CLP Current Events: April 9, 2019

**Topic: Congressional Oversight**



The practice of the United States Congress’ review of policies and programs in the federal agencies and the other branches of government. Congress usually exercises this power by convening committees and subcommittees to investigate and monitor the agencies they are charged with reviewing. Congressional oversight can include hearings before the committees, investigations, studies or reports, or even decisions about appropriations (funding).

**NEWS SOURCES** (4 total)

[**White House Whistleblower Comes Forward in Oversight Committee Investigation of Security Clearances**](https://oversight.house.gov/news/press-releases/white-house-whistleblower-comes-forward-in-oversight-committee-investigation-of)**,** Committee on Oversight and Reform (Chair, Rep. Elijah Cummings, D-MD)**,** April 1, 2019

“Cummings explained that the whistleblower “has come forward at great personal risk to warn Congress—and the nation—about the grave security risks she has been witnessing first-hand over the past two years.”  According to Cummings’ letter:  “She has informed the Committee that during the Trump Administration, she and other career officials adjudicated denials of dozens of applications for security clearances that were later overturned.”

<https://oversight.house.gov/news/press-releases/white-house-whistleblower-comes-forward-in-oversight-committee-investigation-of>

[**Where the Investigations related to President Trump Stand**](https://www.apnews.com/63524ee31b584ce1987f47745079d7fc)

Associated Press, April 8, 2019

“Congressional investigations also are swirling around the president. Democrats have launched a sweeping probe of Trump, an aggressive investigation that threatens to shadow the president through the 2020 election season.”

<https://www.apnews.com/63524ee31b584ce1987f47745079d7fc>

**Opinion:** [**Congressional Oversight is at the heart of America’s democracy**](https://www.sfchronicle.com/news/article/Congressional-oversight-is-at-the-heart-of-13740674.php)

Derek Black, University of Southern California, April 4, 2019

“Presidential power to override Congress is limited to a very small set of circumstances. As for everything else, the Constitution empowers Congress to set the nation’s course and keep it on track through oversight.”

<https://www.sfchronicle.com/news/article/Congressional-oversight-is-at-the-heart-of-13740674.php>

# Opinion: [How the White House Plays Hardball on Congressional Oversight of Security Clearances](https://www.lawfareblog.com/how-white-house-plays-hardball-congressional-oversight-security-clearances)

Margaret Taylor, Lawfare, March 27, 2019

“The oversight committee’s investigation of security clearance practices is far from the only probe the newly Democratic House of Representatives is conducting—nor is it the only one the Trump administration is resisting. But focusing on the security clearance investigation provides a window into how the administration is handling requests for information from a newly combative Congress.”

<https://www.lawfareblog.com/how-white-house-plays-hardball-congressional-oversight-security-clearances>

**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER** (7 total)

* What does oversight mean?
* Why do you think the Framers consider oversight to be important to a functioning democracy?
* How is oversight connected to the necessary and proper clause of the US Constitution?
* How is oversight connected to the rule of law?
* How is oversight connected to the separation of powers?
* How is oversight connected to limited government?
* What are the positives of oversight? What are the potential negatives?

**BACKGROUND AND More** (3 total)

[**The Critical Importance of Congressional Oversight**](https://www.realclearpolicy.com/articles/2018/08/21/the_critical_importance_of_congressional_oversight_110768.html)

Senator Chuck Grassley, August 21, 2018

<https://www.realclearpolicy.com/articles/2018/08/21/the_critical_importance_of_congressional_oversight_110768.html>

[**The House Committee on Oversight and Reform**](https://oversight.house.gov/about)

Chair, Elijah Cummings (D-MD)

<https://oversight.house.gov/about>

[**Congressional Oversight and the U.S. Government**](https://www.thoughtco.com/congressional-oversight-4177013)

Robert Longley, October 15, 2018, ThoughtCo.

