



# **VOTE SMART**

## **JUST THE FACTS**

### **Lesson 3 - How a Bill Becomes a Law**

#### **Standards: National Council for the Social Studies**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.3: Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

NCSS 4: Individual Development and Identity

NCSS 3: People, Places, and Environments

NCSS 6: Power, Authority and Governance

#### **Objectives:**

SWBAT (students will be able to) discuss the legislative process.

SWBAT understand current legislation.

SWBAT express their opinions when discussing current legislation.

#### **Subject Matter:**

House of Representatives, legislative branch, legislative process

#### **Materials:**

- Access to internet
- Whiteboard/blackboard
- Mailing envelopes
- Paper/pencils

#### **Procedure: (70-80 min)**

##### **Set/Hook/Warm up:**

For this warm up activity, to help students understand the upcoming activity, lead a brief discussion on how a bill becomes a law. Ask the following questions to the class.

1. How does a bill become a law?
2. Who is involved when it comes to creating bills?
3. Why do we have laws?
4. In your opinion, what makes a good law?

Use a whiteboard/blackboard to write students' answers to these questions.

**Lesson Essential Question:** How does a bill become a law?

### Activity 1 - Handout & Video:

1. Print and distribute [this](#) step-by-step explanation of how a bill becomes a law to the students.
2. Show [this](#) interactive video by SchoolHouse Rock about how a bill becomes a law.
3. Followed by [another](#) great video from Brainpop.
4. After showing these two videos, ask students what they learned/understood from watching these videos and looking at the handout.

### Activity 2 - If I were in Congress:

This lesson will have students pretend they are a member of Congress and discuss current legislation on the House floor.

1. Assign the students to a current bill on the House floor. Use [this](#) link to find current legislation.
2. Have a brief discussion on the bill, ask the students the following questions:
  1. Who would this bill help?
  2. Is this an example of a good bill?
  3. What would happen if this bill was signed into law?
  4. Does this bill hurt anyone? What would change if this bill became a law?

### Activity 3 - Write a Letter to Your Representative:

This lesson will require students to write a letter to their representative expressing their opinion on the bill reviewed in Activity 2.

1. Instruct the students to visit [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org) and look up the contact information of their state representative:
  - Go to [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org)
  - Scroll to the bottom of the page and click "[Offices and Officials](#)"
  - Under the "Office Type" scroll down menu, click "Gubernatorial" or "State Legislative"
  - Choose your state under the "State" scroll down menu
  - Click on a politician - their contact information will be on the left side of the screen

(Depending on the grade and the classes overall ability to use a computer, this part of the activity might require the teacher to look up contact information for representatives ahead of time. However, using [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org) can allow students to practice using the internet for research).

2. Inform students to write clearly and legibly, and to write the correct mailing address.
3. Towards the end of this activity, hand out envelopes to students. This activity can also be used as a homework assignment depending on the teacher's preference.

### Cool Down Exercise:

What would you do?

This quick activity will give students the opportunity to voice their opinions about legislation.

1. Come up with a “fake bill” based on a popular topic amongst the students. Example: “Should students be required to wear PE uniforms?” Be creative and come up with a bill that will engage students.
2. Split the class into mini groups and give them 5 minutes to discuss if they would approve of this bill - why or why not?
3. After 5 minutes, bring the class back and select one representative from each group to discuss what they agreed upon.
4. After done, re-iterate that this is the type of discussion that members of Congress have when going through the steps of signing a bill into law.

Assessment:

Activity 3 and the attached worksheet can both be used as a homework/graded assignment based on teacher’s preference.

Assignment:

Attached is a worksheet that can be completed for homework.

Self Reflection:

## **How a Bill Becomes a Law Worksheet**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Use your notes and the educational links to answer the following questions:

1. Where does a bill go after it is introduced, but before it is voted on?
2. A. Who refers a bill to a committee in the House of Representatives?  
  
B. Which party does this politician belong to?
3. What occurs when a committee never acts on a bill?
4. What is a filibuster? Which chamber is allowed to use it?
5. What happens to a bill when the House and Senate pass similar, yet different, versions of a bill?
6. What are the President's three options when a bill reaches his/her desk?
7. Is a bill officially dead if the president decides to veto it? Explain your answer.

8. Critical Thinking: Considering what you have learned about the bill-to-law process, why do you think it is so rare that a bill makes it all the way through Congress and the President to become a law?