

## LESSON 2: **WRITING WINNING LEGISLATION**

### TOPIC:

#### Writing Winning Legislation

#### Essential Question + Objectives

How do laws shape everyday life in the United States?

1. Students will be able to analyze a selected bill, discuss its components, and consider stakeholder perspectives.
2. Students will be able to write a piece of legislation featuring standard bill components.

### MATERIALS/RESOURCES:

- Access to the internet and reliable sources for research
- Printed copies of the *bill discussed in the sample round*
- A group of sample bills from the current *NSDA Docket*
- Highlighters and pens/pencils
- Student access to the internet or other research materials
- Students' completed worksheets (*included, page 12*)
- Projection of Analyzed Bill
- Legislation (*Bill*) *Template*
- Printed copies of *Page 19-20* from NSDA Congressional Debate Guide

### Insight:

Congressional Debate allows students to advocate for issues of their design. The legislation that is debated in competitive Congressional sessions is typically written by students for students to debate. Legislation is then submitted to the tournament to be combined into a docket. The docket is shared with all of the competitors in advance so they have time to research and prepare speeches to affirm or negate it. At the tournament, students vote to set the agenda for their chamber (*group of students*). Then, after debate, they vote to pass or fail the legislation. Students own the process from start to finish!

In this lesson, students will analyze bills and resolutions for the purpose of better understanding the role each section of that legislation plays, so they are better informed as they begin to write legislation themselves.

### FOUR-DAY LESSON

#### DAY 1: LEGISLATION BASICS

##### HOOK

5-10 minutes

Using the questions students wrote the night before, review the basics covered in the Chapter 2 reading.

*“Have you ever wondered how the laws that govern our country are created? Imagine having the power to shape policies and bring about change. Today, we’re going to dive into the fascinating world of the legislative process and discover the art of crafting a bill in Congress. Get ready to unlock the secrets behind the words that have the potential to shape our nation’s future!”*

- ▶ Ask students if they are familiar with any bills that have been in the news recently or any issues they feel strongly about.

##### BODY

45 minutes

#### LEGISLATIVE PROCESS REVIEW (15 minutes)

In the previous lessons, students learned/reviewed the legislative process in Congress, including the role of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Before diving into the specifics of bills, ask the following questions of the class to assess their understanding.

- Name three differences between the House and the Senate. *(Answers will vary but examples include: age for eligibility, representation based on size of population, length of term, powers to impeach/initiate tax laws/spending bills.)*
- If a bill is revised by the Senate, what happens to it next? *(It returns to the House for another vote.)*
- Show the **Crash Course video How a Bill Becomes a Law** to dive deeper into the process of introduction, committee review, floor debate, voting, and potential reconciliation between the House and Senate versions.

#### KEY COMPONENTS OF A BILL (30 minutes)

Distribute to each student a copy of the **bill discussed in the sample round** they viewed during Lesson 1. Project the same bill on the board so that you can annotate alongside the students. Share with students that the notes they take in this lesson will be used tomorrow for independent work.

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Discuss and identify the key components of a bill, including the title, enacting clause, sponsor(s), sections, and provisions.

- ▶ **TITLE:** The purpose of a title is to identify the purpose and objective of the bill and to provide an official designation of the law. If students are familiar with other debate events, it's helpful to tell them to think of the title like the resolution.
  - *A Bill to Phase Out Government Subsidies and Financial Incentives to Meat and Dairy Industries*
  
- ▶ **ENACTMENT CLAUSE:** This portion of a bill formalizes the intent for the bill to become a law. For the purpose of Congressional Debate, the enactment clause will always be: "BE IT ENACTED BY THE CONGRESS HERE ASSEMBLED THAT:"
  - *(this is the same for each piece of legislation, and should not change)*
  
- ▶ **SPONSORS:** A sponsor is the member of Congress who introduces legislation. The sponsor is the primary advocate for the bill in their respective chamber and works to bring it to the floor for debate. In a Congressional Debate round, typically there is only one author and it is either a student, a school, or a district.
  - *Introduced for Congressional Debate by the South Oregon District.*
  
