

Lesson Plan: California in the Time of Trump

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Featured resource

[KQED's The Lowdown: Trump vs. California](#)

Opening quick write prompt:

Do you think state governments should always agree with the federal government? Why or why not? What do you think state governments should do when they (and their voters) disagree with federal policies?

A quick write allows students to write down their thoughts before discussing the opening question in order to increase participation and make the discussion more accessible to English Language Learners.



Objective

- Students will analyze the issues at the heart of the conflict between the state of California and the Trump administration and what could happen as a result of this conflict.
- Students will reflect on the issue(s) they care about most and evaluate the Trump administration-California conflict in light of that issue.

Essential Question and Lesson Context

How do states respond when they disagree with federal policies? What are possible consequences of defying of states defying the federal government? What are the possible benefits?

About 12 percent of Americans live in California, a state that voted overwhelmingly for Hillary Clinton in November. Now that President Trump has taken office, California officials are vowing to fight back against federal policies they say run counter to the will of state voters. In response, Trump has threatened to withhold federal funding from California. It is unclear if this is legally possible. Currently, about a third of the state budget (\$96 billion) comes from the federal government, including money to fund education and healthcare. States in open conflict with the federal government is nothing new. During the Obama administration, Texas sued the federal government 48 times.

Key vocabulary

Pre-teach key vocabulary before students do the reading, especially if you have English Language Learners. After going over the simple definition, consider providing a visual aid or having students draw one. More ideas for how to pre-teach vocabulary can be found [here](#).

Word	Simple definition
Defy (v.)	To resist, to refuse to obey
Hard-line (adj.)	Very strict, not compromising
Jurisdiction (n.)	The power to make judgments or laws, often within a specific area
Overreach (v.)	To do something beyond someone's designated power
Withhold (v.)	To hold something back, to refuse to provide something

Direct instruction and guided practice

- Discuss the quick-write prompt to discover what students think about states going head-to-head with the federal government.
- Explain that opposing federal laws and policies is nothing new for states. For example, the decision of states like Colorado and Washington to legalize marijuana runs counter to federal drug laws. Find many other recent examples, [here](#).
- As a class or in small groups, students read [The Lowdown post](#) introduction (before the breakout of issues).
- **Check for understanding:** What is a common way states oppose federal policies? (Answer: States can sue the federal government.) What are potential consequences California might face? (A: The federal government can withhold funding, which makes up 30% of the state budget.)

Independent practice

- **Transition to independent practice:** Individually or in small groups, students choose one or more issues they care about and read those sections of [The Lowdown post](#). While they read, they should prepare responses to the following: 1) What is California's position on this issue? 2) What is the Trump administration's position on this issue? 3) What is my personal position on this issue?

- Model this process using a topic that is unlikely to be chosen, if needed.
- Students read about their chosen issue(s) in [The Lowdown post](#) and prepare the responses to the questions listed above either in note form or as a more formal written response.

Assessment/reflection

- Students present to their group or the class about the issue they chose, explaining both the Trump administration position and California’s position. Students can also share their personal views and discuss their reasoning, using evidence from [The Lowdown post](#) and other sources. *(To learn more about discussing controversial topics in the classroom, check out [this post](#) from the New York Times Learning Network.)*
- As a class, discuss or reflect on the following question: Do you think California should defy the Trump administration on the issue you chose, or other issues? Why or why not? What is at stake? What are the possible positive and negative outcomes?

[Circle chats](#), small-group discussions and [think-pair-share](#) provide a safer space for students to practice speaking and listening, and also boost participation during whole-class discussions.

Extension/homework

Follow your issue through the first 100 days. [Using these resources and others](#), ask students to make a plan for how they can follow their issue through the first 100 days (the end of April).

[First 100 Days: Art in the Age of Trump](#): KQED Arts is accepting submission from artists of all ages for this series. Art of all types (visual, music, dance, poetry) are welcome, and ideally submissions should focus on a specific issue, rather than the appearance or personality of a politician. Find the online submission form [here](#).

Common Core standards

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.1	Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.7	Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.