

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW

OBJECTIVES/RATIONALE

The legislative process is governed by rules, laws and procedures, making it somewhat mechanical in nature. Although the legislative process is long and complex, all laws begin as ideas. The student will analyze the procedure for enacting laws and the impact of the government on the health care industry.

TEKS 121.3 (c) 1I, 1D, 1E
113.35.3A, 3B, 8E, 9A, 21D, 22A, 22B, 22D, 23A, 23B (U.S. Government)

TAKS ELA 1, 3, 4, 5
Social Studies 3, 4, 5

KEY POINTS

A bill, the most common type of measure, is a proposal for a law

- I. Congress is authorized “to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution” these and other powers assigned to the national government.
- II. Socioeconomic Conditions – can influence or constrain public policies
 - A. Public Policies often arise out of conflicts among groups of people with differing interests and desires.
 - B. Conflicts may develop between the interests of big business and small business, employers and employees, wholesalers and retailers, bankers and securities dealers, hospitals and medical-insurance companies, and consumers and manufacturers.
- III. An idea for a law can come from
 - A. an individual or group of citizens
 - B. a legislator or legislative committee
 - C. the executive or judicial branch
 - D. lobbyist or special interest group
- IV. How a Bill Becomes a Law in the United States
 - A. Members of the House or Senate introduce bills for consideration by the Congress. The President, a member of the Cabinet or head of a Federal agency can also propose legislation, although it must be introduced by a member of Congress.
 - B. The Bill is referred to the appropriate committees for comment and revisions. Hearings are held and reports issued containing the revised bill, committee's recommendations and background information. Once revised, a bill is brought again before the House or Senate for debate. Some bills are

referred to a conference committee, composed of both Senate and House members, to reconcile differences in similar bills in both Chambers. If the Conference committee reaches a compromise, it will prepare a written conference report to be submitted to each chamber.

- C. Revised bill is brought before the House and Senate for debate and approval.
 - D. Members of both Chambers vote on the final version of the bill.
 - E. A bill approved by both House & Senate is sent to the President. The President may comment on the bill and then sign or veto it. If he signs it, the bill becomes law. If he vetoes it, it may go back to Congress for redrafting or Congress may override the veto with 2/3rds majority vote in both Houses. If the President does not return the bill to Congress with his objections within 10 days, the bill automatically becomes a law. If Congress adjourns before the 10 day period, the bill is vetoed. (pocket veto)
 - F. Once signed by the President, laws are given public law numbers and issued in printed form first as slip laws. These Public Laws are then bound into the Statutes at Large. Every six years, Public Laws are incorporated into the U.S. Code. Public Laws update the U.S. Code.
- V. **Article I. Section. 7. Clause 2** from the US Constitution
- A. Every Bill which shall have passed the House of Representatives and the Senate, shall, before it become a Law, be presented to the President of the United States; If he approve he shall sign it, but if not he shall return it, with his Objections to that House in which it shall have originated, who shall enter the Objections at large on their Journal, and proceed to reconsider it. If after such Reconsideration two thirds of that House shall agree to pass the Bill, it shall be sent, together with the Objections, to the other House, by which it shall likewise be reconsidered, and if approved by two thirds of that House, it shall become a Law. But in all such Cases the Votes of both Houses shall be determined by yeas and Nays, and the Names of the Persons voting for and against the Bill shall be entered on the Journal of each House respectively. If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the Same shall be a Law, in like Manner as if he had signed it, unless the Congress by their Adjournment prevent its Return, in which Case it shall not be a Law.

ACTIVITIES

- I. Prepare a bill, related to a health care issue, which could be passed by the legislature. (develop a written plan and then defend the bill to the class including how the bill will benefit society)

MATERIALS NEEDED

How a Bill Becomes a Law Graphic

School House Rock – How a Bill Becomes a Law Song

Sample legislative bills

Internet

<http://www.school-house-rock.com/index.htm>

School House Rock

<http://www.house.state.tx.us/common/habill.htm>

How a bill becomes a law in the state of Texas

<http://www.library.ucsb.edu/guides/bills.html>

How a bill become a law in the United States

<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas2.html>

Provides legislative information on the Internet and the ability to search database for bills

<http://majoritywhip.house.gov/constitution/View/Article1/a1s7c2.htm>

The constitution of the United States

ASSESSMENT

Project Rubric

Oral Presentation Rubric

Quiz

ACCOMMODATIONS

For reinforcement, the student will outline the process of how a legislative bill becomes a law.

For enrichment, the student will research a current bill pertaining to a health care issue and evaluate industry reaction providing pros and cons.

REFLECTIONS

Quiz

1. What is the process under which a bill becomes a law?
2. Who approves all bills?
3. If the President does not approve of a bill what can the President do to stop the bill?
4. What is a "veto?"
5. How much time does the President have to veto a bill?
6. How can a bill become law despite the objections of the President?

Schoolhouse Rock - History Rock

I'm Just a Bill

Music & Lyrics: Dave Frishberg
Sung by: Jack Sheldon

BOY: Oof! You sure gotta climb a lotta steps to get to this Capitol Building here in Washington! But I wonder who that sad little scrap of paper is?

I'm just a bill,
Yes, I'm only a bill,
And I'm sitting here on Capitol Hill.
Well, it's a long, long journey
To the capital city,
It's a long, long wait
While I'm sitting in committee,
But I know I'll be a law someday...
At least I hope and pray that I will,
But today I'm still just a bill.

BOY: Gee, bill, you certainly have a lot of patience and courage!

BILL: Well I got *this* far. When I started, I wasn't even a *bill* - I was just an idea. Some folks back home decided they wanted a law passed, so they called their local congressman and he "You're right, there ought to be a law." Then he sat down and wrote me out and introduced me to Congress, and I became a bill. And I'll remain a bill until they decide to make me a law.

I'm just a bill,
Yes I'm only a bill,
And I got as far as Capitol Hill.
Well now I'm stuck in committee
And I sit here and wait
While a few key congressmen
Discuss and debate
Whether they should
Let me be a law...
Oh how I hope and pray that they will,
But today I am still just a bill.

BOY: Listen to those congressmen arguing! Is all that discussion and debate about you?

BILL: Yes. I'm one of the lucky ones. Most bills never even get this far. I hope they decide to report on me favorably, otherwise I may die.

BOY: "Die?"

BILL: Yeah: die in committee. Oooh! But it looks like I'm gonna live. Now I go to the House of Representatives and they vote on me.

BOY: If they vote "yes", what happens?

BILL: Then I go to the Senate and the whole thing starts all over again.

BOY: Oh no!

BILL: Oh yes!

I'm just a bill,
Yes I'm only a bill,
And if they vote for me on Capitol Hill,
Well then I'm off to the White House
Where I'll wait in a line
With a lot of other bills
For the President to sign.
And if he signs me then I'll be a law...
Oh, how I hope and pray that he will,
But today I am still just a bill.

BOY: You mean even if the whole Congress says you should be a law, the President can still say no?

BILL: Yes, that's called a "veto". If the President vetoes me, I have to go back to Congress, and they vote on me again, and by that time it's...

BOY: By that time, it's very unlikely that you'll *become* a law! It's not easy to become a law, is it?

BILL: No! But how I hope and I pray that I will,
But today I am still just a bill!

Congressman: He signed you, bill! Now you're a law!

Bill: Oh yes!

How a Bill Becomes a Law

