Teaching the Federal Budget, Debt, and Deficit Through Civics Courses

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This project presents an opportunity for high school social studies teachers to infuse content on the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit into civics courses. The federal budget influences countries’ decisions about domestic and foreign policy, making the study of the topic a necessity for understanding economic interdependence, as well as active and engaged citizenship. The national debt plays an important role in efforts to balance competing interests concerning taxes, entitlement programs, and government spending. Social studies teachers have the opportunity to create connections between economic and public policies about the federal budget, national debt, budget deficit, and the content commonly taught in high school civics classes across the United States. Our two-day lesson, Examining the role of citizens in the U.S. budgetary process: A case study, can be infused into the civics curriculum to help high school students begin to understand the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit. We model an inquiry-oriented approach for citizen participation about these topics in high school civics classes.

Key Words: Federal budget, national debt, budget deficit, high school, civics, civic education

Introduction

This project presents an opportunity for high school social studies teachers to infuse content on the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit into civics courses. We concentrate on the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit because these are critical concepts in considering public policy and the state of the civic polity regarding longstanding entitlement programs emanating from the New Deal and Great Society programs under Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson. These are also central issues in the contemporary debates on Capitol Hill about the state of the nation, its obligations to citizens, and the costs of these obligations to future generations.

Many economists agree that the ratio of government debt to gross domestic product (GDP) is an accurate gauge of a nation’s fiscal health. Many believe governments should aim for a sustained debt-to-GDP ratio of 60% or less (Congressional Budget Office, 2010; Peterson Foundation, 2011). The current U.S. publicly held debt is nearly $10.1 trillion dollars, or over 68% of the 2011 GDP (Congressional Budget Office, 2012). This level is high by most standards. More specifically, the U.S. publicly held debt now stands at more than $32,225 for every man, woman, and child in the United States. In addition, in 2013 the annual budget deficit will be approximately $1.3 trillion dollars, or 8.1% of the GDP. Over 40 cents of every dollar the federal government spends in 2013 will be borrowed (Congressional Budget Office, 2011).

Most young Americans, however, do not have an adequate awareness of the national debt, federal budget, and budget deficit (Marri et al., 2012; Marri et al., 2011). A study
consisting of 35 teacher interviews and 20 classroom observations found a majority of teachers: do not use in-depth pedagogy when teaching about the federal budget; only teach basic facts about debt or deficit; and implement a disproportionate amount of lessons on personal finance within the space of economic education. Superficial pedagogy about the federal budget, national debt, and budget process prevents students from gaining understanding about these topics (Marri et al., 2011). An analysis of the 12 most commonly used high school and college-level economic textbooks found a tendency to describe topics like the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit in theoretical terms. The textbooks do not contain any examination of budgetary influence on electoral processes (Marri et al., in press). As a result, students cannot analyze public policy options as they relate to the federal budget, national debt, or budget deficit, nor responsibly engage in influencing those policy decisions in ways that reflect an informed point of view.

The topic of the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit is not typically addressed in either civics or economics courses at the secondary level (Marri et al., 2012; Marri, et al., 2011). Our interviews with 35 practicing social studies across nine states reinforced the challenges of teaching about the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit. These teachers suggested more resources on these topics are necessary given the lack of emphasis they receive in the social studies curriculum standards. They supported the need for an inquiry-based and non-partisan curriculum to help engage with these topics. Some teachers, for example, felt these topics “were difficult to explain to students because of their complexities” and “perceived irrelevance to students’ current lives”.

Many state standards lack attention to the substantial depth needed regarding topics such as the budget, national debt, and budget deficit (Marri et al., 2012). Over four-fifths (44 out of 50) of the states make no mention of the topics in their economics standards. While these topics may occasionally be considered in secondary economics courses, their absence from the civics curriculum is particularly troubling. Students must be prepared to engage in democratic discourse regarding the likely outcomes of each public policy decision, as informed by historic examples and contemporary priorities.

**Problem Statement and Literature Review**

For a number of years, the Council for Economic Education (CEE) has conducted biennial surveys about the state of economics education nationwide. Their conclusions bolster our judgment that these topics are not adequately treated at the secondary level and need to be addressed as an essential part of improving Americans’ overall awareness of contemporary economics issues. Engaging with the federal budget and the national debt enables students to understand the contextual factors playing a role in civic decision-making (Etzioni, 1967). Students gain insights into how the federal government’s responsibilities and modes of operating have changed and continue to change through an examination of the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit (Mosher, 1980). These topics further enable analysis of the current economic stratification and inequality in the United States (Atkinson, Piketty & Saez, 2011; McCammon, 1999).

The CEE’s 2011 findings are pertinent to our study as they suggest the troubling state of economics education at the secondary level in this nation. Only 22 states, for example, require students take an economics course as a high school graduation requirement (Council for Economic Education, 2011, p. 1). When read alongside another CEE report from 2005, “What
American Teens & Adults Know about Economics,” the urgent nature of this project could not be clearer. Virtually all participating adults (97%) and high school students (93%) believed it was important for Americans to have a good understanding of economics. Only 50% of high school students, however, said they have ever been taught economics in school (either in a separate course or as part of another subject) (Council for Economic Education, 2005, p. 9).

We focused on creating civics curricula to supplement materials found in textbooks, which are a singularly powerful influence over what is and is not taught in public education in the United States (Ball & Cohen, 1996). Social studies courses often are dictated by textbook content for a variety of reasons, including the lack of familiarity with economic content among most teachers (Miller & VanFossen, 2008; VanFossen, 2000), the lack of detailed curriculum outlines of scope and sequence, and the fairly specialized body of knowledge that is economics. We, therefore, created resources to help civics teachers contribute to their students’ understanding of the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit.

We focused on civics courses, which are essential for promoting the civic education of all students as they help young people acquire democratic citizenship and economic literacy skills, along with knowledge and attitudes that prepare them to be engaged citizens (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; Nemi & Junn, 1998). Since civics courses or content are required by all 50 states and the District of Columbia (Lennon, 2006), they represent an opportunity to reach a large number of students with lessons about the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit.

