



## Claude Pepper's First Bill Lesson Plan

### Introduction

Claude Pepper was a United States congressman from Florida. He was born in Alabama and graduated from Harvard Law School. He was known nationally as "Mr. Aging" for his advocacy for older Americans. Prior to his position as a member of Congress, Claude Pepper served as a state legislator in Florida. The first bill he introduced and saw passed in Florida was a law that would issue fishing licenses free to those over age 65. This activity encourages students to think about legal entitlements and limitations based on age. It is appropriate for units on lawmaking, rights and responsibilities, public policy, or special interest groups.

### Objectives

Students will:

- identify needs of older citizens;
- explain reasons for age-based legislation;
- develop reasons for supporting a political viewpoint; and
- analyze factors influencing decision making in local, state and federal governments.

### Key Terms

age-based laws, age discrimination, special interest or advocacy groups

### Materials

Handout: "The Case of the Controversial Fishing License"

### Procedures

1. Introduce the handout, which is the first bill Claude Pepper proposed as a representative to the Florida State Legislature.
2. Divide the class into small discussion groups. Students should discuss the merits of the proposed bill and reach an agreement as to whether or not it should be passed.
3. Compare group responses, which will include attitudes toward age-based laws. For example, why should there be a special bill for people over age 65? To what are older persons entitled? What assumptions are made about older adults by those who might support or oppose such a bill? Are incomes of older adults relevant for such entitlements? Would your attitude about the bill change if you were 65?
4. Point out that Social Security, Medicare and many other laws are based on age. Have students identify laws which entitle or restrict young people, such as laws on driving, drinking, voting, education and employment.

*This activity was developed by Steven Wisensale, associate professor at the School of Family Studies, University of Connecticut, and is used with permission.*

## Extension Activities

Invite older adults to class to discuss their viewpoints of age-based laws which give them certain rights and restrictions.

Have students make a wish list of laws they would like to see passed that would encourage a full, enjoyable, active life for all young people in the United States. The list might include lowering the minimum age for employment, drinking and driving; or offering free medical benefits, guaranteed minimum income, free recreational programs and optional school enrollment. Contrast and highlights similarities of their list with one that older adults might propose.

The Case of the Controversial Fishing License  
Claude Pepper's First Bill

Assume that you are a state legislator and the following legislative bill is introduced:

HR 2121 - An act to allow for the issuance of a fishing license without charge to those 65 or older who so apply for said license.

Prior to voting for or against such a proposal, what questions would you ask? What information would you need? Are there any political risks either in supporting or opposing this proposal? How would you explain or justify your vote to representatives of an interest group who wanted you to vote the other way?