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Class in Session

*Instructional Guide, Resources, and Worksheets
for turning your class into the Oregon Legislature*

Produced by Oregon State Capitol Visitor Services
2026

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Session in your Classroom



The accompanying activities give you the tools to run a mock Oregon legislative session in your classroom.

Created with your needs in mind, you'll find options for a 30 minute session, a 1.5 hour session, and a multi-day session.

At any point, your activities can be supplemented with the accompanying questions, activities, or your own extensions.

Further lesson plans, activities, and resources can be found at OregonCapitol.com/education.

*Information, activities and resources reviewed and advised on by Oregon State Capitol Visitor Services' Education Advisory Council
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30 Minute Legislative Session

Resources:

- Bill list
- House/Senate Indicators
- Gavel
- Slide Deck
- Testimony Cards
- Vote Recording Tool

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Explain how a bill becomes a law
- Explain how the public can influence the lawmaking process
- Explain how the Legislative and Executive branches of government balance

Essential Practices

- Seek and analyze diverse perspectives to develop a more complete understanding of past and current events
- Demonstrate empathy to understand how identities shape actions of resistance and resilience among individuals and communities
- Apply the practices and knowledge of social science to determine the most effective ways to take informed civic action

2026 ODE Social Science Standards Met

Middle School

8.CI.PI.8 Examine the interconnection of governing power and responsibility in the system of checks and balances

8.C.IR.9 Identify and understand how to apply the rights and responsibilities of individuals under the Constitution

8.C.DP.11 Analyze issues involving liberty in conflict with equality of authority, individual rights in conflict with the common good, or majority rule in conflict with minority rights

High School

HS.C.PI.3 Examine and compare institutions, functions, and processes of government

HS.C.IR.8 Using primary sources from multiple perspectives, discuss and debate the central ideas of government of the United States and Oregon

HS.C.IR.9 Describe the civic behaviors that promote and strengthen a pluralistic democracy

HA.C.IR.10 Analyze how political parties, interest and community groups, corporations, and mass media influence the beliefs and behaviors of individuals, and the policies and laws adopted by local, state, and national governments

HS.C.DP.13 Argue and defend positions on contemporary issues in which foundational ideas or values are in tension

HS.C.CE.17 Explain how active citizens and political or social movements can affect the lawmaking process locally, nationally, and internationally

For Teachers: Role Descriptions

Senators/Representatives: Introduce bills, debate, and vote on said bills.

- 2x the number of Representatives than Senators (ex: 10 Senators, 20 Representatives)

Speaker/President: Elected by their chamber, they keep order during meetings of the House or Senate, ensure each member is treated fairly, and move meetings along by banging the gavel.

- 1 in the Senate, 1 in the House

Committee Members: Selected from each chamber, they discuss bills organized by subject, listen to public testimony, listen to input from interest groups like lobbyists, ask questions of the public during testimony, and make recommendations about the passage of a bill and suggest possible changes to a bill.

- At least 3 students (who are also Senators/Reps), more can be appointed but an odd number makes for easy voting

Public: Provide testimony for or against bills, or raises questions about how the bill will function as a law.

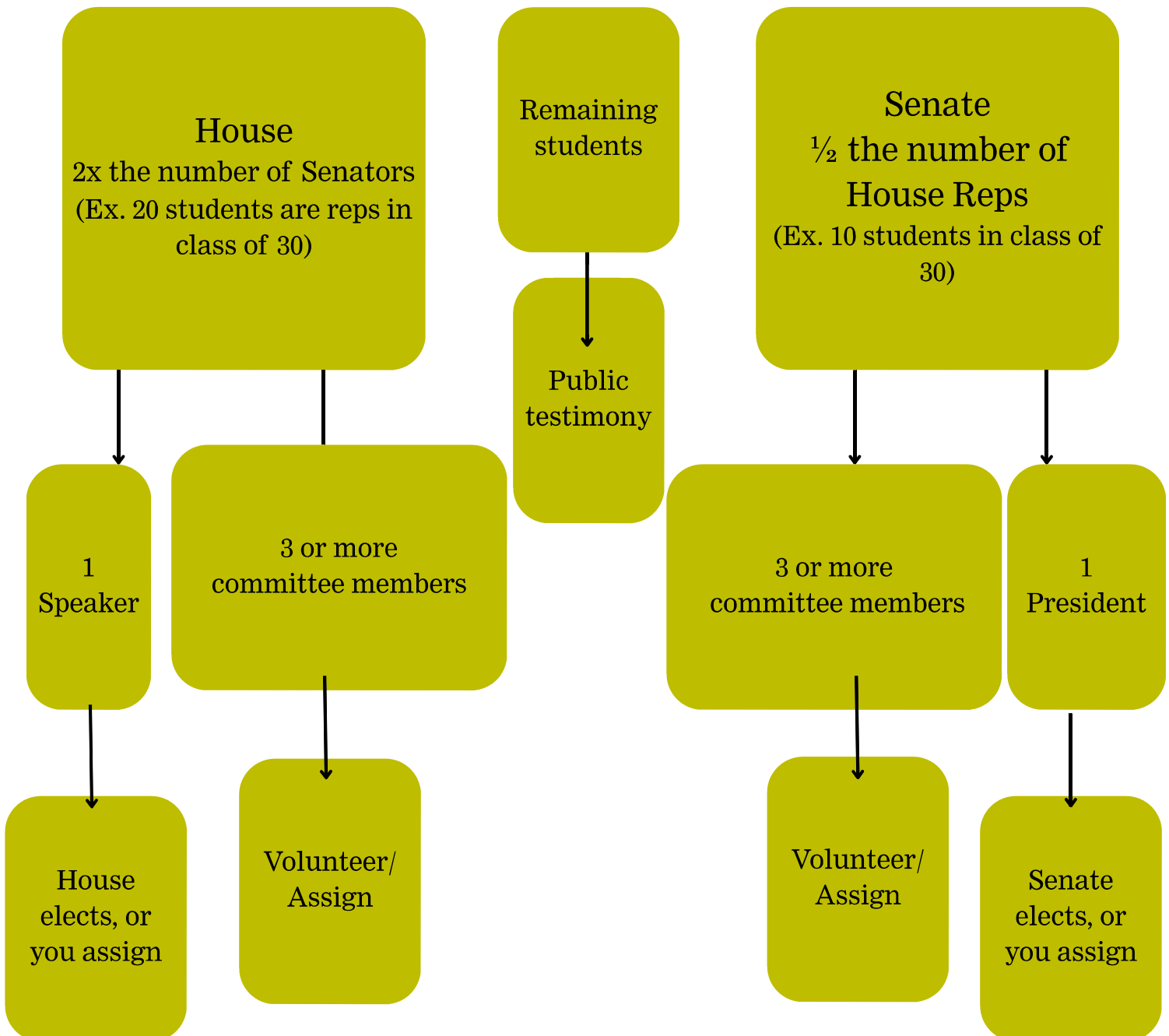
- At least 4 students per bill, more if desired. The public can also be pulled from Senators/Representatives who are not serving on the committee.

