

Cartoons for the Classroom

Presented by NIEonline.com and the Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC)



Between the lines

Russian President Vladimir Putin's party claimed an imposing victory in parliamentary elections on Dec. 3, 2007, despite accusations that there had been "a clear abuse of power and a clear violation of international commitments and standards."

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf imposed a state of emergency and suspended the constitution on Nov. 3, 2007. Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto was assassinated on Dec. 27, 2007.

Venezuelan voters rejected President Hugo Chávez's proposal to overhaul Venezuela's Constitution on Dec. 2. The changes would have scrapped term limits and possibly have led to Chávez becoming president for life.



Cartoon courtesy Ben Sargent / Austin American Statesman

Pakistan, Russia, Venezuela

Free vs. phony elections

Talking points

1. The leaders of Pakistan, Venezuela and Russia get their supplies at a "Phony Elections Emporium" in Ben Sargent's toon. You could easily toss in a few other countries that probably have accounts at that "Emporium." Can you name other countries where elections are suspected of being rigged?
2. Strict press controls are common in countries where elections may be suspect in order to avoid any criticism of the government and armed forces. What role does a free press play in free elections? How does censoring the press make rigging elections easier? Explain how the existence of political cartoons can contribute to free elections.
3. Political cartoons attempt to influence governmental action through social commentary. Why is that dangerous to governments that are not democratic?

Get out your newspaper

Gather a collection of political cartoons from your newspaper dealing with the election. Using the Cartoon Evaluation Worksheet (available online at the NIE Website) analyze each cartoon and explain the issues addressed. Find newspaper stories about the issues and re-evaluate the issues and the opinions expressed.

Additional resources

Association of American Editorial Cartoonists
<http://editorialcartoonists.com/>

More by Ben Sargent: <http://www.statesman.com/opinion/content/editorial/sargent/>