

Political Issue Timeline

Objective:

Students will trace a single political issue through presidential elections.

Students will:

- hone research skills
 - learn about historical political issues
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Resources/Materials:

- 2020election.procon.org
 - historical ProCon.org election sites: [2016](#), [2012](#), and [2008](#)
 - ProCon.org's "[Presidential Election History](#)" resource
 - ProCon.org issue websites (see full list of [debate topics](#))
 - internet connection
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Preparation:

- This project may be completed in small groups, with each group responsible for a particular time frame, so that the timeline as a whole is completed by the entire class. Alternatively, each small group may be responsible for one issue with the whole class working within the same time frame.
 - This project can be adapted for students to work independently from home.
 - Teachers may want to limit or assign the topics available for research.
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Activity:

1. Students should choose an issue presented on the ProCon.org 2020 election site to track through the presidential history as far back as possible (or to a point set by the instructor). ProCon.org has presidential election sites for 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020.

2. Students should write a short essay considering the following:
 - a. Are there any patterns within political parties, within specific time frames, or otherwise?
 - b. Have presidents' ideas about the topic evolved over time or remained mostly the same?
 - c. What other information can be gathered from statements on the issue over time?
 - d. Why some topics may have been debated in earlier elections but are no longer talked about, and why some topics are relevant now that weren't in the past.
 - e. Which issues do the Republican and Democrat presidents tend to agree on, and on which issues do they tend to disagree?
 3. For some topics, including abortion, immigration, and the death penalty, ProCon.org timelines and histories available on our issue websites may be of help for historical background information.
 4. Add-On Tasks:
 - a. Gather information about public opinion polls on the topic over time and compare with the views expressed by the US presidents.
 - b. Gather information about the party platforms over time and compare to that of the president.
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Evaluation:

1. Research skills
2. Quality of writing
3. Understanding of historical issues