

LEGISLATIVE LESSON PLAN

OVERVIEW

State Representatives and Senators form committees that work on the different issues important to our state; they form subcommittees to draft bills related to these issues; and they vote to decide if a bill becomes a law.

Before beginning, make copies of the following documents for each student:

- “How Texas Laws Are Made”
- “How to Write a Bill”
- “A Bill to be Entitled *Prevention of Under Age Tobacco Use*”
- “Drug Prevention Bill Worksheet”

OBJECTIVE

In this lesson, students will learn the various ways drug use/abuse can be prevented through the legislative process. They will learn how laws are made, will write a drug-use-prevention bill, and will debate the bill before a mock legislature, comprised of their peers.

LESSON STEPS

Ask each student to read aloud a sentence or paragraph from “How Texas Laws Are Made.” Allow time for discussion to clarify the information.

After reading “How Texas Laws Are Made,” test the students’ understanding of the material with questions, such as:

1. What are the two bodies of government that make the laws in Texas?
Answer: House of Representatives and Senate or State Senate
2. What is a bill?
Answer: A proposed law
3. What is a committee and what is its function?
Answer: Review bills, make changed or additions/amendments
4. After the members review the bill, what is the next step?
Answer: Given to the Chief Clerk
5. After the members have voted on a bill, what happens?
Answer: It is sent to the opposite chamber for a vote
6. After both chambers agree that the bill can become a law, what happens next?
Answer: It is “enrolled,” or prepared for presentation to the governor
7. After receiving the bill, how many days does the Governor have to review it?
Answer: 10
8. What is a veto?
Answer: Rejection or disapproval of a bill

With each question, allow the students themselves to determine whether or not others' answers are correct, then guide them to the correct answers, if necessary.

VOCABULARY

The following terms should be pre-taught and discussed to ensure students understand these concepts:

Session	Legislator
Senate	Bill
Adjourn	Veto
Majority	

DEVELOPING IDEAS FOR LEGISLATION

Help students draw on what they learned in the *Healthy Choices Lesson* to develop ideas for crafting a drug-use-prevention bill. The bill should address one main question:

How Will We Stop Students From Wanting to Use Drugs?

- Break students into groups of 5-7
- Each group will draft a bill listing their greatest concern and primary solution for how to stop students from wanting to use drugs.
- Each group will vote on which concern and solution should be presented at the mock legislative sessions.
- One student representative from each group will announce their group's greatest concern about student drug use. The class will vote and decide upon the two primary solutions that were identified.

DRAFTING LEGISLATION

Give students copies of "How to Write a Bill" and the sample bill called "A Bill to be Entitled *Prevention of Under Age Tobacco Use.*" These documents can guide them in structuring their bill. They can use the document "Drug Prevention Bill Worksheet" to get started.

DEBATING AND VOTING ON LEGISLATION

After the bills are drafted, an instructor will act as Chief Clerk and facilitate the reading of the bills. The Chief Clerk will ask two students (Senators or Representatives) to speak in favor of the bill and two other students (Senators or Representatives) to speak against it. The Chief Clerk will then take an up-down-hands vote of all students record the final vote.

Please note, there are several specific rules a Senator or Representative must follow when speaking for or against a bill. A Representative must rise and be recognized by the presiding officer before addressing members of the Senate.

After being recognized by the presiding officer, the Senator or Representative

- (1) must remain standing at his or her desk;
- (2) must speak on relevant topics to the issue or bill at hand; and
- (3) may yield the floor to another member for questions.

For additional information for students, visit:

www.senate.state.tx.us/kids

www.kids.house.state.tx.us/kids.htm

HOW TEXAS LAWS ARE MADE

Background Info for Teachers

The two governmental bodies that make laws in Texas are the House of Representatives and the State Senate.

COMPOSITION OF LEGISLATURE

The members of the House are called Representatives. There are 150 state representatives. Each representative is elected for a two-year term. The leader of the House (elected by other members of the House) is called the Speaker of the House. Joe Straus is the current Speaker of the House.

The Lieutenant Governor (elected by Texas voters) is the leader of the Senate and is called the President of the Senate. David Dewhurst is the current Lieutenant Governor.

LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS

During the “session,” the legislators (Representatives and Senators) meet in large rooms called chambers. A session, also known as a “term,” refers to the 140 days that the Legislature meets. The Legislature meets every other year.

A bill is a proposed law. After a legislative session begins, Representatives and Senators, also known as legislators, have 60 days to write and introduce their bills. When writing their bills, the legislators must follow the rules of the Texas Constitution, which is the law that determines the powers of government and protects the rights of Texas citizens.

Once the bill is written, it is given to the Chief Clerk to file.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The bill is then introduced, either by a Representative to other Representatives in the House or by a Senator to other Senators in the Senate.

After the bill is introduced, it must go to a special committee for review. Committees are selected groups of Representatives in the House and Senators in the Senate who review bills. There are 30 House committees and 10 Senate committees. All committee actions must be held in public. That way it gives the people, or citizens, a chance to voice their opinions about a proposed bill.

Before submitting a bill to their fellow Representatives or Senators for a vote, committee members can make changes or additions to the bill. These are called amendments. Committees can also substitute a new bill for the original one.

After the committee has reviewed the bill, it is given to the Chief Clerk, who makes copies of it for the members of the House or Senate.

VOTING ON BILLS

The bill is then scheduled for “floor action” where a vote is taken.

After the members of the House or Senate have voted on a bill, it is then sent to the opposite chamber for a vote.

After both chambers agree to pass the bill, it is “enrolled,” or prepared for presentation to the governor.

After the presiding officers of the House and the Senate sign the bill, the bill is sent to the Governor. Rick Perry is the current Governor of Texas.

ROLE OF THE GOVERNOR AND PASSING/REJECTION OF A BILL

After receiving the bill, the Governor has ten days to review it and then sign it or “veto” it. A veto is the rejection, or disapproval, of a bill.

If the Governor doesn’t sign or veto the bill within ten days, the bill automatically becomes the law.

If the bill is sent to the Governor during the last ten days before adjournment of the legislative session, then the Governor has twenty days to sign or veto it.

If the Governor vetoes the bill, the legislature can “override” the bill. To override a bill, or reject the Governor’s veto, there must be a two-thirds majority vote in each chamber.

HOW TO WRITE A BILL

CENTER TITLE

Write out the concern for the legislative bill.

Start the bill with

1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:
2. State the charter and section of the constitution that you hope to change.
3. Number every line of the document.
4. Be very specific.
5. Include why the bill is needed. (List reasons)
6. Include consequences of not approving the bill.
7. Keep the bill to one page if possible; focus on drug prevention.

(Remember this exercise is a mock legislation exercise. The writing of the legislative bill is for educational purposes only and will not actively change any state laws.)

HAVE FUN.

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

PREVENTION OF UNDER AGE TOBACCO USE

An act concerning the transfer of tobacco to minors

1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF TEXAS:
2. CHARTER 48. Conduct Affecting Public Health, SECTION 48.01. Smoking Tobacco, is
3. amended by adding (g) to read as follows:
4. (g) A person may not transfer, upon purchase, any form of tobacco to children under the
5. age of eighteen.
6. Statistics indicate that adolescents who use tobacco progress to other drugs. In 1994, a
7. survey conducted by Monitoring the Future found 8th graders who smoked at all were
8. three times more likely to try illicit drugs than non-smokers.
9. Aggressive efforts to prevent underage use of tobacco are essential to the prevention of
10. illicit drug use.
11. In 1994, the National Drug Control Strategy stated that underage tobacco use is a
12. gateway to more harmful drugs.
13. Tobacco offers a gateway to and training ground for progression to more dangerous
14. drugs. Therefore, preventing or delaying tobacco use prevents or delays the use of other
15. drugs as well.
16. There is a strong statistical association between adolescents use of tobacco and other
17. drugs.
18. If this bill is not passed children less than eighteen years of age will continue to receive
19. cigarettes and other tobacco products from other adults and enhance their chances of
20. using illicit drugs.

DRUG PREVENTION BILL WORKSHEET

(TITLE)

An act concerning...

1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

2. CHARTER SECTION

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