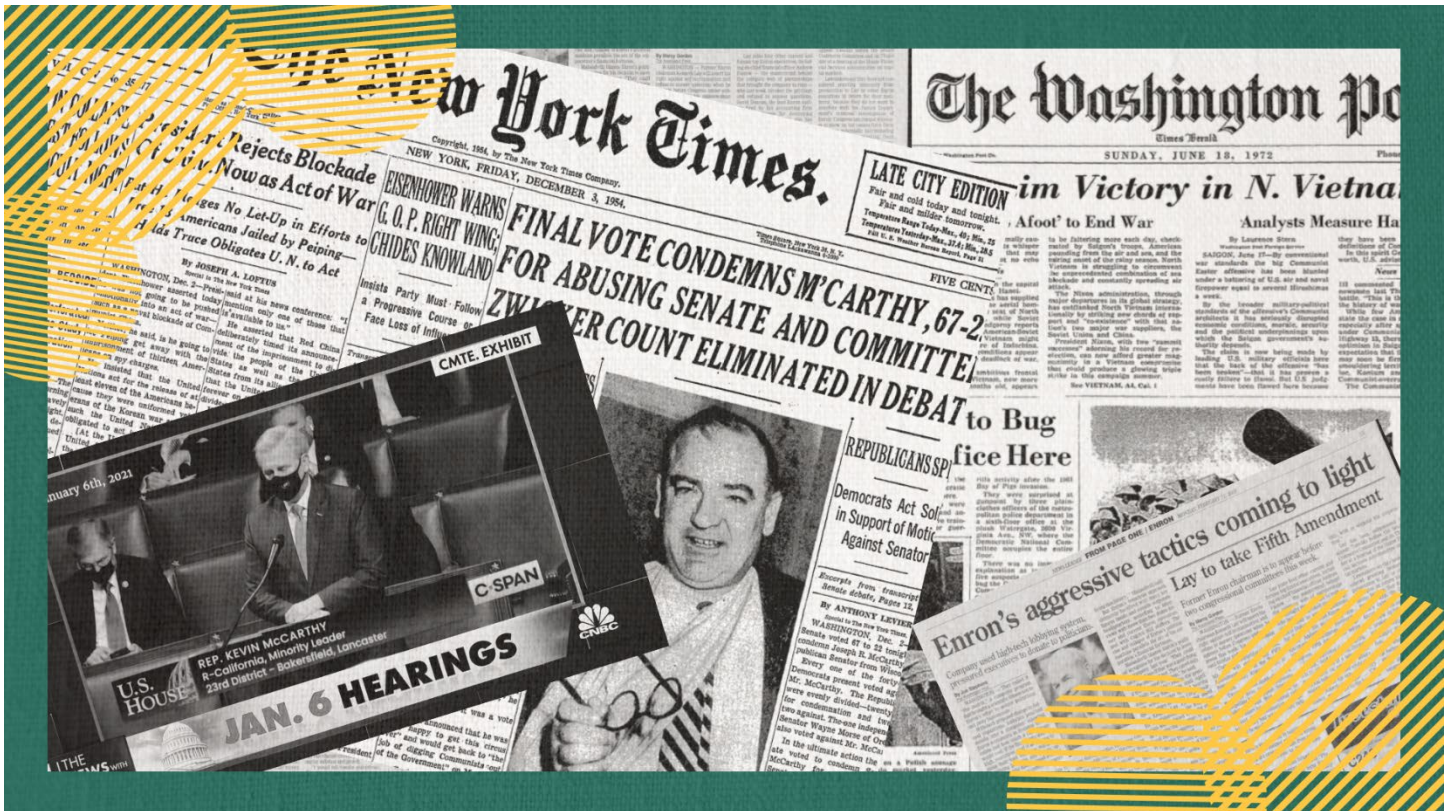


How important is the media in informing the public about government activities?