For Teachers: Class Organization

Divide the class into two groups representing the House of Representatives and the Senate, adjusting the number of students in each group as needed for your class size.

Students may take on multiple roles if necessary.

Create committees with an odd number of members when possible to support clear voting outcomes, though committees may include more than three students. You may choose to form multiple committees to address different policy topics or have a single committee handle all proposed legislation.



For Teachers: Getting Started Script

Slide 1 + 2

INSTRUCTOR: “Today, we’ll run our own Legislative Session. What is a Legislative Session? It’s when our State Legislators come together to make the laws that affect us throughout Oregon.

Everyone has a State Senator and a State Representative. For instance, if you lived at school, you would be represented by Senator [x] and Representative [y] *Lookup tool to find legislators here:* <https://geo.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/lookup/index.html?appid=fd070b56c975456ea2a25f7e3f4289d1>

We will be the Senators, Representatives, and the public today.”

Slide 5

INSTRUCTOR: “I need [10] students to be Senators, and [20] students to be Representatives. (Divide class). Now, I need you to elect a Senate President/Speaker of the House. This person will make sure the session runs smoothly, everyone follows the rules, and everyone is treated fairly. Take 5 minutes and decide who will be in charge of your chamber.

We will also need committee members from each chamber. The committee *amends*, or changes, bills, listens to public testimony, and asks questions to better understand the potential impacts of a bill. Senate President/House Speaker, appoint [3] people in your chamber to be on the committee. It’s better if not everyone on the committee has the same perspectives, that way we can really explore a bill. *(Take 3 minutes to assign committee members with the Speaker/President, or appoint yourself)*

Everyone who does not yet have a role - you will be the public. You’ll share your thoughts, or testimony, on the bills during committee.”

Slide 6

INSTRUCTOR: “We have table tents to show what our roles are - fold those so that we can easily identify you as a Senator, Representative, Committee Member, or Public. Now we can start session! “

Slide 7

INSTRUCTOR: “Quorum Call! Are [7] Senators present? Are [14] Representatives present? Yes? We have a quorum in both chambers. Senate President, bang the gavel to start session. Speaker of the House, bang the gavel to start session”

Slide 8

INSTRUCTOR: “We will start with First Readings. This introduces the bill to the chamber. A bill can start in the House or Senate, and is sponsored by a legislator. The idea for a bill can come from anyone.

We’ll start with [House/Senate] Bill [Selected from list].” *Bills can be introduced in both chambers or just one, depending on time and if you’d prefer to run committees/sessions concurrently for both chambers*

SENATE PRESIDENT/SPEAKER: (Bang Gavel) “First reading of [Senate/House] measures. (Call on student in your chamber) Would you please read the bill number, summary, and full text?”

STUDENT INTRODUCING BILL: “[House/Senate Bill XYZ], A Bill for an Act, Summary: [text].”

If reading more than one bill, continue reading bill texts until all bills are introduced in their respective chambers.

SENATE PRES / SPEAKER: “Seeing no other members in the queue, the [House/Senate] is adjourned.” (Bang Gavel)

Slide 9

INSTRUCTOR: “Now we send bills to committee, to be discussed and perhaps changed, or *amended*. Senators and Representatives sit on the committees, listen to the public’s testimony, and can ask questions to make things clearer. We will have a time limit of [x] per person.”
(Have the House or Senate committee members come to the front of the room, and sit facing the public audience)
(Have the audience draw testimony cards based on the bills being discussed)

INSTRUCTOR: “We’ll have a committee chair read the summary of the bill for the public. I’ll designate a committee chair, but normally the Speaker or President appoints chairs. Chairs run the meeting, and choose who will provide testimony next.
Chair [student last name], will you read the bill summary?”

COMMITTEE CHAIR STUDENT: (reads summary), “We will now open a public hearing on on [Bill]. We’ll start with (student/testimony of Chair’s choice)

STUDENT GIVING PUBLIC TESTIMONY: “Members of the committee, Chair [student name], My name is [name] and I’m here in support/opposition to this bill . . . [continue to share thoughts].”

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: *Can ask questions of students giving testimony, ask questions of each other, or share thoughts.*

COMMITTEE CHAIR: “Hearing no other testimony, the public hearing on [bill number] is now closed.”

