“HOW POLITICS REALLY WORK: AN INSIDER’S VIEW”

TOPICAL ISSUES FOR STATE AND LOCAL POLITICS

This document can be found on our website:
www.rit.edu/cla/statesmanship/events.php

1. Federalism: The American political system includes three levels of government (Federal, State and Local). Do you know your Federal, state and local government representatives?
   a. Federal: U.S. Senate and House of Representatives
   b. NY State: Senate and Assembly
   c. Local: County, City, Town/Village officials

2. Redistricting (the process of drawing electoral district boundaries) and gerrymandering (a practice intended to establish a political advantage for a particular party or group): How do these processes impact our political system?

3. Ethics in Government: How to monitor and regulate conflicts of interest; what works and doesn’t work in addressing ethics in government and politics?

4. Campaign Financing Laws
   a. What laws currently govern political fundraising and campaign financing at the State and local level?
   b. How would public financing of political campaigns impact our political system?

5. The Role of Lobbying in our Political System
   a. How does lobbying impact legislative decision making?

6. Getting out the vote: How can we encourage more people to vote in presidential as well as “off-year” elections. Why are local/state elections important? Every vote “counts” so why do people not vote?

7. Should judges be appointed or elected? If appointed, what should be the criteria/process for appointing judges?

8. What are the advantages of incumbency?
9. How do bills get to the floor for a vote in the State Legislature?
   a. What is the role of the Leadership of the respective houses in the functioning of their organizations?
   b. What role do committee chairs play in this process?
   c. What role do individual members of the legislature/congress have in introducing and passing legislation?

10. What is the role of the Governor vis-à-vis the State Legislature in policy making, and how do the two branches interact? How is it similar or different at the local level (County/City/Town/Village)?