To gauge civics course content on the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit, we reviewed all 50 state high school social studies standards as well as the Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs. Given the significant state-by-state variation in high school graduation requirements, the high school curriculum looks quite different from state to state, both in terms of the overall requirements as well as the sequence and rigor of requirements (Marri et al., 2012; Vogler & Virtue, 2007).

While they vary significantly, state social studies standards (conventionally understood as standards in history, geography, economics, and civics) have been influenced by the standards promulgated by national professional organizations, such as the Center for Civic Education, National Council for the Social Studies, National Council for Geography Education, National History Standards, and those of the group formally known as the National Council for Economic Education, now called the Council for Economic Education (CEE). In particular, we examined:

- the scope of topics covered in the civics curriculum related to economics and public policy
- the presence of three key concepts: federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit
- the specification of skills required to both use and understand key economic concepts
- the expectation for civic engagement or decision making in response to the above topics

We began our review of the 50 state curriculum standards in social studies with a long list of questions we believed would help us evaluate the ways in which budget, deficit, and debt were embedded in the curriculum. Since we found so little mention of these concepts in most states’ curriculum standards, we shifted our strategy towards examining how state curriculum standards approach economics concepts more generally, especially in subjects other than economics. We found state curriculum standards use highly generalized terminology in their treatment of economics concepts (e.g., “economic factors,” “economic structures,” “economic effects,” etc.)
in all social studies subjects except for economics classes. We proceeded with our analysis using
the steps below:

1. Rating the degree to which economics concepts were found in social studies subject
    standards as minimum, moderate, or in-depth. (Note: the margin of difference among
    these ratings is very small; the ratings are far more important as norm-referenced
    indicators than criterion-referenced indicators).

2. Evaluating the language used in connection to economics standards to determine
    whether higher order thinking was called for in relation to learning this content.

3. Reviewing the Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and
    Council for Economic Education (CEE) curriculum frameworks for the above.

Our review yielded one major conclusion: almost universally, state high school social
studies standards pay little or no attention to the federal budget, the budget deficit, or the national
debt. We found an overall lack of attention in the vast majority of state standards to the federal
budget, national debt, and budget deficit. States varied broadly in the degree of specificity about
economic concepts, but commonly used overly generalized phrases such as “economic causes”
along with “political and social causes” in analyzing phenomena, past and present. In short, our
key findings are as follows:

- **Finding 1**: Over four-fifths (44 out of 50) of the states make no mention in their
economics standards of the terms: federal budget, budget deficit, or national debt.

- **Finding 2**: Three-fourths (36 out of 50) of all states mention economic or economics
    in some fashion (often as a modifying adjective, for example, economic factors) in
    World History, U.S. History, Civics, and Geography, but most give only cursory
treatment to economic concepts.

- **Finding 3**: Over four-fifths (44 out of 50) of the states used language in their
    standards that provides an opening for infusing treatment of the topics of federal
    budget, national debt, and budget deficit, i.e., decision-making, fiscal responsibility,
policy, etc., into social studies subject matter.

- **Finding 4**: The college-oriented AP courses in micro- and macroeconomics and the
    CEE economic standards mention budget, deficit, and national debt. The sample AP
    exam also included in the publicly distributed materials asked one multiple-choice
    question related to the US trade deficit. The IB economic course, however, does not
    mention these topics.

Even in the AP and IB curricula, both of which spend at least one year on economics,
only marginally more attention is paid to this content. The results are discouraging. There is
little emphasis on deep understanding of economic concepts or the higher order thinking skills of
analysis, synthesis, and evaluation related to this content. The emphasis—almost exclusively—is
on the assimilation and regurgitation of facts (Marri et al., in press). From the standpoint of
civic engagement, the verbs used to describe the educational objectives related to this content
typically involve lower levels of learning and application. Opportunities exist, nevertheless, for
the incorporation of lessons related to these topics in the civics curriculum. In the next section,
we present an example of such a lesson for high school civics courses. We are confident an
inquiry-based curriculum that teaches students to explore, debate, and make reasoned judgments
about complex economic and public policy issues can be successfully aligned with state social
studies standards. Inquiry-based questions hold significantly more power to engage students and
ensure the transfer of knowledge (Capalongo-Bernadowski, 2006; Hand, Prain, & Wallace, 2002; Rosenshine, Meister, & Chapman, 1996; Taboada & Guthrie, 2006). While the lessons include questions that require careful reading of text and recall of information, the lessons emphasize questions that create a more lasting engagement with the material to allow for scaffolding of learning (Anderson, et al., 2000; Rosenshine, et al. 1996; Taboada & Guthrie, 2006). Lesson questions tend to be open-ended, with no clear-cut answers, and expect critical thinking on the part of the student. Further, assessments in the lesson measure how students use what they know over simply memorizing facts and vocabulary.

**Synopsis of Examining The Role of Citizens in the U.S. Budgetary Process: A Case Study**

This two-day lesson, *Examining the role of citizens in the U.S. budgetary process: A case study*, is inquiry-driven and aligned with the national standards for civics and economics. The lesson does not advocate any one conclusion about the significance of the debt and deficit, their primary causes, and/or any best solutions. Our goal is to: help high school students understand these issues in all their complexities; clarify their own thinking; and, ultimately, care enough to become involved in these and other public policy questions as citizens. We know that higher-order, divergent questions hold significantly more power to engage students and ensure the transfer of knowledge (Sheppard, 2000). Like the standards, this lesson emphasizes higher-order thinking skills such as application, analysis, and evaluation that are necessary to understand and solve complex fiscal problems. Teachers will find that assessments in this lesson measure how students use what they know. We provide classroom resources for civics teachers to help students understand the impact of the federal budget, national debt, and the budget deficit. Ideally, this lesson would be taught in two 90-minute blocks, so teachers with traditional 45-50 minute periods may need to divide the lesson over three or four days.

