

OHIO-WEST VIRGINIA STATE YMCA

Youth in Government Student Manual

How to Write a Bill

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How to Write a Bill

How a Bill is Prepared

Youth Legislators serve as Senators or members of the House. Responsibilities include:

- 1. With a partner, write and submit one (1) Bill to improve the state**
- 2. Meet ALL deadlines**
- 3. Be aware and informed of and able to use YG legislative rules and procedures**
- 4. Participate in all parts of the program on an intellectual and productive level.**
- 5. Adhere to the Code of Conduct.**

A Bill is simply draft legislation. Legislators use a special format for wording the draft so it fits with existing laws.

The most important part of writing a Legislative Bill is to choose a topic that is personally meaningful. Personal commitment to a bill influences the overall Student Legislature experience.

Begin early! Draw upon experience in HI-Y service initiatives for ideas. Talk with people about your ideas and spend time determining what legislation will accomplish. After the bill is written, continue research and prepare information for debate in Committees and Legislative Session.

DEVELOPING A BILL

- 1. Determine the Bill topic.**
- 2. Find something that will improve the state. Remember, some Bill topics are presented year after year and delegates are tired of them. It is time to move on and leave behind some of these issues – driver’s test for senior citizens, lowering the drinking age, same sex marriage, prostitution, etc.**
- 3. Prepare a preliminary draft of the Bill.**

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- A. Use the library and internet for materials with the facts to support the Bill – and the view of those who may have other ideas and solutions.
- B. Check with authorities for their views (Public Health, Education, Government, Law Enforcement, Economic Development, Business, Labor, Community Organizations, Faith Groups, etc.)
- C. Determine the constitutionality of the proposed Bill by referring to the State and Federal Constitutions and ask a lawyer.
- D. YG Legislation must be **within the constitutional authority of the state government**...not "*federal government*."
- E. Find the section of the State Code where the proposed Bill "fits." Cite (write) that section number in the Preamble of your Bill.

4. Ask others to critique the Bill to highlight arguments for and against as well as to make suggestions on how to improve it.

5. Draft the Bill in the proper form. Type the Bill in the format outlines in this manual. Bills are typed for the Bill Book as received so make sure spelling, grammar, sentence structure, and Code citations are all accurate.

6. Research the Bill topic for presentations to the Committee, Legislature, Lobbyists, Governor and Cabinet.

WHAT IS A YOUTH IN GOVERNMENT BILL?

A Bill is an idea for a new law. It is written by students. The Bill will be printed in a Bill Book. Every delegate will receive a Bill Book. Bills will be discussed in Committees. If the Committee thinks that the Bill would make a good law, they will send it to the Legislature where it could become a law. All Bills must be state issues only.

DETERMINING AND DEVELOPING A BILL TOPIC

Ideas for state laws come from citizens who have ideas on how to improve their lives. Existing laws may be amended for improvement. Your idea for a bill must be for either a law that does not yet exist, or will be an amendment to an existing law. Ask others what they believe our state needs, watch the news and read the newspapers...and be sure to start early so there is plenty of time to come up with the best possible Bill topic.

Compare notes with others in the delegation. Within the delegation, *be sure each pair of legislators writes on a different topic* so the Student Legislature has a variety of Bills to consider.

In the box below, write down your ideas for a law which would improve the lives of the citizens of your state. Some topics for ideas are:

- Education
- Housing
- Public Health/Safety
- Crime
- Pollution
- Radical Problems
- Technology
- Civil Rights
- Unemployment

With your partner, brainstorm some additional topics that are important to you:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Still having trouble coming up with an idea? Ask yourself these questions:

- 1. What conditions exist in your school that make it difficult for you to get the best education?**
- 2. What conditions exist in your city that make it difficult for you to feel safe?**
- 3. Are there enough employment opportunities for your family?**
- 4. Does your family have health care?**
- 5. Do you agree with the current laws for hunting?**
- 6. Does your city have enough opportunities for recreation?**

Write your idea for a Bill

RESEARCH – A law may already exist for your idea, but it could be improved. How can you find out?

- 1. Go online**

2. Talk with your Advisor and Principal

3. Talk to your City Council Representative

4. Call your senator or representative's office.

INFORMATION ON CURRENT ISSUES

- 1. Newspaper – Local, state or national give ideas on what people do or don't want, like or don't like.**
- 2. Interview community people – those who are prominent, those who are not and those who are down and out. Get views on the issues people believe need legislative attention.**
- 3. Consider any condition in the school, neighborhood, town or county that make it difficult for people, organizations and/or community to achieve their potential.**

DRAFTING A BILL

Now that the topic is selected and the proposed legislation is known, get a copy of current legislation from the State Code. Every Bill topic has been thought of in some form and the legislation is in the State Code.

