drilling in places such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

**Stein:** Believes a clean environment is a health issue. As part of her far-ranging environmental policies, she promotes green local economies, sustainable agriculture and clean power.

**Johnson:** Believes each state should have its own policy on clean water; would enforce clean air policies but would not provide financial rewards for lower-emission research and technology.

**Goode:** While in Congress, he voted to fund Amtrak improvements and operation through 2013; has generally sided with corporations on environmental issues.

**Lindsay:** Favors a central economic plan to significantly cut greenhouse gases, clean up the environment and build a massive renewable energy network. Believes our for-profit economic system creates incentives to pollute and that it must be changed.

## HEALTH CARE

*Since 2010, 1.3 million people received health coverage due to government health insurance programs such as Medicare and Medicaid and the passage of the Affordable Care Act. However, there are still 7.9 million children in the United States who do not have health insurance.*

**Obama:** Increase competition between insurance companies and drug companies; give people the option to buy affordable healthcare. In 2010, President Obama passed the Affordable Health Care Act, which aims to make health care easier for more people to get.

**Romney:** In favor of a free-market-based system. Believes in individual responsibility for healthcare.

**Stein:** Wants Medicare for all (single payer), not just for the elderly and disabled. Stein criticized large CEO salaries in the healthcare industry, and that 30% of ? goes to advertising insurance plans.

**Johnson:** Cut Medicare/Medicaid spending by 43%. Let states decide healthcare on a state-by-state basis.

**Goode:** Wants to leave Medicare to the states. Wants employers to encourage employees to put money into their employee medical savings accounts. Opposes more federal funding on healthcare.

**Lindsay:** Create a completely free and public health care system.

## IMMIGRATION

*There are approximately 11.5 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. Most left their home country because of poverty. Many undocumented immigrants take low-paying jobs and live in fear of being deported.*

**Obama:** As of June 2012, said he would no longer seek the deportation of undocumented immigrants, and would allow them to seek work permits.

**Romney:** Encourage legal immigration, but secure borders to end illegal immigration.

**Stein:** Will provide a legal path to citizenship for immigrant residents. She also feels undocumented immigrants are a critical component of the economy.

**Johnson:** Encourage legal immigration, but secure borders to end illegal immigration.

**Goode:** Illegal immigrants shouldn't be allowed citizenship. Stop illegal immigration and what he calls "terrorism" from Mexico. End diversity visas for Muslims.

**Lindsay:** Would abolish all anti-immigrant laws, stop the raids and deportations and dismantle the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico.

## **WARS**

*In 2011, \$718 billion, or 20 percent, of the federal budget was spent on the military and defense. Despite 2008 campaign promises to "pull out," there is still a large U.S. military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan.*

**Obama:** Decreased U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, while spending about \$110 Billion on Afghanistan in 2011.

**Romney:** Will not allow Iran to have nuclear weapons, and believes the U.S. must have a military option to prevent that. Wants to expand military spending.

**Stein:** Believes Iran doesn't threaten our security. She says that we can change the country if we change to green jobs and would not need to make war over oil.

**Johnson:** Thinks that the U.S. wasted \$4 trillion dollars on the illegal Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

**Goode:** Believes that, because the U.S. spends too much money, we must come home from Afghanistan and reduce our spending around the world.

**Lindsay:** Believes war is used to advance the interests of the "biggest banks and corporations." Favors ending the blockade on Cuba and ending U.S. foreign aid to Israel.

Obama – Democratic

Romney – Republican

Stein – Green

Johnson – Libertarian

Goode – Constitution

Lindsay – Socialism and Liberation

## Student Activity Sheet 1 – Match the Candidate/Party with the Position

- Goode /Constitution
- Johnson /Libertarian
- Lindsay /Socialism and Liberation
- Obama/ Democratic
- Romney /Republican
- Stein /Green

<b>ECONOMY</b>	
<i>Unemployment remains high: 8.3 percent of Americans don't have jobs. Half of American households hold only 1 percent of the country's wealth.</i>	
<b>Position</b>	<b>Candidate/Party</b>
Budget should be balanced now by cutting agency funding. Against bank bailouts, as well as the stimulus bill for jobs and energy	
Create new jobs and decrease the taxes of people who work by asking the wealthy to pay more in taxes.	
Cut the rate of taxation across-the-board; eliminate the inheritance tax and would keep taxes most big businesses pay the same as they are now.	
Does not believe the federal government should spend any money on stimulus or transportation. Believes businesses should not be taxed, as that would help them create jobs.	
Guarantee the right to a job at a living wage for every American willing and able to work. Supports changing the financial industry so it serves people and communities.	
Supports making a job a Constitutional right; will defend unions and the right to organize. Favors taking over the banks and ending our capitalist system.	

