

SHOULD SUPREME COURT JUSTICES HAVE TERM LIMITS?

THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA FOR HOMEWORK, IN-CLASS TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.

INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the Thinkalong module. Students can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

WHY DID THE FRAMERS GIVE LIFETIME TENURE TO SUPREME COURT JUSTICES?

GBH | October, 2019 | Audio

4:44 minutes

The framers of the Constitution all agreed there should be a national judiciary and were unanimous in their decision that justices would be appointed for life, but some critics have wondered why.

- “Tenure during good behavior” followed a precedent set by Great Britain.
- Lifetime tenure was thought to preserve judicial independence - that the judges’ decisions would not be influenced by their desire to be re-elected or re-appointed.
- The framers did not anticipate that the justices would play the large role they do now in resolving political and social disputes.
- Backlash against judges holding lifetime appointments began back in the mid-19th century.

IS IT TIME TO RECONSIDER LIFETIME APPOINTMENTS TO THE SUPREME COURT?

NPR | February 17, 2016 | Article

490 Words

After the sudden death of Justice Antonin Scalia in 2016, legal scholars from both political parties renewed the call to reconsider term limits for the Supreme Court justices.

- While lifetime tenure was meant to insulate justices from politics, scholars say that has not been the case. Modern-day appointments have become increasingly partisan.
- Several lawyers have suggested an 18-year term limit, which would space out appointments to every two years.
- Advocates of term limits say lifetime appointments are undemocratic, and justices serving for too long may be out of touch with modern issues, such as cases involving technology.

Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help students to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.

SCALIA'S DEATH REVIVES CALL FOR SUPREME COURT TERM LIMITS

Here & Now | February 26, 2016 | Audio

5:39 Minutes

Robin Young speaks with Paul Carrington, professor emeritus of law at Duke University about his advocacy for Supreme Court term limits.

- Carrington says that Justices realize that the court and the job has become politicized, and there's more power in the courts than ever before.
- Justices have more law clerks to help them, which allows them to shift some work and make the job a little easier.
- Carrington says that term limits would make justices more accountable to popular opinion, but doesn't think justices should be elected.

KEY WORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your classroom and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Tenure
- Contentious
- Politicized
- Mandatory

CONTEMPLATE

Students will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent?
6. When was this media created, and is it still relevant?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help students answer these five questions about each piece of media.

DEBATE

Students will engage their peers in an evidence-based debate using the media they just analyzed. Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form an evidence-based response to the debate question.

In addition to rich in-class discussions, teachers can also connect with other classrooms through the Thinkalong website.

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