INSTRUCTOR: “Members of the committee, we’ll open a work session on this bill. You can propose an amendment, move the bill to another committee, or move it to the floor for the chamber to vote on. We do this by making a ‘motion’”

COMMITTEE CHAIR: [If no amendments] I move [bill] with a do-pass recommendation / [If amendments] I move the [1,2, etc] amendments to [bill]

Repeat for each bill

Slide 10

INSTRUCTOR: To advance a bill, the committee votes, and we’ll see if the bill has a majority yes and passes. (*Committee members vote*).
Now any bills that have had motions will come back to the chamber they started in to be voted on. Normally, there is a second reading for informational purposes, then a third reading for the vote - we’ll skip right to the 3rd reading for time.”

(have students return to desks to kick off floor session)

SENATE PRESIDENT / HOUSE SPEAKER: (Bang Gavel) “Third reading of Senate/House Measures, [student], will you be our reader?”

STUDENT: reads full text, including any amendments, of the bill to be voted on.

INSTRUCTOR: “If any of the [Senators/Representatives] would like to make a comment on this bill, you can now. Raise your hand if you’d like to make a comment. We will have a 1 minute time limit for comments. [Senate President/House Speaker], you can call on the legislators to speak by saying “Recognize [Senator/Representative Last Name]”

SENATE PRESIDENT / HOUSE SPEAKER: “Recognize [Senator/Representative]”

SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE: “Colleagues, I rise in support/opposition to this bill because ...”

Repeat for each legislator who would like to speak

SENATE PRESIDENT / HOUSE SPEAKER: “The question now rises on the third reading and final passage of [Bill number]. Those of the opinion that the bill should pass vote aye”

INSTRUCTOR: We’ll take votes [out loud, using vote tool] now. After the votes are tallied the [Senate President/House Speaker] will give us the chamber’s decision.

SENATE PRESIDENT / HOUSE SPEAKER: “[bill number] having received a constitutional majority is considered passed / [bill number] have failed to receive a constitutional majority is not passed.”

Slide 11

INSTRUCTOR: “Now the bill has to work through this process in the opposite chamber. We will start with first readings. [Call on student in respective chamber] Would you please read the bill number and full text?”

STUDENT INTRODUCING BILL: “[House/Senate Bill XYZ], A Bill for an Act, Summary: [text].”

If reading more than one bill, continue reading bill texts until all bills are introduced in their respective chambers.

SENATE PRES / SPEAKER: Seeing no other members in the queue, the [House/Senate] is adjourned. (Bang Gavel)

INSTRUCTOR: “Now we’ll repeat the committee process for this chamber”

(Have the House or Senate committee members come to the front of the room, and sit facing the public audience)

(Have the audience draw testimony cards based on the bills being discussed)

We'll have a committee chair read the summary of the bill for the public. I'll designate a committee chair, but normally the Speaker or President appoints chairs.

Chair [Student], will you read the bill summary?"

COMMITTEE CHAIR STUDENT: (reads summary), "We will now open the public hearing on [Bill]. We'll start with (student/testimony of your choice)

STUDENT GIVING PUBLIC TESTIMONY: Members of the committee, Chair [student name], My name is [name] and I'm here in support/opposition to this bill . . . [continue to share thoughts]

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: *Can ask questions of students giving testimony, ask questions of each other, or share thoughts.*

COMMITTEE CHAIR: "Hearing no other testimony, the public hearing on [bill number] is now closed."

INSTRUCTOR: "Committee, what is your recommendation for this bill? Pass as is, make amendments (if so, what are they?), do not pass, or "table" for further discussion?"

COMMITTEE CHAIR: *Explain recommendation*

INSTRUCTOR: "Members of the committee, we'll open a work session on this bill. You can propose an amendment, move the bill to another committee, or move it to the floor for the chamber to vote on. We do this by making a 'motion'"

COMMITTEE CHAIR: [If no amendments] I move [bill] with a do-pass recommendation / [If amendments] I move the [1,2, etc] amendments to [bill]

Repeat for each bill

INSTRUCTOR: Again, any bills that have passed come back to the chamber to be voted on - we'll skip right to the 3rd reading for time.

(Have committee members return to their desks and the Speaker/President come to the front of the room for the chamber meeting)

Slide 12

SENATE PRESIDENT / HOUSE SPEAKER: (Bang Gavel) "Third reading of Senate/House Measures, [student], will you be our reader?"

STUDENT: *reads full text, including any amendments, of the bill to be voted on.*

INSTRUCTOR: "If any of the [Senators/Representatives would like to make a comment on this bill, you can now. Raise your hand if you'd like to make a comment. We will have a 1 minute time limit for comments. [Senate President/House Speaker], you can call on the legislators to speak by saying "Recognize [Senator/Representative Last Name]."

SENATE PRESIDENT / HOUSE SPEAKER: “Recognize [Senator/Representative]”

SENATOR/REPRESENTATIVE: “Colleagues, I rise in support/opposition to this bill because ...”

Repeat for each legislator who would like to speak

SENATE PRESIDENT / HOUSE SPEAKER: “The question now rises on the third reading and final passage of [Bill number]. Those of the opinion that the bill should pass vote aye”

INSTRUCTOR: We’ll take votes [out loud/using vote tool] now. After the votes are tallied the [Senate President/House Speaker] will give us the chamber’s decision.

SENATE PRESIDENT / HOUSE SPEAKER: “[bill number] having received a constitutional majority is considered passed /OR/ [bill number] have failed to receive a constitutional majority is not passed.”

INSTRUCTOR: “Now, all bills that have passed must be delivered to the Governor’s desk for signing. I’ll act as the governor. President/Speaker [last name], will you bring the bills?

I can sign these bills to make them into laws, veto the bills to send them back to the legislature, where a 2/3rds majority vote would override my veto, or take no action. If I take no action, the bill becomes a law after a set amount of time.

Bills that did not pass both chambers are “dead;” a legislator can try again next session.