To enable high school students to engage actively with this content, we focus on the essential question: *How can citizens with multiple viewpoints engage in the budget-making process?* This two-day lesson helps students recognize the various methods citizens use to have their views considered in the creation of a federal budget. Students engage in a case study of the inclusion of renewable energy programs in the Department of Energy’s 2010 budget. Teachers introduce students to grassroots interest groups who support renewable energy and their role in the 2008 election of President Obama. With a basic knowledge of the budgetary process, students can evaluate the ways citizens can continue to voice their opinions through the use of such tools as committee hearings and their First Amendment rights of freedom of speech, petition, assembly, and press. As an assessment, students should write a response to the essential question at the end of the lesson. Teachers can use Figure 1, a rubric, to evaluate student’s mastery of the essential question and content standards. This lesson could easily be incorporated into a government unit on the federal budget process or used in conjunction with a unit on citizen participation in the government.

**Essential Question**

*How can citizens with multiple viewpoints engage in the budget-making process?*

**Related Standards**
• National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS):
  Strand 6 – Power, Authority, and Governance: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

• National Standards for Civics and Government (Center for Civic Education, 1994)
  III. How Does the Government Established by the Constitution Embody the Purposes, Values, and Principles of American Democracy?
  V. What are the Roles of the Citizen in American Democracy?

• Council for Economic Education Voluntary Standards (CEE, 2009)
  Standard 1: Scarcity
  Productive resources are limited. Therefore, people cannot have all the goods and services they want; as a result, they must choose some things and give up others.
  Standard 2: Decision Making
  Effective decision-making requires comparing the additional costs of alternatives with the additional benefits. Many choices involve doing a little more or a little less of something: few choices are “all or nothing” decisions.

Day 1: Introduction to the Federal Budget Process
The first day of this lesson introduces students to the budget process and presents them with information about the history of funding for renewable energy. The lesson follows the interests of citizens who want to increase federal government support for renewable energy projects and examines what happens as proposals for renewable energy funding go through the federal budget creation process. As students engage in the process, they should be encouraged to question the underlying assumptions of those who support these particular policies, the arguments of those who oppose them, and the costs and tradeoffs that must be weighed in budgetary decisions.

I. Lesson Entry
During the 2008 presidential elections, Barack Obama supported government investments, subsidies, and consumption in renewable energy sources, such as water, wind and solar, while his opponent, John McCain, opposed such investments. Why would some political groups and constituencies (those supporting President Obama) support this type of investment, and others (those supporting Senator McCain) oppose them? Barack Obama won the presidency in part due to support from various environmental groups, one of which was the Sierra Club, the largest environmental organization in the United States. Begin the lesson by distributing Appendix A, Resource 1: Political Activity of the Sierra Club to students and asking them to discuss the ways grassroots organizations can influence the political process.

Explain to students that the citizens who supported President Obama expect him to follow through on his campaign promise to invest in renewable energy sources. Inform students that over the next two days, they will learn about how these projects are funded, about the tradeoffs and compromises involved in these decisions, and about how citizens can influence the process.

II. History of Alternative Energy Funding
This activity will provide students with background information about historical spending on renewable energy in comparison with other energy technologies. Introduce the activity by
asking students to define the term “R&D” (research and development) and to explain the concept in their own words. Distribute Appendix B, Resource 2 – Renewable Energy R&D Funding History (Reading and Questions) and instruct students to complete the handout individually or in small groups. When they have completed the exercise, lead the class in a discussion about their answers, and ensure that they understand the charts and the overall trends in funding.

III. Introduction of Federal Budget Process

This part of the lesson could be used as a review of previously assigned homework or textbook reading on the federal budget process. Distribute Appendix C, Resource 3 – Federal Budget Process to introduce students to the steps in the appropriations process. Briefly discuss each step in the chart, ensuring that the students understand the order of the steps and the distinct differences between each step. This can be a difficult concept for students to comprehend, so additional time reviewing these steps may be required to ensure that students understand the appropriations process. Detailed explanations for each step are available at:

- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities – Policy Basics: Introduction to the Federal Budget Process
- United States Senate – Virtual Reference Desk: Budget
- White House Office of Management and Budget

When the students can explain and have no further questions about the appropriations process, distribute the documents in Appendix D, Resource 4 – Aspects of the 2009 Federal Budget Process, each of which concerns renewable energy funding and is directly related to a step in the budget process. Students should work in small groups to match each document to one step in the federal budget process as shown in Appendix C, Resource 3, thus arranging the documents in the chronological order of the budget process. As students work, walk around the room answering questions and asking students to justify their choices. Students should be encouraged to note the relative level of success in increasing alternative energy funding as the budget works through the various steps.

After the students have completed the matching and ordering of the documents, ask the groups to compare their results and give reasons for their choices. When students are confident with their answers, inform them of the correct order of the documents and clarify any points of confusion (see Appendix F, Resource 6 – Budget Process Answer Key). If time allows, ask students for their initial thoughts about how well renewable energy funding did in the 2009 Federal Budget Process compared to possible alternatives.

Emphasize to students that budgetary resources are always scarce, even in times of plenty. Ask students to compare and contrast the first two excerpts from Resource 4: the President’s energy proposals in the State of the Union compared with the analysis of choices in Congress’ budget resolution. What are some of the trade-offs? What are some reasons why additional funding for renewable energy research may face challenges? Students may correctly point out that, given enough political support, the government could just raise taxes to provide more funding, but they should also note excessive taxation has costs as well. Discuss with students the possible tradeoffs and opportunity costs embedded in choices about renewable energy funding in the 2009 Federal Budget Process, and ask how they would decide which investments are the most worthwhile.

Assign students to read Appendix G, Resource 7 – Problems Funding Alternative Energy in the Federal Budget for homework. This article will give students an introduction to the
politics involved in the appropriations process and an overview of the different positions concerning renewable energy funding, along with the methods used by lawmakers to promote those positions. As they read, students should consider the role of compromise in the passage of appropriations bills, using the language of scarcity, tradeoffs, and opportunity costs discussed in the previous activity. Students should note the opportunity costs of investments in renewable energy research, and how they would decide which of the competing investments was more worthwhile.

