

Waste Group

You are a **Recycling Reformer**

Your Background and Biography

You are an advocate for better recycling laws, and you have been involved in this fight for over 25 years. During your career as an activist you have learned more about the politics of special-interest groups than you intended. In fact, if you knew then what you know now, you might never have gotten involved.

Back then you were a new college graduate with a passion for politics and in need of a job. A college career loaded with practical experiences as student body president and a congressional campaign worker helped you land a position with a not-for-profit organization focused on waste and recycling. Though you had never been especially concerned with environmental issues, this position was ideal for you. You could direct all your energy and competitive spirit to working on battles you were certain you could win, and you learned more about the political process at the same time.

Over the years, as you were learning many important lessons about politics, activism, and lobbying, you noticed something interesting: you started to care about the victories and defeats differently than you had before. At first you cared about winning for its own sake. But you realized that you started to actually care about the issues you were advocating, too. The more you learned about recycling, the more you realized how much it mattered. You saw that you were doing good work for a worthy cause, and your new passion as a believer in your cause gave you an added advantage as an activist. You sought out powerful industry leaders and the politicians who represented them.

But even as you became a true believer in recycling, you remained realistic. You realized that even if local communities passed better regulations, you needed the support of the people who brought revenue to the state and of state legislators. These legislators depended on campaign contributions from the very industries you were fighting against. You learned that your enemies could become powerful allies and that in the end winning came down to money.

For more than 10 years you continued to work to strengthen recycling laws. You rose from lowly intern to executive director of your organization, and you became a powerful and established lobbyist. Now you have been asked to help the Environmental Protection Agency develop its new regulation. You know you can be persuasive and convince this group that the best way to address the problems of plastic waste is through extended producer responsibility (EPR), a policy requiring the manufacturers and producers of plastic waste to plan and pay for its disposal. EPR will enable the recycling efforts you've been fighting for all these years.

Your Mission

Your goal at this hearing is to convince the Regulators to include the Waste 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 for your position that plastics are extremely harmful to the environment and that reducing production and consumption is the only effective solution to the problem;
- 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 Waste Group is ranked and how well the regulation reflects your goals.

Sources

Waste Group Sources

- Case Study: Trash and Treasure
- "The Sea of Plastics," video,
www.ted.com/talks/capt_charles_moore_on_the_seas_of_plastic.html

Your Individual Sources

- "Seven Common Misperceptions about Plastic," by the Berkeley Plastics Task Force, April 8, 1996
- Select **one article** from the bibliography on *The Case of Plastics* website recommended for the Waste Group. Read the article and write two paragraphs summarizing the article and how it will be useful to you in the upcoming debate.