

Suggestions For What's Next...



Things you can do on your own:

- Follow up on the contacts you made with your legislators during 4-H Capitol Experience. You might want to talk about the local impact of the issue you explored during your time in Lansing.
- Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper describing your view on an issue you learned about during 4-H Capitol Experience.
- Make a presentation to your 4-H Council and/or your county Extension council concerning some of the things you learned during 4-H Capitol Experience. Such a presentation could also be appropriate for local service organizations such as Rotary, Kiwanas, Optimists and Zonta.
- Attend a candidates' forum to learn about the views of candidates for public office.
- Join a local political party.
- Become involved with the campaign for a candidate for public office.
- Become involved in the campaign for a ballot issue.
- Circulate petitions regarding a specific issue.
- Join an organization that is working on issues of interest to you.
- When you turn 18, REGISTER TO VOTE, and then be sure to VOTE!

Working with a group (4-H club, social studies class, church group, or other organization)

- **Consensus process**--Use the consensus-building activity, *How Should State Government (or County Government) Spend Our Tax Dollars*, to help participants learn about the consensus process and about some of the funding issues faced by a unit of government.
- **Differing values**--Use the exercise, *What's Your Opinion*, to help participants learn about some of the current public policy issues. They will also have an opportunity to reflect on the differing values and beliefs that are represented by the members of the group.
- **Responsibilities of local officials**--Make a list of the elected officials in your township, village or city, or in the county (Use the *Who Represents You?* form). Invite one or more of these officials to talk to your group about their responsibilities and challenges. What are some of the services that that unit of government provides to its citizens? What is the largest challenge or most difficult challenge currently facing that unit of government and that elected official?
- **County services**--Arrange a tour of one or more of the offices that represent the services of county government (e.g. road commission, county jail, animal control facilities, circuit court, community health department, family independence agency, fair board).

- **Local committee/board meetings**--Attend a committee meeting for a local board or commission in your area. Such groups include: planning commission, township board or city council, fair board, housing commission, road commission, etc. Call the city, township or county clerk for information about meeting schedule and location. These are public meetings, so all citizens are welcome to attend and simply observe the proceedings. Questions to ask include:
 - Who are some of the people attending the meeting? What are their responsibilities?
 - What types of issues are being discussed at the meeting?
 - Are there any examples of citizens involved with the decisions being made by the board or council (such as someone giving testimony, writing letters, etc.)
- **Current policy issues**--Identify a public policy issue that is currently of concern in your local community. Develop a list of the various alternative approaches to solving the issue. Explore those alternatives, thinking about the pluses and minuses of each. Invite representatives of differing viewpoints to address your group. Can your group reach a consensus on this issue? Use the worksheet *YOU Can Make a Difference!*
- **School boards**--Attend a school board meeting and talk with school board members about the roles that they play in establishing policy for the local school district. What issues are currently of major concern? What are the differing viewpoints on those issues?
- **Criminal justice issues**--Tour your county jail and/or juvenile detention facility. Questions to ask might include:
 - How do the lengths of sentences vary for different crimes?
 - What are some of the issues unique to the juvenile justice system?
 - What is the difference between a misdemeanor and a felony?
 - What punishments are used as alternatives to prisons?
- **The land use issue**--Study the land use and development policies in your local community. Talk with members of the planning commission, planning department, and zoning board concerning their roles and to learn about current issues.
- **Funding local government**--Find out how much money it takes to operate your local government for one year. How is the money obtained and how is it spent? What kinds of taxes does your family pay in order to help support the services provided by local government?
- **The court process**--Visit a court session and observe what takes place. Several different levels of the judicial system are open to the public. (Call your circuit or district court administrator to find out the court schedule.) Questions to consider include:
 - Who are some of the people in the courtroom? What are their roles and responsibilities?
 - Who determines the defendant's sentence: the judge or the jury? If there is a jury, how did the jurors get selected?
 - Who provides testimony?
- **Political parties**--Have representatives from different political parties visit your group to talk about their views on current issues. It will also be helpful to discuss party membership, the role of the party before elections and between elections, and in choosing candidates for public office.

- **Running for public office**--Explore the procedure for running for office. Who is eligible? What are the challenges and responsibilities of being a candidate? How are campaigns financed?
- **The election process**--Learn about the electoral process. How do people register to vote? How are elections administered? What about absentee ballots? What might be some of the other strategies for elections (e.g. voting by mail)?

This information compiled by Judy Ratkos and Elizabeth Moore, MSU Extension, March 2002.