- ▶ **SECTIONS:** Bills are divided into numbered SECTIONS. Each section outlines an element of the bill. The first section may state the purpose of the bill and/or describe the situation or problem that gives rise to the measure or describe the need for and intent of the legislation. Sections may specify the action mandated by the legislation, including clear instructions for changes to existing laws. They may also provide definitions of terms, provide remedies and penalties, and specify how long the legislation will be in effect.
  - *Ask the students to read each section and try to identify what the goal of each section is.*
    - » **Section 1** – State the new policy in one or a few brief declarative sentence(s).
    - » **Section 2** – Define ambiguous terms not obviously clear or technical in nature.
    - » **Section 3** – Name the government agency or agencies that will oversee enforcement along with the specific enforcement mechanism.
    - » **Section 4** – Detail when the legislation will go into effect.
    - » **Section 5** – The sentence "All laws in conflict with this legislation are hereby declared null and void."

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- ▶ **DEFINE KEY TERMS:** Break down each term one by one, providing clear definitions.
  - » **Fiscal Impact** – Define fiscal impact as the financial consequences of a bill. Explain that this includes both the cost and revenue implications of implementing the proposed law.
  - » **Effective Date** – Describe the effective date as the date on which the bill becomes law and takes legal effect. Mention that some bills specify a future date, while others become effective immediately upon passage.
  - » **Enforcement Provisions** – Explain that enforcement provisions outline how the law will be enforced. This may include penalties, regulations, or agencies responsible for enforcing the law.

### CLOSURE

5 minutes

#### REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

- Collect the students' sample bills with their annotations/notes.
- Discuss the importance of considering the potential impact of legislation.
- Summarize the key takeaways from the lesson and address any lingering questions or concerns.

## DAY 2: LEGISLATION ANALYSIS

### HOOK

5 minutes

*“To turn an idea into a law, as we’ve discussed, is a complex and political process. If a piece of legislation is to succeed, it must be well written and its author has to balance a lot of different interests. Today, we will take on the role of a legislator who is deciding whether or not to cosign/support the bill.”*

### BODY

60 minutes

Return to the students their annotated bill from the last lesson. They may use their notes and the sample as they analyze bills during today’s lesson, complete their homework, and the same notes will be used in the next lesson.

#### COLLABORATION AND DISCUSSION (25 minutes)

Divide the class into small groups, with each group focusing on a different bill from the current month’s NSDA docket. Ask them to repeat the analysis done the previous lesson on the sample bill.

- Within their groups, students should discuss the objectives, provisions, potential impact, and any amendments or modifications being proposed in their selected bills.

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- Encourage students to ask questions, identify unfamiliar terms, and evaluate the bill's strengths and weaknesses.

### RESEARCH AND STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES (15 minutes)

Instruct students to conduct additional research on the issue addressed by the sample bill.

Ask students to identify various stakeholders who may be affected by the bill, such as citizens, interest groups, businesses, or advocacy organizations.

Discuss different stakeholder perspectives and their arguments for or against the bill, considering their potential motivations and impacts.

- Ask the students questions such as, *Who benefits from the passage of this bill? Who is harmed when this bill passes? Does a particular group make money/lose money when this bill passes? What groups may be advocating for this bill and why?*

### GROUP DISCUSSION ON STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES (15 minutes)

Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a different stakeholder perspective (e.g., *pro bill, against the bill, neutral*).

In their groups, students should discuss their assigned perspectives, share their analysis of the bill, and develop arguments to support their position.

Reconvene as a class and facilitate a debate or discussion, allowing students to present their viewpoints, respond to counter arguments, and engage in respectful discourse.

### HOMework AND/OR ASSESSMENT

- Give each student a sample piece of legislation from the *NSDA Docket* and an analysis worksheet (included, page 12). Explain that this worksheet will have students identify the basic components of the bill and predict stakeholder perspectives and their arguments for or against the bill, considering their potential motivations and impacts. You may group the students so a few have the same bill, you may give each student their own bill to analyze, or all students may have the same piece of legislation.

**NOTE:** *These worksheets will be reviewed and peer-graded during the next class session. If using this assignment as a graded assessment, consider giving each student a different piece of legislation, or having them 'claim' one from a docket so that they can't share answers.*

### CLOSURE

5 minutes

#### REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

- Summarize the key takeaways from the lesson and address any lingering questions or concerns.
- Preview the fact that bills that are “good for debate” have evidence-based reasons both for and against their passage. Ask students to brainstorm what some “not good for debate” bills might be.

