



LESSON PLAN: THE NUCLEAR OPTION

Student Handout: Pre-lesson Activity

Directions: To prepare for this lesson you will need to review some background information on the procedure of the filibuster used in the Senate. You will also find information that explains the current controversy over the filibuster and the action sometimes called the “Nuclear Option” or “Constitutional Option” being proposed to end the use of the filibuster.

1. Review the transcripts attached to this handout from the Newshour on the proposal to end the filibuster.
 - a. “Judicial Wars”
 - b. Senators Wrangle over the “Nuclear Option”
2. You can also access the video stream for “Judicial Wars” from this link: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/congress/jan-june05/judges_5-13.html# and access the transcript to “Senators Wrangle over the Nuclear Option” from this link http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/jan-june05/filibuster_5-16.html
3. Take notes on the questions below to prepare for the activity.

Note-taking Questions:

- A. What is a filibuster? What is the Constitutional precedent of the filibuster?
- B. What is the procedure used to close a filibuster?
- C. What are the reasons the Democrats have used the filibuster recently?
- D. Why have Republican’s been frustrated with the use of the filibuster by the Democrats and what have some Republican senators threatened to do if the Democrats use the filibuster again?
- E. What have Democrats said about this proposal?
- F. How have some moderate Republican and Democrats reacted to this dispute and what have they offered as compromise?