



MIDSOHIO WINTER CONGRESS

BILL WRITING GUIDE





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A GUIDE TO PREPARING FOR THE JUNIOR STATE OF AMERICA’S CONGRESS CONVENTIONS

The Junior State of America invites you to attend an exciting simulation of a Congressional session where you and other high school students become Members of the United States Congress. You write the legislation! You vote in committee hearings! You speak on the floor of the House or Senate! This incredible weekend convention is entirely student-run and offers you a fantastic learning experience.

This booklet contains all the information you need to prepare yourself and your delegation in the bill writing process for MidSoHio Winter Congress Conventions. In addition, information regarding how to sponsor legislation and rules/procedures specific to JSA's Congress format are also included. Detailed instructions on how to register for the convention are in a separate registration packet. If you need a registration packet or have any questions, problems, or comments, please call Junior State National Headquarters toll free at 1-800-334-5353.

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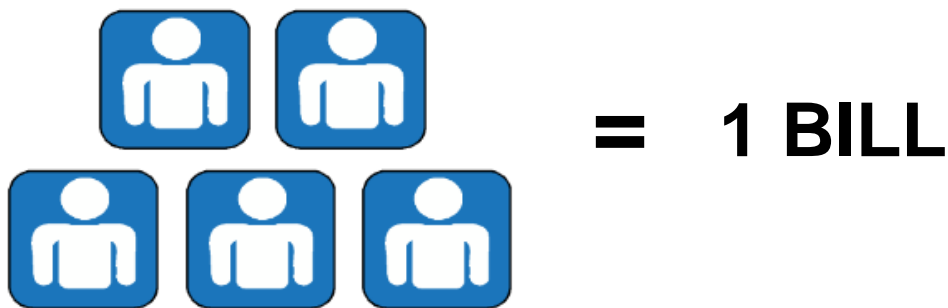
I. Your Delegation

I.I ASSEMBLING A DELEGATION

Each delegation will be made up of a combination of Senators and Members of the House of Representatives. Senator and Representative titles are assigned to delegates prior to the convention, though in the context of our Mock Congress there is little difference between the two roles. Delegates will receive their chamber assignments prior to the convention and will remain in their chamber for the course of the day debating various legislation.

I.II SPONSORING LEGISLATION

Sponsoring legislation is the best way to get involved and fully take advantage of JSA's Congress Conventions. Do you think the United States should create and implement a national health care plan? Should funding for artists be restricted based on the content of their artwork? What is your strategy for protecting our nation's environment? As the sponsor of a bill, you have the chance to address any topic on the national agenda. Every delegation must submit at least one bill for every five delegates. You can submit as many additional bills as you wish. Each bill will be sponsored jointly by one Senator and one Representative. This allows two people to research topics, write legislation, and prepare speeches together.



At the convention, you and your co-sponsor will present your bill, one on the floor of the House and the other on the floor of the Senate. You will learn the process and experience the passions of our nation's legislative process.

II. Writing Your Bill

Writing legislation is easier than you might think. If you are politically aware and follow current events you probably already have some good ideas for legislation. Below are simple guidelines to follow for writing a bill.

1. Select an area of

interest. The first step in writing your bill is to select a topic. Write a bill on an area of national politics that you know a little bit about. Like the U.S. Congress, the convention will deal with a broad spectrum of issues: foreign affairs, health and human services, finance, the environment, military affairs, business and commerce.



2. Research. Once you decide an area of interest, read newspaper and magazine articles to get a sense of the current issues being discussed. The

Library of Congress offers a database of recently discussed Congressional bills on a website called “Thomas” which can be found at thomas.loc.gov/. The Congressional Research Service (CRS) provides members of Congress with nonpartisan research and analysis of issues. Although these reports are not directly available to the public, some members of Congress have provided access to some of these reports on their websites.



3. Select a specific

subject/ problem. The next step is to pick one problem or issue from your general area of interest on which to focus.

For example, if you are interested in the war on drugs you may wish to write legislation on drug testing. Or, if you are interested in foreign affairs, you could write legislation to restrict U.S. intervention abroad.



4. Determining the type of

Legislation. There are three types of legislation: A Bill, which establishes a new law; A Congressional Resolution, which expresses the sentiment of Congress; A Constitutional Amendment, which changes or adds to the U.S. Constitution.



5. Draft your bill.

To begin drafting your bill, you must first concisely, in 5 to 15 words, state the purpose of your legislation. For example, legislation on drug testing might be “to provide for drug testing of all commercial vehicle operators.” Legislation on arms sales might be “to restrict military arms sales to politically unstable countries.” This concise statement of purpose will be part of the title of your legislation.