This process runs throughout session, so if we had more time we could keep introducing new bills, taking them to committee, and voting on them. The important thing to remember is that each bill must complete all these steps before it becomes a law.”



POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Was anything surprising to you about this process?

Was it easier/harder than you anticipated? Why?

How do you think you could get involved in the lawmaking process?

How do you think political parties influence this process?

How do you think lobbyists (people who advocate on behalf of a policy area) influence this process?

In this exercise, we made decisions by consensus, rather than unilaterally (like an executive branch position might [governor, president, etc]). What are the pros and cons of making decisions this way?

Are there things that you are still curious about?

Slide 3: Looking at this quote, what do you think it means? Why do you think it was chosen to be put in the Capitol?

30 Minute Session Instructions

Organization

Break class into two groups, the House of Representatives and Senate.

- The House should have ~2x as many people as the Senate (IE, if you have 15 kids, 10 will become House Reps, 5 will become Senators)
 - The House elects a Speaker to keep them on task
 - The Senate elects a President to keep them on task
 - If desired, these roles can be selected as a group vote, or you as the instructor can nominate or select each role.
 - Assign 3 people from each chamber to be Committee Members
 - Committee Members will amend bills.
 - Selection for committee members could be by volunteer, assignment, or random, however works best for your class. In the Legislature, committee members are assigned by the Speaker or President. If desired, collaborate with this student to assign committee members.
 - The committee will meet after the bills are introduced.
 - Remaining students will be members of the public.

Begin Session

Quorum Call

Establish that 2/3^{rds} of the members in each chamber are present to establish a quorum.

First Readings - Introduce Bills

- Instructor explains that bills can start in the House or Senate, and are sponsored by Representatives, Senators, or a combination.
- Instructor “introduces” a bill into the House, and a different bill into the Senate. Use the **Bill List in Appendix A**
 - To introduce the bill, read the bill number and summary
- Instructor explains that the bill first has to go to committee after introduction.

Committee Process

- Break out committee members from the chamber the bill started in.
 - To save time, this committee can hear all bills from their chamber. In the long version, bills are heard by topic-centric committees
- Send Bills to Committee
 - The committee reads the full text of the bill
 - Out loud by a committee member, or popcorn through the members
 - The committee then asks for testimony from the public
 - Students not on the committee will assume the roles of the public providing testimony
 - Draw cards from the **Public Testimony Card in Appendix B** to assign testimony
 - Students share testimony, committee members listen
 - Committee can then amend the bill, pass it without amendments, or not pass it

Amending Bills

- If the committee opts to amend a bill in any way (change wording, add a clause, etc):
 - Edit the bill in writing on the bill form
 - All future readings of the bill must include the edits

Second Readings

- Bills that have been amended have a Second Reading in their chamber, for informational purposes. For time, we'll skip this process.
 - Or, have students vote to waive the Second Reading (Typically, this is a unanimous vote)

Third Readings (First Vote in Original Chamber)

- The bill returns to the original chamber it started in
 - The bill is read aloud, and the chamber votes:
 - If a majority of the chamber votes YES it passes, if not, it does not pass
 - If the bill does not pass, it ends here
 - If the bill passes, it moves to the next step

First Reading in *Opposite Chamber*

- Read the bill as it passed in the last chamber

Committee 2

- Send the bill to the *opposite chamber's* committee and repeat the committee process

Second Readings

- Vote to waive the second reading in the opposite chamber to save time

Third Readings in *Opposite Chamber* (Final Vote)

- The bill goes to the opposite chamber for another vote
 - The bill is read aloud and the chamber votes
 - If a majority votes YES it passes, if not, it does not pass
 - If the bill does not pass, it ends here
 - If the bill passes, it moves to the next step

Governor's Desk

- Students deliver the passed bill to the Governor's desk
 - You as the instructor are the governor
 - If you agree with the bill, sign it
 - If you disagree with the bill, veto it
 - As the Governor, you can also "take no action" and allow a bill to pass into law without your signature. Good for times you know a veto will be overridden but disagree with a bill.

Signed Bill

- This bill is now law

Vetoed Bill

- If you veto the bill, the chambers can take another vote - if they both get a 2/3rds majority of members present in each chamber, they override the veto and the bill becomes law

1.5 Hour Legislative Session

Resources:

- Bill formats
- House/Senate Indicators
- Gavel
- Slide Deck
- Committee Handouts
- Vote Recording Tool

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Explain how a bill becomes a law
- Explain how the public can influence the lawmaking process
- Explain how the Legislative and Executive branches of government balance

Essential Practices

- Seek and analyze diverse perspectives to develop a more complete understanding of past and current events
- Demonstrate empathy to understand how identities shape actions of resistance and resilience among individuals and communities
- Apply the practices and knowledge of social science to determine the most effective ways to take informed civic action
- Construct well-reasoned and logically coherent explanations, arguments, and solutions related to complex societal issues

2026 ODE Social Science Standards Met

Middle School

8.C.PI.4 Examine and analyze significant primary source documents establishing, limiting, or denying civil rights in the United States and Oregon

8.CI.PI.8 Examine the interconnection of governing power and responsibility in the system of checks and balances

8.C.IR.9 Identify and understand how to apply the rights and responsibilities of individuals under the Constitution

8.C.DP.11 Analyze issues involving liberty in conflict with equality of authority, individual rights in conflict with the common good, or majority rule in conflict with minority rights

8.C.CE.12 Examine the evolution of political parties and interest groups and their effect on events, issues, and ideas

8.E.MI.5 Explore varying viewpoints on the role and purpose of taxation and government spending historical and contemporary debate

High School

HS.C.PI.3 Examine and compare institutions, functions, and processes of government

HS.C.IR.8 Using primary sources from multiple perspectives, discuss and debate the central ideas of government of the United States and Oregon

