

## **“Law In Everyday Life:” A Law-Related Education Course and Resource**

*Name of organization:*

**Grodna Public Association of Young Intellectuals “VIT”**

### **Teacher’s Guide**

#### **How One Can Influence a Change of a Law**

The objective of the lesson: to define an effective strategy to influence a change/adoption of a law by analyzing possible ways of achieving it.

By the end of the lesson the pupils will gain the following:

#### **Knowledge:**

- name pros and cons of a corresponding law;
- compare the ways of influencing the change of laws;
- define persons via whom one can influence a change/adoption of laws;
- evaluate the results of different ways of influencing a change/adoption of laws and the possible consequences of these steps; and
- write down the strategies of influencing a change of a law and evaluate their efficiency.

#### **Skills:**

- write a petition on change of a law;
- work out a strategy of influencing the change of laws; and
- choose the best strategies proposed for influencing the change of laws.

#### **Values:**

- understand the importance and necessity of modification of imperfect laws and the citizens’ participation in this process;
- understand that it is possible to influence the change/adoption of laws but for this purpose a person should have an active civil position; and
- realize that the future of the country depends on each citizen and it can be achieved by means of an active civil position and hard work

#### **Main definitions:**

Alternative service is an opportunity to perform the military service by executing socially important work, without holding weapons.

Petition is a kind of appeal in the form of a sheet with signatures in support of a proposition sent to all institutions that can influence solving a particular problem.

**Interactive methods:** work in groups, press-conference, discussion

#### **Materials:**

1. Flip chart paper/blackboard with the topic of the lesson, objective and expected results;
2. blackboard/Flip chart paper for writing strategies; and
3. chalk/markers.

**Duration:** 45 min.

**Plan of the lesson:**

1. Acquaintance with the topic, objective, and expected results of the lesson, introductory discussion (3 minutes)
2. Work on arguments on the question of the alternative service (5 minutes)
3. Division into groups and working out the strategy of influence (12 minutes)
4. Press-conference (20 minutes)
5. Results (4 minutes)
6. Homework assignment (1 minutes)

**Procedure**

1. At the beginning of the lesson the teacher announces the topic of the lesson and expected results. After that it is necessary to organize a short quiz. The main purpose of the questions is to review the methods of influencing a change of law. It is important that the pupils should understand that: 1) each citizen decides on what laws we will have and what decisions are made by authorities; 2) what steps are possible when it is necessary to change a law; 3) ways of influence the change of a law stated in the textbook. The possible questions:
  - Who does the change of a law depend on? (*those who adopt them, officials, citizens, society*)
  - In what way Belarusian citizens can influence a change of a law? (*via deputies, the impact on authorities' decisions, organization of civil actions, participation in public associations or political parties*). The teacher can ask pupils how they understand each of this way of influence.
2. Next the teacher reminds the pupils that at home they were to work out the strategy to influence the change of a law by the example of the change of the Law on Military Service of 5.11.1992 in the part of the alternative service in Belarus. The pupils were to define pros and cons of the alternative service. The blackboard is divided into two parts: "pros" and "cons." The "round-robin" method should be used for the oral test (the description of this method is given in chapter "**Methods of Active Teaching**"). The pupils' answers are written down in the appropriate part of the blackboard. It is not necessary to write down the answers of all pupils because of the lack of time, so instead write down four or five answers. There can be more pros or more cons on the blackboard. It should not be a problem for the lesson if there aren't the same number of each. In this situation the teacher should not convince the pupils that the alternative service is good or bad because the pupils should have their own point of view. If the problems with the arguments arise, give your variants: "*pros*" – *freedom of choice in a democratic country (written down in the Constitution!); a big army requires great expenses; the army should be professional; during the alternative service young men are taught to be kind people helping others;* "*cons*" – *it's early to have a professional army in Belarus because of the lack of legislative and military system; the professional army requires great expenses; everyone would like to perform the alternative service, and who will serve in the Army then, etc.*
3. Work in groups. Firstly, give the task (see description below) and then divide the class into groups, four or five pupils in each. Each group receives the task.  
Task for the groups: using "pros" and "cons" of introducing the alternative service in Belarus (worked out at home by the pupils), two groups (if the teacher divides the class into four groups) should develop their own strategy (succession of steps) of influencing

the adoption of alterations into the Law on the Military Service and introduction of the alternative service. Two other groups shall work out the strategy against such measures.

