

The Rights Race

adapted from original by Democracy Unlimited of Humboldt County

Time

About 15–20 minutes

Materials

- Cast
 - » State Governor (student intern)
 - » Race Official (teacher)
 - » Corporate Person (older student or student intern)
 - » the Citizens (students)
- A large room or open space where participants can line up side-by-side about 25 feet away from, and facing, the Governor
- 3 copies of “The Rights Race” script
- 1 copy on ORANGE paper of the “Corporate Charter with Rights” for Corporate Person
- 1 copy on BLUE paper of the “Corporate Charter with Privileges” for Corporate Person
- Corporate Person props such as a suit coat, necktie, sunglasses, if available

Preparation

Note: This activity works well after Ultimate Civics’ Activating My Democracy lessons 3 and 4.

- Review instructions and script (teacher and intern)
- Choose and prep space
- Prep Corporate Person in hallway or aside from other students JUST BEFORE exercise
 - » Don any clothing props
 - » Entrance cue: KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK
 - » Entrance instruction: Enter room

or space and pushes to CENTER FRONT of line of Citizens with much jostling and repeated statements of “excuse me, pardon me.”

- » Wave copy of the ORANGE Corporate Charter with Inalienable Rights at Citizens during entrance and throughout race; HAM IT UP
- » During reading of statements: Always take BIG STEPS FORWARD after EACH statement is read

Conduct the exercise

Refer to The Rights Race script.

Completing the exercise

Ask students to return to their room and seats for the final debriefing.



THE RIGHTS RACE SCRIPT

ACT I

The scene

(Citizens form a line about 25 feet away from and facing the Official and Governor.

The Corporate Person is either outside in hallway or off to side and behind the Citizens and being very quiet.)

Official

"I am the Official for this Race. This is our Governor and you are the Citizens of this community. Governor, can you see the People?"

Governor

"Well, ahem, yes, ahem. I think so. Is that them w-a-a-a-y down there? There seems to be a lot of them."

Official

"Yes, Governor. There is a proposal by the concerned citizens of our community to establish that only human persons have protected inalienable rights and that money is not speech. "

Governor

"Well, ahem, yes, ahem. I've heard about these things. It's my job to listen to the people as I make these decisions. But it seems to me one person is missing."

Official

"I don't think so but..."

Corporate Person enters

(KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK on door or nearby desk.)

Corporate Person

"Pardon me, excuse me. Pardon me, excuse me. Pardon me, excuse me."

Governor

"Ahhhh, yes, that's who was missing. The Corporate Person of course has a legal Corporate Charter to do business in this state. Corporations are also recognized by law as a person with inalienable rights, so I have to listen to them too."



Corporate Person

Waves ORANGE Corporate Charter with Inalienable Rights at Citizens.

Official

"Now, People, in order to influence your Governor you have to get to them. Whoever gets over here first will more influence over the decision."

"Now BEFORE WE START the Race, let's review the Race rules. We want to make sure that all Persons are taking full advantage of your lawful rights and privileges."

"I'm going to read a set of statements, and if they are true for you, take a step forward or backward as appropriate."

The scene

(Underlined statements apply to Corporate Person ONLY; other statements apply to Citizens and Corporate Persons, UNLESS noted.)

Official

"Take a step **forward** if you have the right to freedom of speech under the 1st Amendment."

"Take a step **forward** if you have the right to equal protection and due process under the law under the 5th Amendment."

"Take a step **forward** if you have the right to a trial by jury of your peers under the 7th Amendment."

"Take a step **forward** if you can live forever."

"Take a step **backward** if you can be put in jail." (Citizens only)

"Take a step **forward** if you have the right to just compensation for taking of your property under the 5th Amendment."

"Take a step **backward** if you need clean air and clean water to survive." (Citizens only)

"Take a step **forward** if you have the right to be secure from unreasonable search and seizure under the 4th Amendment."

"Take a step **forward** if you have limited liability for the harms you cause to others."

"Take a step **forward** if you net over a million dollars in profit annually."