HS.C.IR.9 Describe the civic behaviors that promote and strengthen a pluralistic democracy

HA.C.IR.10 Analyze how political parties, interest and community groups, corporations, and mass media influence the beliefs and behaviors of individuals, and the policies and laws adopted by local, state, and national governments

HS.C.DP.13 Argue and defend positions on contemporary issues in which foundational ideas or values are in tension

HS.C.CE.17 Explain how active citizens and political or social movements can affect the lawmaking process locally, nationally, and internationally

HS.G.HI.8 Identify examples of conflict and cooperation involving the use of land and natural resources

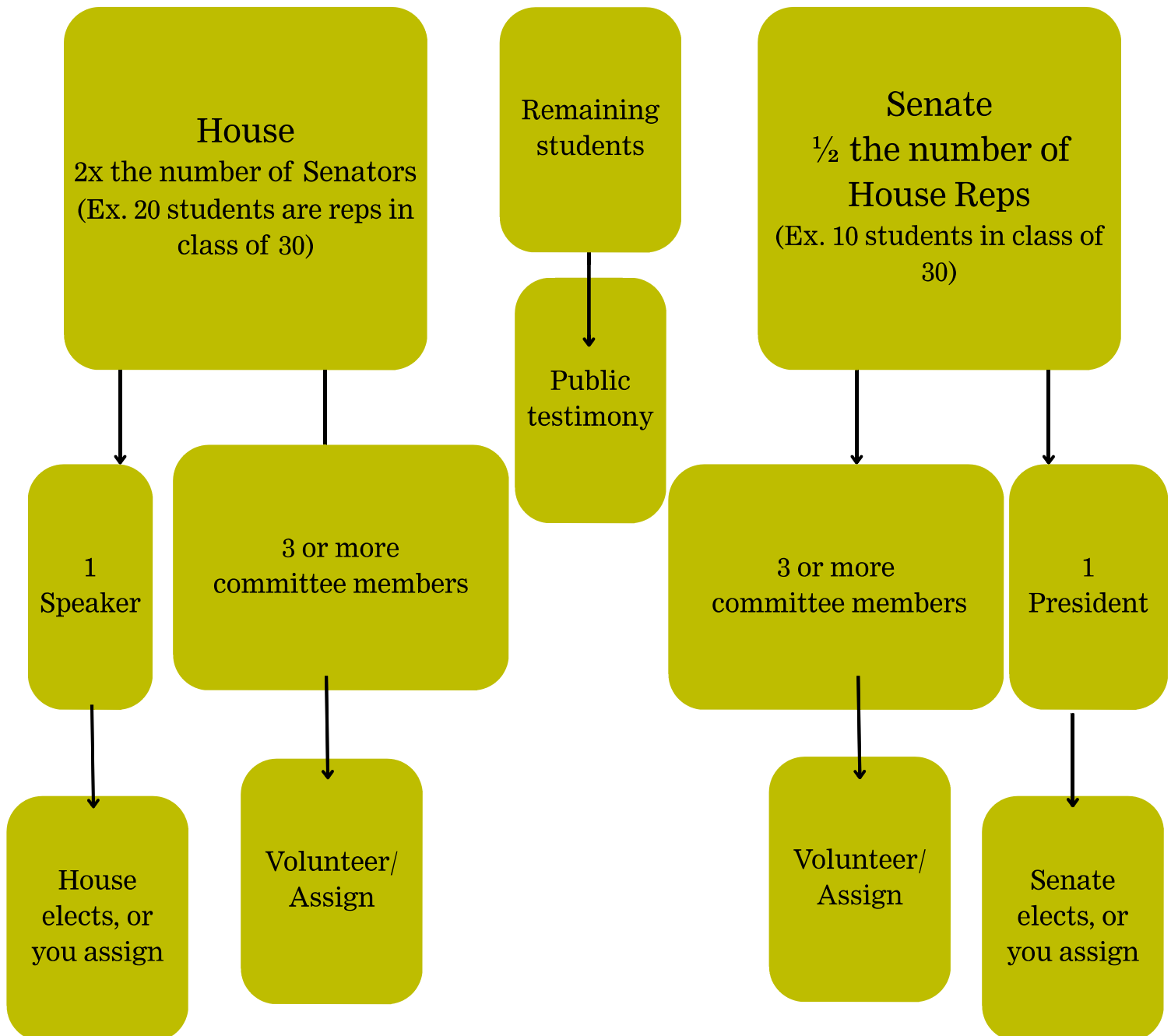
HS.G.HE.10 Evaluate efforts at the local, national, or international level to address the use of limited or environmentally harmful resources

For Teachers: Class Organization

Divide the class into two groups representing the House of Representatives and the Senate, adjusting the number of students in each group as needed for your class size.

Students may take on multiple roles if necessary.

Create committees with an odd number of members when possible to support clear voting outcomes, though committees may include more than three students. You may choose to form multiple committees to address different policy topics or have a single committee handle all proposed legislation.



Role Descriptions

Senators/Representatives: Introduce bills, debate, and vote on said bills.

Speaker/President: Elected by their chamber, they keep order during meetings of the House or Senate, ensure each member is treated fairly, and move meetings along by banging the gavel.

Committee Members: Selected from each chamber, they discuss bills organized by subject, listen to public testimony, listen to input from interest groups like lobbyists, ask questions of the public during testimony, and make recommendations about the passage of a bill and suggest possible changes to a bill.

Public: Provide testimony for or against bills, or raises questions about how the bill will function as a law

1.5 Hour Session Instructions

Follow the same format as the 30 minute session, with these changes:

- Students create their own bills and introduce in their chamber
 - To save on time, limit bills (1-5) per chamber.
- Students not serving on committees come up with their own testimony.
 - “The public” has a 10-15 minute brainstorm time to develop their testimony.
 - As the instructor, you can prompt students as various stakeholders, depending on bill
 - Ex: environmental protection group, a large scale developer, a nearby farmer, the head of an agency that, etc.
- Before votes, bill sponsors and other chamber members get to share testimony

Organization

Break class into two groups, the House of Representatives and Senate.

