Lesson 2:
Understanding the Issues

Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.1, 6-8.2, and 6-8.4;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.1, 9-10.2, and 9-10.4;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1, 11-12.2, and 11-12.4;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.8;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.8, and 9-10.9;
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.8, and 11-12.9

Essential Questions:

What are public policy issues?
How do different candidates for political office address public policy issues differently, and how are they influenced by their political party affiliations?
What issues matter to me the most?
How do I judge potential solutions to various public policy issues?

Objective:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to...
1. describe at least three public policy issues and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to public policy issues.

Materials Needed:

1. A classroom set of computers or laptops is ideal for this lesson. However, this lesson can also be adapted to work with one teacher computer. Adaptations are noted throughout the "Procedure" section of this lesson plan.
2. Copy of BallotReady student handout for each student.

Procedure:

1. Do Now (See student handout): Rank these public policy issues in order from the most important to you to the least important to you: Crime, Immigration, Education, Healthcare, the Environment. If you don't know very much about these issues, just do your best. Next, list as many *other* public policy issues as you can think of.
2. If students have access to computers, have them search the internet for definitions of the public policy issues listed on the student handout.

     a. If only one classroom computer is available, project a webpage at the front of the class, and conduct an internet search together. Also consider using a classroom set of dictionaries, if available.

3. Next, have students log on to ProCon.org. Once there, students should scroll down the webpage until they see a list of issues. Following the instructions on the student handout, students should pick three issues that candidates for office deal with frequently, and record those issues on the handout.
     a. If only one classroom computer is available, complete this part of the lesson together as a class, or consider printing out information from ProCon.org ahead of time and distributing it to the class.

4. Continuing to follow the instructions on this lesson's handout, students will use ProCon.org to research and record information about the "pro" and "con" sides of various public policy issues. You may wish to review with students how to summarize information in their own words by demonstrating with an example.

5. One students have a chance to fill out their charts, they will then analyze the issues that they researched by recording on the student handout which "sides" of their chosen issues that they agree with and why.

6. Next, students will turn to a partner and tell them about one issue that they believe would most influence how they vote. Students will record what their partners tell them.

7. Working independently once again, students should complete the Closing/Exit Slip portion of the student handout.

Lesson 2 Student Handout

<u>Do Now:</u> Before the 2016 Presidential Election, Americans <u>ranked</u> issues directly related to <u>gun laws, immigration, minimum wage, healthcare, and climate change</u> as the top issues on their minds. Rank these public policy issues in order from the most important to you to the least important to you: If you don't know very much about these issues, just do your best.

1. _____ (Most important to me)

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____ (Least important to me)

Why did you rank the issues in that order?

Next, list as many *other* public policy issues as you can think of:

Exploring Policy Issues:

1. Complete the table below by doing an internet search to help you define the issues that are listed. Then, log on to ProCon.org, and scroll down until you see a list of issues. Click on the issues that are listed in the table, and write down the question that ProCon.org asks about that issue on the next page.

Define these issues in your own words after doing an internet search:	What is the question that ProCon.org asks about these issues? (Click on each issue to see the question.)
Gun Control:	
Illegal Immigration:	
Minimum Wage:	
Right to Healthcare:	
Climate Change:	

2. After logging in to www.procon.org, scroll down until you see a list of controversial issues. Write down three issues that you think elected officials deal with or talk about frequently.

1.

2.

3.

3. Next, for each of the issues that you chose in #2 above, write down in your own words two "pro" stances on that issue and two "con" stances.

Issue (from #2 above)	Two "Pro" stance examples (in your own words)	Two "Con" stance examples (in your own words)

4. For each of the issues that you researched, write down which "side" (pro or con) that you personally agree with and why you agree with that side.

    Issue 1: I agree with the _____ side, because…

    Issue 2: I agree with the _____ side, because…

    Issue 3: I agree with the _____ side, because…

5. After you complete #4 above, turn to a partner and tell them about which <u>one</u> of the issues you researched that would most influence how you vote (for example, you might say "I would only vote for a candidate that believes _____ about the issue of _____ because…"). Write down what <u>your partner tells you </u>about one issue that they chose:

The issue that your partner told you about:

Why that issue influences how your partner would vote:

Closing/Exit Slip: Name 3 public policy issues that you learned more about during this lesson. In your opinion, what makes a solution to a public policy problem "good"? What makes a solution to you public policy problem "bad"?