<https://www.thoughtco.com/congressional-oversight-4177013>

**lesson plans** (2 total)

**Structure of Congress - Lesson Plan**

PBS, March 1, 2009

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/lessons-plans/structure-of-congress/>

[**The Art of Congressional Oversight: A User’s Guide to Doing it Right**](http://www.pogoarchives.org/m/coi/pogo-the-art-of-congressional-oversight-handbook.pdf)

Project on Government Oversight, 2015

<http://www.pogoarchives.org/m/coi/pogo-the-art-of-congressional-oversight-handbook.pdf>

**Constitutional connections** (2 total)

**Investigations & Oversight**

United States House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives

<https://history.house.gov/Institution/Origins-Development/Investigations-Oversight/>

**The Historical and Legal Basis for the Exercise of Congressional Oversight Authority**

Constitutional Accountability Center, January 2019

<https://www.theusconstitution.org/think_tank/issue-brief-the-historical-and-legal-basis-for-the-exercise-of-congressional-oversight-authority/>

**oregon** (1 total)

**Oregon Legislative Preview: Democrats I Charge with Ambitious Agenda**

Dirk VanderHart, Lauren Dake, OPB, January 18, 2019

<https://www.opb.org/news/article/oregon-legislature-2019-preview/>

**Oregon SOCIAL SCIENCE Standards**

7.25 Identify issues related to historical events to recognize power, authority, religion, and governance as it relates to systemic oppression and its impact on indigenous peoples and ethnic and religious groups, and other traditionally marginalized groups in the modern era

7.27 Critique and analyze information for point of view, historical context, distortion, propaganda and relevance including sources with conflicting information.

7.28 Draw on multiple disciplinary lenses to analyze how a specific problem can manifest itself at local, regional, and global levels over time, identifying its characteristics and causes, and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address the problem.

7.29 Assess individual and collective capacities to take informed action to address local, regional, and global problems, taking into account a range of possible levers of power, strategies and potential outcomes.

7.30 Construct arguments using claims and evidence from multiple sources and diverse media, while acknowledging the strengths and limitations of the arguments.

8.8 Analyze important political and ethical values such as freedom, democracy, equality, equity, and justice embodied in documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

8.9 Analyze the effect of historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.

8.22 Evaluate continuity and change over the course of United States history by analyzing examples of conflict, compromise, cooperation, interdependence, and social justice from multiple perspectives.

8.29 Use and interpret relevant primary and secondary sources pertaining to U.S. History from multiple perspectives.

8.30 Synthesize information and data to construct an account of historical events that includes multiple sources and varied perspectives.

8.32 Critique and analyze information for point of view, historical context, distortion, bias propaganda and relevance including sources with conflicting information in order to question the dominant narratives in history.

8.33 Analyze how a specific problem can manifest itself at local, regional, and global levels over time, identifying its characteristics and causes, and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address the problem.

8.34 Analyze and apply a range of deliberative and collaborative procedures to make decisions and take informed action.

8.35 Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples and details with relevant information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations.

HS.4 Examine institutions, functions and processes of United States government.

HS.6 Examine the institutions functions and processes of Oregon’s state, county, local, and regional governments.

HS.10 Explain the roles and responsibilities of active members of a democracy and the role of individuals, social movements, and governments in various current events.

HS.11 Examine the pluralistic realities of society recognizing issues of equity and evaluating the need for change.

HS.13 Examine and analyze provisions of the Oregon Constitution and the U.S. Constitution.

HS.55 Analyze the complexity of the interaction of multiple perspectives to investigate causes and effects of significant events in the development of world, U.S., and Oregon history.

HS.62 Identify historical and current events, issues, and problems when national and/or global interests are/have been in conflict, and provide analysis from multiple perspectives.

HS.71 Construct arguments using precise claims, integrating and evaluating information provided by multiple sources, diverse media, and formats, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary strengths and weaknesses.

HS.72 Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or nonlinear), examples, and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations given its purpose (such as validity, value and limitation, cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical).

HS.73 Identify and analyze multiple and diverse perspectives as critical consumers of information.

HS.74 Analyze an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon, critiquing and evaluating characteristics, influences, causes, and both short- and long-term effects.

HS.75 Evaluate options for individual and collective actions to address local, regional and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

HS.76 Propose, compare, and evaluate multiple responses, alternatives, or solutions to issues or problems; then reach an informed, defensible, supported conclusion.

**For Connections to lessons in *We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution* texts**

**Middle School, Level 2**

Unit 3, Lesson 15: How did the Framers resolve the conflict about the powers of the legislative branch?

Unit 4, Lesson 19: How did Congress organize the new government?

**High School, Level 3**

Unit 2, Lesson 11: What questions did the Framers consider in designing the three branches of the National Government?

Unit 3, Lesson 16: What is the Role of Political Parties in the Constitutional System?

Unit 4, Lesson 21: What is the role of Congress in American Constitutional Democracy?

Unit 4, Lesson 22: How does Congress perform its functions in the American Constitutional System?