Since everything has a place in the State Code, the way to write new legislation is to change an existing law to make it say *what one wants it to say*. Copies of the State Code can be found in libraries, the county court house and the office of an attorney.

Here are some additional Bill drafting specifics . . .

- 1. Determine the specific part of the State Code the proposed legislations will change by amendment, addition or deletion.**
- 2. In the preamble to the Bill, write the specific number of the State Code being amended, added to or deleted.**
- 3. Write the proposal in Bill Form found in the manual.**
- 4. Review the draft, have others review it, check for new facts, etc. and then prepare the final Bill using correct English, the correct reference to the State Code and YG format.**

Bill Drafting Instructions

Limit the bill to one topic. Write in ordinary, concise and uniform language that follows the rules of the YG Bill construction. YG Bills contain:

- A. TITLE: Clearly express the subject in a short title without going into detail.
- B. PREAMBLE: State the section of the State Code being amended, added to or being deleted. Include a brief statement of purpose.
- C. ENACTING CLAUSES: Begin with “BE IN ENACTED BY THE STUDENT LEGISLATURE”
- D. BODY: Use language as common as the topic allows and arrange it as simply as possible. Use as few words as possible. Use short sentences.
1. LANGUAGE: Use present tense. Deal with facts. Short, familiar words that express the meaning intended are best.
 2. DEFINITIONS: If needed, put at the beginning of the Bill.
 3. EXPRESSION OF LIMITATION: If the Bill is limited in its application or is subject to an exception or condition, begin the sentence with the limitation, exception or condition or with an expression pointing out any limitation that follows.
 4. USING NUMBERS: Use words to express numbers.
 5. NUMBERING SECTIONS: Use consecutive Arabic figures.
 6. LENGTH OF SECTIONS: YG Bills can only be 33 lines double spaced. Sections are short. The outline numbering order is:
 - Section number (may have decimal fraction)
 - Subdivision (a)
 - Paragraph (1)
 - Subparagraph (A)
 - Sub sub paragraph (i)
 7. IMPLEMENTATION: Include any penalty, appropriation and authority to administer.
 8. LENGTH OF BILL: YG Bills are no more than thirty-three (33) lines double spaced.
- E. EFFECTIVE CLAUSE: State the date the Bill becomes law if passed and signed by the Youth Governor. The Effective Clause is a separate section.

Bill Format

Available online <http://hi-y.org/hiyresources.html> under Youth in Government heading.

OH HI-Y Student Legislature(insert current year)

Bill # _____

Authors: (Name)_____,(Name)_____

Committee # _____

School _____,

City_____, State_____

(A BILL)

(- - - INSERT TITLE NAME - - -)

(PREAMBLE - - - - indicate "to amend", "to add", or "to delete"

a specific section of the Ohio (or West Virginia) Revised Code and your purpose)

BE IT ENACTED BY THE MODEL LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF OHIO (or WEST VIRIGNIA):

2 Section 1.

3

4

5

6

7 Section 2.

8

9

10

11

12

13

14 Section ?. (Last section) This Bill shall go into effect (____ months, or

15 _____ days, or _____ year(s) after passage.

NOTE:

ALL typing in the body of the Bill is double-spaced and each line is numbered at the left. **Maximum length is 33 double-spaced lines.** The Bill Supplement and Resource Credential must accompany this Bill.

Bill Example

OH HI-Y Student Legislature (insert current year)

Bill # _____

Authors: (Name) _____, (Name) _____

Committee # _____

School _____,

City _____, State _____

A BILL

RESTRICTING MINORS FROM USING A MOBILE COMMUNICATION DEVICE

WHILE DRIVING A MOTOR VEHICLE

To amend and add to section 4507.07.1 of the Ohio (or West Virginia) Revised Code for the purpose of restricting minors from using a mobile communication device while driving a motor vehicle.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE MODEL LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF OHIO (or WEST VIRGINIA):

2 Section 1. Definitions: A "minor" is any person under the age of 18. "Mobile communication device" is a cellular
3 telephone or other device that enables a person in a motor vehicle to transmit and receive audio signals to and from a person or
4 audio recording device located outside the motor vehicle.

