Industry Group
You are a Representative of Coca-Cola

Your Background and Biography
As a Georgia native, Coca-Cola was an inescapable part of your early life. The Coca-Cola Company, headquartered in your hometown of Atlanta, saturates the region’s economy and cultural life. You were thrilled when a college internship turned into a job offer in Coke’s marketing department, and you have never looked back. Your coworkers are friendly and competent, and you have always found the company supportive and responsive. They have invested in you, even paying for graduate school, and you are committed to them.

However, you do worry about one thing: the environmental impact of Coca-Cola and its products. You took some environmental-science classes in college and are well read on environmental concerns, and you have been criticized by friends because you work for a company they see as destructive.

You were pleased, therefore, when Coca-Cola began to promote voluntary sustainability initiatives. You transferred into Coke’s sustainability division, and today you head the initiatives marketing and communication department. You are proud of Coke’s efforts to use recycled polyethylene terephthalate (PET) in its bottles and invest in the development of bioplastics—the new “Plant Bottle” (made from plants rather than petroleum)—and you are honored to represent the company at the upcoming Environmental Protection Agency hearing. You intend to use the opportunity to promote Coca-Cola’s programs and to talk about Coca-Cola’s commitment to environmental stewardship.

You know all the arguments against Coke, and you find them frustrating. Detractors argue that Coca-Cola’s sustainability initiative is only a front to get the company good public relations while it continues to promote destructive policies. This isn’t true. Sure, the Coca-Cola Company isn’t perfect, but no organization is. The reality is much more complicated than “good” and “bad.” Coke must operate in a business world where ideal is not always possible and contend with the reality that everyone has a different opinion about what is ethically correct.

Your goal at this hearing is to promote the work that Coca-Cola is doing, argue that its sustainability efforts are genuine and effective, and secure the least restrictive regulation possible. You also want to emphasize the scope of Coke’s sustainability initiatives beyond plastic recycling and plant bottles. Restrictive regulations may force Coca-Cola to scale back these initiatives, which offer countless global benefits. If Coke must expend resources to comply with unnecessary government regulation, it will be forced to reduce efforts elsewhere.
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
• “Interview with the General Manager of Coca-Cola PlantBottle Packaging,” by interbrand.com
• 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.