

Governing in Crisis Teaching Guide

Bobbi Watt Geer
President and CEO of United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania
Helping our Neighbors in Need

Interview Summary

Since last spring, the United States has faced a series of cascading crises brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. An ongoing health crisis resulting in over 240,000 American deaths has quickly expanded into an economic downturn resulting in food and housing insecurity for millions of Americans. Throughout our communities our neighbors are suffering and organizations like the United Way have stepped up to help meet basic needs during these uniquely challenging times. Bobbi Watt Geer, President and CEO of the United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, describes how the United Way has worked to address the problems arising from the pandemic within urban, suburban, and rural communities. She explains the importance of early planning and strong regional partnerships between governments, businesses, and nonprofits to overcome crises when they arise.

To watch the video interview please visit: <https://youtu.be/qOwWp7VWn6s>.

The Governing in Crisis series videos, podcasts, and resource materials are available at:
www.iop.pitt.edu/governing-crisis.

Potential Uses:

- Post a governance series video on Canvas and ask students to respond to a discussion question about the video, as well as comment on 1-2 of their classmates' posts.
- Show a clip of the video during class to enrich learning, emphasize a point, and/or contextualize a topic.
- Create a resource folder on Canvas that includes governance series videos, accompanied by "learn and do more" documents, as well as other links to support student growth related to current events.
- Incorporate a governance series video into pre-class readings for a live discussion using or adapting the questions below.

Suggested Written Reflection Questions

- What policies have the states and federal government enacted to support people in your community? Where have they fallen short? What policies should state and federal actors consider in order to better support people during the pandemic?

- ❑ Bobbi Watt Geer underscores the importance of the United Way working in partnership with other organizations. What are the advantages of nonprofits, government, and businesses work together to address issues in their communities? What are challenges that could arise from these partnerships?
- ❑ What did you find interesting in the interview? What is something that you disagreed with?

Suggested Classroom Discussion Questions

- ❑ What is 211? What can we learn from 211 to inform policymaking or human service delivery?
- ❑ The United Way of Southwestern PA consolidated smaller United Ways into a larger regional United Way. It now currently serves five Pennsylvania counties, Allegheny, Butler, Westmoreland, Fayette and Armstrong. What are the benefits of this merger? Are there any downsides?
- ❑ According to Bobbi Watt Geer, what is the “triple crisis” we are facing? How does this “triple crisis” complicate or change how we address basic needs?

Related Reading

- ❑ Click [here](#) to check out more on the Southwestern PA United Way. If you live outside of Southwestern PA, click [here](#) to find your local United Way.
- ❑ Check out the Tax Policy Center’s [How did the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act \(TCJA\) affect incentives for charitable giving?](#)
- ❑ Read the Center for High Impact Philanthropy at University of Pennsylvania’s [COVID-19 Pandemic: Urgent Needs & Nonprofits to Give to](#).
- ❑ Learn about [eviction protections](#) and [disconnection moratoria](#) in your state and across the country.
- ❑ Check out an analysis of the [Impacts of COVID-19 on Pennsylvania Nonprofits](#) from the Pittsburgh Foundation.
- ❑ Read [United Way Campaign Addresses Triple Crisis](#).
- ❑ Learn why the [Pittsburgh Business Times](#) selected Bobbi Watt Geer as a woman of influence.
- ❑ Take Action:
 - ❑ Find and contact your federal, state, and local elected officials using this [online directory](#) or compose a message with [United Way’s Fight for America’s Recovery](#) and [Fight for Charities that are Proving Covid-19 Pandemic Relief](#).
 - ❑ Check out [Eleven Ways to Help Others During Coronavirus Pandemic](#) and [10 Ways to Help Your Community in 30 Minutes or Less](#).

Stay Informed via Social Media:

 iop.pitt.edu

 thornburghforum.pitt.edu

 [@Pitt.IOP](#)

 [@DickThornburghForum](#)

 [@PITT_IOP](#)

 [Institute of Politics](#)

 [Institute of Politics](#)