How the Media Connects Oversight to the Public



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LEARNING BY
HEARINGS

How important is the media in informing the public about government activities?	
Key Concepts	Congressional oversight, media, checks and balances, public opinion
Content Standards	<p>MI Civics – 3.3.3 Explain the concept of public opinion, factors that shape it, and contrasting views on the role it should and does play in public policy.</p> <p>MI Civics – 3.3.5 Identify and discuss roles of non-governmental organizations in American civic society.</p> <p>MI Civics – 3.3.6 Explain functions and possible influence of various news and other media sources in political communication.</p> <p>MI Civics – 3.3.7 Analyze the credibility and validity of various forms of political communication.</p>
Staging the Question	With a partner, brainstorm a list of places where you get news throughout the day. Which ones do you trust the most and why? Compare your list with another group and discuss what you noticed.
Assessment	Students will write a C-E-R using at least two pieces of evidence from the activity to answer the compelling question “How important is the media in informing the public about government activities?”
Extension/Taking Informed Action	<p>Watch at least 30 minutes of a recent oversight hearing and draft a tweet (280 characters or less) that includes information, a headline, or a quote from the hearing that you think the public should be made aware of. You can watch recorded hearings here:</p> <p>https://oversight.house.gov/hearing/</p>

Required Supplies/Materials:

- Physical copies or digital access to station instructions
- Computer access for stations 2 and 3
- 3-4 copies of the “Vanity Fair” article for station 5
- Activity worksheet
- Compelling question (C-E-R) assessment
- Chart paper (optional)

Suggested Pacing: One 60-minute class period

Lesson Sequence:

You will need an area for 5 stations. Each station has its own instructions and a short activity. With larger classes, it may work well to run two simultaneous activities so that the groups are smaller. You will need to duplicate the content and have ten stations instead of five (students will still only visit five).

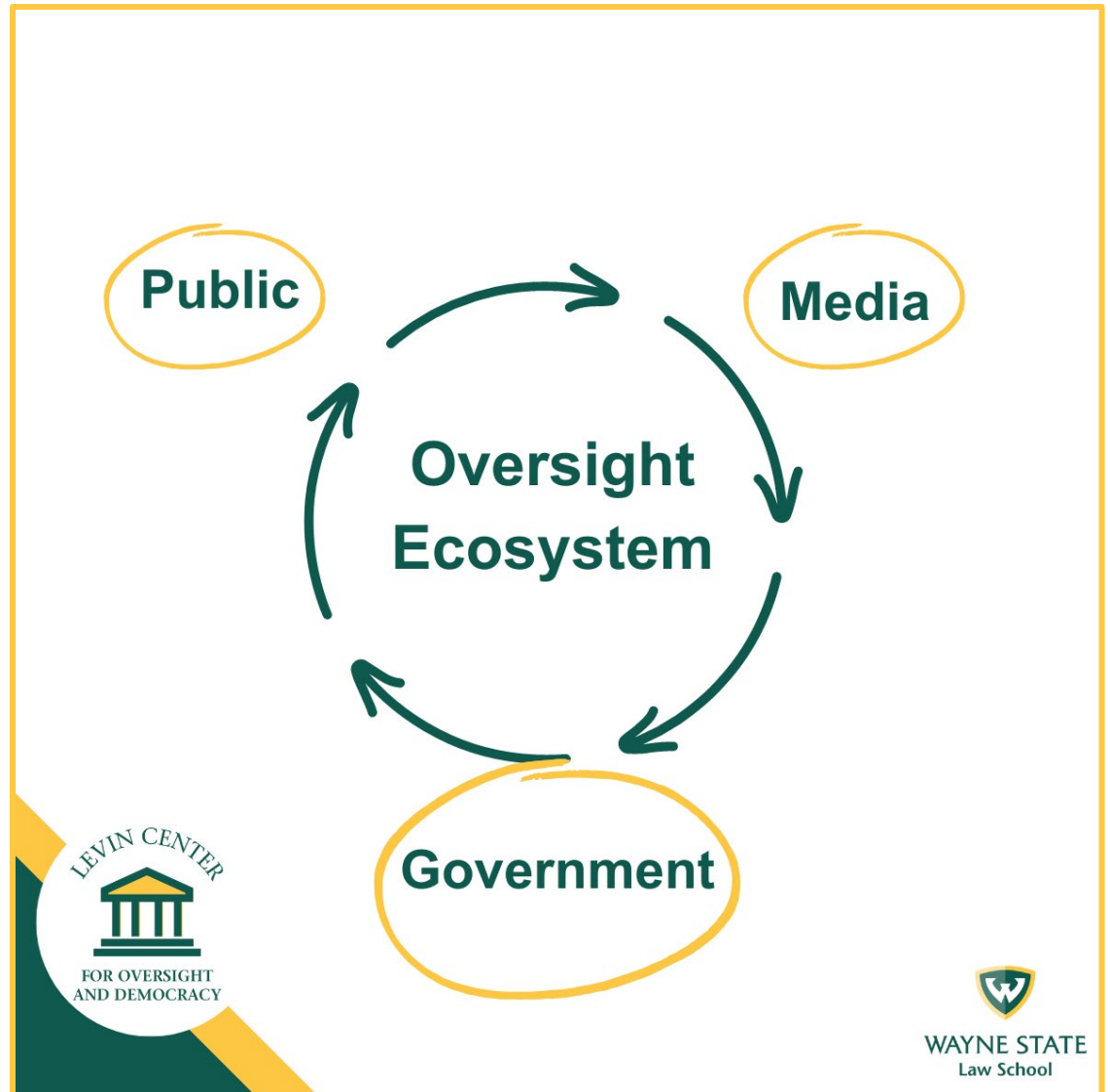
1. Ask students to discuss the staging the question prompt with a partner. Students can complete this verbally, in a class notebook, or on large chart paper to discuss. Have a few students share their observations. **(5 min)**
2. Pass out the station activity worksheet to each student. Divide the class into 5 equal groups and assign each group to a starting table. The group will move together throughout the activity.
3. Give students 5-7 minutes to complete the task at each station. **(35 min)**