*So, the first half of the pupils will work on developing a strategy of “pros” and the other half of “cons” of the introducing the alternative service. Pupils who are personally against the alternative service may happen to be in the group for the alternative service. If you notice these pupils’ reluctance to work on this task, tell them that they must learn to develop arguments for and against certain facts and they should be able to stand for their point of view in any case. Moreover, at home all pupils were to write “pros” and “cons” arguments and an example of a petition. Tell the pupils immediately that they have little time but as a large part of the task was done at home, they will perform the task quickly.*

Each group should have the following results in 12 minutes:

- a) Choose the most powerful arguments in favor of your position concerning the influencing the change of the Law on Military Service in the part of introduction or non-introduction of the alternative service, and define who you will apply to and what you are going to write about;
- b) Choose one best petition from those written at home by the members of the groups (to the appropriate authority and the establishments which the group will consider important), and prepare presentations of the petition (the pupil may write it again changing some points); and
- c) Think over and write down on a sheet of paper (blackboard, flip chart paper) all steps for influencing the introduction (or non-introduction) of the alternative service, taking into consideration what will be most effective in the existing circumstances.

Thus, each group will work out its own step-by-step strategy for or against the change of the law. Don’t forget to tell each group to choose one pupil who will present his or her group’s strategy.

4. Press-conference. Put two tables near the blackboard, ask four representatives from each group to sit down at them facing the class (on average there will be four groups, one representative from each). Each presentation shall last above three minutes. It’s short but they should follow the time. Tell the pupils that all of them, except for those at the table, will not be the part of the groups now but they will just be attending the press-conference where they will listen to four proposals — step-by-step strategies (two “pros” and two “cons” of the introduction of the alternative service in Belarus). The representatives’ task is to present their groups’ strategy within three minutes and — which is the most important! — to determining whether this strategy is viable/efficient and what results can be reached out of it. Thus, each of the four representatives should present the **plan** of his or her actions, briefly proving it (read the petition or other appeal as well).

The task of all other pupils present is to listen attentively and to determine what strategy is the best and most efficient and why. After each presentation, pupils who are present at the press-conference can ask two or three questions to specify the position of each representative. Attention! Remind the participants of the press-conference that they are discussing the **strategy** of the change of the law but not “pros” and “cons” of the alternative service. This question can be discussed at another lesson with other objectives. The objective of this lesson is the discussion of effective ways of influencing the change of a law.

*After the press-conference thank the participants and take them out of their roles (e.g., by applauding).*

5. To summarize, you can ask the following questions:

- What new things have you learned today?
- Why is it necessary to change laws? *(Often they are obsolete and unlawful.)*
- What ways of influence (or what strategies proposed) do you consider the most effective and why? What are their advantages and disadvantages? *(It's necessary to influence the change of laws using all the methods at once because the result of work on changing the law (or any other decision important for us) depends on a concrete case, level of taking the decision and our active civil position.);*
- What is the most reliable result of using the above strategies? What should be done if the strategy fails? *(Do not lose heart, work out another strategy.);*
- Do Belarusian citizens use their constitutional right to influence the change/ adoption of a law? Why? *Unfortunately, this rarely happens because they do not know what to do and how to do it.);*
- Do the pupils know the examples when ordinary citizens, just like we are, have influenced the change of a law or tried to do so *(whether successfully or not)? Ask to give examples or give them yourself — in 2001 youth organizations carried out hearing of the draft of the Law on Education and a number of alterations have been made in the Law.)*

Because of the lack of the time, the teacher should choose the most important questions to summarize that will allow for increasing the civil position of the pupils.

At the end of the lesson you can make a conclusion: to change or influence something one should be an active citizen of his or her country and work a lot for these changes because if nothing ventured, nothing is gained.

6. Homework assignment: read the chapter “Apply to a Lawyer” and do the written tasks after the chapter.