- The House should have ~2x as many people as the Senate (IE, if you have 15 kids, 10 will become House Reps, 5 will become Senators)
 - The House elects a Speaker to keep them on task
 - The Senate elects a President to keep them on task
 - If desired, these roles can be selected as a group vote, or you as the instructor can nominate or select each role.
 - Assign 3 people from each chamber to be Committee Members
 - Committee Members will amend bills. Selection for committee members could be by volunteer, assignment, or randomly, however works best for your class.
 - In the Legislature, committee members are assigned by the Speaker or President. If desired, collaborate with this student to assign committee members for their chambers.
 - The committee will meet after the bills are introduced.
- Remaining students will be members of the public when not acting as Reps or Senators

Begin Session

Introduce Bills

- Instructor explains that bills can start in the House or Senate, and are sponsored by Representatives, Senators, or a combination.
- Students take 15 minutes to brainstorm possible bill ideas. These can be done individually, as small groups, across party lines or across chambers.
 - Instructor Option: You can limit your class to only 1-5 bills per chamber to save on time. In the actual legislature, there are no limits.
 - To introduce the bill, read the bill number and summary aloud to the chamber it will start in.
- Instructor explains that the bill first has to go to committee after introduction.

Committee Process

Use Committee Process Handouts in Appendix A

- Break out committee members from each chamber.
 - Based on the topics of the bills, committees take names to reflect the subject matter they will discuss. Education, Energy and Environment, Public Safety, etc. Committees can name themselves, or you as the instructor can name them.
- Send Bills to Committee
 - The committee reads the full text of the bill
 - Out loud by a committee member, or popcorn through the members
 - The committee then asks for testimony from the public
 - Students not on the committee will assume the roles of the public providing testimony
 - Give students acting as “the public” 5-10 minutes to brainstorm their testimony.
 - Committee members can use this time to think about their perspectives, questions, and concerns they may have.
 - Prompt as needed to support developed thoughts
 - Students share testimony, committee members listen
 - Committee members can ask follow-up questions of the public, and share their own thoughts.
 - Committee can then amend the bill, pass it without amendments, or not pass it

Amending Bills

- If the committee opts to amend a bill in any way (change wording, add a clause, etc):
 - Edit the bill in writing on the bill form
 - All future readings of the bill must include the edits

1.5 Hour Legislative Session

Second Readings

- Bills that have been amended have a Second Reading in their chamber, for informational purposes.
- For time, skip this process or:
 - Have students vote to waive the Second Reading (Typically, this is a unanimous vote)

Third Readings (First Vote in Original Chamber)

- The bill returns to the original chamber it started in
 - The bill is read aloud, and the chamber votes:
 - If a majority of the chamber votes YES it passes, if not, it does not pass
 - If the bill does not pass, it ends here
 - If the bill passes, it moves to the next step

First Reading in *Opposite Chamber*

- Read the bill as it passed in the last chamber

Committee 2

- Send the bill to the *opposite chamber's* committee and repeat the committee process

Second Readings

- Vote to waive the second reading in the opposite chamber to save time

Third Readings in *Opposite Chamber* (Final Vote)

- The bill goes to the opposite chamber for another vote
 - The bill is read aloud and the chamber votes
 - If a majority votes YES it passes, if not, it does not pass
 - If the bill does not pass, it ends here
 - If the bill passes, it moves to the next step

Governor's Desk

- Students deliver the passed bill to the Governor's desk
 - You as the instructor are the governor
 - If you agree with the bill, sign it
 - If you disagree with the bill, veto it
 - As the Governor, you can also "take no action" and allow a bill to pass into law without your signature. Good for times you know a veto will be overridden but disagree with a bill.

Signed Bill

- This bill is now law

Vetoed Bill

- If you veto the bill, the chambers can take another vote - if they both get a 2/3rds majority of members present in each chamber, they override the veto and the bill becomes law

Multi Day Legislative Session

Resources:

- Bill formats
- House/Senate Table Tents
- Gavel
- Slide Deck
- Oregon Constitution
- Vote Recording Tool

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Explain how a bill becomes a law
- Explain how the public can influence the lawmaking process
- Explain how the Legislative and Executive branches of government balance
- Explain the non-partisan aspects of bill making

Essential Practices

- Seek and analyze diverse perspectives to develop a more complete understanding of past and current events
- Demonstrate empathy to understand how identities shape actions of resistance and resilience among individuals and communities
- Apply the practices and knowledge of social science to determine the most effective ways to take informed civic action
- Construct well-reasoned and logically coherent explanations, arguments, and solutions related to complex societal issues
- Develop the necessary skills to critically analyze and evaluate digital and social media content, identify reliable sources, and become more informed and responsible digital citizens

2026 ODE Social Science Standards Met

Middle School

6/7.E.IC.8 Explain how government interventions, such as incentives, taxes or tribute affect individual participation in the economy

8.C.PI.4 Examine and analyze significant primary source documents establishing, limiting, or denying civil rights in the United States and Oregon

8.CI.PI.8 Examine the interconnection of governing power and responsibility i the system of checks and balances

8.C.IR.9 Identify and understand how to apply the rights and responsibilities of individuals under the Constitution

8.C.DP.11 Analyze issues involving liberty in conflict with equality of authority, individual rights in conflict with the common good, or majority rule in conflict with minority rights

8.C.CE.12 Examine the evolution of political parties and interest groups and their effect on events, issues, and ideas

