

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview.
Operation Jury Nullification (15–20 Minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Goal

Students evaluate whether justice requires conviction or acquittal (a form of nullifying an unjust law) when a defendant technically violates a law.

Instructions

1. Put students in pairs or small groups.
2. Give students 12–15 minutes to answer the questions.
3. Ask for volunteers from each group for their answers.

Discussion Questions

- Should jurors only decide whether a law was broken, or whether the law is just?
- Which case was easiest to decide? Which was hardest?
- Why might jurors view Case #3 differently from the other cases?
- How could a juror reasonably make the case that “nullifying” a bad or unjust law via a “not guilty” verdict is actually administering a Biblical standard for government?

AWV, but executing “judgment and justice” is a Biblical mandate for rulers, and a jury that executes justice for a wrongly accused person fulfills that.

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Work with your group as a jury. For each case, decide whether the defendant should be found Guilty or Not Guilty. If you vote Not Guilty, write a brief jury statement explaining why justice requires acquittal despite the alleged violation of the law.

Case #1 – The Neighborhood Teacher: State law requires anyone who tutors students for pay to obtain a government teaching license costing several thousand dollars. Scott, a very, very old teacher, tutors local students in mathematics from his home. Parents willingly hire him, students improve their grades, and no one complains. After a government inspector discovers that Scott never obtained the required license, he is charged with violating the law.

Your verdict and why:

Case #2 – The Park Lunches: A city ordinance forbids distributing food in public without a permit. A church group, unaware of this ordinance, spends Saturdays preparing lunches and handing them out to homeless people in a city park. The group charges nothing, creates no disturbance, and cleans up afterward. City officials nevertheless charge the organizers with violating the ordinance because they never obtained a permit.

Your verdict and why:

Case #3 – The “Like New” Generator: Kevin advertises a portable generator online as “like new” and tells a buyer that it has only been used a few times and has never had mechanical problems. The buyer pays full price. Two weeks later, the generator stops working. Evidence at trial shows that Kevin had experienced repeated breakdowns, had replaced several parts, and knew the machine had serious problems before the sale. Kevin is charged under a state fraud statute.

Your verdict and why:

Case #4 – The Unauthorized Pamphlets: A town council passes a law requiring citizens to obtain government approval before distributing political literature in public places. Michael prints and hands out pamphlets criticizing several local officials without seeking permission. He does not threaten anyone, damage property, or block traffic, but he is arrested and charged with violating the ordinance.

Your verdict and why: