Your Background and Biography

When you were a kid, your parents got your brother a chemistry set for his birthday. He used it once and never touched it again, which was lucky for you because you couldn’t put it down. At age 8 you knew that chemistry was for you. You excelled at science and math in high school. As president of your school’s Academic Challenge team, you led the team to a regional victory. But far from being a stereotypical “nerd,” you were a favorite among all your classmates, and you were even voted class president your senior year.

You studied chemistry and physics as an undergraduate and earned a master’s degree in chemistry before you took a break from the lab to work in the marketing department at a chemical company. You took the job so you could pay off your student loans quickly, but you were surprised to find you enjoyed the work. The business of chemistry ended up being even more of a draw than research was for you, and you ultimately decided to pursue a law degree so you could specialize in energy law.

Working as legal counsel for a major international chemical company provided invaluable experience and helped you understand the lay of the land for the chemical industry. As the industry you had devoted your life to came under increasingly bitter attack, you felt compelled to join the defense. You became a lobbyist for the Society for the Plastics Industry (SPI), a trade organization that represents one of the largest manufacturing industries in the country. The plastics industry in the United States alone employs nearly one million workers, and the SPI represents the interests of that industry.

This is the work you were born for. You are a skilled negotiator and a persuasive debater. You believe wholeheartedly in the critical role that the plastics industry plays in the safety and health of the American people and the American economy, and you are determined to bring people around to your view. You fear that too much regulation will slow economic growth in the plastics industry. You know that the American people are just as concerned as you are about the growth of our economy and that economic considerations are a strong argument in your favor.

Even though you are paid to be an advocate for the plastics industry, you do not consider yourself to be an enemy of anti-plastics crusaders. You recognize that these concerns are legitimate, but you don’t want anyone to let emotion get in the way of hard facts and serious scientific research. Furthermore, your industry is at the cutting edge of new technologies that are paving the way for the plastics of the future. SPI recently created the Bioplastics Council to promote the development of bioplastics. You have long advocated for recycling; it was SPI that created the Resin Identification Code in 1988 to improve the
recycling process. Now SPI is promoting new zero-waste strategies designed to keep plastics in use and out of landfills. You are certain the industry is doing an outstanding job responding to very real environmental concerns and any governmental regulation will only slow down that process.

Your Mission

Your goal at this hearing is to convince the Regulators to include the Industry Group’s recommendations in their final regulation. To make this argument effectively, you must

- Complete the assigned readings listed at the bottom of this page;
- Work closely with the other members of your group to develop clear answers to the Regulators’ questions;
- Make use of as much specific information as possible to develop strong arguments that the many societal benefits of plastics outweigh the problems and that the industry can and does regulate itself without government intervention;
- Read as much as you can about your position and the positions of the other groups; and
- Complete written reflections on your character, interest group, and readings as assigned.

Your Victory Objectives

- **You will receive 10 points** if the Regulators select your group’s proposal as the final regulation.
- The Regulators will rank the interest groups by how well their goals are represented in the final regulation. **You will receive between 1 and 5 points** based on how the Industry Group is ranked and how well the regulation reflects your goals.

Sources

**Industry Group Sources**

- Case Study: Plastics: An American Success Story
- “Interview with Steve Russell,” video, vimeo.com/channels/465871

Your Individual Sources

- Select one article from the bibliography on The Case of Plastics website recommended for the Industry Group. Read the article and write two paragraphs summarizing the article and how it will be useful to you in the upcoming debate.