- Goode /Constitution
- Johnson /Libertarian
- Lindsay /Socialism and Liberation
- Obama/ Democratic
- Romney /Republican
- Stein /Green

<b>EDUCATION</b>	
<i>More than 4,500 public schools shut down since 2007. Today, students still face segregation and racism with the school system. The country's high school graduation rate is 75 percent and the average college graduate finishes school with more than \$20,000 in debt.</i>	
<b>Position</b>	<b>Candidate/Party</b>
Allow school prayer on a voluntary basis. Close down the Federal Department of Education. Provide vouchers to help families pay for public school.	
End federal involvement in education. Use more of the money obtained through funding for programming.	
Make education free—cancel all student debt.	
Make U.S. the top in math and science, and fund early childhood education for all. Will also add 25,000 teachers to high-need areas. The federal government will run and provide loans as part of the federal college student loan program	
Says teachers' unions hinder student achievement. Supports Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, as well as English immersion and abstinence education.	
Wants free college education for all, as she believes the current system traps people in debt; believes decisions concerning education should be at a more grassroots level than currently.	

- Goode /Constitution
- Johnson /Libertarian
- Lindsay /Socialism and Liberation
- Obama/ Democratic
- Romney /Republican
- Stein /Green

<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	
<i>Humans burning fossil fuel for energy has released chemicals into the atmosphere that have warmed the planet, which has contributed to extreme weather patterns across the world, from droughts to hurricanes.</i>	
<b>Position</b>	<b>Candidate/Party</b>
Believes a clean environment is a health issue. As part of her far-ranging environmental policies, she promotes green local economies, sustainable agriculture and clean power.	
Believes each state should have its own policy on clean water; would enforce clean air policies but would not provide financial rewards for lower-emission research and technology.	
Believes in a market approach to solving environmental problems and wants to explore domestic oil drilling in places such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge	
Favors a central economic plan to significantly cut greenhouse gases, clean up the environment and build a massive renewable energy network. Believes our for-profit economic system creates incentives to pollute and that it must be changed.	
Rejects drilling for oil in some environments, and takes the prevention of global warming seriously in his policies.	
While in Congress, he voted to fund Amtrak improvements and operation through 2013; has generally sided with corporations on environmental issues.	

- Goode /Constitution
- Johnson /Libertarian
- Lindsay /Socialism and Liberation
- Obama/ Democratic
- Romney /Republican
- Stein /Green

<b>. HEALTH CARE</b>	
<i>Since 2010, 1.3 million people received health coverage due to government health insurance programs such as Medicare and Medicaid and the passage of the Affordable Care Act. However, there are still 7.9 million children in the United States who do not have health insurance.</i>	
<b>Position</b>	<b>Candidate/Party</b>
Create a completely free and public health care system.	
Cut Medicare/Medicaid spending by 43%. Let states decide healthcare on a state-by-state basis.	
In favor of a free-market-based system. Believes in individual responsibility for healthcare.	
Increase competition between insurance companies and drug companies; give people the option to buy affordable healthcare. Passed the Affordable Health Care Act, which aims to make health care easier for more people to get.	
Wants Medicare for all (single payer), not just for the elderly and disabled. Criticized large CEO salaries in the healthcare industry, and that 30% of ? goes to advertising insurance plans.	
Wants to leave Medicare to the states. Wants employers to encourage employees to put money into their employee medical savings accounts. Opposes more federal funding on healthcare.	

- Goode /Constitution
- Johnson /Libertarian
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<b>IMMIGRATION</b>	
<i>There are approximately 11.5 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. Most left their home country because of poverty. Many undocumented immigrants take low-paying jobs and live in fear of being deported</i>	
<b>Position</b>	<b>Candidate/Party</b>
As of June 2012, said he would no longer seek the deportation of undocumented immigrants, and would allow them to seek work permits.	
Encourage legal immigration, but secure borders to end illegal immigration.	
Encourage legal immigration, but secure borders to end illegal immigration.	
Illegal immigrants shouldn't be allowed citizenship. Stop illegal immigration and what he calls "terrorism" from Mexico. End diversity visas for Muslims.	
Will provide a legal path to citizenship for immigrant residents. She also feels undocumented immigrants are a critical component of the economy.	
Would abolish all anti-immigrant laws, stop the raids and deportations and dismantle the border wall between the U.S. and Mexico.	