### DAY 3: ANALYSIS ASSESSMENT

### HOOK

15 minutes

*“Yesterday we evaluated bills as if we were legislators. Today, we’re going to review our fellow legislators’ analysis as a way to check their work and solidify our own understanding.”*

Provide students time to review the independent analysis assignment they worked on during the last class and/or for homework. Once complete, collect their analysis worksheets and redistribute them to a different student so that they may be peer-graded.

### BODY

45 minutes

#### ***If students were assigned legislation in groups:***

Group students by the legislation analyzed. Have them review the legislation that was analyzed and together create one set of correct answers that they all agree upon. Once they feel they’ve got all of their answers correct, review their work.

#### ***If students all analyzed a different piece of legislation:***

Direct students to review the legislation as if they had to complete their own analysis worksheet and determine if they agree with their classmate’s responses. If they agree, have them note agreement. If they disagree, have them note disagreement and note where they find an answer.

#### ***If students all analyzed the same piece of legislation:***

Using a projection, work through the analysis worksheet showing where the answers can be found and then discussing the stakeholders’ potential arguments for/against the bill.

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### CLOSURE

10 minutes

#### REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

- Return each student's analysis worksheet and take a few minutes to let them review and ask their peer-grader questions. Discuss common errors or questions.
- Challenge students to begin thinking of a bill they think should be passed by the U.S. Congress.

### DAY 4: WRITING A BILL

**NOTE:** This lesson plan could take longer than 45-60 minutes, especially if students are diving deep into research. Extend work time to last as many periods as needed.

### HOOK

5 minutes

*"Yesterday, we entered the fascinating world of legislative power as we explored the process of writing a bill for Congress. Today, get ready to dive deeper into the art of persuasive writing and advocacy. Imagine having the chance to pitch your bill to lawmakers, sparking passionate debates and potentially shaping our nation's future. Get ready, because we're about to unleash the power of your words!"*

### BODY

45-60 minutes

#### LESSON: GUIDED BILL WRITING (40 minutes)

Distribute printed copies of pages 19 the **NSDA Congressional Debate Guide**.

- In this sample, section five has been incorporated into section four. It isn't wrong, but encourage students to still put *"All laws in conflict with this 13 legislation are hereby declared null and void."* as a section five.

Review the guidelines and components of the bill, such as the title, preamble, sections, and provisions.

Instruct students to choose an issue they are passionate about and guide them through the process of drafting their bill using the NSDA provided template. Remind them (*from the first day of this lesson*) that each section has specific content it should include.

Permit students to do research to review other bills that may be similar to learn more about the issue they want to address or to discover what levels of funding may be appropriate. At this point, they don't have to have the exact wording—sentence fragments or ideas are okay!

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Encourage students to think about the potential impact of their bill and consider the perspectives of different stakeholders.

### PEER REVIEW AND FEEDBACK (15 minutes)

Have students exchange their written bills with a partner or in small groups.

Instruct students to review their peers' bills asking the same questions as those on the analysis worksheet, providing constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement.

- It may be productive to give them new analysis worksheets or project the questions on the board.

Emphasize the importance of clarity, coherence, and persuasive arguments in their bill writing.

### REVISION AND FINALIZATION (10 minutes)

Allocate time for students to revise their bills based on the feedback received.

Encourage students to refine their ideas, strengthen their arguments, and ensure coherence and logical flow in their bill.

**TEACHER TIP:** *Collect all student legislation. Before the next class period, review and suggest edits as needed. If appropriate, give students class time to make edits. This set of bills will be used throughout the rest of the lessons, so having them as digital copies may be helpful.*

## CLOSURE

10 minutes

### REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

- Discuss the importance of persuasive writing, critical thinking, and considering multiple perspectives when crafting legislation.
- Summarize the key takeaways from the lesson and address any lingering questions or concerns



NAME:



## LEGISLATION ANALYSIS

Bill Title:

Enactment Clause:

What is the issue this bill seeks to address?

What is the fiscal impact of this bill?

What is this bill's enforcement mechanism?

What are some arguments **for** this bill? Who may hold those positions?

What are some arguments **against** this bill? Who may hold those positions?