

#ISupportFeds

PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

May 4 - 10, 2025

TEACHERS GUIDE

WELCOME!

Our nation's 2 million career civil servants play a vital role in our everyday lives.

Yet today, they face unprecedented threats. The current administration has arbitrarily fired scores of federal employees, shuttered entire agencies and offices, and disrupted essential public services.

To push back on these harmful efforts, the nonpartisan, nonprofit Partnership for Public Service recently launched an [#ISupportFeds campaign](#) that invites members of the public and federal employees to submit stories about civil servants who make a difference.

We invite you to join us as a supporter of Public Service Recognition Week, kicking off on May 4, by sharing a story that helps us demonstrate why public servants matter and what is at stake if their work is disrupted.

This toolkit includes classroom activities and other resources you can use to take part in Public Service Recognition Week and champion those who serve our nation in vital and underappreciated ways.

WHAT IS PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK?

Celebrated during the first full week of May, Public Service Recognition Week, or PSRW, honors those who serve our nation as federal, state, county and local government employees. Throughout the nation and the world, PSRW is an opportunity to educate others about the vast and essential work public servants do, why they chose public service careers, and how they make our lives better every day.

Every year, from the steps of the Capitol to the smallest towns, public servants participate in ceremonies, information fairs, parades and other events—both online and in person—to honor government employees.

Now more than ever, these events are essential to communicating the value of government service and government employees to the public. We hope you will join us in doing so this May during Public Service Recognition Week.

GET INVOLVED

For more information or to share your ideas, call us at (202) 775-9111 or email us at psrw@ourpublicservice.org. Complete program details are available at psrw.org.

PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU

The Partnership for Public Service developed this Teacher's Guide to provide resources about public servants and the important work they do on behalf of people in the U.S. and around the world every day.

We hope this guide helps you:

- Teach the value of a quality government workforce and the important role it serves in providing essential services to our country
- Provoke student conversation and knowledge about the role and effects of public service
- Educate students about the scope and nature of government
- Raise awareness of public service careers

We hope this information will facilitate a deeper dialogue about, and understanding of, government. This congressionally declared week offers a unique opportunity to provide an interactive learning experience that combines school activities and field trips with local and national celebrations.

Thank you for your interest and excitement about engaging high school students in public service! If you have any ideas or feedback about our Teacher's Guide, please email us at: events@ourpublicservice.org.

PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

DID YOU KNOW?

Civil servants have been responsible for so many of our country's greatest achievements, from landing on the moon to developing the internet and lifesaving vaccines. Public servants:

KEEP OUR NATION SAFE AND SECURE:

- At the Justice Department, [Joshua Mellor, Nicholas Cheviron and Stephanie Stevens](#), led a worldwide investigation that resulted in the arrest of more than a thousand drug traffickers and members of organized crime syndicates.
- [Jamie Rhome](#), a storm surge specialist at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, created a new forecasting model and warning system that more accurately predicts the deadly storm surge caused by hurricanes and saves lives by alerting residents sooner of the approaching danger.
- At the Labor Department, [Shannon Rebolledo, Justin Uphold and Nancy Alcantara](#) discovered more than 100 children ages 13 to 17 illegally working on dangerous machinery in 13 meat slaughterhouses across eight states.

IMPROVE OUR HEALTH CARE

- [Andrea Fletcher](#) led teams at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to create online services that help patients dispute unexpected medical bills and enable hospitals to make their prices transparent to the public.
- [Janet Woodcock](#) transformed the Food and Drug Administration's drug review process to expand access to generic medicines and promising medications to treat severe, life-threatening diseases.
- [Sarah O'Donnell, Allison Hutchings, Megan Meacham](#) created a major initiative at the Department of Health and Human Services that provides grants for prevention, treatment and recovery services to help millions of people suffering from opioid use in rural communities across the country.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

- At the Department of Housing and Urban Development, [Michelle Daniels, Charles Eldridge and Ryan Jones](#) created an innovative program that offers housing assistance and social services to young people aging out of foster care to prevent them from becoming homeless and to provide an opportunity for self-sufficiency.
- [Michael Camal](#) expanded a government campaign to help aviation personnel identify potential victims of human trafficking and report their suspicions to law enforcement.

PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ALSO:

- | | |
|--|--|
| » Educate our children | » Fight fires |
| » Help our nation's veterans and care for our wounded soldiers | » Develop new technologies for renewable energy |
| » Investigate crime and prosecute criminals | » Manage our public parks |
| » Keep our food safe | » Protect our environment |
| » Negotiate international agreements | » Design and build our roads and bridges |
| | » Distribute financial aid to schools and students |

For more examples of public servants who contribute to our country's well-being, visit servicetoamericamedals.org.

PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

GENERAL DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

LOCAL ISSUES

- What are the biggest problems in our school system today?
- What are the biggest problems in our community today?
- Who is affected by each of these problems?
- What are the causes of the problems?
- Who is trying to deal with the problems?
- Is the government involved? If so, how?
- What solutions can you offer?
- How can you help?
- What are some ways people are helping each other in our community?

Idea: Ask your students to identify the elected official(s) that deal with issues pertaining to local, state and national government.

THE PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT

- What feature of our system do you most value? Why?
- What would you include in a charter for governing your class?
- What are the biggest threats to our system?
- What can you do to protect it?

FUNCTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- How does the student council operate?
- How is the student council similar to the city council?
- How is it different?
- Where would a city or county manager fit in?