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<b>WARS</b>	
<i>In 2011, \$718 billion, or 20 percent, of the federal budget was spent on the military and defense. Despite 2008 campaign promises to “pull out,” there is still a large U.S. military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan.</i>	
<b>Position</b>	<b>Candidate/Party</b>
Believes Iran doesn't threaten our security. She says that we can change the country if we change to green jobs and would not need to make war over oil.	
Believes that, because the U.S. spends too much money, we must come home from Afghanistan and reduce our spending around the world.	
Believes war is used to advance the interests of the “biggest banks and corporations.” Favors ending the blockade on Cuba and ending U.S. foreign aid to Israel.	
Decreased U.S. involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, while spending about \$110 Billion on Afghanistan in 2011.	
Thinks that the U.S. wasted \$4 trillion dollars on the illegal Iraq and Afghanistan wars.	
Will not allow Iran to have nuclear weapons, and believes the U.S. must have a military option to prevent that. Wants to expand military spending.	

## Student Activity Sheet 2

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read through the positions listed under each issue. Check the one that most closely describes your own position on the issue and write one sentence to explain why. Afterwards, look at the way your positions align with the six political parties. Who would you be more likely to vote for? Did the outcome surprise you? Why or why not?

<b>ECONOMY</b>	
<i>Unemployment remains high: 8.3 percent of Americans don't have jobs. Half of American households hold only 1 percent of the country's wealth.</i>	
<b>Position</b>	<b>Your Position</b>
Budget should be balanced now by cutting agency funding. Against bank bailouts, as well as the stimulus bill for jobs and energy	
Create new jobs and decrease the taxes of people who work by asking the wealthy to pay more in taxes.	
Cut the rate of taxation across-the-board; eliminate the inheritance tax and would keep taxes most big businesses pay the same as they are now.	
Does not believe the federal government should spend any money on stimulus or transportation. Believes businesses should not be taxed, as that would help them create jobs.	
Guarantee the right to a job at a living wage for every American willing and able to work. Supports changing the financial industry so it serves people and communities.	
Supports making a job a Constitutional right; will defend unions and the right to organize. Favors taking over the banks and ending our capitalist system.	

**Why do you take this position?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**EDUCATION**

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<b>Position</b>	<b>Your Position</b>
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**Why do you take this position?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**ENVIRONMENT**

*Humans burning fossil fuel for energy has released chemicals into the atmosphere that have warmed the planet, which has contributed to extreme weather patterns across the world, from droughts to hurricanes.*

<b>Position</b>	<b>Your Position</b>
Believes a clean environment is a health issue. As part of her far-ranging environmental policies, she promotes green local economies, sustainable agriculture and clean power.	
Believes each state should have its own policy on clean water; would enforce clean air	
Believes in a market approach to solving environmental problems and wants to explore domestic oil drilling in places such as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge	
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Rejects drilling for oil in some environments, and takes the prevention of global warming seriously in his policies.	
While in Congress, he voted to fund Amtrak improvements and operation through 2013; has generally sided with corporations on environmental issues.	

**Why do you take this position?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**HEALTH CARE**

*Since 2010, 1.3 million people received health coverage due to government health insurance programs such as Medicare and Medicaid and the passage of the Affordable Care Act. However, there are still 7.9 million children in the United States who do not have health insurance.*

<b>Position</b>	<b>Your Position</b>
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**Why do you take this position?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**IMMIGRATION**

*There are approximately 11.5 million undocumented immigrants in the United States. Most left their home country because of poverty. Many undocumented immigrants take low-paying jobs and live in fear of being deported*

<b>Position</b>	<b>Your Position</b>
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**Why do you take this position?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**WARS**

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Position	Your Position
Believes Iran doesn't threaten our security. She says that we can change the country if we change to green jobs and would not need to make war over oil.	
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**Why do you take this position?** \_\_\_\_\_

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