PARLIAMENTARY HEARING EXERCISE

PARTICIPANT INSTRUCTIONS  (to be shared with all participants)

Background: In the fictional country of Terabithia, a new law is being considered that would exempt contraceptives from foreign import duties and taxes. Currently, all contraceptives imported into the country are subject to a 15 percent import tax, which significantly reduces the buying power of the national budget for family planning, as well as the value of donor contributions. At an upcoming hearing, the health committee of Parliament will debate this legislation and vote in favor or opposition to moving it to the floor for consideration by the full Parliament.

Family planning advocates have been pushing for five years to exempt contraceptives from import taxes, in order to fulfill the government’s mandate to maintain a full stock of these supplies and at free or reduced costs to citizens who are unable to afford them in the private sector. Since the health committee announced that they would vote on whether to advance this proposal, media reports have sensationalized the issue. Many stakeholders have begun to vocalize opposition to the proposed tax exemption.

Instructions: You will be randomly assigned an individual role to play during the parliamentary hearing. You will be an advocate participating in the hearing, testifying in support or opposition to the proposed policy, or a parliamentarian member of the Health Committee. One parliamentarian will serve as the Chair of the Health Committee and will facilitate the hearing. You will work with others who have been assigned the same role to develop a strategy, and then the hearing will begin.

The hearing will have three phases, followed by a group discussion:

1) Statements by advocates in favor of and opposed to the proposed legislation (5 minutes each)
2) Debate by parliamentarians (20-25 minutes)
3) Vote (5 minutes)
Assignments (to be distributed randomly and individually by facilitator)

You are a: PRAGMATIC ADVOCATE—PRO FAMILY PLANNING
Your group is: ORANGE

Your advocacy goal is to support passage of the legislation, but you are willing to make compromises if they advance this goal. You prefer to work one-on-one or in small groups and to cultivate collaborative relationships with policymakers. You work closely with program experts, researchers, advocates, and international NGO and donor partners. You strongly believe in the power of evidence to sway members of the committee to your side.

You and other members of your group will have time to prepare a strategy for the hearing, and discuss the key points you wish to make in your opening statement. You know from your audience research that some members of the committee are inclined to support the proposed legislation, and some are inclined to oppose. You may want to appeal to certain members in your group’s statements, if you wish. Keep your group’s identity and strategy secret from other participants during this planning period.

Your group must select one representative to make a five-minute statement at the beginning of the parliamentary hearing. However, during the parliamentarian debate, members may choose to ask questions of anyone in your group.

Representatives that may be included in this group include:

1) Private sector family planning service providers. Have been advocating for the removal of import taxes on contraceptives for several years. These are registered service delivery organizations that are well funded by international donors.

2) OB/GYN association. The national association representing obstetricians and gynecologists supports the proposed legislation and is providing medical evidence and the benefits of, and high demand for, family planning. They are using statistics and global guidance as the basis for their advocacy.

3) International pharmaceutical companies. The foreign companies that manufacture contraceptives are in favor of the new legislation. Because their products are subject to import taxes, they volume of orders for Terabithia is smaller than it would otherwise be.

4) Organizations funded by international donors. Although international donors will not intervene directly in national legislative processes, local organizations that they fund may feel encouraged to advocate in favor of the proposed legislation.
You are a: RADICAL ACTIVIST—PRO FAMILY PLANNING
Your group is: PURPLE

Your advocacy goal is to **support passage of the legislation**, and you are not willing to accept any compromises to achieve that goal. You operate on a minimal budget and are passionate and committed to the cause. You inherently distrust the government and view anyone who is less passionate than you as elitist and corrupt. You are willing to be disruptive and/or antagonistic in the achievement of your goals, but you should not entirely derail the exercise.

You have requested to attend the parliamentary hearing, but your group was not invited to speak. However, during the parliamentarian debate, members may choose to ask questions of anyone in your group.

You and other members of your group will have time to prepare a strategy for the hearing, and how to engage in it. Keep your group’s identity and strategy secret from other participants during this planning period.

Representatives that may be included in this group include:

1) **Human rights advocacy organizations.** These organizations endeavor through difficult political circumstances to protect and promote the human rights of the poorest and marginalized in society, including universal access to health care services. Such groups not only demand action by their parliamentarians, but have used tactics such as spontaneous protest, sit-ins, etc. While considered radical, the increased visibility of the issue they achieve has forced the hand of government representatives to take action. However, when their tactics prove too potentially embarrassing, the government is likely to take punitive measures to silence them.
You are an: ANTI-FAMILY PLANNING ADVOCATE
Your group is: YELLOW

Your advocacy goal is to **prevent passage of the legislation**. You are part of a coalition of people opposed to the legislation for diverse reasons, including:

- Organizations that benefit from the revenue collected in import taxes.
- Domestic contraceptive manufacturers whose products are more competitive because they are not subject to import taxes.
- Religious organizations opposed to family planning.

You and other members of your group will have time to prepare a strategy for the hearing, and discuss the key points you wish to make in your opening statement. You know from your audience research that some members of the committee are inclined to support the proposed legislation, and some are inclined to oppose. You may want to appeal to certain members in your group’s statements, if you wish. Keep your group’s identity and strategy secret from other participants during this planning period.

**Your group must select one representative to make a five-minute statement at the beginning of the parliamentary hearing.** However, during the Parliamentarian debate, members may choose to ask questions of anyone in your group.
You are a: LEANING-SUPPORTIVE PARLIAMENTARIAN

You are not deeply knowledgeable about the issue, but are willing to support the new legislation. Your vote will depend on the quality of the advocacy you receive. If you are the target of well-planned and executed advocacy, you may find yourself wholly persuaded and become a champion. However, if you are the target of weak advocacy, you may become disengaged and leave the room, or even be swayed to the other side.

To prepare for the hearing, consider what information would help you to make an informed decision. You might also want to prepare questions to ask of the groups who will testify in favor or opposition of the legislation.

Please use a nametag to label yourself as “leaning-supportive.”

During the debate portion of the hearing, you may make an individual statement or ask a question of any advocate of your choice.
You are a: LEANING-OPPOSED PARLIAMENTARIAN

Your inclination is to be opposed to the new legislation. Your reasons may be economic (the proposed budget line could be better spent elsewhere), or cultural. Your vote will depend on the quality of the advocacy you receive. If you are the target of well-planned and executed advocacy, you may become more entrenched in your opposition. However, if you are the target of weak advocacy, you may become disengaged and leave the room, or even be swayed to the other side.

To prepare for the hearing, consider what information would help you to make an informed decision. You might also want to prepare questions to ask of the groups who will testify in favor or opposition of the legislation.

Please use a nametag to label yourself as “leaning-opposed.”

During the debate portion of the hearing, you may make an individual statement or ask a question of any advocate of your choice.
You are: CHAIR OF THE HEALTH COMMITTEE

Your role is to convene and moderate the committee hearing and to maintain order. Once the facilitator opens the hearing, you will:

1) Open the hearing by calling everyone to order, stating the purpose of the hearing, and introducing the members of the committee (or asking the members to each introduce him or herself).
2) Call for one statement, of a maximum of five minutes each, from advocates in favor of (Orange group) and opposed to (Yellow group) the legislation. There is a third group who has come to the hearing to observe, but was not invited to speak.
3) Call upon your parliamentary colleagues to debate the proposed legislation.
4) As Chair, it is your prerogative to make a statement yourself at any time.
5) **Maintain order** during any unexpected disruptions or outbursts.
6) **Strictly keep time.**
7) At the appointed time, call for a vote on the legislation. You also participate in the vote.