

Student Worksheet

DIRECTIONS

Read the following news story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions. Use additional paper if necessary.

STORY

Obama Shatters Fundraising Records, Reigniting Public Finance Debate

10/21/08

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/july-dec08/funds_10-21.html

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How much money did Barack Obama raise in September?

2. What strategies did Obama use to reach so many donors?

3. What do candidates have to give up if they accept the \$84 million in public financing?

4. How many presidential candidates have refused public financing for the general election?

5. Where does the money for the public financing come from?

6. Why was the public financing system created?

7. How have special interest groups gotten around the public financing rules?

8. How will the extra money help Obama in his campaign?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

1. What is your response to Obama promising to participate in the public finance system and then changing his mind? Was it the right thing to do or was it a mistake? Why?

2. Why is it significant that the average contribution to Obama's campaign is less than \$100?

3. What are the pros and cons of having a public financing system?

4. Imagine you are tasked with deciding what to do with the public financing system before the next presidential election in 2012. Would you make it mandatory, leave it the way it is, make other changes or get rid of it? Explain your answer.

5. Research a special interest group that has been buying ads for one of the candidates. Who runs the group? Why might they be concerned about who wins the election?

Extension Activity

Have students write a 300-500 word essay on this topic providing clear examples. Send your completed editorial to NewsHour Extra (extra@newshour.org). Exceptional essays might be published on our Web site.