**Conflicting Responsibilities of a Congressman**

**Directions:** Read We The People #29 on Congressman Jones and answer the following questions.

1a. What effect will the tariff on imported shoes have on the shoe factories and workers in Congressman Jones’ district? Explain.

The tariff will protect the industry from foreign competition, enabling it to stay in business and sell its shoes for a higher price than the imported shoes. The workers will be able to keep their jobs and economic stability.

b. How might this affect other businesses in the area where the factory workers live? Explain.

Since the factory workers will have jobs and money to spend, it will have a ripple effect on local businesses as those workers spend their pay checks at restaurants, movie theaters, local stores buying electronics and automobiles, etc.

c. How will these influence Congressman Jones’ popularity among his constituents? Explain.

Since the people and the businesses in his district will be happy and grateful to him for supporting the tariff, they will be more likely to support his campaign with money and vote for him.

2a. What effect will the tariff have the price of shoes?

The price of shoes will increase for everyone.

b. How might this affect poor people who do not work in the shoe industry? Explain.

The tariff will benefit factory workers, who will be able to afford the price increase for shoes. People who do not work in the shoe industry will have to pay more for their shoes, even though they are not making any more money. Poor people may not be able to afford new shoes.

3a. What might nations who export shoes to the United States do in response to the tariff on their shoes?

They will place tariffs on American exports, thus raising the price of those products in the foreign nation.

b. What impact might this have on other industries in the United States? Explain.

This will hurt American businesses, as the high price will result in less of their products being sold in the foreign countries.

4a. Should all people be forced to pay more for shoes so the factories in Congressman Jones’ district can stay in business? Explain.

Political question. Depends on your views about trade and protectionism. Most students will say no to this question, even though they may support the tariff.

b. Should other industries in the United States have to pay more to export their goods so the factories in Congressman Jones’ district can stay in business? Explain.

Political question. Depends on if you support free trade no matter what, or think all of society should pitch in to help less efficient domestic industries. Most students will say no to this question, even though they may support the tariff.

If you were Congressman Jones, what would you do concerning the tariff on imported shoes? **Explain**. Be thorough!!!

Answers vary. If support tariff, only reason cannot be “just to get re-elected”, even though that is important factor.

If you oppose the tariff, you would need to explain to your constituents why you chose to oppose it.

**What is Popular vs. What is Right**

The following questions relate to what **YOU** feel the role of the representative should be. Feel free to discuss with neighbors, but you should answer the questions according to your own beliefs.

1. What happens when the needs of the constituents conflict with what the representative believes is right?

The rep is put in a tough spot. He/she is forced to either side with the constituents because that’s what they would do if they could vote, and the rep’s job is to represent them. It also helps with re-election. But reps likely have better access to information and consequences of decisions, and may feel the need to “lead” their people to the right decision.

2. What happens when the needs of the constituents conflict with the general welfare of the United States?

Much like above. The question then becomes, is the rep just a representative for his/her district, or a policy maker for the United States.

3. What happens to a representative whose voting record goes against the opinions of most of his/her constituents?

They will likely get voted out of office, unless they can convince the people that their decisions were the correct ones.

4. In your opinion, is the role of the representative to vote the way his/her constituents want, right or wrong, or is the role to vote for what they feel is in the best interest of the country, should those two things conflict? Explain!

Again, political question:

Arguments for voting with district- That’s how the people would vote if they could, so that is the job. Also, “bite the bullet” on this one so you can represent the people in the other areas where you agree. Other districts have reps who can vote the “right way” if they feel it is best for the country. And it enables re-election.

Arguments for voting conscience: They were chosen to lead the people and make the tough decisions, not do just what gets them re-elected. They likely have better info from experts and lobbyists, and can make the decisions that will be best in the long run. But if they vote against the constituents wishes, they MUST explain to their district why they did this.

**Practical Politics**

Directions: Read the following scenarios and answer the questions.

1a. One of the first bills up for a vote in this congress decriminalizes marijuana. You know a vast majority of your constituents oppose the bill. Personally, you believe the current laws are useless. They cost a lot of money to enforce and do little to reduce marijuana use. You believe that marijuana should be decriminalized and law enforcement should concentrate on more important crime problems. Do you vote against your constituents? What do you do? WHY?

Things to consider: Representing your district, re-election, Doing what is right vs. what is popular. Voting your conscience and leading the people.

b. Would you vote be the same if it involved heroine or methamphetamine? Explain why or why not.

The issue should not affect the actions of the representative.

2. The voters in your district would like to spend money developing a park in your area. You have introduced a bill that would do that. However, to get your bill passed, you will have to make deals with other legislators. One key legislator is Representative Hamilton. He tells you he will make sure your bill is passed if you vote for his bill. His bill makes a drastic cut in welfare payments. About 1 person in 5 in your district receives some sort of welfare payment. Nearly 60% of the people in your district favor the park. Would you accept the deal in order to get the park? What would you do? Why?

Just by the numbers, you should take the deal. Also, poor people less likely to be politically active/vote. Perhaps the poorer people can get jobs associated with the park.

Might not “look good” sacrificing the poor people to please the wealthier people who want the park. Also, park might be a luxury- basic necessities are not.