**Day 2: Citizen Participation**

The second day of this lesson focuses on opportunities for citizen participation in the appropriations process. Students will identify the ways in which citizens can have their views considered and note how those with different views also have opportunities for access. In particular, students should take note of whether or not some viewpoints have more access than those of others, and hypothesize about the reasons why. Through this activity, they will gain a better understanding of the federal budget process.

**I. Introduction**

Briefly review the article read for homework and discuss the role of tradeoffs and compromise in the passage of appropriations bills. Ask students for examples of opportunity costs and to consider how they would decide between different projects competing for the same resources if they were members of Congress. Inform students that they will be learning about the different ways that a citizen or group of citizens can encourage lawmakers to continue a program’s funding. Explain that those who demonstrate that the investments they support are the most effective, efficient, and/or beneficial use of scarce resources, have a better chance of succeeding in their advocacy.

**II. Brainstorming**

As students rejoin the small groups they worked with during the previous class, distribute Appendix E, *Resource 5 – Budget Process Handout* to each group. Instruct students to work within their group to fill in the column labeled “2009 Examples” using the information from the previous lesson. When students have completed the review and are confident with the steps in the appropriations process, ask them to begin thinking about the various ways citizens could influence the process at each step. In addition, using information from Appendix D, *Resource 4* and Appendix G, *Resource 7*, ask students to consider reasons why citizens and citizen groups may disagree about renewable energy funding, given the tradeoffs and opportunity costs.

If students have trouble getting started, it may be necessary to remind them of the role citizens play in the election process, as well as their right to free speech, petition, assembly, and press. Encourage them to consider the ways each right could be used to influence the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the President to support alternative energy funding. Students should write down their group’s answers in the column labeled, “Possible Areas for Citizen Input”. Examples of possible student answers can be found in Appendix F, *Resource 6 – Budget Process Answer Key*.

When students have completed the chart, lead the class in a discussion about their answers and talk about the costs and benefits of each possible method of participation. Encourage students to highlight the most effective methods and discuss why they believe these options are better than others. It is also important for students to consider the ways in which the Internet and cell phone technology have opened up new opportunities for citizen organization
and new avenues to contact public officials. Students should continue to add new ideas to their charts as the discussion continues. Possible student responses, along with their strengths and weaknesses can be found in Appendix H, Resource 8 – Cost/Benefits Evaluation Chart. Be sure to emphasize the benefits, and not just the costs, of each opportunity for citizen participation, and encourage students to think about ways to mitigate or overcome the costs of some of the actions.

**Lesson Assessment**

As a concluding assessment for this activity, students should work individually to write a response to the following prompt:

- How can citizens with multiple viewpoints engage in the budget-making process?
- What are some ways to ensure that your viewpoint is adequately heard? Give specific examples to support your point of view.

This assignment could be implemented as a short, 100-word “exit pass” to conclude the class, or students could develop their responses into a longer essay they could finish for homework. Students’ answers to this question will vary, but should demonstrate their understanding of the concepts discussed in the lesson. It should further demonstrate they can support their arguments with evidence from the readings.

**Lesson Grading Rubric**

(Teachers can use all or parts of this rubric to assess student mastery of the content, engagement with the essential question, and the success of the lesson.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence of Understanding the Federal Budget Process, Choices and Tradeoffs, and Opportunities for Citizen Participation</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>A Cut Above</th>
<th>Meets Minimum Standards</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skillfully utilizes key vocabulary and concepts.</td>
<td>Competently utilizes key vocabulary and concepts.</td>
<td>Minimally utilizes key vocabulary and some appropriate concepts.</td>
<td>Misuses some key vocabulary and concepts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of Accurate and Specific Evidence</th>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>A Cut Above</th>
<th>Meets Minimum Standards</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provides ample and appropriate examples of citizen engagement, analyzing tradeoffs and weighing costs and benefits.</td>
<td>Discusses examples of opportunities for citizen participation and sources of disagreement, but without fully analyzing tradeoffs.</td>
<td>Evidence of multiple viewpoints, tradeoffs and alternatives, and methods of participation is limited and simplistic.</td>
<td>Explanations and evidence of tradeoffs, alternatives, multiple viewpoints, and methods of participation are flawed or inaccurate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The example used in this lesson, renewable energy, was chosen because it may be more interesting as well as relevant to students’ lives than other topics such as Medicare or Social Security. Any budgetary item, however, could be inserted into the framework of this lesson with equally successful results. Upper-level or advanced students could be encouraged to research the appropriations process independently, ultimately compiling similar pieces of evidence as those included in this lesson to demonstrate how various projects are funded and citizens’ role in that process. In particular, if students are not interested in environmental or energy policy, the lesson can be extended to encourage students to compile documents similar to those found in Appendices B and D, Resources 2 and 4, but related to a public policy dilemma of particular interest to them.

The intended audience for this lesson is a high school-level civics course open to all students. Courses regularly involving guided or independent reading of current events from
popular periodicals should help students prepare for the type of reading they will encounter in this lesson. Some parts of this lesson require a significant amount of reading and may need to be modified for English Language Learners and students who read below grade level. Teachers, for example, could summarize each document in Appendix D, Resource 4 – Aspects of 2009 Federal Budget Process into a series of clear and concise bullet points and provide definitions of terms that may be difficult or unfamiliar. This would reduce the reading level, but still provide students with the information they need to complete the activity and learn about the appropriations process.

Similarly, the lesson can be differentiated for English Language Learners and students who read below grade level by pre-teaching key vocabulary words. For the Entry Activity and Appendix A, Resource 1, students may need an introduction to the terms constituency, grassroots organization, global warming, endorsement, citizen rally, and delegation. Teachers may wish to supplement Appendix A, Resource 1 with additional visuals or brief summaries of the main ideas in the form of newspaper headlines. Although Appendix B, Resource 2 does not require sophisticated mathematical calculations, some students with weaker math skills may benefit from a review of basic strategies for interpreting numbers (for example, paying attention to ordering, observed patterns, and changes over time). Some learners may benefit from a more visual presentation of the material in Appendix C, Resource 3, perhaps in the form of a timeline or flow chart. Finally, the material in Appendix G, Resource 7 may be paraphrased or summarized at a reduced reading level without sacrificing content, or presented in its original form and accompanied by pre-teaching vocabulary.

