

Model Senate - Bill Writing Assignment

Goal: To demonstrate your knowledge of your issue, your senator, and the political process through the use of legislative language.

Steps: You will go through the following steps in drafting your bill.

1) Identify potential topics – Think about what parts of the issue your senator feels strongly about. Try to identify and brainstorm how legislative could address his or her underlying interest.

2) Find a co-author - Your bill must be co-authored together with another senator who feels equally passionate about a particular aspect of your issue and with whom you may agree on a solution (Obviously this might be someone from your own party, but you can reach across the aisle also if you're looking for a challenge). Both of your names must appear on the bill.

3) Draft the bill – You will receive a bill writing template, sample bills, and practice drafting bills in small groups before sitting down to draft your bill for the Model Senate. An excellent bill does the following:

a. Propose a realistic, thoughtful solution. This should include at least an effort to acknowledge and reconcile both sides of the argument/solution. If not, it will likely not make it through committee

b. Demonstrate a sound grasp of current law and/or policy on your topic. Your preamble (i.e. the introduction) should quickly and adequately lay out problems in current legislation; the following sections should address legal solutions.

c. Reflect the point of view of your senator, in so far as this is compatible with the above two points.

d. Reflect the tone, voice, and formality of the bill examples given (examples will be posted on DP).

e. Mimic the formatting, punctuation, and feel of the bill examples. Use the bills template and handout to make sure you are following the layout exactly.

4) Submit for peer review – At the end of class on Wednesday, December 3rd, you'll exchange your bill with another pair of senators. You'll take this bill home with a peer review sheet that you'll fill out and give back to them on Thursday. get their suggestions for refinement. An excellent bill will avoid the following:

a. Make vague or incorrect statements in the preamble – this portion needs to clearly outline current law and show why it is insufficient to address your issue.

b. Be completely partisan. Although your Senator might have rigid positions, you will have to consider other viewpoints in the construction of your policy or it will go nowhere.

c. Use informal voice. (No "I's," opinions, thoughts, or commentary of any kind)

5) Submit final bill – You'll revise, refine, and finalize your bill on Thursday. It will go to a committee of honors students who will choose one climate change bill and one immigration reform bill for mark up by the respective committees.

Value: 40 Summative Points

Evaluation Criteria: Each of the following criteria will be worth ten points in coming up with a final grade for your bill.

- **Solution:** Do you pose a realistic, creative, and/or thoughtful solution? To get a nine or ten here, your solution should demonstrate some aspect of creativity.
- **Issue Knowledge:** Does this bill demonstrate you have a grasp on current law/policy? To get a nine or ten here, your legislation should demonstrate a more thorough and nuanced grasp of the issue and current law.
- **Senator Research:** Does your bill accurately represent the position, beliefs, and interests of your senator? If your bill deviates significantly from your senator's public record, there must be a good reason.
- **Writing:** Structure, verbal phrasing, punctuation, and formatting are all appropriate

Deadlines:

Draft – Printed copy due at the end of class December 3rd

Final – Printed copy due by the end of class on December 4th