

Civics: A Christian Worldview.
“We’re Not Plundering—We’re HELPING!” (15-25 minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS/KEY

Instructions

1. **Objective:** Students “think like politicians” to clarify how many politicians justify legal plunder.
2. Put students into pairs/groups (probably 3 per group at the most, so each has a chance to contribute).
3. Print copies of Page 2 for each student, and hand out.
4. Read the instructions and the top example scenario together, then instruct students (give them 15 minutes!) to rewrite the four scenarios on the handout as government officials trying to pretend they’re not plundering. When 15 minutes are up, let each group/pair/table take a turn by reading at least one response. (If you have more than 4 groups/pairs, let more than one group/pair read their answer to a scenario.)

Answer Key

1. Answers will vary, but might be something like this: “We want our wonderful children, especially those who are just starting out, to have the best education they can...”
2. AWV, but something like this: “In our day and age, the health care of our citizens is really important. We want our local colleges and universities to have the best equipment available, so we can provide the best service and help our poor, suffering patients recover from those difficult health care issues...”
3. AWV, but something like this: “Our locals are hardworking and rugged, and we need to step up here in government to honor that wonderful spirit, so we’re going to provide a way for them to travel and help their businesses thrive in this great state of ours...”
4. AWV, but something like this: “Our state wants to be proud of its status and as a home city to a fantastic professional sports team, so we’re going all out to help. This billion-dollar stadium is a great way to enhance our local businesses, which all benefit from the additional money that pro football fans bring to our state...”

Key Concepts

- Even though slick politicians can justify all these expenditures, it’s impossible to get around the fact that these are all **PLUNDER**. They are taking money from one group and giving it to others! It doesn’t matter that it helps those groups that benefit—what about the **PLUNDERED** groups? Everybody **SEES** that one group is doing well (“Wow, look at that beautiful new medical center!”), but nobody **SEES** the fewer things that the plundered groups can now afford to buy, since their taxes went up...to benefit others! This, again, is a **PERVERSION** of the law, since it **PARTICIPATES IN STEALING**, instead of threatening theft or punishing it when it happens.
- You can tell your students (because it’s 100 percent true!) that these examples **ALL REALLY HAPPENED**. All four scenarios are taken from real-life!

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You are a government official who wants to spend money on a special project that is legal plunder (stealing from some taxpayers and giving that money to others). The project makes you look like a generous, helpful government official (and it’s easy to look generous when you’re spending other people’s money!). **YOUR JOB: To rewrite what these programs really do, so you can fool the public** into thinking: “Wow, this government official is really trying to *help* us with this program!” (Choose one person to be the “rewriter,” while everyone gives ideas.)

EXAMPLE SCENARIO: You want to spend \$5 million to build a new public library in an area that only has 70 people living within 15 miles of that library. (Why? Because you have arranged for your brother’s construction company to get the contract to build the library, and he promised you a big cash payoff if you did.)

But you can’t tell your voters that! They might get angry and beat you with sticks if they see you at a local grocery store—or even worse, force you to watch golf on TV. So here’s how you announce the project:

Our county, with all of its wonderful people, has fallen behind in child literacy. But we have a plan to help our precious children: Not only are we going to provide a new library with a multimedia center, but we are also going to provide jobs for 25 individuals to help run it! [Of course, you don’t dare mention the fact that the \$5 million will be obtained by raising taxes on county residents, or your brother’s construction company and his bribe to you!]

Now, rewrite these four scenarios in a similar way:

SCENARIO 1: Public school teachers, principals, and school administrators in the school district you represent in Maine have threatened to vote you out of office unless you get them more materials. You then introduce a bill in your state’s legislature that gives every kindergartner in public schools a new iPad. Total cost per year: \$228,000.

SCENARIO 2: You are a U. S. senator who wants \$60 million to spruce up the research department at the College of Medicine at a small university in your state. You insert this request into a U. S. government spending bill; the money will be taken, of course, from taxpayers in other states.

SCENARIO 3: You live in a small town with a population of about 1500. You want to spend \$75 million building an airport and \$29 million building a harbor that people will almost never use. The town only has about five boats, so the harbor sees very little activity. The airport is also unused because no airlines actually fly there.

SCENARIO 4: Your city has a pro football team. To get the team to stay in your city, you want to raise taxes on property to give to the team. City residents, including many who have no interest whatsoever in pro football, will end up paying over \$600 million in taxes that go to funding that football team and its billionaire owner.

