

# IDEOLOGICAL SPECTRUM and POLITICAL ISSUES

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of government is to serve the needs of the people. It provides justice, protects national security, controls the economy, and does whatever else the citizens demand. However, people often disagree about what government should do or, even when they agree about what should be done, they disagree about how to do it. These disagreements are just a consequence of different ideas about how government should work - *ideologies*. These ideologies are often classified by *liberal* and *conservative*. Because people are not usually all liberal or all conservative in their thinking, it makes more sense to talk about an ideological spectrum. Just like the light spectrum makes a rainbow of colors, there are a range of ideologies from liberal (left) to conservative (right).

The furthest right is FASCISM, most notably Mussolini's Italy, where the government makes all economic and social decisions with a goal of national unity, patriotism, national security, and expansion.

The furthest left is COMMUNISM, as practiced in the Soviet Union, where all economic and social decisions are controlled by the government with a goal of equality. (Communism as theorized by Karl Marx envisioned a world without government.)

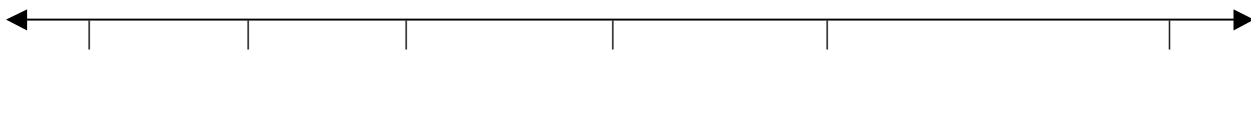
Another well known liberal ideology is SOCIALISM. Socialists believe the government should control all economic decisions but very few social decisions. The people can vote on how the economy is managed, but they don't own any land or ways of making a large amount of products to sell. Socialists consider this system to be good because everyone has an equal say how a country's resources are used. While there are more and less wealthy people, no one is really rich or really poor. Also, if the government provides a service, everyone gets the same benefits, like health care and education.

These ideologies are not prevalent in the United States. Here, liberals are more likely to believe that the government should control the economy and less social policy. (Some people confuse this with socialism. However, liberals in the U.S. do not advocate that the government control all of the country's economic assets.) Conservative are more likely to believe that the government should control social policy but leave economic decisions to markets.

Generally speaking, Democrats are considered to be liberal, and Republicans are considered to be conservative. However, it is important to remember that these are the names of *political parties*, not ideologies.

## PLACE THESE TERMS ON THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

Moderate, Democrats, Republicans, Socialism, Fascism, Communism



## LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES ON THE ISSUES

The purpose of this activity is to make you familiar with the way liberals and conservatives think. After studying the positions on these issues, you will be asked to create an imaginary person; one who has some liberal *and* conservative beliefs. You will read the summary of your person's beliefs to the class. We will try to explain why that person would tend to vote for a Democrat or a Republican. You will then explain why you think that person would vote Democrat or Republican.

ISSUE	LIBERAL (Democrat)	CONSERVATIVE (Republican)
National Security	Secure the nation through international consensus. Use force as a last resort and only with international approval.	Get international consensus where possible, but use force when necessary regardless of what the international community thinks.
Economy	The economy should be regulated to protect consumers. Markets don't always work. Need to regulate food and drugs, etc.	Markets rule. Consumers protect themselves and decide for themselves using as unregulated a market as possible.
Business	Businesses seek to help themselves, not consumers. Regulate them so that consumers don't suffer.	Consumers benefit when businesses are free to adapt and innovate. And when a business grows, the more people it employs.
Taxes	Taxes are needed to provide services to citizens. As long as the government provides desired, efficient services, the people will want to pay.	Cut taxes. Money is power. Every dollar the government takes from the people is stolen power. If someone earns money they should be able to keep as much as possible.
Federal Budget	The federal budget should be balanced. Americans aren't allowed to borrow more than they can afford. The government shouldn't either, unless needed during a recession.	The federal budget is too big because the government is trying to do too much. Cut the budget, but allow for deficits during recession or to provide for national security. Deficits are an investment in America!
Energy	Reduce oil dependency for the sake of the environment. Turn to wind, solar, hybrid, and fuel cell technologies. Don't drill in ANWR - a beautiful natural environment will be hurt so that oil companies can profit.	Reduced dependency on oil over time to protect our national security. Turning to other technologies will help our economy. Drill in ANWR to decrease our dependence on foreign oil.
Welfare	Provide welfare to America's poor. No one should starve in the world's wealthiest nation. Having to work for it just leaves children without a parent at home.	Welfare to work. Provide welfare to those who work for it. People will get job training and self-esteem. Money wasted on freeloaders will be eliminated.
Social Security	Social security is government's guarantee to take care of old people – our nation's poorest people with the least ability to earn money. Privatization is too risky.	Privatize social security. People should be allowed to use their own money to provide for retirement. Plus, their investment will help corporations provide jobs to help our economy grow.
Health Care	Universal health care. All Americans should be taken care of and preventative care will decrease the cost of health care in general.	Privatize health care. Health Management Organizations (HMOs) will offer competitive policies that will lower the cost of healthcare for all.
Immigration	Immigration is good for America. Immigrants fill needed jobs. Illegal immigrants should be granted work visas and a path to citizenship. America's history is a history of immigration.	Immigration can be good for America if the immigrant assimilates. Illegal immigrants should be deported as lawbreakers. Our borders should be made more secure.
Environment	Protect the environment. The earth is our home and we should protect it and its creatures. It is our appreciation of nature, and our place in it, that helps us understand our humanity.	Business comes before the environment. Protecting the environment is important, but making sure business can employ workers and provide goods and services to humans is more important.

ISSUE	LIBERAL (Democrat)	CONSERVATIVE (Republican)
Euthanasia	Doctor assisted suicide is okay if the person is of sound mind and has a terminal illness.	Life is precious and should not be taken unnaturally. Doctors take an oath to preserve life, not take it.
Abortion	Pro-Choice. Women have a right to control reproduction. If a woman chooses to have an abortion, it is not the government's place to deny her the operation.	Pro-Life. Life is precious. A woman's control over reproduction goes with her choice to have sex. Once an egg is fertilized, a human life has been created and that life has a right to exist.
Free Speech	Flag burning and art that insults people's beliefs may be in bad taste but they should not be illegal. Free expression should be free as long as the rights of others are not infringed.	Free speech is important, but flag burning should be banned. Insulting artwork should not receive federal money. The government may limit speech for the common good.
Church/State	Religion and government should be kept strictly separated. Government should not give money to religion and any benefits, like tax breaks, should be given to all. Religious symbols should not be on government property.	America is religious. Even the Declaration of Independence acknowledges the "Creator". While no religion should be given special status, people should be allowed to pray at public events and recognize the importance of religion in public places.
Gun Control	Guns kill people. The 2 <sup>nd</sup> Amendment only protects weapons in the context of a "militia".	Guns don't kill people. People kill people. Punish criminals for crimes, not everyone. People have a 2 <sup>nd</sup> Amendment right to bear arms.