

Group or Individual Lesson
1 class period

A People's Guide to the Federal Budget
Chapter 3

History of the Federal Budget

Objective:

Students will research and explain the various changes in the budgetary process from 1789 through the present.

Description:

1. As an introduction, write the following quote on the board, "The voice of the people has been said to be the voice of God; and, however generally this maxim has been quoted and believed, it is not true to fact. The people are turbulent and changing, they seldom judge or determine right."
2. Ask the students to respond to the following:
 - ⤴ Based on the quote of Alexander Hamilton, do you believe he would have supported the average citizens having greater understanding of, and involvement in, the federal budget process? Do you agree or disagree with Hamilton? Support your opinion.
3. Then, divide the class into groups of three or four students.
4. Assign each group one of the following topics to investigate:
 - ⤴ the 1789 creation of the Treasury Department
 - ⤴ the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921
 - ⤴ the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Act of 1974
 - ⤴ Gramm-Rudman-Hollings legislation
 - ⤴ the Budget Control Act of 2011
5. Students can use the internet and/or class textbooks to research their topic.
6. Give students the following guiding questions:
 - ⤴ What were the political or economic reasons for passage of the budget act they are researching?
 - ⤴ What major expenses did the government have in the decade prior to the act's passage (i.e. war, economic depression or recession, new entitlement programs)?
 - ⤴ What changes to the budget process occurred as a result of the budget act?
7. Each group should create a brief Power Point presentation to share with the class. The purpose of the Power Point is to teach the class about their budget act.
8. Have students share their Power Point presentations with the class.

9. When the Power Point presentations are completed, solicit answers to the following questions:
- ⤴ What seemed most influential in causing changes to the budgetary process?
 - ⤴ Were changes in the budgetary process most often a result of economic or political pressures?
 - ⤴ Do you feel that the changes have improved the budgetary process? Is the process more or less accountable to taxpayers?