MOVIE "NEIGHBORHHOD GOVERNMENT IN CHICAGO'S 44TH WARD"

Alderman Dick Simpson of Chicago's 44th Ward took an active approach to government and governance in the community that he represented. Rejecting the stereotypical "machine" type governance, in which aldermen took orders from the top of the hierarchy in return support at election time, Alderman Simpson attempted to truly represent his constituents. The democratic approach in the 44th Ward encouraged residents to attend meetings and forums in which community and city issues were openly discussed. Alderman Simpson facilitated dialogues with local government officials and residents, and 44th Ward committees actively worked for legislation and changes that would benefit both their ward and Chicago in general. To increase feelings of community and to further encourage resident inclusiveness, an annual 44th Ward fair included activities and demonstrations from community member representing the spectrum of ages, backgrounds, and cultures of its residents.

OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize the fundamental difference between local government and local governance.

2. Identify the issues that confront residents of the 44th Ward in this film.

3. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of actively courting the involvement of as many local residents as possible in local governance.

4. Evaluate Alderman Simpson's efforts to represent his constituents and to fully involve residents in the democratic process.

5. Explain how community organization bolsters the chances for private citizens to affect legislative changes and general policy in a neighborhood.

6. Describe the different committees and their respective roles in the 44th Ward.

7. Compare and contrast the pros and cons of two styles of aldermanic representation:

    a. A "top-down" approach in which the alderman makes decisions and then sells them to the community.

    b. A 'bottom-up" approach where the alderman consults constituents and speaks and votes according to what his constituents prefer.

8. Draw parallels between the concerns of residents in 1977 and today.

9. Identify differences between the concerns of residents of 1977 and today.

10. Describe the origins and structure of the 44th Ward Assembly.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the potential benefits of having an annual fair for a city ward that demonstrates not only the diversity of the community, but also the backgrounds of each different culture and group?

2. How does community organization and active local government involvement allow for the existence of the annual fair?

3. What is the importance of keeping and attracting jobs to a community, and how does community organization enhance those goals?

4. What factors in a community would encourage resident involvement?

5. What factors in a community would discourage resident involvement?

6. How might community organization affect a neighborhood on issues that extend beyond their borders?

7. How could active community participation lessen the influences of corruption in local government?

8. In the 44th Ward, a two-thirds vote by residents would obligate Alderman Simpson to work for the ward's favored direction. How might an alderman use this "two-thirds" rule to his or her advantage?

9. What improvements could be made to augment this style of governance?

10. Even though this film was made in 1977, in what ways is it still relevant today?