

APPENDIX C

Sample Discussion Questions

CHAPTER ONE

1. In what ways did Louisiana's colonial experience differ from that of the original 13 American states? What, if any, examples can you identify as lasting effects of Louisiana's colonial experience?
2. What was the significance of the Louisiana Purchase?
3. How did the immigration and settlement of the Acadians affect the development of the culture and politics of south Louisiana?
4. Generally, what are differences between the residents of north and south Louisiana? What affect might these differences have on public policies at the state or local level?
5. Why is the Louisiana constitution amended so often?
6. What changes in the Louisiana economy were responsible for the move from a rural to an urban society? Has the rural-urban transition resulted in any changes in the state and local governments?

CHAPTER TWO

1. Discuss the difference between "representative" and "direct" democracy and give examples of each from Louisiana state and local government.
2. What major changes have taken place in Louisiana's political parties since the 1960s?
3. Candidates campaigning for political jobs rely heavily on television advertising. What problems, if any, does this create?
4. What are some of the special interests groups or PACs that are involved in political campaigns in Louisiana? How do special interest groups influence elections? Should their influence be limited?
5. If you were to run for governor, would you be a populist or a conservative? Discuss your position on an issue which demonstrates the choice you made?

CHAPTER THREE

1. What is the purpose of "gerrymandering"? In what instances do you believe gerrymandering might be justified in Louisiana?
2. Assume you were a state legislator and you felt strongly about an issue on which most of the voters in your district take the opposing view. Would you vote your conscience or how your constituents wanted you to vote? Can you think of an issue that would be a good example?
3. A bill faces many hurdles on its way through the Legislature. If you were a lobbyist, where in the legislative process would you concentrate your efforts in an attempt to kill a bill that you opposed?
4. In what ways does the Legislature provide a check against the governor and executive branch?
5. What are the arguments for and against term limits for state legislators? Do you feel the present three-term limit is adequate?
6. Would Louisiana be assured of having better legislation if the Legislature met year round and legislators were full-time, professional lawmakers?

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Does Louisiana have too many state-wide elected officials? Do these officials provide a necessary check on the power of the governor? Which, if any, of these state-wide elected offices should be made appointive?
2. Are there certain characteristics a candidate for governor must have to be elected in Louisiana? Do you think these desired characteristics might change in the future?
3. What are examples of the governor's administrative, legislative and judicial powers?
4. What institutions are responsible for setting rules and policies for the operation of public schools?
5. How does Louisiana differ from most other states in the way it provides hospital services for the poor?
6. What was wrong with the way state employees were hired or fired prior to the creation of the civil service system?

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Who is responsible for making certain that judges do their jobs correctly? How may a judge be removed from office?

2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of electing judges rather than appointing them?
3. What are the various ways an ordinary citizen might become involved in the judicial system?
4. How does a civil case differ from a criminal case? Who is the plaintiff in each? What is the standard of proof required in each and why are they different?
5. Why is it that very few cases make it to the state supreme court?
6. In what type of court would you: a) plead innocent to a traffic ticket; b) sue for divorce; c) get an assurance that your neighbor would keep his pet ostrich locked up; d) be prosecuted for armed robbery; e) appeal your armed robbery conviction; f) sue someone for a million dollars in damages; or g) attempt to collect a \$100 debt.

CHAPTER SIX

1. What local government bodies provide services for the area where you live? Name one or more of the services provided by each of these.
2. Why would residents of a parish consider creating a home rule charter and how would they go about doing it?
3. What are the three basic ways to organize a local government's executive and legislative functions? Which of these forms of government is used in your city and/or parish?
4. What makes a strong mayor strong? How does the relationship between a strong mayor and his council differ from the relationship between a local school superintendent and a parish school board?
5. Name five constitutionally required parish officers and indicate what role, if any, each plays in the judicial process.
6. What role does a police jury play in the judicial system?

CHAPTER SEVEN

1. What are the major sources of the money spent by the state government and by local governments?
2. If a state or local government's revenues are not growing as fast as its operating costs, what steps can it take to adopt a balanced budget for the next fiscal year?
3. If governments could only collect one type of tax, which one would you prefer and why?

4. If one tax could be eliminated, which one would you select and why? In making this decision, is it important to know whether the tax is proportional, progressive or regressive?
5. What are the basic steps in the state budget process? What is the role of the governor in this process?
6. What is the difference between a fee and a tax and when is a fee more appropriate than a tax?
7. What is a tax exemption and what are reasons that a government might grant exemptions from the sales tax, property tax and income tax?

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. What can an individual citizen do to get a government to change a public policy?
2. An 18-year-old citizen has the right to view any public record. If denied access to a public record what action can he or she take?
3. Does a citizen have the right to speak in any public meeting of a governmental body?
4. Who is the official elected to represent you on the: a) school board; b) city and/or parish governing authority; c) Louisiana Senate; d) Louisiana House of Representatives; e) Public Service Commission; and f) Board of Elementary and Secondary Education?
5. Where can you find information on: a) bills filed in the Legislature; b) recent governor's executive orders; c) election results, and d) recent bills passed by the Legislature.