Conclusion

High school students have the capacity to grasp essential concepts about the federal budget, national debt, and budget deficit. Many students are not taught about these topics through student-centered pedagogy aimed at higher order thinking skills (Marri et al., 2012; Marri et al., 2011). Students, further, are not provided opportunities to interpret these topics as the result of choices made by policy makers. Very few opportunities exist in the existing curricula to engage these topics as citizens and future voters.

We believe adolescents with a more informed perspective about budgets, deficit, and debt will demand better decisions from their elected leaders. Scholars argue that an understanding of economic concepts can promote active citizenship and provide an analytical framework with which citizens can adopt in a democratic society (Becker, 2000; Miller & VanFossen, 2008; Schug & Wood, 2011). Consequently, low awareness of economics issues will reduce civic engagement in citizens (Becker, 2000; Schug & Wood, 2011). It is imperative that educators teach students to think critically in matters of public finance. Likewise, teachers need to stimulate a democratic dialogue among young people about these financial issues, enabling them to grapple with their complexity, as well as the competing agendas and conflicting values that shape public policy. With a deep understanding of these issues, students will be empowered to demand capable leadership and effective solutions to fiscal challenges.

References


**Web-Based References**


Appendix A  
Resource 1 – Political Activity of the Sierra Club

Excerpt from:  
“Welcome to the Sierra Club!”  
http://www.sierraclub.org/welcome/

You’re here because, like 1.4 million of your friends and neighbors, you want:

- a safe and healthy community in which to live
- smart energy solutions to combat global warming
- an enduring legacy for America’s wild places

Since 1892, the Sierra Club has been working to protect communities, wild places, and the planet itself. We are the largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization in the United States.

Excerpt from:  
“Political Activity of Environmental Groups and their Supporting Foundations: Update 2008”  
Report to the Ranking Member Senator James M. Inhofe  
U.S. Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Minority Staff  
September 2008

The Sierra Club has a history of endorsing candidates for political office. Currently, the Sierra Club has announced that it will support Senator Obama’s (D-IL) presidential bid. While there is no reported activity yet from the organization, Sierra Club has been historically known to run television and radio advertisements both supporting their candidate and criticizing the opposition. (p. 15)

Excerpt from:
“Citizens Rally to tell EPA to Regulate Toxic Coal Ash”
http://www.sierraclub.org/coal/la/default.aspx

On September 8th, a delegation of energetic Louisiana citizens joined the Sierra Club in Dallas to tell the EPA to regulate toxic coal ash.

Appendix B

Resource 2 – Renewable Energy R&D Funding History (Reading and Questions)
Excerpt from:
Renewable Energy R&D Funding History:
A Comparison with Funding for Nuclear Energy, Fossil Energy, and Energy Efficiency R&D
Fred Sissine
Specialist in Energy Policy, Resources, Science, and Industry Division
April 9, 2008, Order Code RS22858

Summary
Energy research and development (R&D) intended to advance technology played an important role in the successful outcome of World War II. In the post-war era, the federal government conducted R&D on fossil fuel and nuclear energy sources to support peacetime economic growth. The energy crises of the 1970s spurred the government to broaden the focus to include renewable energy and energy efficiency. Over the 30-year period from the Department of Energy’s inception at the beginning of Fiscal Year (FY) 1978 through FY2007, federal spending for renewable energy R&D amounted to about 16% of the energy R&D total, compared with 15% for energy efficiency, 25% for fossil, and 41% for nuclear. For the 60-year period from 1948 through 2007, nearly 11% went to renewables, compared with 9% for efficiency, 25% for fossil, and 54% for nuclear.
Table B1
*DOE Energy Technology Cumulative Funding Totals*
(billions of 2008 dollars)

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renewable Energy</td>
<td>$3.94</td>
<td>$15.43</td>
<td>$16.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Efficiency</td>
<td>$6.02</td>
<td>$14.18</td>
<td>$14.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fossil Energy</td>
<td>$5.36</td>
<td>$38.62</td>
<td>$39.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear Energy</td>
<td>$6.41</td>
<td>$38.62</td>
<td>$85.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Systems</td>
<td>$0.93</td>
<td>$2.85</td>
<td>$3.02</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>$22.66</td>
<td>$95.30</td>
<td>$158.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: *DOE Budget Authority History Table by Appropriation, May 2007; DOE Congressional Budget*

Table B2
*DOE Energy Technology Share of Funding*
(percent; derived from Table B1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renewable Energy</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy Efficiency</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fossil Energy</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear Energy</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Systems</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Questions from the Reading**
- What historical events led to an increased interest in renewable fuels such as solar energy or wind power?
- How has the funding of renewable energy by the government changed in recent years? Compare the funding of renewable energy to the funding of other energy sources in the
Using the charts to guide your answer, if the total funding for energy research were held at the same level, what would need to happen for renewable energy funding to increase? What is the name of the economic concept this illustrates?

If you were an advocate of renewable energy, would you think that the federal government was doing enough to support renewable energy? Why or why not?

How would you decide how to allocate the limited budget for energy research and development? What evidence would you need to decide whether or not additional funding for renewable energy research is a good investment?

Answers for Questions in Resource 2

What historical events led to an increased interest in renewable fuels such as solar energy or wind power?

“Energy research and development (R&D) intended to advance technology played an important role in the successful outcome of World War II. In the post-war era, the federal government conducted R&D on fossil fuel and nuclear energy sources to support peacetime economic growth. The energy crises of the 1970s spurred the government to broaden the focus to include renewable energy and energy efficiency.”

How has the funding of renewable energy by the government changed in recent years? Compare the funding of renewable energy to the funding of other energy sources in the report. Use the two charts to help you answer this question.

Funding for renewable energy (as a percentage of the total spending) has increased over time while funding for fossil energy has remained relatively stable. However, significantly more money has been spent on fossil energy overall.

