

## LESSON PLAN

### "FROM A BILL TO A LAW"



#### RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL

Grade School



#### OVERVIEW

This activity is designed to familiarize students with the legislative process and increase the students awareness of their district Representative and the responsibilities of Members of the U.S. House of Representatives.



#### CURRICULUM CONNECTION

- American Government, Social Studies
- U.S. House of Representatives, Laws, Locally elected Representatives



#### OBJECTIVES

1. Understand that bills become laws when voted on and approved by the Congress and signed by the President.
2. Identify local Representative(s).



#### LESSON PLAN

1. To help introduce students to the upcoming activity, engage them in a brief discussion to assess how much they already know about the legislative process:
  - a. What is a law?
  - b. Who makes laws?
  - c. What is a bill?
  - d. Where do bills come from?
2. Go over the content of How A Bill Becomes A Law on <http://kids.clerk.house.gov> with the class—this can be done as a group, individually, or in several small groups. Once the class has read the content, allow a brief question and answer period.
3. Discuss your local Representative and his/her role in the process of making laws with the class:
  - a. Who is our Representative in the House of Representatives?
  - b. How did he/she get his/her job?
  - c. What is his/her job?
4. Select one of the activities listed below.



#### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the U.S. House of Representatives' most important job?
2. What does a bill need before it can be introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives?
3. How is a bill introduced to the U.S. House of Representatives?
4. Why would a bill go to committee? Subcommittee?

5. Who votes on bills?
6. If the President vetoes a bill, can it still become a law?



## MAIN EXERCISE

### **Option 1: Dear Representative**

1. Have students brainstorm, either individually or as a group, ideas for laws. Ask them why their ideas would make good laws and who those laws would help.
2. Instruct the students to choose the idea that would be most beneficial to the most people.
3. Instruct the students to write a letter to their Representative telling him/her about their idea and why it should be made into a law.
4. Letters can then be mailed to your Representative. Member mailing addresses are available at [http://clerk.house.gov/Member\\_Info/](http://clerk.house.gov/Member_Info/)

### **Option 2: Act it Out!**

1. Assign roles to students. You will need:
  - a. Citizens
  - b. Senators
  - c. Representatives
  - d. The President
2. Have the citizens brainstorm a law that will benefit them. That idea is then shared with the Members of the House of Representatives. Optional: designate one student as the citizens Representative and he/she can be contacted by a citizen and place the bill into a “hopper” in the front of the room. You can also designate a bill clerk to assign the bill a number and read the bill aloud.
3. The Members of the U.S. House of Representatives debate and discuss why or why not the bill should be a law. After they have discussed for a few minutes, hold a vote on whether the bill should become a law. The vote can be held verbally or on paper. If the bill passes it is then sent to the U.S. Senate.
4. The Senators debate and discuss the bill in the same fashion as the Representatives. A vote is held and the U.S. Senate decides if the bill is ready to go to the President for consideration. If the bill passes, it is sent to the President where he/she can either sign it into law or veto it.
5. If the bill stalls at any point, lead the class in a discussion about why the bill failed. Some questions to pose:
  - a. Why did this bill not become a law?
  - b. Could there be changes made to the law that would make it better?
6. Explain to the students that making changes to bills happens often and the discussion they had would have likely occurred while the bill was in committee.
7. If the students agree that changes could be made to make the law better, and time permits, start again by having the Members of the U.S. House of Representatives discuss and vote, the U.S. Senate discuss and vote, and the President sign or veto it.



## ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

Office of the Clerk  
<http://clerk.house.gov>