4. When students have completed all 5 stations, have students share some of their observations from each activity.
(10 min)
5. Pass out the compelling question worksheet to each student (homework or additional work time the following day).

Station 1

Look at the diagram to the right. It explains the relationship between members of the public, members of the media, and the US government.

Directions: With your partners, brainstorm some of the ways that you see the government and the media interacting. Complete the chart on your worksheet with real-world examples. Try to be specific!



Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy. "Oversight Ecosystem". Wayne State University, 2024.

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Station 2

In April 1974, the House Judiciary Committee asked for 42 tapes of recorded White House conversations from President Nixon that dealt with the 1972 break-in at the Democratic National Committee's headquarters (in the Watergate Office Building). President Nixon gave Congress an edited version of the tapes, citing "executive privilege." Eventually, the full tapes came to light in July 1974.

You are going to listen to one of those tapes, known as the "Smoking Gun," because it becomes clear that President Nixon did know about the plan, and then tried to hide the evidence.

To listen, visit the website **bit.ly/LbHstation2** or scan the QR code.

Directions: On your chart, write a brief reflection to this prompt: Imagine that you are a reporter in 1974, hearing this tape for the first time. Write a newspaper headline that summarizes this breaking news.



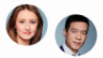
University of Virginia. "Smoking Gun." The Miller Center, 2025. <https://millercenter.org/smoking-gun>.

Station 3

In this hearing, Mark Zuckerberg (CEO of Meta) along with the CEOs of Discord Inc., X Corp., TikTok Inc., and Snap Inc. answered questions from Congress about what their companies are doing to protect young people on their platforms.

To watch the video, scan the QR code or visit this website: bit.ly/LbHstation3

**CEOs of Meta, X, Discord, TikTok
and Snap testify before the
Senate Judiciary Committee**



By Clare Duffy and Brian Fung, CNN
Updated 5:00 PM EST, Wed January 31, 2024

NICHOLAS THOMPSON

BUSINESS APR 13, 2018 7:08 PM

***2 Days, 10 Hours, 600 Questions:
What Happened When Mark
Zuckerberg Went to Washington***

Within Facebook, a Sense of Relief Over the Zuckerberg Hearings

Facebook employees watched the hearings closely, and were pleased by what they saw.



Directions: Watch a short clip from the 10-hour Senate Judiciary Hearing about Big Tech's impact on young people. On your chart, answer the question: Why was it important that these hearings were public and televised?

"Moment Mark Zuckerberg apologizes to families of children harmed online." Uploaded by CBS News, January 31, 2024.

<https://youtu.be/8yIsjUXk7AQ?si=lmxzDvW9rur6Nt2p>.

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Station 4

In 1922, local newspapers in Wyoming started covering backroom deals that led to the leasing of the government land at Teapot Dome to Mammoth Oil. Neither the public nor Congress had been told about these leases before they were signed. Constituents buried Senator Kendrick from Wyoming in a flurry of letters. Kendrick, an unknown Junior Senator in the minority party, launched an investigation that put him at the center of a high-profile scandal.

Directions: Look at this political cartoon published in 1924. What's the message of this image? Do you think it is more important for journalists to reflect public opinion or to shape public opinion?



