

Lesson One

Red State. Blue State.

Objectives

Students will be able to explain:

- 1) What red states and blue states are.
- 2) The outcome of the 2000 and 2004 Presidential elections.
- 3) How close the elections were.
- 4) Major current political divisions in America.

Materials

- 1) Red and blue crayons.
- 2) A blank map of the United States.
- 3) **1.1:** The article “Blue States Buzz over Secession” by Joseph Curl. *The Washington Times*.

Lesson Outline

- Explain to students what red states and blue states are.
- Display an overhead depicting red states and blue states.
- Hand out blank maps of the United States and blue and red crayons. Have students color in blue states and red states.
- Explain the outcome of the 2000 and 2004 Presidential elections. Emphasize how close these elections were, and that the results demonstrate how politically divided the people of the United States are.
- Students will read the article “Blue States Buzz over Secession” and answer the following questions. 1) What are some of the reasons given for why some in the blue states would want to secede from the Union? 2) In what ways do people from different regions and political parties describe each other?

1.1

Excerpt from “Blue States Buzz over Secession,” by Joseph Curl *The Washington Times*, 9 November 2004

Secession, which didn't work very well when it was tried once before, is suddenly red hot in the blue states. In certain precincts, anyway. One popular map circulating on the Internet shows 19 blue states won by Sen. John Kerry—Washington, Oregon, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Maryland and the Northeastern states—conjoined with Canada to form the “United States of Canada.” The 31 red states carried by Mr. Bush are depicted as a separate nation dubbed “Jesusland.”

The idea isn't just a joke; one top Democrat says, “The segment of the country that pays for the federal government is now being governed by the people who don't pay for the federal government.”

“Some would say, ‘Oh poor Alabama. It's cut off from the wealth infusion that it gets from New York and California,’” said Lawrence O'Donnell, a veteran Democratic insider and now senior political analyst at MSNBC. “But the more this political condition goes on at the presidential level of the red and blue states, the more you're testing the inclination of the blue states to say, ‘So what?’”

Mr. O'Donnell raised the subject of secession on “The McLaughlin Group” during the weekend. “Ninety percent of the red states are welfare-client states of the federal government,” said Mr. O'Donnell, who was an aide to Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, New York Democrat.

In a telephone interview, Mr. O'Donnell said the red states that went to Mr. Bush “collect more from the federal government than they send in. New York and California, Connecticut—the states that are blue are all the states that are paying for the bulk of everything this government does, from... Social Security to everything else, and the people in those states don't like what this government is doing.”

The Internet has exploded with talk of a blue-state confederacy, including one screed circulating by e-mail that features a map of a new country called “American Coastopia” and proposes lopping off the Northeast, the West Coast and the upper Midwest to form a new country, away from the “rednecks in Oklahoma” and the “homophobic knuckle-draggers in Wyoming.”

“We were all going to move to various other countries, but then we thought—why should WE move?” the anonymous message asks. “We hold our noses as we fly over you. We are sickened by the way you treat people that are different from you. The rest of the world despises America, and we don't want to be lumped in with you anymore.” The secession movement has already spawned commercial opportunism. One Web site is selling T-shirts that read “I seceded.”

No one at the White House would comment on calls for secession, but one top Republican official with ties to the Bush administration said the recent talk is not surprising, coming off an election in which the president received more than 59 million votes—the most in history.

“If we were that far out of the mainstream, maybe we’d be pushing the creation of our own country,” the official said. “Then we might have a chance of ever winning an election again.”

But Andy Nowicki, a libertarian blogger, said the blue states will never secede because “liberals don’t want to leave their enemies alone. Instead, as their track record shows, they want to take over the government in order to force their enemies to endure perpetual sensitivity training for being such racist, sexist, homophobic, ‘closed-minded’ boors, i.e., for disagreeing with them.”

The emergence of a solidly Republican South prompted longtime Democratic activist Bob Beckel to advocate Southern independence the morning after Election Day. “I think now that slavery is taken care of, I’m for letting the South form its own nation. Really, I think they ought to have their own confederacy,” Mr. Beckel said on the “Fox and Friends” program.

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