Using the charts to guide your answer, if the total funding for energy research were held at the same level, what would need to happen for renewable energy funding to increase? What is the name of the economic concept this illustrates?

If total funding were held constant and funding for renewable energy research were to increase, then funding for energy efficiency, fossil energy, nuclear energy, and/or electrical systems would need to decrease. This is called a tradeoff; in other words, the decrease in the next best alternative ( whichever were to actually decrease) is the opportunity cost of increasing funding for renewable energy research.

If you were an advocate of renewable energy, would you think that the federal government was doing enough to support renewable energy? Why or why not?

Students’ answers will vary. Students’ answers should be supported with evidence from the summary and the information provided in the tables.

How would you decide how to allocate the limited budget for energy research and development? What evidence would you need to decide whether or not additional funding for renewable energy research is a good investment?

Student answers will vary, but should include some method for comparing the benefits of additional funding for renewable energy research with the benefits of the next best alternative.

Figure 2. Answers for Questions in Resource 2
Appendix C

Resource 3 – Federal Budget Process

The annual budget process, or *appropriations process*, mainly concerns only one-third of the budget. This one-third of the budget, called the *discretionary budget*, is what Congress debates and sets the levels for on an *annual* basis. Examples of discretionary spending include the military and education programs.

The other two-thirds of the federal budget is referred to as mandatory spending. These include entitlement programs, such as Food Stamps and Social Security. Mandatory spending also includes net interest on the national debt. These programs do not require annual appropriations action for their funding. The numbers given in the budget every year are estimates based on the eligibility or payment rules.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Monday in February</td>
<td><em>President submits the 'budget request':</em> The President's Budget is a proposal for the coming fiscal year, which will start on October 1st and run through September 30th of the following year. For example, FY2004 began on October 1, 2003 and will end September 30, 2004. Initially, the President and Cabinet decide policy priorities. Each federal agency submits a budget request to the President’s staff in accordance with the President’s strategic priorities. These budget documents are also submitted to the appropriations committees of the House and Senate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February-mid-April</td>
<td><em>The House and Senate pass a budget resolution:</em> After the President submits his budget, the House and Senate traditionally prepare budget resolutions. A 'budget resolution' is a framework for making budget decisions about spending and taxes. It does not set binding spending amounts for particular programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Period</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Spring-</td>
<td><em>The House and Senate subcommittees 'markup' appropriation bills:</em> Based on the budget resolution, the Appropriation Committee of each chamber sets allocations for each of its subcommittees (10 in the House and 12 in the Senate). Each committee takes the budget requests and justifications submitted by agencies, conducts hearings and does follow-ups with agencies to obtain answers to questions about the agency requests. Based on all of this information, each committee writes a first draft of its appropriation bill.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Fall</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer-Early Fall</td>
<td><em>Floor Votes:</em> The individual appropriation bills are debated and voted on by their respective chambers. After both versions of a particular appropriation bill are passed in their respective chambers, a conference committee is set up to resolve differences between the House and Senate versions. The House and Senate both vote on a conference report for each bill. Each one is then signed by the President.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(in practice, through December)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1st</td>
<td><em>Budget is Enacted:</em> The President must sign each appropriation bill after it has passed Congress. When he has signed all of the bills, the budget is enacted. However, the process is not normally finished by October 1st. For the past several years, this process didn't finish until December.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 11th</td>
<td>The General Accounting Office begins monitoring how the money is spent and periodically reports to Congress.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from: *The National Priorities Project* – http://www.nationalpriorities.org/Federal%20Budget%20Timeline
Permission Granted, April 21, 2010
Appendix D
Resource 4 – Aspects of 2009 Federal Budget Process
Excerpt from:
State of the Union Address
President Barack Obama
February 24, 2009

We are a nation that has seen promise amid peril, and claimed opportunity from ordeal. Now we must be that nation again. That is why, even as it cuts back on the programs we don’t need, the budget I submit will invest in the three areas that are absolutely critical to our economic future: energy, health care, and education. It begins with energy.

We know the country that harnesses the power of clean, renewable energy will lead the 21st century. And yet, it is China that has launched the largest effort in history to make their economy energy efficient. We invented solar technology, but we’ve fallen behind countries like Germany and Japan in producing it. New plug-in hybrids roll off our assembly lines, but they will run on batteries made in Korea.

Well I do not accept a future where the jobs and industries of tomorrow take root beyond our borders – and I know you don’t either. It is time for America to lead again. Thanks to our recovery plan, we will double this nation’s supply of renewable energy in the next three years. We have also made the largest investment in basic research funding in American history – an investment that will spur not only new discoveries in energy, but breakthroughs in medicine, science, and technology.

We will soon lay down thousands of miles of power lines that can carry new energy to cities and towns across this country. And we will put Americans to work making our homes and buildings more efficient so that we can save billions of dollars on our energy bills.

But to truly transform our economy, protect our security, and save our planet from the ravages of climate change, we need to ultimately make clean, renewable energy the profitable kind of energy. So I ask this Congress to send me legislation that places a market-based cap on carbon pollution and drives the production of more renewable energy in America. And to support that innovation, we will invest fifteen billion dollars a year to develop technologies like wind power and solar power; advanced biofuels, clean coal, and more fuel-efficient cars and trucks built right here in America.
Excerpt from:
A Brief Analysis of the Congressional Budget Plan
President's Budget Priorities Move Forward
James R. Horney
May 4, 2009

The budget resolution Congress adopted last week for fiscal year 2010 largely reflects the proposals in the preliminary budget President Obama submitted to Congress in February. Under the budget resolution:

- Deficits will be very high by historical standards in the next several years but will decline substantially by 2014. Over the 2010-2014 period as a whole, deficits will be $824 billion lower than if no changes were made in current policies.
- Congress will be free to consider legislation to implement President Obama’s proposals to reform health care, move toward energy independence and limit greenhouse-gas emissions, reform financial aid for higher education, and address other high-priority national needs.
- Congress can extend “middle-class tax cuts,” relief from the alternative minimum tax, and the current estate tax rules (which exempt the estates of 99.75 percent of people who die — 399 of every 400 — from paying any estate tax), rather than allowing these measures to expire as scheduled under current law.
- Total funding for nondefense discretionary programs, which has increased little in recent years, will grow modestly in real terms above the 2009 level but be about $10 billion below the amount the President requested. Funding for defense will be exactly at the level the President proposed.

