

Department of History & Political Science

Seminar in American Politics
Topic: Money & Politics
Course: POS 450 Section: 001
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Dr. Melanie J. Blumberg

Research Project

Please check the requirements that pertain to your team's part of the Enron Project. If you find something, which may be helpful to another team, please let the members know. In the end, this is a collaborative effort. I am more than happy to help if you reach an impasse.

Although some of tasks seem more difficult than others, please be assured that what appears to be a breeze may be the more tedious assignment such as condensing the rules governing the 401 (k) plan. One team is even taking responsibility for two separate parts of the project. Please note that another element has been added to the original list.

Enron Corporation Campaign Contributions

Executives and Related Political Action Committees

- to senators and representatives of relevant committees
- to the president
- to the national party committees

This covers campaign contributions from 1989 to 2002, but is limited to the senators and representatives of the standing committees that consider legislative proposals important to the energy community. Contributions to the national party committees and George W. Bush must also be included in the report. The information is readily available.

The first step is to identify the relevant standing committees and their members. The rest is relatively straight-forward: Record the year and amount of each contribution. As the information becomes available, it would be interesting to track which members are returning Enron contributions.

You will use some of the information in conjunction with the material collected by teams working on committee and floor votes: You are going to see how those members who received campaign contributions voted on key bills.

Enron Corporation High-Level Executives: Profiles

Brief profiles are available from a number of electronic sources, and may be used as a starting point to do further research.

Stock Trading by Enron Corporation High-Level Executives

This information, once again, is readily available. You need to list the dates and value of the blocks of stock that were traded, then use the information to evaluate whether it was being dumped. Include how Kenneth L. Lay, CEO of Enron, explained his sale of stock. It is perfectly acceptable to incorporate various analyses from newspapers, public interest group websites, and the like. This requires thorough research and much thought.

Detailed Time-Line of Enron Corporation's Collapse

The time-line is not too difficult to find on the Internet. However, you will need to flesh out the events, *viz.* write a detailed explanation of what occurred at each juncture. As important, you must document how Enron's problems were exacerbated by deregulation. You will probably need to check back copies of newspapers and specialty publications.

Proposed Legislation (Bills) Important to Enron

You will need to play "detective" on the Internet to find the list of key bills. Once you find the list, you will need to access the text and write a brief summary of each bill. The next two steps are not too difficult, just time-consuming: First, check the committee of jurisdiction for each legislative proposal and record the how each committee member voted. Second, record the floor vote (if one was taken) for the same members. You must then consult with the teams working on campaign contributions, whose members are working on the correlation between campaign contributions and voting.

Enron Corporation's Annual Report: Detailed Analysis

It would be worthwhile to check at least two reports: 2000 and 2001. In addition to summarizing the annual reports, you need to include a time-line of its Dunn & Bradstreet ratings. You are checking to ascertain whether there were any indications of its financial demise.

Arthur Andersen's Part in the Collapse of Enron Corporation

You will need to follow the story as it unfolds. The major daily newspapers, weekly news magazines, specialty publications, and public interest group websites are good sources. This requires diligence as there is quite a bit of information. Be sure to include Andersen's defense of its accounting practices. Someone else is keeping tabs on the congressional hearings.

Rules Governing the 401(k)

The rules are not difficult to find, but summarizing them so the layperson can understand them is another story. In addition to condensing the major points, you need to track what happened to the employees' retirement accounts and what options they have. If you are so inclined, it would be interesting to write a brief synopsis of the Texas-based nonprofit group that is trying to help the former employees find work.

Congressional Hearings

Several Senate and House committees are set to hold hearings on Enron. You need to write a brief summary of the each hearing, focusing on the most critical information. You are looking for "new" information.