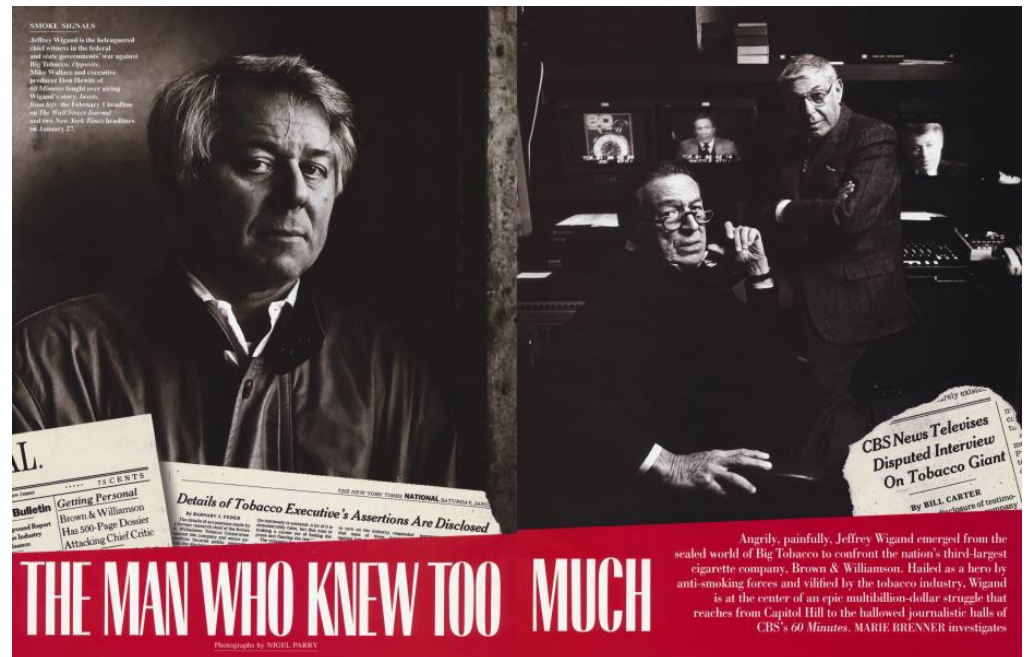
Enright, W.T.. *Who says a watched pot never boils?*. Illustration. *Judge*, February 23, 1923. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Division Washington, D.C. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003654798/>

Station 5

The first scientific evidence that smoking caused cancer in rats was published in 1953, but most people did not know the risks. It took until 2009 for Congress to pass a law that gave the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) clear authority to regulate the manufacturing, advertising, and sale of tobacco products.

In 1996, whistleblower Jeffrey Wigand, who was a former tobacco industry vice president, spoke on the show 60 Minutes. A follow-up article titled, “The Man Who Knew Too Much,” was published in Vanity Fair. A fictionalized version of the interview was made in 1999 starring Al Pacino and Russell Crowe.

Directions: After reading excerpts of this Vanity Fair article, reflect on what Wigand risked by coming forward. In your opinion, why did his story get so much attention?



Brenner, Marie. “The Man Who Knew Too Much.” *Vanity Fair*. May 1996. <https://archive.vanityfair.com/article/1996/5/the-man-who-knew-too-much>. Photo from original print article.

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The Man Who Knew Too Much (excerpts)

Angrily, painfully, Jeffrey Wigand emerged from the sealed world of Big Tobacco to confront the nation's third-largest cigarette company, Brown & Williamson. Hailed as a hero by anti-smoking forces and vilified by the tobacco industry, Wigand is at the center of an epic multi-billion-dollar struggle that reaches from Capitol Hill to the hallowed journalistic halls of CBS's *60 Minutes*.

By Marie Brenner, Vanity Fair, May - 1996

I. The Witness

"I am a **whistle-blower**," he says. "I am notorious. It is a kind of infamy doing what I am doing, isn't that what they say?"

It was never Jeffrey Wigand's ambition to become a central figure in the great social chronicle of the tobacco wars. By his own description, Wigand is a linear thinker. [...] Wigand has recently learned of a vicious campaign orchestrated against him, and is trying to document all aspects of his past. "How would you feel if you had to reconstruct every moment of your life?" he asks me, tense with anxiety. He is [flooded] with requests for interviews. TV vans are often set up at DuPont Manual, the magnet high school where he now teaches. In two days Wigand, the former head of research and development (R&D) at the Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp., will be on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal* for the second time in a week. Five days from now, he will be on *60 Minutes*.

