

***Did My Bill Pass? – A Model Legislature**

Student Instructions

INTRODUCTION

For the next couple of weeks you will be a member of Congress, serving as either a Democrat, a Republican or an independent and representing a region of the U.S.. Your congressional duties include drafting bills, sitting on a committee, and participating in full Senate or House sessions.

After you have chosen or been assigned to a political party and a region, the first item of business in this _____ Congress _____ session is to select party leaders. The two caucuses (parties) will meet and elect the leaders:

In the U.S. Congress, these leaders are usually the ones with the most seniority (been there the longest). They have much power and are good at parliamentary maneuvers and persuading other members to vote their way. Your student leaders are in charge, so choose classmates with good powers of persuasion and other leadership qualities.

PARTY MEETING

Once the leaders have been selected, the parties strategize and draw up legislative goals for this Congress. Members have the opportunity at this time to say on which committee they would like to serve and what issues they're going to write bills on. Each morning there may be a brief party strategy meeting.

WRITING BILLS

Each member must author at least _____ bill(s) You will receive a bill-writing rubric and a format/sample for writing your bills. Here are some bill-writing tips.

- What's your bill going to be about? Give it a name that will show at a glance what's it's about. The sample bill is called, "Affordable Housing Plan"
- In the "purpose" section give a short summary of what your bill will accomplish and why that is important. This is a "policy statement." (Ex. "To build good quality, affordable housing for low income families.")

As you begin to write the bill's "provisions"—the body of the bill—ask yourself the following questions:

- Is what I am writing a policy statement or true provisions?
- Is my language clear and precise?
- Did I provide money to pay for the bill's provision?
- Does my bill make something illegal? Did I make the line between legal and illegal clear?
- Does my bill provide for punishment for wrong-doers?

INTRODUCING BILLS

First thing each class period any new or rewritten bill (with the number of copies specified by your teacher) must be "dropped into the hopper" for use that day. Members generally write bills about issues that affect their constituency (the voters and businesses in their district).

WORKING WITH BILLS

Your teacher will appoint committee chairs and assign each member to a committee. The committee then discusses the bill, working on amendments to make the bill better. When there are enough bills, the full HR or Senate meets to discuss and amend them.

** Excerpted and abbreviated*