8.E.MI.5 Explore varying viewpoints on the role and purpose of taxation and government spending historical and contemporary debate

High School

HS.C.PI.3 Examine and compare institutions, functions, and processes of government

HS.C.IR.8 Using primary sources from multiple perspectives, discuss and debate the central ideas of government of the United States and Oregon

HS.C.IR.9 Describe the civic behaviors that promote and strengthen a pluralistic democracy

HA.C.IR.10 Analyze how political parties, interest and community groups, corporations, and mass media influence the beliefs and behaviors of individuals, and the policies and laws adopted by local, state, and national governments

HS.C.DP.13 Argue and defend positions on contemporary issues in which foundational ideas or values are in tension

HS.C.CE.17 Explain how active citizens and political or social movements can affect the lawmaking process locally, nationally, and internationally

HS.G.HI.8 Identify examples of conflict and cooperation involving the use of land and natural resources

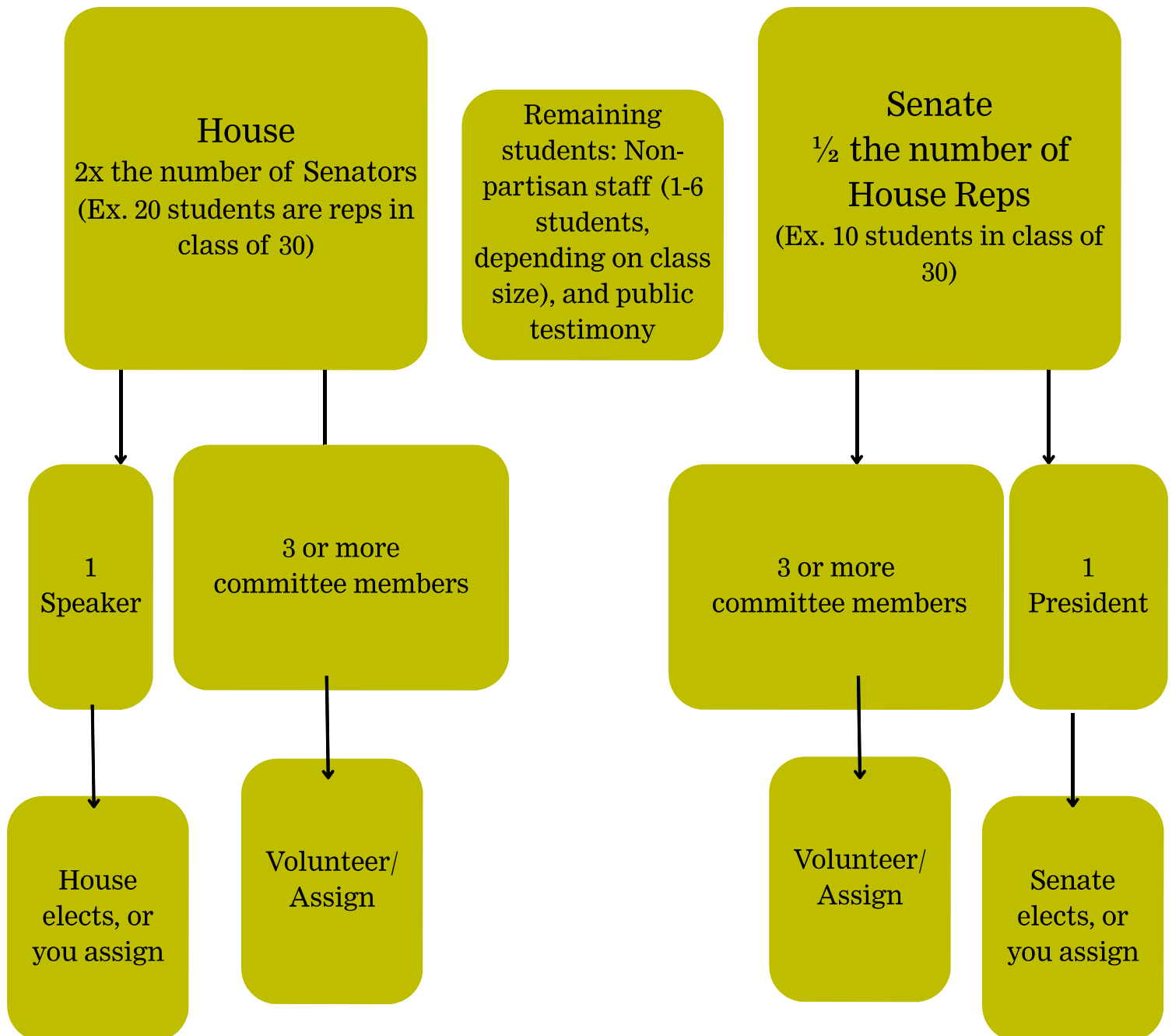
HS.G.HE.10 Evaluate efforts at the local, national, or international level to address the use of limited or environmentally harmful resources

For Teachers: Class Organization

Divide the class into two groups representing the House of Representatives and the Senate, adjusting the number of students in each group as needed for your class size.

Students may take on multiple roles if necessary.

Create committees with an odd number of members when possible to support clear voting outcomes, though committees may include more than three students. You may choose to form multiple committees to address different policy topics or have a single committee handle all proposed legislation.



Role Descriptions

Senators/Representatives: Introduce bills, debate, and vote on said bills.

Speaker/President: Elected by their chamber, they keep order during meetings of the House or Senate, ensure each member is treated fairly, and move meetings along by banging the gavel.

Committee Members: Selected from each chamber, they discuss bills organized by subject, listen to public testimony, listen to input from interest groups like lobbyists, ask questions of the public during testimony, and make recommendations about the passage of a bill and suggest possible changes to a bill.