Whistleblower: one who reveals something covert or who informs against another. Especially an employee who brings wrongdoing by an employer or by other employees to the attention of a government or law enforcement agency.

Regulate: to bring under the control of law or constituted authority.

Wigand is trapped in a war between the government and its attempts to **regulate** the \$50 billion tobacco industry and the tobacco companies themselves, which insist that the government has no place in their affairs. Wigand is under a temporary restraining order from a Kentucky state judge not to speak of his experiences at Brown & Williamson (B&W).

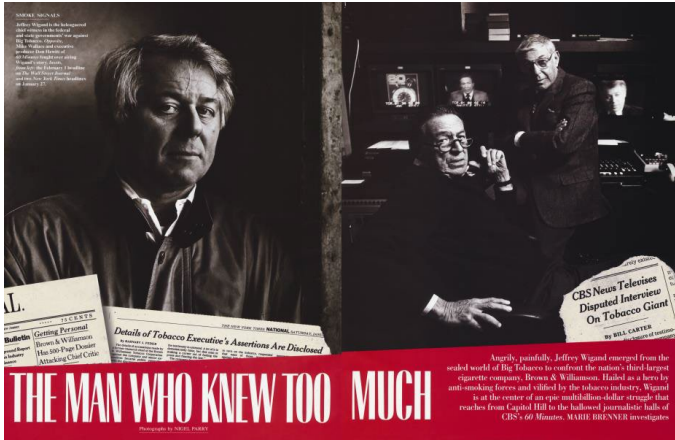
Wigand sits with his security man, Doug Sykes, a former Secret Service agent. Wigand is worn out, a fighter on the ropes. He has reached that moment when he understands that circumstances are catapulting him into history, and he is frightened, off his moorings.

In front of us, on a large screen, a basketball game is in progress. "They kept me up until two a.m. last night. Just when I thought I was going to get some sleep, the investigators called me at midnight. At six a.m. I was gotten up again by someone from *60 Minutes* telling me I should relax. How am I supposed to relax?" Wigand stares at the TV screen. "You are becoming a national figure," I say. Wigand suddenly sputters with rage. "I am a national figure instead of having a family. O.K.? I am going to lose economically and I am going to lose my family. They are going to use the trump cards on me."

[...]

All through dinner, Wigand keeps his cellular phone on the table. It rings as we are having coffee. He explodes in anger into the receiver: "Why do you want to know where I am? What do you want? What do you mean, what am I doing? It's 10 o'clock at night.... What do you need to connect with me for? I am not a trained dog. You are going to have to explain to me what you are doing and why you are doing it so I can participate." Wigand narrows his eyes and shakes his head at me as if to signal that he is talking to a fool. He is beyond snappish now. I realize that he is speaking to one of his legal investigators, who has been putting in 16-hour days on his behalf, mounting a counterattack against his accusers. "You

can't just drop into Louisville and have me drop what I am doing. No, you can't! I am not listening, o.k.? fine. you tell him to find somebody else."



Wigand slams the telephone on the table. "Everyone on the legal team is pissed off because I am in Louisville. You know what the team can do! If he was going to come down today, why didn't he tell me he was coming?" We walk out of Kunz's and trudge back through the snow toward the Hyatt. Across from the hotel is the B&W Tower, where Wigand used to be a figure of prestige, a vice president with a wardrobe of crisp white shirts and dark suits. "I am sick of it. Sick of hiding in a hotel and living like an animal. I want to go home," he says with desperation in his voice.

Jeffrey Wigand and I met at an anti-smoking-awards ceremony in New York on January 18. Wigand was receiving an **honorarium** of \$5,000, and former surgeon general C. Everett Koop was going to introduce him. Wigand radiated glumness, an unsettling affect for a man who was in New York to be honored along with such other anti-smoking activists as California congressman Henry Waxman and Victor Crawford, the former Tobacco Institute lobbyist, who died soon after of throat cancer. "I am not sure I should be here," Wigand told me moments after we met. "Something terrible has happened to me. Brown & Williamson has gotten private records from the Louisville courthouse. A local TV reporter has come to my school to ask about my marriage. They are trying to ruin my life. When I get back to Louisville, I may not have a job. A public-relations man in New York named John Scanlon is trying to smear me. I have five sets of lawyers who are representing me, and no one can agree on a strategy." Then he said, without any special emphasis, "If they are successful in ruining my credibility, no other whistle-blower will ever come out of tobacco and do what I have done." One hour later he was on the stage accepting his award and giving a halting history of his conflict with B&W. "My children have received death threats, my reputation and character have been attacked systematically in an organized **smear campaign**," he said, his voice breaking.