II. Writing Your Bill

5a. Rationale for Bills and Amendments: Next, you need to develop the rationale for your legislation. This should be a short paragraph that explains reasons why your legislation is necessary. For example, a rationale for a bill lowering the minimum wage for teenagers might read: *A lower minimum wage for teens will decrease teen unemployment as statistics show that as the minimum wage increases so does teenage unemployment. In the inner city, where teens need gainful employment, businesses currently won't hire teenagers when they can hire an older person. Giving teenagers a chance to gain valuable job experience far outweighs the fact that they will be paid less.*

5b. Whereas Clauses for Resolutions: Resolutions are non-binding statements of the opinion of Congress. All resolutions should contain "Whereas clauses" instead of a paragraph that gives reasons why the Congress should adopt the resolution. For example, whereas clauses for a resolution condemning offshore oil drilling might read: *Whereas, Offshore oil drilling is a hazard to our coastlines and coastal wetlands, and; Whereas, The U.S. needs to decrease its dependence on oil and move to cleaner forms of energy, and; Whereas, Oil rigs off shore are unsightly.*

5c. The body of your legislation: The main portion of your legislation is the provisions or sections. The first section should establish the main effect of the legislation. The first section of drug testing legislation may be: *"All interstate commercial vehicle operators shall be subject to a random drug test at least once a year."* Other sections of your legislation should establish any limitations or restrictions: *"The results of the drug test are to be kept confidential by the employer."* Also include any penalties that accompany your new law: *"Employers not complying with this law shall be subject to fine of up to \$10,000."*

All bills passed are assumed to go into effect in 90 days unless otherwise specified. If your legislation involves federal expenditures, list the amount. Generalized costs are acceptable. *For example, you could increase the space budget by 50%.*

6. Formatting your legislation. The title of your legislation should be centered on the top of the page along with the names of the Senator and Representative who are sponsoring the bill and the name of your high school. The first line of your bill should be worded as follows:



For a Bill: "Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that:"

For an Amendment: "Be it amended by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that:"

For a Resolution: "Be it resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that:"

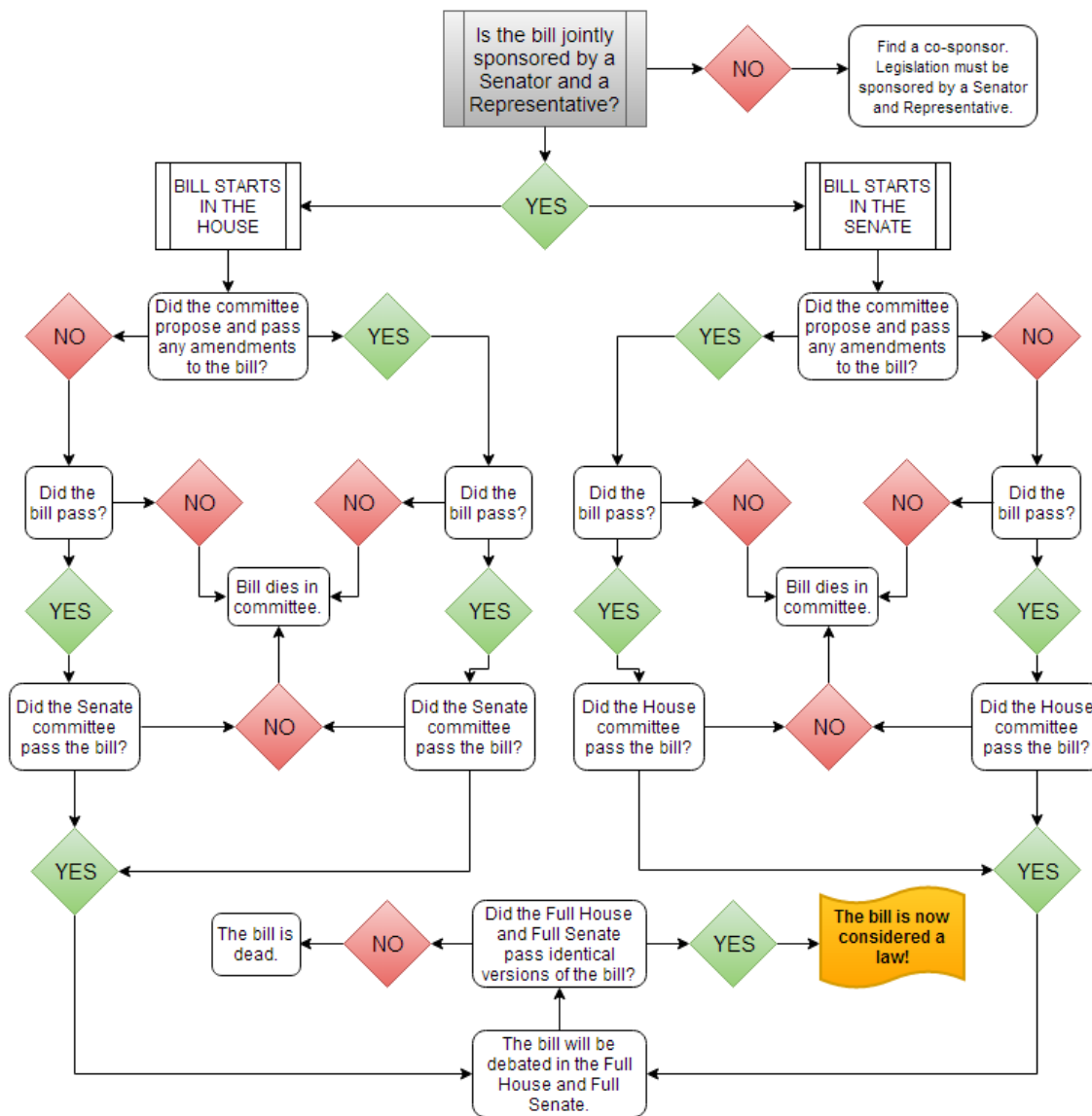
The body of the bill should be divided into sections and numbered. Please follow the format of the several sample bills at the end of the handbook. At the bottom of the page, please include the names and email addresses of the bill sponsor(s). **Please send your bill to your state's Bill Director (see your registration packet for more details):**
Midwest: mkokkines@midwest.jsa.org
Ohio River Valley: mkarbowsky@orv.jsa.org
Southeast: dgursoy@southeast.jsa.org



III. The Path of Legislation

Below is a description of the legislative process used at JSA's Congress Conventions. The legislative path for this weekend long convention is a modified version of the actual procedures of the U.S. Congress.

1. Legislation is sponsored jointly by a Senator and a Representative. The bill is assigned to the proper House and Senate Committees prior to the convention. You will receive a Legislative Index that contains all of the legislation and committee assignments so that your chapter can prepare for the convention.
2. In each pair of Senate and House committees, the bills are discussed in opposite order: Houses debate bills in increasing order, Senates in decreasing order. The sponsors of the bill are the proponent or opening speakers on the bill. During debate, the committee may propose and pass amendments to the bill using amendment forms provided by the chair. Amendments may only be passed on the first five bills in any committee, thus ensuring that two different versions of a bill are not passed.
3. After debating the bill, the committee votes on it. If both the House Committee and Senate Committee pass the bill, it goes on to the floors of the Full House and Full Senate the next day. If either committee fails to pass the bill, it dies in committee.
4. If both legislative bodies pass identical versions of the bill, the bill will be considered law.





IV. Congressional Rules

IV.I FULL HOUSE AND FULL SENATE SESSIONS

The House and Senate Sessions are presided over by Chairs and Clerks selected from the previous day. The order in which the bills are debated is determined before the sessions begin.

The first order of business in the full sessions of the House and Senate is to hear reports from the committees. Each Committee Chair will report on the bills that passed out of committee.

After the reports, debate can commence on the bills. Debate procedure is as follows:

1. The presiding officer reads or distributes the bill as approved by committee.
2. Debate begins with a 6 minute opening speech from the sponsor of the bill, followed by a 6 minute opening speech from the main opponent of the bill (as selected by committee). If the main speakers do not use all of his or her time, he or she may yield the remaining time to questions or to the chair.
3. After the main speeches are over, the presiding officer asks for subsequent speeches from members of the house. These speeches are three minutes long and alternate between the affirmative and the negative. Subsequent speakers, if they have not used their full three minutes, may yield their remaining time to questions, another speaker on the same side, or the chair.
4. Subsequent speeches continue until previous question is moved and passed by a 2/3rds vote. At that time, the main opponent is given three minutes to make a closing speech and finally, the sponsor will be given three minutes to make a closing speech.
5. Immediately after the closing speeches, the house votes on the legislation. A majority is required to pass bills and resolutions. Constitutional Amendments require a 2/3rds vote to pass.

IV.II PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Motions are made by raising your hand, being recognized by the presiding officer, and telling the chair under what point (or motion) you rise.

