

A Town Meeting

A town meeting provides members of a community an opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. A community forum usually considers matters of local concern, but the format has also been used on television to conduct “national town hall meetings” on specific issues. A town meeting can serve as a local governing and decision-making body by performing functions similar to those of a representative city council. It can also be advisory in nature, providing elected representatives with the view of citizens.

Procedures

- § Identify, or help students identify, a proposition of importance to the entire community that the town meeting will discuss, debate and vote upon.
- § Organize the town meeting by assigning individuals the following roles:
 - § chairperson
 - § representative of a group in favor of implementing Redeploy Illinois
 - § representative of a group in opposition to the Redeploy Illinois
 - § community members at large
 - § elected officials who represent the entire community in the town or city council, state legislature, or other legislative body.
- § Explain to students the purpose of the town meeting and the procedures to be followed.
- § Allow time for students to prepare for the town meeting according to their assigned roles.
- § If possible, arrange for the use of a larger room than the typical classroom.
- § If possible, arrange for local legislators and representatives from local civic improvement associations to serve as resource persons or observers.
- § Conduct the town meeting using the “Student Instructions for a Town Meeting” handout.

Followup Questions

- § In what ways is speaking in a town hall meeting an effective way for citizens to share their views? In what ways is it limited?
- § Did the vote after the meeting affect how you thought of the process? Were you in the majority or minority?
- § What was the most compelling thing you learned about the “Redeploy Illinois” during your preparation? From another participant?
- § What would help you to understand better this issue?