Take a step **forward** if you have the right not to self-incriminate under the 5th Amendment.

"Take a step **forward** if you can be in more than one place at the same time."

"Take a step **forward** if you have the right to equal protection under the 14th Amendment.



“Okay, now we can begin our race to the Governor. Whoever gets to the Governor first is going to help our Governor decide these issues. Is everyone ready?”

The Scene

(At this point you can choose to actually race, or not. The Corporate Person should be very far ahead of everyone else.)

Governor

Shakes Corporate Person’s hand.

“Well done! What can I do for you?”

INTERLUDE

Instructions for group discussion

- Form a circle to debrief.
 - » How did it feel as a Citizen to be part of the race?
 - » What was it like to be the Corporate Person?
 - » Were you surprised by the Race result? Why or why not?
 - » Do you have any questions about any of the rights used in this exercise?



Preparation for Act II

- Ask Citizens to resume starting positions again
- Prep Corporate Person quickly and quietly
 - » Give Corporate Person a copy of the BLUE Corporate Charter with Approved Privileges to WAVE at Citizens during the race
 - » Instruct Corporate Person to pay attention for 3 move options: stay in place, backward, or forward
 - » Ask Corporate Person to join Citizens in lineup

ACT II

The Scene

(Citizens line up about 25 feet away from and facing the Official and Governor.

The Corporate Person joins Citizens in the lineup.)

Official

“Governor, your Citizens are back with a new proposal. As you know, the People recently passed a constitutional amendment to establish that only natural persons have constitutional rights and that money is not speech.”

Governor

“Well, ahem, yes, ahem. Well, what is it this time?”

Official

“The concerned Citizens of our community have a science-based plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions in all public buildings, public utilities, public transportation, and public vehicles.”

Governor

“Well, ahem, yes, ahem. I’ve heard about these things. It’s my job to listen to the People as I make these decisions. Is our Corporate Person present?”

Official

“Why of course, Governor. But this time, the Corporate Person has only privileges that were granted through its Corporate Charter.”

Corporate Person

Waves BLUE Corporate Charter with Approved Privileges in Citizen lineup.

Governor

“Yes, yes, but I still have to listen to them too!”

Official

“Of course. Now remember, People, in order to influence the Governor you have to get to them.



Whoever gets over here first will more influence over the decision.”

“BEFORE WE START the Race, let’s review the Race rules again. I’m going to read a set of statements, and if they are true for you, take a step forward or backward as appropriate.”

The scene

(Underlined statements apply to Corporate Person ONLY; other statements apply to Citizens ONLY.)

Official

“Take a step **forward** if you have the right to freedom of speech under the 1st Amendment.”

“Take a step **forward** if you have the right to equal protection and due process under the law under the 5th Amendment.”

“Take a step **forward** if you have the right to a trial by jury of your peers under the 7th Amendment.”

“Take a step **backward** if you can live forever.”

“Take a step **backward** if you can be put in jail.”

“Take a step **forward** if you have the right to just compensation for taking of your property under the 5th Amendment.”

“Take a step **forward** if you need clean air and clean water to survive.”

“Take a step **forward** if you have the right to be secure from unreasonable search and seizure under the 4th Amendment.”

“Take a step **forward** if you have limited liability for the harms you cause to others.”

“Take a step **forward** if you net over a million dollars in profit annually.”

Take a step **forward** if you have the right not to self-incriminate under the 5th Amendment.

“Take a step **backward** if you can be in more than one place at the same time.”

“Take a step **forward** if you have the right to equal protection under the 14th Amendment.

Official

“Okay, now we can begin our race to the Governor. Whoever gets to the Governor first is going to help our Governor decide these issues. Is everyone ready?”



The Scene

(At this point you can choose to actually race, or not. The Citizens should be very far ahead of the Corporate Person.)

Governor

Greets the Citizens.

“Well done! What can I do for you?”

END

Instructions for group discussion

Return to classroom to use TIMELINE with final debriefing.

Use notes in Slide 7 for “Final debriefing guide.”