The budget resolution is not a law and serves only as a blueprint for future tax and spending legislation.

Source: http://www.cbpp.org/cms/index.cfm?fa=view&id=2802
Excerpt from:
Statement of Steven Chu, Secretary of Energy
Before the Committee on the Budget
United States Senate, Washington, D.C.
March 11, 2009

The President’s Fiscal Year 2010 Budget will continue this transformation to a clean energy economy, while returning to fiscal responsibility. The President has pledged to cut the deficit he inherited by at least half by the end of his first term. But even as we make the hard choices to begin to bring down the deficit, the President’s Budget will make strategic investments in America’s economic future investments that have been delayed for far too long. It lays the groundwork for our future prosperity by bringing down the high cost of health care, by giving all of our children a world class education, and by reducing our dependence on foreign oil and creating millions of clean energy jobs.

The President’s Fiscal Year 2010 Budget provides $26.3 billion for the Department of Energy, with investments in basic science and in clean energy technologies, while securing and properly managing our nation’s nuclear materials. The development of this budget carefully considered the funding in the Recovery Act for the Department of Energy and complements those investments. The line-by-line details of the FY 2010 budget are not final yet, but I’d like to share with you a few of our priorities.

**Investing in Science:** The President has set a goal of doubling federal investment in the basic sciences. As part of that plan, the 2010 Budget provides substantially increased support for the Office of Science. It increases funding for climate science – a critical area of concern – and continues America’s role in international science and energy experiments. The Budget also invests in the next generation of America’s scientists by expanding graduate fellowship programs in critical energy-related fields. The funding builds upon the $1.6 billion provided in the Recovery Act for basic science programs at the Department of Energy.

**Clean Energy Technology:** To encourage the early commercial use of innovative clean energy technologies, the Budget supports loan guarantees to help get these projects off the ground. These include renewable energy projects, transmission projects, and carbon sequestration projects that avoid, reduce, or sequester air pollutants and greenhouse gases. It also provides support for research, development, deployment, and commercialization of biofuels, renewable energy, and energy efficiency projects. And to allow us to exploit our huge domestic coal resources with reduced harmful greenhouse gas emissions, the budget supports carbon capture and storage technology. This is in addition to the $3.4 billion provided in the Recovery Act for low-carbon emission coal power and industrial projects.

Together, these investments will reduce our dependence on oil and create sustainable green industries that will power our economy long into the future.

Excerpt from:
Not over yet: Senate subcommittee restores DOE’s hydrogen funding cut
Sebastian Blanco
July 8, 2009

It was huge news back in May when President Obama and the DOE slashed hydrogen vehicle funding from the FY 2010 DOE budget. Since then, hydrogen advocates like CARB have put on the best possible face and asked the DOE to restore the funds. The first steps towards officially putting H$_2$ back into the federal money stream has now been made in Washington, D.C.

The change comes from the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee, run by U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.) The subcommittee has finished marking up the DOE's FY 2010 budget and it now includes $190 million for continuation of the terminated hydrogen research and development program. Dorgan said in a release that "because ongoing research and development is necessary to develop game-changing technologies, this bill also restores funding for Hydrogen energy research." Hydrogen advocate Greg Blencoe notes that the House's version of hydrogen funding includes $108 million, including $40 million for hydrogen vehicles. The two chambers will reconcile their differences soon, probably within the next two weeks.

Excerpt from:
FY 2010 Defense Appropriations Act Provides About $374M in Earmarks for Advanced Energy and Vehicle Programs; $55.7M for Advanced Battery Development and Manufacturing
Green Car Congress
December 28, 2009

On 19 December, President Obama signed into law the $636.3-billion Defense Appropriations Act, 2010 (H.R. 3326) which provides FY 2010 appropriations for Department of Defense (DOD) military programs. Attached to the bill (now law) are $4.197 billion in 1,719 earmarks—Congressionally directed spending projects.

Of those earmarks, about 156 (worth about $374 million) deal with advanced energy storage, ground vehicle technology, power electronics and motors, composites, renewable hydrocarbon fuels, synthetic fuels and biofuels, hydrogen fuel cells, plug-in hybrids, renewable power generation, and so on. Of those, 24 projects worth $55.7 million target Li-ion and advanced battery technology development and manufacturing.

### Appendix E
**Resource 5 – Budget Process Handout**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Process</th>
<th>2009 Examples (Day 1)</th>
<th>Possible Areas for Citizen Input (Day 2)</th>
<th>Possible Alternatives, Tradeoffs, and Costs (Day 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President submits a budget proposal with an outline of his priorities introduced in State of the Union Message</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congress passes a budget resolution. This is mainly a general plan at this point.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congressional Subcommittees hold hearings, debate, and finalize proposals which are sent on to Appropriations Committee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The House and Senate vote on the budget appropriations and work out their differences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The President signs each appropriation bill and the budget is enacted.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

