

## Student Worksheet

### DIRECTIONS

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

### STORY

**Democrats Reach Magic 60, as Former Comedian Takes Senate Seat**, 07/02/09

[http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/july-dec09/franken\\_07-02.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/us/july-dec09/franken_07-02.html)

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

[Student Worksheet](#) (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

### PROCEDURE

#### 1. WARM UP

Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

#### 2. MAIN ACTIVITY

Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

#### 3. DISCUSSION

Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.

### INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. Name the two houses of Congress and how their members are elected.
2. How many senators are there? Can you name the senators from your state?

### READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS – [Student Worksheet](#)

1. When was the Minnesota Senatorial election?
2. Why has it taken so long to seat Senator Al Franken?
3. What is the importance of the Minnesota Senate seat to the Democrats in Congress?
4. How did former Senator Coleman challenge the vote?
5. Which party controls the Senate now?

**6. Which party controls the House of Representative?**

**7. Why might the Democratic Party still not get everything they want?**

**8. Before becoming Senator what was Al Franken's previous career?**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (more research might be needed)

**1. Do you think Sen. Franken's previous position as a comedian helped him or hindered him as he ran for office? Do you think it could help him in his work?**

**2. Because some votes were challenged by both candidates the final verdict took months, can you think of an easier way to guarantee voting in the United States?**

**3. Look at recent coverage of other democratic elections (India, Iran, etc) and compare that election to the election in Minnesota; what are the similarities or differences?**

**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.