5 Section 2. No minor shall be using a mobile communication device while driving a motor vehicle on a highway or any
6 public road. This section shall not apply to a person who is using the mobile communication device:

7 To contact a public safety entity;

8 While the vehicle is lawfully parked; or

9 During an emergency

10 Section 3. Whoever violates division (B), (D) or (I) of this section is guilty of a minor misdemeanor.

11 Section 4. This bill shall go into effect 180 days after passage.

Bill Rating

Determines the Legislative Calendar

A Bill's rating determines its numerical position in the Bill Book and the order it will be considered in Committee and the Legislature.

Only complete Bills received in the YG Office by the deadline are rated for the position in the Bill Book. Complete Bills are those submitted with four (4) typed copies of the Bill, one (1) Bill Supplement, one (1) Resource Credential, Form E (registration form), signed Code of Conduct and the Final Fee.

Bill Rating is done by the YG Legislative officers, Committee Chair persons and officer candidates.

Bill Rating Criteria

- 1. The Bills deal with an issue of long-time and continuing interest or a new, current or future interest. 15 points**
- 2. The Bill offers the Legislature a solution that is traditional OR is unique, challenging, or imaginative. 15 points**
- 3. The Bill benefits the people of the state as a whole OR solves a significant problem that affects a few. 10 points**
- 4. The research is thorough as demonstrated by the Bill Supplement, Resource Credential and quality of writing. 15 points**
- 5. The Authors demonstrate commitment to their Bill in the quality of their research, Bill Supplement and writing. 7 points**
- 6. The Resource Credential is relevant and an appropriate authority was consulted. 7 points**
- 7. The Bill is written using correct English and proper Bill Form 6 points**

NOTE . . . Bills submitted without a Bill Supplement OR a Resource Credential receive an automatic "0" rating.

Submissions to YG Office and Continuing Research

When Due

Postmark no later than Final Deadline listed in calendar, means to have materials to your Advisor two weeks before the due date.

Late Bills and Plagiarized Bills are NOT Accepted

- 1. All Bills are due in the YG Office by the deadline.**
- 2. Since late Bills cannot be included in the Bill Book, Authors of late Bills disqualify themselves from participation in the program. Remember, there are no refunds.**
- 3. Send original legislation. Do not copy Bills from past Bill Books. Students who submit plagiarized Bills from past YG's will be disqualified from participating and dismissed from the program. Remember, there are no refunds.**
- 4. Do not submit a Bill written by parents, advisors, or others. Everyone is to do their own work!**

Continuing Research and Preparation

Once the Bill is written and submitted, the Authors work continues! Just because the Authors think their Bill looks good does not mean it is going to pass. The Authors must convince all the other Legislators hearing the Bill in Committee to report it out to the House or Senate.

- 1. Continue reading on your topic and researching all sides of the issue. Authors need to know both the "Pro" positions and the reasons others may oppose the Bill.**
- 2. Prepare – Practice to speak in front of a Committee and in front of the Legislature.**
- 3. Prepare to answer questions. Know all sides of the issue better than anyone else.**
- 4. Get advice from a Legislator, lawyer and others who know the Bill topic and Legislative process and how to best present your ideas.**

5. Hold Delegation practice sessions before other groups like school faculty, Chamber of Commerce, school board, civic clubs, etc. so these groups can enter the debate, ask questions and put Authors on the “Hot Seat” so the Authors become better prepared for anything that could happen in YG Committee and Legislative sessions.

What to Submit to YG Office

Four (4) typed copies of the Bill

One (1) Bill Supplement

One (1) Resource Credential

Individual Registration for each Author (2 per Bill)

Final Fees

NOTE: Please use paperclips – **NO STAPLES** – if attachments are needed

4. Would this legislation cost money? How much? Where will it come from?

5. We researched this Bill by . . .

6. In addition to our work to pass this legislation, we are doing the following to solve this problem . . .

7. Exactly who will be affected by this legislation? How? (Who benefits, who bears any burden, does it impact all equally, etc.)

8. Why should the Student Legislature pass this Legislation?

9. Should this legislation be brought to the attention of the Governor and Legislative Leaders?

Attach To This Supplement

1. A copy of the Ohio or WV Revised Code related to this Bill.

2. Three to five (3 to 5) pieces of research material as examples of the research done on this legislation. Highlight the relevant parts.

CERTIFICATE

We certify that the attached Bill is our own original work. No one else wrote it for us and it is not a copy of a previous Youth in Government Bill.

Bill Author's Signature: _____ Date _____

Bill Author's Signature: _____ Date _____

Please keep a copy of your Supplement and the research materials submitted to YG. The materials turned into YG will not be returned as they stay with the Bill for use by the Committee, Governor and Cabinet.