HOW WE CHOOSE OUR LEADERS

Present the following situation:

- Two students are running for the student council. Both will want you to vote for them. One has a great personality and is a hard worker. The other has some terrific ideas for the council, which she has shared with you, but she is very shy. How will you decide who to vote for?
- Use answers to facilitate a discussion about the qualities we look for in elected officials.

Adopted from "Investing in Our Future: A Handbook for Teaching Local Government"

PUBLIC SERVICE RECOGNITION WEEK

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

Public service touches every aspect of our lives and civil servants deserve to be recognized and honored for the important work they do every day. From social studies, biology or anything in between, opportunities abound for you to integrate public service into your lesson plans.

Here are some ideas for engaging your students during Public Service Recognition Week.

THINK ABOUT THE ISSUES

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of how federal agencies affect students' lives and their communities
- Stimulate research and reflection on the issue areas and accomplishments of federal agencies
- Inspire students to think of ways they can make a difference by becoming a public servant

Activity:

Have students choose a particular issue area or areas, such as space exploration, the environment or the safety of our nation, and then connect those issues to the government agencies that work on them. Discuss how those agencies help—or could help—the American public. (View a list of Cabinet-level agencies and their descriptions on the following pages.)

Discussion Questions:

1. What issues do you care about? (List them on the board or screen)
2. Why is this issue important to us?
3. What will happen if the government ignores your issue?
4. What do you think government could do better regarding this issue?
5. What other organizations or people (e.g., private sector, community groups, etc.) should the government engage to achieve its goals?
6. How can you make a difference on this issue? (This question could lead to the letter-writing activity below.)

WRITE A LETTER TO A PUBLIC SERVANT

Our nation's civil servants take a constitutional oath to serve the public good. They move our nation forward, ensuring our food and water are clean, helping veterans and seniors access their benefits, providing disaster relief, protecting our borders, keeping us safe when we travel, delivering weather forecasts, and more. Encourage your students to think about issues that might affect their family and recognize how public officials can or have worked on those issues.

Activity:

- Ask students to write letters to a relevant public official, detailing why they care about an issue and why it is important to them. Visit [congress.org](https://www.congress.org) to search for your local congressional member. You could also write to your mayor or governor.

Objectives:

- Connect issues that affect students to the work of public servants
- Encourage civic participation by reaching out to a public official
- Recognize civil servants for their accomplishments

Discussion Questions:

- Why do you care about this issue?
- Why would the public official care about your issue?
- What will your next steps be?

THE PUBLIC SERVICE CALL TO ACTION

Objectives:

- To demonstrate constructive steps that students can take to influence public policy
- To encourage students to take active roles in their communities through civic education and participation

Activity:

Discuss how students might influence or affect a public policy that they are interested in. Have students break into small groups to pick an issue and come up with a plan for how to make their voices heard on the issue.

1. If students want to influence the development of homeless policy or the availability of student loans for college, what steps might they take? Have the class list possible approaches. Would they gripe to their friends? Educate themselves on government or political issues? Write a letter to Congress? Volunteer for a political campaign?
2. Have your students break out into small groups and pick an issue to focus on, such as:
 - » Cancer research
 - » Housing mortgage rates
 - » Education
 - » Public transportation
 - » Student loans
3. Possible approaches include:
 - Writing to public officials
 - Attending public forums or town meetings
 - Organizing petitions
 - Learning about issues
 - Campaigning for candidates who support particular issues
 - Drafting letters to the editor
 - Requesting information from government agencies
 - Joining associations that are issues oriented

HOMETOWN HEROES

Inviting a federal, state, county or local government employee to speak to young people can be a powerful way of promoting the importance of public service. Consider inviting public servants to your classroom to present on their work. Examples of public servants (federal, state, and local government employees) include:

- Firefighters
- Police and law enforcement officials
- Elected officials
- Social workers
- Members of the military
- Employees of local branches of federal agencies (See [usa.gov](https://www.usa.gov) for a list.)

Still looking for ideas? Check out the blue pages in your phone book for nearby workplaces that may have public servants who would be interested in visiting your site. Or use a web search engine to locate federal agencies in your area.

If you plan to bring a public servant to speak at your school or organization in conjunction with Public Service Recognition Week, let us know [here](#).

PROFILES OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Looking for public service stories and profiles to post in your classroom or highlight in a program? Check out our Government Success Database. Students can learn about interesting careers, how people use their academic background to solve our nation's biggest challenges and why public service matters.

Explore our [Government Success Database](#)

SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECTS

Service-learning is a method of teaching, learning and reflecting that combines academic classroom curriculum with meaningful service in the community to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, encourage lifelong civic engagement and strengthen communities.

Service-learning can also connect young people with local, state and regional public servants and work in conjunction with [Hometown Heroes](#). If you are looking for ways for your students to participate in Public Service Recognition Week activities, consider one or more of the following:

- Have students present their service-learning project and/or research to a local elected official.
- Invite the mayor to participate in a service-learning project your class plans, such as school beautification or a Habitat for Humanity project (see below for more ideas).
- Ask a firefighter or police officer to work with students to develop a school safety plan.
- Invite a local Environmental Protection Agency employee to speak to your class about environmental policy that affects the community before or after the class engages in a local clean-up project.

The Partnership for Public Service is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that believes good government starts with good people. We help government serve the needs of all Americans by strengthening the civil service and the systems that support it. With our focus on innovation in public service, our leadership trainings and seminars are uniquely designed for federal employees.



600 14th St. NW
Washington, DC 20005

(202) 775-9111
ourpublicservice.org