If a member of the house wanted to suspend the rules of the debate to make subsequent speeches two minutes long instead of three, due to time constraints, s/he would:

1. Raise his/her hand and wait to be recognized by the presiding officer.
2. Tell the presiding officer the motion and the purpose of the motion: "I move to suspend the rules to limit subsequent speeches to two minutes."
3. The motion would then have to receive a second from another member of the house.
4. This motion is not debatable under parliamentary procedure so a vote is taken right away.
5. A two-thirds vote is required to pass.

A subsequent speaker may have his/her time extended if a motion stating the amount of additional time is made, seconded, and passes with a vote of two-thirds or more.

A common motion is point of personal privilege. You should rise to a point of personal privilege if you are unable to hear the speaker, need to leave the room, and so forth. If you simply feel some personal discomfort (the room is too warm or too cold), you may not interrupt the speaker. If, however, something is seriously affecting the orderly progress of the debate, such as your being unable to hear due to lack of amplification or disruptive delegates, you may interrupt the speaker and ask the presiding officer to rectify the situation.

Another important motion is previous question. This motion calls to discontinue subsequent speeches and move to closing speeches (on bills and amendments) and voting.



IV. Congressional Rules

AMENDING LEGISLATION DURING DEBATE

Legislation at the end of the orders of the day may be moved up and discussed immediately with a motion to change the orders of the day, which requires a 2/3rds vote.

Amendments are often added to legislation during the debate after the main speeches have been given. If you would like a provision added or deleted from a piece of legislation you must:

1. Submit the amendment in writing to the presiding officer.
2. Raise your hand and be recognized by the presiding officer.
3. Introduce your amendment by reading the specific language of the provision you wish added or deleted.
4. The presiding officer will ask the sponsor of the legislation if the amendment is “friendly” -- this means the sponsor thinks your amendment improves the legislation and agrees with it. If the amendment is “friendly”, the amendment can be incorporated into the legislation by unanimous consent.
5. If the amendment is not “friendly” or if unanimous consent is not given, the amendment must be seconded by another member of the house.
6. At this point the debate will shift focus to a discussion of the amendment, not the whole legislation. You, as the person who proposed the amendment, will have three minutes to explain why you feel the amendment is needed. Then speeches will alternate between opponents of the amendment and proponents.
7. Debate on the amendment ends when someone moves the previous question on the amendment, it is seconded, and passed.
8. A vote is then taken on whether or not to adopt the amendment. Amendments require a majority vote to pass.
9. If the amendment fails, debate resumes on the original version of the legislation.
10. If the amendment passes, the debate resumes on the legislation as amended.

**CHECK OUT THE
TABLE OF
PARLIAMENTARY
MOTIONS ON THE
NEXT PAGE!**



Appendix I

Table of Parliamentary Motions

MOTION TO USE	PURPOSE OF MOTION	INTERRUPT SPEAKER?	SECOND NEEDED?	DEBATABLE?	VOTE REQUIRED TO PASS
A POINT OF ORDER	To correct an error in Parliamentary Procedure	YES	NO	NO	Decision of the Chair
POINT OF PERSONAL PRIVILEGE	To make a personal request during the proceedings	YES	NO	NO	Decision of the Chair
POINT OF PARLIAMETARY INQUIRY	To ask a question about the proceedings	YES	NO	NO	Answer from Chair
MOVE TO ADJOURN	To dismiss the meeting	NO	YES	NO	Majority
MOVE TO RECESS	To dismiss the meeting for a specific length of time	NO	YES	NO	Majority
CALL FOR DIVISION	Request for a hand count instead of a voice count	YES	NO	NO	Decision of the Chair
MOVE TO TABLE	Postpone debate on a motion until a later time	NO	YES	NO	Majority
MOVE TO PREVIOUS QUESTION	End debate	NO	YES	NO	2/3rds
MOVE TO AMEND	To add, delete, or modify provisions of legislation	NO	YES	YES	Majority
MOVE TO LIMIT DEBATE	To set a time on debating the legislation or amendment	NO	YES	NO	2/3rds
MOVE TO SUSPEND THE RULES	To take action contrary to established rules or set time limits	NO	YES	NO	2/3rds
MOVE TO CHANGE THE ORDERS OF THE DAY	To change the agenda to move a piece of legislation up on the agenda	NO	YES	NO	2/3rds
MOVE TO EXTEND THE SPEAKERS TIME	To give the current speaker a specific amount of extra time	NO	YES	NO	2/3rds



Appendix II

How to Write Legislation

Decide the type of legislation you will write:

Bill: establishes a new law;

Congressional Resolution: expresses the sentiment of Congress;

Constitutional Amendment: changes or additions to the U.S. Constitution.