Honorarium: a small amount of money paid for a service for which no official charge is made.

Smear campaign: a planned attempt to harm the reputation of a person or company by telling lies about them.

[...]

When Wigand told his brother he was going to work for a tobacco conglomerate, James said, "You've got to be kidding." But Wigand was optimistic. "I thought I would have an opportunity to make a difference and work on a safer cigarette. I talked to a lot of my friends from college. They said, 'You know, you're never going to be able to come back. You can't go from tobacco back into health care.'"

II: The Firm

Wigand had two offices at B&W, one at the R&D laboratory and one in the office tower. When he toured the lab for the first time, he was startled, he told me, to observe how antiquated it seemed. "The place looked like a high-school chemistry lab from the 1950s with all sorts of old-fashioned smoking machines. There was no fundamental science being done." There was neither a toxicologist nor a physicist on staff, a fact which Wigand found very unsettling. How, he thought, could you be serious about studying the health aspects of tobacco or fire safety without the proper experts? According to documents that later wound up in the University of California at San Francisco library, even in the 1960s

research had been done for B&W which tobacco activists say proved that cigarettes were addictive and caused cancer. However, Wigand says that he did not learn of those studies until after he left the company.

Shortly after Wigand was hired, he was sent to an orientation session on tobacco-litigation matters ... B&W lawyers had devised an ingenious method for avoiding discovery of sensitive information: have it “shipped offshore”—a practice one attorney referred to as “document management.” Wigand later testified that another law firm, Covington & Burling, sometimes edited scientific information on additives.

[...]

Wigand began to keep an extensive scientific diary, both in his computer and in a red leather book. “I kept it day by day, month by month. I saw two faces, the outside face and the inside face. It bothered me. I didn’t know the diary was going to be valuable.” In one early entry, Wigand recalled, he recorded a promise made to him that he would be able to hire “a scientific and medical advisory committee.” “Then, all of a sudden—poof!—it’s gone.”

[...]

Wigand came to feel increasingly that there was “no sense of responsibility” on the subject of teenagers and smoking. He was disturbed by a report that on the average children begin to smoke by 14 ... “I used to come home tied in a knot. My kids would say to me, ‘Hey, Daddy, do you kill people?’ I didn’t like some of the things I saw. I felt uncomfortable. I felt dirty.”

[...]

Wigand says that his anger made it impossible for him to censor himself; he had come to believe his worth as a scientist was being violated by his association with the tobacco company. He also believed that the other scientists in the company would share his values. Wigand was determined to be on the record with his research on additives. He recalled writing a memo for the files on the dangers of coumarin. He felt, he later said, that he was being diligent. In January 1993, it was announced that Thomas Sandefur, Wigand’s nemesis, had been named C.E.O. of B&W. On March 24, Wigand was fired and escorted from the building. He has testified that B&W never returned his scientific diary.

III: The Journalist and the Whistle-Blower

In the early spring of 1993, Lowell Bergman, an award-winning news producer at *60 Minutes*, found a crate of papers on the front steps of his house in Berkeley, California. Bergman’s specialty at CBS was investigative reporting; he possessed a Rolodex of peerless snitches, C.I.A. operatives, and corporate informants...Bergman often received anonymous letters and sealed court documents in his mailbox; it did not surprise him in the least, he told me, to find the box of papers on his porch. When Bergman received the box of papers, he took a look at the hundreds of pages of material. “They were a shambles,” he recalled, “but clearly from a nonpublic file.” The papers were very technical and came from the Philip Morris company. The phrase “ignition propensity” was repeated often in them. “I had never heard that phrase before,” Bergman said. He called his friend Andrew McGuire, the only person he knew who had ever studied tobacco and fire. “Do you know anyone who can make sense of these papers for me?” Bergman asked. “I might have just the guy,” McGuire said.

[...]

