

## Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum Right to Privacy?

### Curriculum Focus

U.S. Government

### Grade level

9-12

### Duration

One or two class periods

### Objectives

Students will

- discuss issues regarding the right to privacy;
- learn about the proposed national identification cards;
- read articles both in favor of and against national identification cards;
- write their own opinion papers either for or against national identification cards.

### Materials

- Computer with Internet access
- Paper, pens, pencils

### Procedures

1. Begin the lesson with a general discussion about privacy. What are some privacy issues discussed in the video? What systems were discussed? (*Examples: video surveillance cameras in stores, day cares, on highways; and the use of Echelon, a global electronic communications surveillance system.*) What are the advantages of using these systems? How could these systems threaten personal privacy?

Students may discuss the advantages of using surveillance cameras to detect criminal activity. However, some may feel that overuse of surveillance cameras is the same as treating the public like criminals. Students may discuss how surveillance cameras used at the uprising in Tienanmen Square in China were later used to identify and arrest pro-democracy demonstrators.

2. Next, ask students to talk about how the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, have affected issues regarding our rights to privacy. How and why did these events influence privacy concerns? Many people believe that Americans must sacrifice some rights to privacy to protect national safety. Others feel that national safety precautions could go too far, and that Americans may be in danger of losing too much of their privacy.
3. Tell students that they'll be examining the issue of national identification cards. Under this system, every American citizen would be given an identification card. The cards would be digitized, linked to huge databases, and used to verify the identity of all citizens. The cards gained widespread support after September 11, since some officials believe they would prevent terrorists from operating under assumed identities. Some

people feel the cards will protect national security, while others feel they would give a false sense of security and threaten our civil rights even further.

4. Have students read articles from the Web sites listed below. The articles cover both sides of the debate.

#### **In support of ID cards**

##### **TIME: The Case for a National ID Card**

<http://www.time.com/time/columnist/carlson/article/0,9565,193705,00.html>

##### **National ID Card Gaining Support.**

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A52300-2001Dec16.html>

#### **Against ID cards**

##### **ACLU: National ID Cards: 5 Reasons Why They Should Be Rejected**

[http://www.aclu.org/issues/privacy/National\\_ID\\_Feature.html](http://www.aclu.org/issues/privacy/National_ID_Feature.html)

##### **Electronic Privacy Information Center: ID CARDS**

[http://www.epic.org/privacy/id\\_cards/](http://www.epic.org/privacy/id_cards/)

5. To conclude the lesson, have students write their own opinion paper. Do they feel that national ID cards are a good idea? Have the students explain their position supported by examples whenever possible. Should Americans be willing to sacrifice some level of privacy for national security? As a class, discuss both sides of the issue. If time permits, have students debate the issue.

### **Evaluation**

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

**3 points:** Students were highly engaged in class discussions, and they created comprehensive and thoughtful opinion papers that include several relevant facts from their research.

**2 points:** Students participated in class discussions, and they created somewhat comprehensive opinion papers that include some relevant facts from their research.

**1 point:** Students participated minimally in class discussions, and they created simplistic opinion papers that include few or no facts from their research.

### **Vocabulary**

#### **Echelon**

**Definition:** A global electronic communications surveillance system used to intercept billions of communications everyday, including phone calls, e-mail messages, Internet downloads, and satellite transmissions

**Context:** Echelon is operated by the intelligence agencies in five nations: the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

#### **national identification cards**

**Definition:** Proposed system of identification that would grant every U.S. citizen an identification card linked to a database of personal information

**Context:** Officials disagree whether national identification cards would adequately protect national security.

**right to privacy**

**Definition:** Having control over your own personal data and the ability to grant or deny access to others, according to the ACLU, or the American Civil Liberties Union

**Context:** Whenever our personal information is shared or sold without our knowledge, our right to privacy is denied.

**Academic Standards**

This lesson plan addresses the following standards from the National Council for the Social Studies:

- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Power, Authority, and Governance

**Credit**

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