Format

Use Garamond Font

Your legislation needs the following sections

Title: Center title and put in all caps (capitalize every letter)

Sponsored By: Needs to be sponsored by both a Senator and a Representative. Include name of high school.

Rationale: This should be a short paragraph that explains reasons why your legislation is necessary. For example, a rationale for a bill lowering the minimum wage for teenagers might read:

A lower minimum wage for teens will decrease teen unemployment as statistics show that as the minimum wage increases so does teenage unemployment. In the inner city, where teens need gainful employment, businesses currently won't hire teenagers when they can hire an older person. Giving teenagers a chance to gain valuable job experience far outweighs the fact that they will be paid less.

First Line of legislation:

For a bill: "Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that:"

For a resolution: "Be it resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that:"

For an amendment: "Be it amended by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, and upon approval of 3/4 of the States, that:"

Body of Legislation:

Bills: The body of the bill should be divided into sections and numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. The first section should establish the main effect of the legislation. Other sections should establish any limitations or restrictions. Also include any penalties that accompany your new law. All bills passed are assumed to go into effect in 90 days (unless otherwise specified), so you do not have to include the time when the bill becomes law. If your legislation involves federal expenditures, list the cost. Generalized costs are acceptable. For example, you could increase the space budget by 50%.

Resolutions: All resolutions should contain "Whereas clauses" instead of a paragraph that gives reasons why the Congress should adopt the resolution.



Appendix III

Sample Legislation

The first bill shows proper formatting for submitting a congressional bill. The following bills provide examples of the wording for resolutions, bills, and amendments.

A BILL TO CREATE A FLAT TAX

Sponsored by: Senator Brian Lazarus of Lincoln High School
Representative Alex Levine of Lincoln High School

The current federal tax code is an overly complex system that attempts to redistribute wealth by assessing higher tax rates on the wealthy than on the middle and lower classes. Wealthy individuals foil the system by finding as many loopholes as possible to cut their tax liabilities. The fairest way to assess taxes is to have everyone pay the same percentage of their income with no deductions allowed.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, that:

Section 1. The Internal Revenue Code shall be amended to impose on the taxable income of every individual a tax equal to 19 percent of the taxable income of such individual for such taxable year.

Section 2. The Internal Revenue Code will further be amended to eliminate all personal income tax deductions.

A RESOLUTION TO PROMOTE THE USE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY

Sponsored by: Senator Victoria LaMar from Hayward High School
Representative Joey Garcia from Hayward High School

Whereas: Nuclear power is a cheap and efficient source of energy; and

Whereas: Pollution from other forms of energy, specifically coal and natural gas, is threatening to have an irreversible detrimental impact on the environment; and

Whereas: With today's technology, nuclear power is almost completely safe

Be it resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives that:

Section 1. The U.S. Department of Energy should take every step possible to encourage the use of nuclear power.

Section 2. The Federal government, state governments, and private industry should invest money into researching ways to make nuclear power sources even safer.

RESOLUTION



Appendix III

Sample Legislation

A BILL TO BAN COSMETIC RESEARCH ON ANIMALS

Sponsored by: Senator Megan Davis from Pope John XXIII High School
Representative Matthew Pelequin from Pope John XXIII High School

The cruel and inhumane use of animals for testing cosmetic products must stop. Every year over 50,000 cats, rabbits, and other animals are tortured, maimed, or even killed for the only purpose of developing new cosmetic products. Unlike animal testing for medical research, this experimentation does not benefit society in any productive way.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that:

Section 1. This act bans the use of animal testing for the development of cosmetic products.

Section 2. Animal testing will be allowed for medical research. A five member National Animal Experimentation board will be appointed by the President to establish the necessity and validity of all animal experimentation.

Section 3. If any animal experimentation is conducted without approval from the National Animal Experimentation Board the person(s) or company involved will be fined \$7,000 for each animal harmed.

AN AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE EQUAL RIGHTS FOR ALL PEOPLE REGARDLESS OF SEX

Sponsored by: Senator Meredith Lincoln from Sehome High School
Representative Joanna Harper from Sehome High School

While there are more women than men in our country, women continue to be the objects of discrimination. Their concerns include equal pay, discrimination on the job, and legal equity. Many believe that these areas of concern can be addressed with the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment which would prohibit discrimination based on sex.

Be it amended by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, and upon approval of 3/4 of the States, that:

Section 1. Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States of America or by any state on account of sex.

Section 2. The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

BILL

AMENDMENT