For weeks Bergman tried to get Wigand on the telephone. Each time a woman answered, and she would tell him, “He is not home.” Finally [he was told] she said, “He doesn’t want to talk to you.” Bergman had become fascinated by the court papers involving Philip Morris, and was convinced he needed this particular chemist to make sense of them. He wanted a

scientist, not an anti-tobacco advocate. In February 1994, he decided to go to Louisville. “I did the old ‘call him at midnight’ maneuver. He answered the phone and I said, ‘If you are curious to meet me, I’ll be sitting in the lobby at the Seelbach Hotel tomorrow morning at 11 a.m.’”

At 11 a.m. a gray-haired man in a windbreaker appeared and said, “Are you Lowell?” Bergman looked up to see a portrait of middle-aged anxiety. “I said to him, ‘Let’s go have a coffee.’” It was the beginning of an extraordinary relationship. Bergman’s presence in Wigand’s life would eventually inspire him to come forward as a whistle-blower.”

[...]

In April 1994, Henry Waxman, the California congressman, was holding public hearings on tobacco in Washington. Wigand watched the live coverage on C-SPAN of the testimony of top executives of the seven largest tobacco companies. He was in his den with Lucretia when he watched Andrew Tisch, the chairman of Lorillard, testify, “I believe nicotine is not addictive.” Then he heard Thomas Sandefur say the same thing. Wigand was furious. “I realized they were all liars. They lied with a straight face. Sandefur was arrogant! And that really irked me.” Wigand, however, was hamstrung; he had the threat of a lawsuit hanging over his head. He could not criticize Sandefur publicly or his child might lose her medical insurance.

[...]

Wigand reached a point where nothing surprised him anymore, so he hardly reacted when he looked across the dining room at the Essex House and noticed Ian Uydess, the tall, balding new whistle-blower from Philip Morris, having breakfast. The two men nodded at each other—Uydess had once applied to Wigand for a job—but they avoided direct conversation, perhaps in order to prevent any suggestion of conspiracy. Later, Uydess told me that he believed his own role was relatively minor, and that Wigand was the person “with real courage.”

Brenner, Marie. “The Man Who Knew Too Much.” *Vanity Fair*. May 1996.

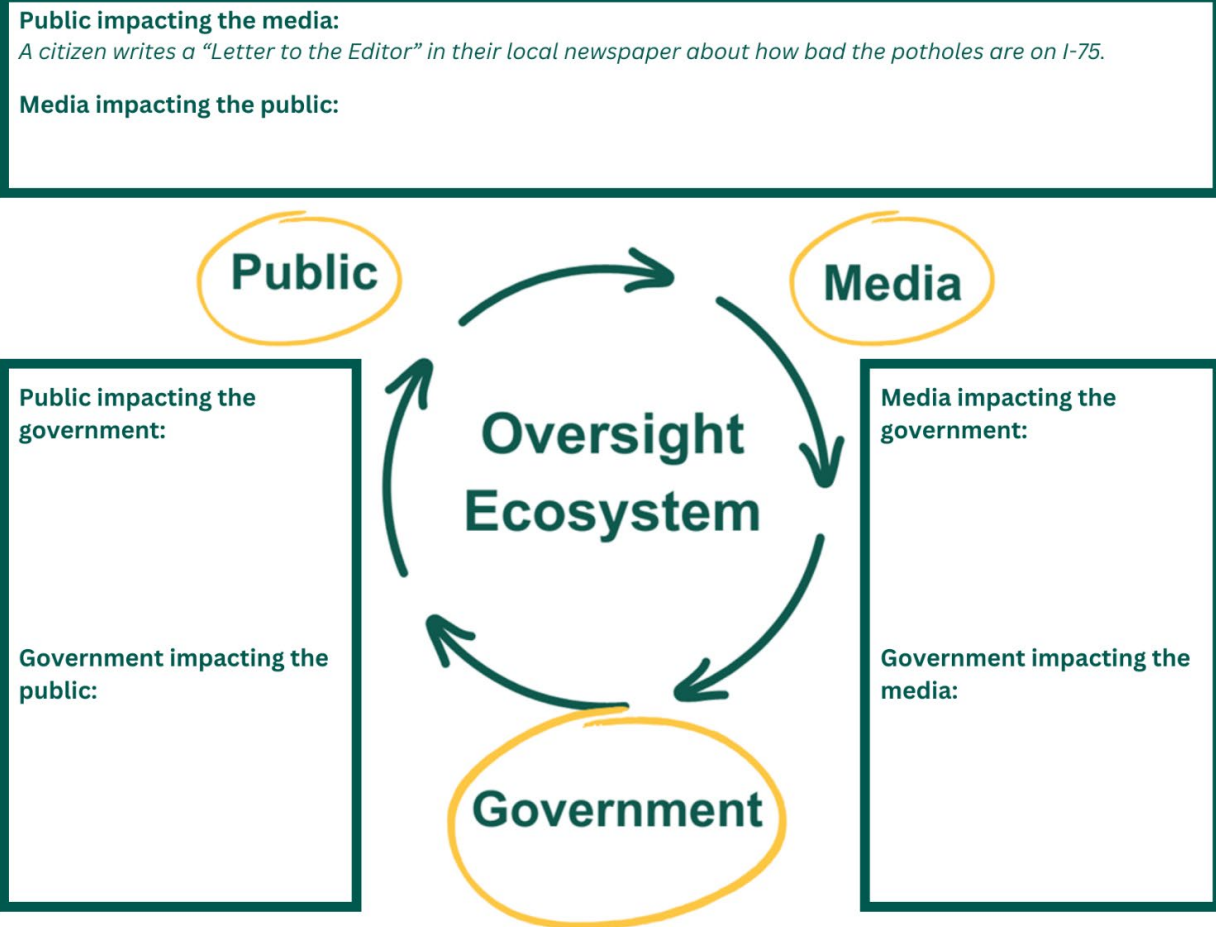
<https://archive.vanityfair.com/article/1996/5/the-man-who-knew-too-much>. Photo from original print article.

