

American Government & Politics: A Christian Worldview.
The Bureau of Things That Don't Need a Bureau (25–30 Minutes)

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

Goal

Students work in groups to create and defend a ridiculously unnecessary federal agency, so they (a) recognize how real government bureaucracy often expands beyond constitutional limits and (b) learn to question whether any federal agency truly serves a legitimate purpose.

Instructions

1. Put students in groups of 3–4.
2. Read the instructions together.
3. Students complete the handout. (Allow 15–20 minutes.)
4. Discuss as a class via volunteers for each group.

Debrief/Wrap-Up Questions

- Was it easy or hard to defend something unnecessary? Why?
- The Constitution only grants about 20 powers to Congress. Did any of your agencies actually (sort of) match any of those powers? Which ones?
- The book sections asks: “What did Americans do before these departments existed?” Did your group have a good answer for that?
- If it’s easy to invent a ridiculous federal agency, what does that say about the real ones?

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Step 1: Name Your Agency (3 minutes). Brainstorm and choose a name for your new federal agency. It should sound official, important, and vaguely bureaucratic. Use real agencies from the reading as inspiration (Department of Energy • Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives • National Pesticide Information Center • President's Council on Fitness, Sports, and Nutrition, etc.). Make it sound important, something like Bureau of Refrigerator Temperature Standardization, Department of Toilet Paper Quality Assurance, Federal Commission on Proper Lawn Mowing, Office of Couch Cushion Retrieval, and so on.

Your agency name:

Step 2: Write Your Mission Statement (5 minutes). Every federal agency has a formal mission statement that sounds crucial but says very little. Write a 1–2 sentence mission statement for your agency. Use grand, vague language like “ensure,” “promote,” “protect,” “safeguard,” “uphold,” “guarantee,” “regulate,” “oversee.”

Your mission statement:



Step 3: Create Your Slogan (3 minutes). Every government agency needs a catchy slogan. The slogan should sound reassuring and patriotic. Examples: “Keeping America’s Refrigerators Safe Since 2026,” “Your Couch Cushions: Secured,” or “A Greener Lawn for a Stronger Nation.”

Your slogan (rhyming or alliteration encouraged!):

Step 4: Defend Your Agency (6–8 minutes). Now comes the hard part. You must prepare a 90-second defense of your agency as if it were absolutely vital. Your defense must answer ALL of the following questions:

1. What problem does your agency solve (even if the problem doesn't exist)?
2. What did Americans do before your agency existed (suffered terribly, of course)?
3. How does your agency benefit all Americans (use emotionally charged “buzzwords”)?
4. Is your agency constitutional? (It's not, but you must argue “Yes.” You can use one of “those clauses” if you'd like....)
5. What would happen if your agency were abolished (doom, chaos, and disaster, of course)?