

## *Invention*

You are a **Famous Inventor and an Innovator**

### **Your Background and Biography**

You like to think of yourself as the Thomas Edison of the 21st century. You are fascinated by the man who gave the world useful inventions like recorded sound, the motion picture, electric lighting, and systems for generating and distributing electrical power. In fact, you were even born in Menlo Park, New Jersey, where Edison had his famous “invention factory” in the 1870s. Although curious and very bright, you did not do well in school, earning only average grades. Like Edison himself and other creative people, you were frequently at odds with your teachers. Instead of applying your efforts to rote learning and busywork in order to please your teachers, you enjoyed tinkering with gadgets and started inventing at a very early age. Before you graduated from high school you held several patents, which earned more money than your parents’ combined incomes.

While in college you invented the first wearable infusion pump that enabled the safe, timely administration of medications to patients without need for a trip to the hospital or doctor’s office. You left college after three years to start your own company to manufacture and market the medical device. Your invention was well accepted by the medical community in such diverse specialties as chemotherapy, endocrinology, and neonatology. Your company thrived. When you were 30, you sold your company to a large medical supplier. You began a new company focused on the development and marketing of inventions in the health and technology fields. Among your inventions are kidney-dialysis machines that can be used by patients in the comfort of their homes, an advanced prosthetic arm, and a robotic wheelchair that can climb steps and go over curbs. You hold more than 400 U.S. and foreign patents and have received awards recognizing your contribution to global health care.

Your passion for science, technology, and invention led you to inspire and excite high-school students in science and technology. You have put a great deal of your seemingly infinite energy into establishing national robotics competitions for high-school students. You know the next generation of scientists, inventors, and entrepreneurs is in high school now.

None of your inventions would have been possible without plastics. These lightweight materials that can be formed and molded in countless ways and engineered to have unique properties have enabled most of your work. You worry that government regulation will limit the ability of researchers to provide innovative devices that will improve lives and living conditions worldwide.

At this public hearing you want to use your celebrity status, your energy, and your passion to explain how plastics have improved society, improved health care, and made technological advancement possible. Although you support the recycling of one-use plastics and packaging, you are opposed to regulations that will dampen invention, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

### **Your Mission**

Your goal at this hearing is to convince the Regulators to include the Invention 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 Regulator 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 too much regulation may stifle innovation;
- 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 Invention Group is ranked and how well the regulation reflects your goals.

### **Sources**

#### **Invention Group Sources**

- Case Study: The Benefits of Plastic Innovation
- "Interview with Bob Kenworthy," video, [vimeo.com/channels/465871](https://vimeo.com/channels/465871)

#### **Your Individual Sources**

- "Plastic Man," by Monte Burke, *Forbes*, December 23, 2002
- Select **one article** from the bibliography on *The Case of Plastics* website recommended for the Invention Group. Read the article and write two paragraphs summarizing the article and how it will be useful to you in the upcoming debate.