Your Background and Biography

Your favorite childhood memories involve the outdoors. You grew up outside Washington, D.C., and you took regular vacations to the mountains of western Virginia. Shenandoah National Park is still your favorite place in the world, and a love of nature remains your guiding passion.

In college you majored in environmental science with an emphasis on ecology and environmental chemistry. You hoped to work for the National Park Service, but when a summer internship in an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) field office developed into a full-time job after college, you transferred your passion to a different government agency. With the EPA you could influence policy beyond the bounds of National Park Service lands and regulate industries and companies across the country.

You worked in a number of EPA field offices while completing a master’s degree in environmental policy. As you have moved up the ranks, you have become increasingly committed to the goal of reducing America’s solid-waste production. Five years ago you transferred to the EPA headquarters in Washington, D.C., to be near your family and in the heart of policy development.

You recently received a promotion to Director of the Division of Resource Conservation and Recovery. In this position you are responsible for finding ways to conserve natural resources and to recover energy from the waste stream. Your division investigates ways to make trash more productive. Though you do not know the exact solution yet, the problem is obvious: too much American waste goes to landfills. New methods and incentives are needed to encourage increased recycling and recovery over landfills.

You are optimistic that a new regulation can address some of the resource recovery problems facing your division. If new rules required greater waste recovery, less trash would go to landfills. Because of its durability, plastic is especially important to recover. But plastic is also very important, so you want a regulation that will improve recovery without putting too much pressure on producers and polymer scientists. You hope that the experts at this hearing will present innovative solutions to your concerns.

Your goal at the hearing is to get as much information as possible from each interest group. Years of work in the EPA has taught you that compromise is essential for getting things done but that too much compromise can destroy a project. You want to find a version of the regulation that addresses as many concerns as possible but will still significantly decrease the amount of plastic in the waste stream.
Further, as a new director, you want to impress your boss, the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response and prove that you were the right choice for this position.

Your Role
Your goal is to select a final regulation that will address the problems of plastic waste in an effective yet practical way. Learn as much as possible from the experts to ensure that you make the right decision. During this hearing you should

• Keep an open mind. Allow yourself to be persuaded by well-reasoned arguments and convincing evidence.
• Find out as much as possible about the issues. It’s in the best interest of the country and the environment that you are able to carefully evaluate the arguments presented.
• Facilitate discussion and cooperation within and among the groups. Your goal is to implement the best, most effective final regulation possible, not to make everyone happy. The best regulation will involve compromise between groups, so push the experts in that direction.

Your Assignment
You will become the expert on the Invention Group and report back to your fellow regulators with an evaluation of its position and arguments. Engage in the following activities as you conduct your research:

• Attend the meetings of the Invention Group to learn more about its arguments and to plan for the hearing. Remember, you are an observer, so do not participate in discussion.
• Write **two questions** you would like to ask the Invention Group during the hearing.
• Write a one-page analysis of the Invention Group’s main arguments and positions. What are its main concerns? Which of its arguments do you find convincing? Unconvincing? Why?

Sources

Invention Group Sources

• Case Study: The Benefits of Plastic Innovation
• “Interview with Bob Kenworthy,” video, vimeo.com/channels/465871

Your Individual Sources

• 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.