Public: Provide testimony for or against bills, or raises questions about how the bill will function as a law

Non-Partisan Staff: Works for the process, and supports lawmaking in the background. Roles include:

- Legislative Counsel - Draft bills, checks grammar and spelling in all amendments, and check if a bill would be prohibited by the Oregon or US Constitutions.
- Legislative Fiscal - Research financial impacts of the bill. What would it cost to implement, how would it be funded, or how it would impact tax revenues.
- Legislative Policy and Research (Optional)- become subject matter experts in a bill subject area, and sit with the committee to answer technical questions.

Party Line Addition

Prior to session start, have House and Senate members align with a party for added complexity and the real 'game of politics.' This addition requires outside homework and an additional 30 minutes-1 hour

- Create Party Platforms
 - Pull directly from the Democratic/Republican/Constitution/Green, etc, platforms via their websites
 - Alternatively, have students band together to develop their own platforms
 - Instructor Guidance: *It may be helpful to center your class's political parties on a handful of issues you determine are 'in scope', as otherwise they may not overlap in policy areas.*
- Caucus as a party
 - Prior to session, have your political parties 'caucus', or gather to talk strategy. They should decide
 - What their #1 priority is
 - What they're willing to compromise on
 - What bills they will introduce
- Throughout Session
 - Have brief caucus sessions prior to floor votes
 - Caucus to decide what amendments bills may need
 - Potential to make deals with other parties to compromise and advance your agenda

Multi-Day Session Instructions

Organization

Determine who will be non-partisan staff in the research offices, and from the remaining students break class into two groups, the House of Representatives and Senate.

- The House should have ~2x as many people as the Senate (IE, if you have 15 kids, 10 will become House Reps, 5 will become Senators)
 - The House elects a Speaker to keep them on task
 - The Senate elects a President to keep them on task
 - If desired, these roles can be selected as a group vote, or you as the instructor can nominate or appoint each role.
 - Assign 3 people from each chamber to be Committee Members. You can create as many committees as desired, centered on a policy area. In the Legislature, committee members are assigned by the Speaker or President. If desired, collaborate with this student to assign committee members for their chambers.
 - Committee Members will amend bills.
 - The committee will meet after the bills are introduced.
 - Appoint/take volunteers for Non-Partisan roles.
 - Remaining students will be members of the public.

Pre-Session

Bill Brainstorming

Any student can come up with the idea for a bill, and propose it to a legislator (if they are not one).

- Legislators can sponsor bills by filing them with Legislative Counsel. Leg Counsel then drafts the bill, and passes it to Leg Fiscal / Policy and Research for additional research.
 - Research can be assigned out of class, or if time allows, guided in-class. Additional non-partisan staff can be temporarily appointed to help with research, drafting, etc.
- As the instructor, you can focus bill development on some key issues, provide platforms, competing interests, or limit bill development as works for your class.
- Once bills have been drafted, assign them a number and get ready to begin session.

Begin Session

Introduce Bills

- To introduce the bill, read the bill number and summary aloud to the chamber.
 - Instructor explains that the bill first has to go to committee after introduction.
 - Instructor Option: You can limit your class to only 1-5 bills per chamber to save on time. In the actual legislature, there are no limits.

Committee Process

Use Committee Process Handouts in Appendix D

- Break out committee members from each chamber.
 - Based on the topics of the bills, committees take names to reflect the subject matter they will discuss. Education, Energy and Environment, Public Safety, etc. Committees can name themselves, or you as the instructor can name them.
 - Send Bills to Committee
 - The committee reads the full text of the bill
 - Out loud by a committee member, or popcorn through the members
 - The committee then asks for testimony from the public
 - Students not on the committee will assume the roles of the public providing testimony
 - Give students acting as “the public” 5-10 minutes to brainstorm their testimony.
 - Committee members can use this time to think about their perspectives, questions, and concerns they may have.
 - Prompt as needed to support developed thoughts
 - Students share testimony, committee members listen
 - Committee members can ask follow-up questions of the public, and share their own thoughts.
 - Committee can then amend the bill, pass it without amendments, or not pass it

Amending Bills

- If the committee opts to amend a bill in any way (change wording, add a clause, etc):
 - Edit the bill in writing on the bill form
 - All future readings of the bill must include the edits

Second Readings

- Bills that have been amended have a Second Reading in their chamber, for informational purposes.
- Read the amended bill aloud, or have students vote to waive the second reading requirements to save time, if desired.

Third Readings (First Vote in Original Chamber)

- The bill returns to the original chamber it started in
- The bill is read aloud, and the chamber votes:
 - If a majority of the chamber votes YES it passes, if not, it does not pass
 - If the bill does not pass, it ends here
 - If the bill passes, it moves to the next step

First Reading in Opposite Chamber

- Read the bill as it passed in the last chamber

Committee 2

- Send the bill to the *opposite chamber's* committee and repeat the committee process

Second Readings

- Students read amended bills aloud in *opposite* chamber, if desired.
- Or, Vote to waive the second reading in the opposite chamber to save time

Third Readings in Opposite Chamber (Final Vote)

- The bill goes to the opposite chamber for another vote
 - The bill is read aloud and the chamber votes
 - If a majority votes YES it passes, if not, it does not pass
 - If the bill does not pass, it ends here
 - If the bill passes, it moves to the next step

Governor's Desk

- Students deliver the passed bill to the Governor's desk
 - You as the instructor are the governor
 - If you agree with the bill, sign it
 - If you disagree with the bill, veto it
 - As the Governor, you can also "take no action" and allow a bill to pass into law without your signature. Good for times you know a veto will be overridden but disagree with a bill.

Signed Bill

- This bill is now law

Vetoed Bill

- If you veto the bill, the chambers can take another vote - if they both get a 2/3rds majority of members present in each chamber, they override the veto and the bill becomes law