

## You Are the Governor, p. 29

### 13.2 Activity

Congratulations! You have been elected governor of North Carolina. You have a lot of responsibility as our state's new CEO and you must ensure you make the best decisions you can possibly make. Below are some decisions you are responsible for making in your first month on the job. Read each scenario and respond. Remember that North Carolinians are keeping a constant eye on you & any unpopular decision you make may result in your not being elected for a 2nd term. Good luck!

#### To Pardon or Not to Pardon?

Steven Snipes, a father of 7 children, was arrested Feb. 13, 2008 in Sanford, NC for allegedly holding up a convenience store. When police arrived at the scene, the store clerks explained that the robber had been wearing a mask, but that they recognized the robber's voice as that of Steven Snipes. Minutes after the robbery, the police arrived at Steven's house, arrested him, and brought him back to the crime scene. The clerks said, "Yeah, that's him; he's done changed clothes." There was no physical evidence linking Steven to the robbery and he has an alibi. However, a jury of 12 NC citizens came back with a guilty verdict after his trial. Steven was sentenced to prison, where he has been for five years now. The entire time Steven has been in prison, he has been claiming he is innocent. Most people in prison naturally say they did not commit the crime they are convicted of – who wants to stay in prison after all? However, as governor of NC, it is your decision whether to pardon Steven Snipes or not. Pardoning him means that he will be released from prison and can be eligible for money for "wrongful incrimination."

The decision is yours to make. Based on the information above, will you pardon Steve Snipes? Why or why not?

#### NC Tobacco Tax Increase - Pass or Veto?

NC is considering whether or not to institute an increase in the tobacco tax by \$1/pack. NC happens to be the state with the smallest tax rate on tobacco. As the governor, you have heard a lot of opinions on this issue, and you know many North Carolinians feel very strongly about this issue, some for and some against a "sin" tax increase. Recently, when 2 General Assembly legislators who strongly opposed the tax hike had excused absences and were not present, a special meeting was called to vote on the measure. Without these 2 opposing votes, the final vote was a tie, 24-24. When there is a tie, your Lieutenant Governor votes to break it...and she did. Sally Sanders cast the tiebreaking "yes" vote, and today on your desk is a bill to increase the tax on tobacco by \$1 per pack in NC.

**You, as governor, must decide if you want to sign it into law or veto it.** The decision regarding whether NC will the tax on tobacco or not is yours. Make a decision and explain how you decided what to do.

#### Declaring a State of Emergency – Now or Wait and See?

Hurricane Jerry is barreling down towards North Carolina's coast. Nearly all forecast models have it making landfall somewhere between Wilmington and Duck. Landfall is still approximately 72 hours away. If you declare a state of emergency now, that would give all local agencies plenty time to do evacuations, but all alcohol sales would be banned and a curfew would be imposed. If you wait until landfall is 48 hours away, you are less restrictive on the millions of vacationers in the region, but local authorities may not have time to completely evacuate the area.

**You, as governor, must decide if you want to declare the state of emergency now or wait and see.** The decision regarding whether or not to impose this is yours. Make a decision and explain how you decided what to do.

#### Life or Death -To stay an execution or let it proceed?

Billy Brainer was convicted on first degree murder in the death of his pregnant girlfriend and her sister. A jury found that he shot and killed them both after an argument in which both sides has a gun. His side of the story was that his girlfriend pulled a gun on him, so he fired back, killing her. He then claimed that her sister picked up the gun and was going to shoot him, so he shot her, too. A jury did not buy his lawyer's account of the situation, but Brainer never took the stand in his own defense, pleading the 5<sup>th</sup>. Now his execution has been scheduled and his attorney is asking for you to commute his sentence to life without parole because the nature of the crime does not meet the statute for 1<sup>st</sup> degree murder.

**You, as governor, must decide if Billy Brainer lives or dies.** The decision regarding whether or not to go forth with the execution is yours. Make a decision and explain how you decided what to do.

Which of these decisions was easiest to make? Why? Which was the most difficult to make? Why?