Name: _____

Compelling question: How important is the media in informing the public about government activities?

Directions: Follow the instructions to complete each of the five stations. It does not matter what order you view the material in but be sure to record your answers in the correct place. Keep in mind that you will be answering the activity's compelling question, so pay attention to examples that you find persuasive.

Station 1: With your partners, brainstorm some of the ways that you see the government and the media interacting. Complete the chart with real-world examples (one is done for you).



<p>Station 2: Imagine that you are a reporter in 1974, hearing this tape for the first time. Write a newspaper headline that summarizes this breaking news.</p>	
<p>Station 3: Why was it important that “Big Tech” hearings were public and televised?</p>	
<p>Station 4: What’s the message of this political cartoon? Do you think it is more important for journalists to reflect public opinion or to shape public opinion?</p>	
<p>Station 5: What did Wigand risk by coming forward about big tobacco? In your opinion, why did his story get so much attention?</p>	

Responding to Open-Response Questions using the C-E-R Method

Before you write...what is the question asking?

- Read the question carefully
- Circle or underline key words in the questions
- Restate the question in your own words



Claim

Your concise answer to the question. The rest of your response should PROVE your claim.



Evidence

This includes a direct quotation or a paraphrased detail from the text that **PROVES** your claim is correct. You need to **CITE** your evidence.



Reasoning

You need to **EXPLAIN** in your own words how your evidence proves that your claim is correct.

Sentence starters for introducing evidence

These sentence starters can help you introduce your text evidence:

- **The author stated...** *"insert direct quotation" (citation).*
- **According to the text...** *"insert direct quotation" (citation).*
- **In the text it stated...** *"insert direct quotation" (citation).*
- **This example provides evidence that...** *"insert direct quotation" (citation).*
- **An example is...** *"insert direct quotation" (citation).*
- **The graphic showed...** *(insert explanation of graphic) (citation).*
- **The illustration showed...** *(insert explanation of illustration) (citation).*

Sentence starters for reasoning

These sentence starters can help you begin your reasoning:

- **This shows...**
- **This means...**
- **This reveals...**
- **This expresses the idea...**
- **This implies...**
- **This suggests...**
- **This confirms...**
- **This highlights the difference between...**
- **The author's point is that...**
- **This example proves that...**



Name: _____

How important is the media in informing the public about government activities?

Directions: Using the sources from the stations activity, answer the compelling question using **at least two** pieces of evidence.

Claim: A claim is a statement that answers the question. It will usually only be one sentence in length. The claim does not include any explanation, reasoning, or evidence so it should not include any transition words such as “because.”	
Evidence: The evidence is the data used to support the claim. It can be either quantitative or qualitative depending on the question. The evidence should be a direct quote or paraphrase from one of the sources.	
Citation: Which document are you quoting or referencing?	
Reasoning: The reasoning is the explanation of “why and how” the evidence supports the claim. This is written in your own words.	