



GUIDE TO JSA WINTER CONGRESS

WRITING YOUR BILL

Writing legislation. The process 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.

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.

Research. Once you decide an area of interest, read newspaper and magazine articles to get a sense of the current issues being discussed. Your public library should have issues of Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report and Congressional Digest. 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 and political associations have provided access to certain CRS reports on their websites. Try getting these in-depth reports from <http://openocrs.com/>.

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.

Determining the type of Legislation. There are three types of legislation:

- **Bill:** establishes a new law;
- **Congressional Resolution:** expresses the sentiment of Congress;
- **Constitutional Amendment:** changes or additions to the U.S. Constitution.

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 arm 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.

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.

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.

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 could be: "All interstate commercial vehicle operators shall be subject to a random drug test at least once a year." Other sections 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), 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%.

Formatting your legislation. The legislation should be in Garamond font. The title should be capitalized and 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 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:"*

The body of the bill should be divided into sections and numbered 1, 2, 3, etc. There are several sample bills for you to follow at the end of the handbook.

At the bottom of the page, please include the names, addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses of the bill sponsor(s).

THE PATH OF LEGISLATION

"How a Bill Becomes a Law"

Below is a description of the legislative process that is 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 introduced simultaneously to the Senate and the House and assigned to the proper House and Senate Committees. Legislation is assigned to committees in advance of 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 the committees, the bills are debated in the order prescribed in the Legislative Index. 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.
3. After debating the bill, the committee votes on the bill. If both the House Committee and Senate Committee pass the bill, it goes on to the floors of the House and Senate. If neither committee passes the bill, it dies in committee. If one committee passes the bill but the other does not, the bill goes only to the floor of the legislative body whose committee passed the bill. For example, if the House Committee passes the bill but the Senate Committee does not, the bill goes only to the floor of the House.
4. If both legislative bodies pass identical versions of the bill, the bill will be considered law.
5. One or both houses may decide to amend a bill as it moves through committee and onto the floor. If both houses pass the bill in different forms, the Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate will appoint a Conference Committee. The committee will produce the version of the bill that will be debated and voted on in both chambers. If both chambers pass this version of the bill, it will be considered law.

CONGRESSIONAL RULES

I. COMMITTEE HEARINGS

Student delegates may attend the Committees of their choice during the convention. The committees will:

1. Determine the wording of the bills, by passing them as submitted or amending them.
2. Rank the passed bills in order of importance.
3. Send legislation to the floors of the House and Senate.
4. Choose one committee member to be the main opponent of the bill on the floor of the House and the Senate.

Committee Chairs, selected in advance of the convention, will determine the order of discussion.

If you are interested in applying to be a Committee Chair or hold another position, please refer to the Leadership Positions section of this booklet.

Sponsors present their legislation to the committee. You should explain the reason your legislation is needed, the rationale behind and restrictions or limitations in your legislation, and the definitions of any terms that may be unclear. You have ten minutes for your formal presentation which include your presentation and questions from committee members. A majority of votes will be required to pass legislation out of committee.

II. HOUSE AND SENATE SESSIONS

The House and Senate Sessions are presided over by the Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore of the Senate, respectively. These two Congressional leaders are selected in advance of the convention.

Before the general sessions begin, the Rules Committee determines the order in which the bills are debated, and establishes any modifications of the debate procedures for floor debate. The Rules Committee is composed of the Speaker of the House, President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and other student leaders of the House and Senate Committees.

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 have been read, 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 six minute opening speech from the sponsor of the bill, followed by a six 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:
 - a) Questions;
 - b) Another speaker on the same side; or
 - c) 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.



III. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

Committee Hearings as well as General House and Senate Sessions are run according to parliamentary procedure as stated in Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised.

Included with this handbook is a chart on parliamentary procedure and rules. After each session is called to order, the rules are in effect. Motions are made by raising your hand, being recognized by the presiding officer, and telling the chair under what point (or motion) you rise.

For example, if a member of the house wanted to **suspend the rules** of the debate to make subsequent speeches two minutes long instead of the established three, 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 particular motion is not debatable under parliamentary procedure so a vote is taken right away.
5. This motion requires a two-thirds vote to pass.

Another important motion is **previous question**. If this motion passes, subsequent speeches are discontinued, closing speeches are presented (on bills and amendments), and the vote is taken.

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.

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, then you may interrupt the speaker and ask the presiding officer to rectify the situation.

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.

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.

TABLE OF PARLIAMENTARY MOTIONS

<u>MOTION TO USE</u>	<u>PURPOSE OF MOTION</u>	<u>INTERRUPT SPEAKER?</u>	<u>SECOND NEEDED?</u>	<u>DEBATABLE</u>	<u>VOTE REQUIRED TO PASS</u>
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 PARLIAMENTARY 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 THE 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 limit 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 SPEAKER'S TIME	To give the current speaker a specific amount of extra time.	NO	YES	NO	2/3rds

SAMPLE BILLS

The first bill shows proper formatting for submitting a congressional bill. The next three provide examples of the different wording for resolutions, bills and amendments, in that order.

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 of Hayward High School
Representative Joey Garcia of 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.

A BILL TO BAN COSMETIC RESEARCH ON ANIMALS

Sponsored by: Senator Megan Davis of Pope John XXIII High School
Representative Matthew Pelequin of 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 of Sehome High School
Representative Joanna Harper of 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.