### Appendix F
**Resource 6 – Budget Process Answer Key**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Process</th>
<th>2009 Examples (Day 1)</th>
<th>Possible Areas for Citizen Input (Day 2)</th>
<th>Possible Alternatives, Tradeoffs, and Costs (Day 2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| President submits a budget proposal with an outline of his priorities introduced in State of the Union Message | *State of the Union Address*  
President Barack Obama | Letters, emails and petitions to the President  
Promises of financial support in next election  
Coverage of media event by local news  
Visits to President | President’s proposed budget cuts things he says we do not need to support energy, health care, and education. Some may disagree that the cut programs are unnecessary. |
| Congress passes a budget resolution. This is mainly a general plan at this point. | *A Brief Analysis of the Congressional Budget Plan*  
*President’s Budget Priorities Move Forward*  
James R. Horney | Letters, emails and petitions to the members of Congress  
Promises of financial support in next election  
Coverage of media event by local news  
Visits to Congresspersons | Increasing funding for alternative energy research could increase the deficit, reduce spending to reform financial aid or for national defense, or lead to tax increases. |
| Congressional Subcommittees hold hearings, debate, and finalize proposals which are sent on to Appropriations Committee | *Statement of Steven Chu, Secretary of Energy*  
*Before the Committee on the Budget* | Speaking at hearings  
Contacting members on Congress on a specific committee  
Informal meetings with members of Congress -lunches & parties | Financial resources must be divided between researching new technologies and funding existing technologies; more of one comes at the expense of the other. |
| The House and Senate vote on the budget appropriations and work out their differences | *Not over yet: Senate subcommittee restores DOE’s hydrogen funding cut*  
Sebastian Blanco | Protest demonstration at Capitol  
Threats to vote out incumbents in next election | Unclear from this document from where the restored funding for hydrogen will come, but it must come from somewhere. |
The President signs each appropriation bill and the budget is enacted.

FY 2010 Defense Appropriations Act Provides...
Green Car Congress

Protest demonstration at the White House Threats to vote out the president in next election

Money earmarked for these special projects comes from increased debt, tax increases, or reduced spending on other programs.

Appendix G
Resource 7 – Problems Funding Alternative Energy in Federal Budget

Excerpt from
The Other Looming Debate Over ‘Cash for Clunkers’ Funding; Plan Siphons Billions From Renewable Energy Technologies
Washington Independent
Mike Lillis
August 6, 2009

While Senate leaders have reached agreement on a $2 billion extension of the cash for clunkers program, many lawmakers are already bracing for a more distant confrontation: The likely debate over how to return that funding to another stimulus program that it came from.

The House last Friday provided the generous lifeline to the wildly popular clunkers program — which grants drivers up to $4,500 to scrap their gas guzzlers for more fuel efficient vehicles — and the Senate is poised to pass that bill Thursday. But there’s a glitch. The proposal steals its funding from a Department of Energy program encouraging the development of renewable energy technologies. That initiative, granted $6 billion under this year’s stimulus bill, provides federal loan guarantees to clean energy projects — including solar, wind and biofuel innovations — in hopes of spurring private investment in those industries. Tens of billions of dollars in loan applications are before the DOE, but the program funding was seen by lawmakers as low-hanging fruit because it wouldn’t be spent until next year, at the earliest.

The saga has created a dilemma for a number of lawmakers who support the cash for clunkers extension but don’t want to pilfer from the loan guarantee program to fund it. “I would hate to see us take money from that source,” Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), who chairs the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, told CNBC on Tuesday. “I hope we can find an alternative.”

They didn’t. Although seven amendments to the House proposal will be offered on the Senate floor Thursday afternoon, none aims to locate a new source of the $2 billion. The Senate plans to vote on final passage later in the day, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) announced Wednesday night. Indeed, with the House having left town Friday for a five-week vacation, any changes at all to the House-passed bill are unlikely. The reason? If the Senate alters the proposal, then either (1) cash for clunkers will have to forgo the additional funds until Congress returns in September, or (2) House lawmakers will have to return from recess to iron out the differences between the two bills. In light of the overwhelming popularity of the program, the former option is a political landmine. And on Wednesday, the office of House
Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) pretty much ruled out the latter scenario. “The House isn’t coming back,” said Pelosi spokesman Brendan Daly, “so that’s just a dumb idea.”

More likely, the Senate will pass the House bill, and push to replenish the $2 billion loan funding at a later date. Indeed, Democratic leaders have gone out of their way to assure Bingaman and other loan guarantee supporters that the money will be replaced. Shortly after Friday’s House vote, for example, President Obama vowed to work with Congress to replace the funding “down the road.” On the same day, Pelosi promoted the importance of having all $6 billion available for the loan program. And, responding to concerns voiced by Rep. Edward Markey (D-Mass.), House Appropriations Committee Chairman David Obey (D-Wis.) said Democratic leaders “have every intention of restoring these funds.”

But that might be easier said than done. With the Democrats hoping to pass a health reform agenda tickling the $1 trillion mark, finding ways to pay for another $2 billion program won’t be easy. And in the wake of spending hundreds of billions of dollars salvaging the economy, many in Congress have lost their tolerance for deficit spending. This is true not only in the eyes of conservative deficit hawks, but also some Democrats as well. Sen. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), for example, had hinged her support for cash for clunkers on a single mantra: No new spending. On her Twitter account, the Missouri Democrat said Monday that she “may support” the addition funding — “if it is $ already appropriated for stimulus.”

Source: http://washingtonindependent.com/53982/the-other-looming-debate-over-cash-for-clunkers-funding

### Appendix H

**Resource 8 – Cost/Benefits Evaluation Chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Action</th>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Challenges/Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voting</td>
<td>Simple to complete; may gain the attention of an elected official.</td>
<td>Unlikely to have an impact unless many citizens are involved and elected official sees a potential impact on his or her candidacy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing to Representative</td>
<td>Simple to complete; may gain the attention of an elected official at any time.</td>
<td>Unlikely to have any strong impact unless many citizens write letters with a consistent message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting With a Representative</td>
<td>Face to face meeting is a way to show specific concerns and will most likely have more impact than a letter.</td>
<td>Difficult to obtain and much preparation time is needed; unlikely to lead to change unless candidate sees larger impact or concern of other larger groups of constituents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Writing a Letter to an Editor</strong></td>
<td>Simple to do and can impact large amounts of voters and gain the attention of an elected official.</td>
<td>Needs to be accepted by publisher and gain reaction from a large amount of readers to have a true impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Joining an Action Group</strong></td>
<td>Easy to do; politicians tend to listen to large groups more seriously.</td>
<td>The group may not have the same position as you and you may not have direction over how the group works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizing an Action Group</strong></td>
<td>Can impact politicians by gaining support of a number of people and directing the message the way you want to.</td>
<td>Tremendous amount of work, cost, and start up time but possibly easier now with social networking sites.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Authors’ Bios**

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