

## Researching and Sponsoring Your Own Major Bill

One of the most rewarding aspects of being a legislator is sponsoring a bill that is eventually enacted into law. This is not an easy task for a number of reasons. Legislators will often disagree about priorities, and resources are limited for even those things that legislators do agree deserve attention. Fewer than 1 out of 10 bills introduced in Congress eventually makes it into law.

You can sponsor as many bills as you prefer on any subject. However, this assignment asks you to research and draft an *original* and *significant* bill of your choosing. If you don't know where to begin, consider looking at some actual bills by visiting the Library of Congress' **Thomas** website or the bills that different members have sponsored (see the resources below). Then you should look at the sample bill at the bottom of this assignment.

### Begin by considering several questions:

- How is a bill structured?
- What strategic considerations should you be thinking about when you draft the actual language of your bill?

**Next, decide on a topic.** Choose an important policy issue that interests you. Begin by drafting some initial language that conforms to the structure of the Sample bill (title, findings and purposes, etc).

**Research your subject.** It is entirely appropriate for you to develop your bill based on the work of others, whether policy organizations or legislators. However, your bill should be original in the sense that it reflects your own approach to the problem, as opposed to copying and pasting language developed by others. Originality counts! The Related Resources below provide some helpful starting points for learning more about issues.

**Get feedback.** Share your proposed idea with respected colleagues and asked for feedback and suggestions. After all, you will need their support later on. Give yourself time to tweak and improve your idea.

**Introduce your bill on LegSim.** Proofread! You will not be able to edit your bill after you have submitted it. Login to LegSim, click on "Submit Legislation" under My Office, and copy the text of your bill into the template provided.

Now it is time to find out what others think!

**\*\*\*Finally**, as a separate assignment, turn your bill in to your instructor along with a paragraph (or two) explaining why you chose your subject; the strategic considerations that influenced its content, and where you found information that helped you to formulate the bill's specifics.\*\*\*

# Sample Bill Handout (also found in your LegSim session under Instruction)

| H.R. 100 (S. 100) : The National Science Education Act  |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Short Title:</b> This Act may be cited as the <b>National Science Education Act</b></p>   | <p>A <b>Bill</b> (H.R. or S.) has the force of law. A <b>Resolution</b> (H.Res or S.Res) does not.</p>   |
| <p><b>Findings and Purposes</b></p> <p>It is estimated that more than half of the economic growth of the United States today results directly from research and development in science and technology. The effectiveness of the United States in maintaining economic growth will be largely determined by the intellectual capital of the United States.</p> <p>New methods of teaching science, mathematics, and technology are required, as well as improved training of teachers. Students should learn science primarily by doing science. Teachers need to be knowledgeable of their content area, and of techniques that can be used to connect that information to their students in the classroom.</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Section 1. Master Teacher Grant Program</b></p> <p>The Director of the National Science Foundation shall make grants to public or private K-12 schools for the purpose of hiring a master teacher. To be eligible to receive a grant, the school must submit a description of the relationship of the master teacher to other staff, the qualifications of a master teacher, and the master teacher's job responsibilities as they relate to the development of innovative science curricula.</p> <p>Grants shall be made from National Science Foundation funds available for education. There are authorized to be appropriated to the National Science Foundation to carry out this section \$50,000,000 for fiscal years 2004 through 2006.</p> | <p><b>Title</b> should be broad and comprehensive but limited to a single subject</p> <p><b>Findings</b> convey the importance and general intentions of the bill</p> <p>Each provision gets its own section to facilitate amending.</p> <p>Each section provides all of the specifics required for implementation. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is proposed?</li> <li>Who will administer it?</li> <li>How will they administer it?</li> <li>Are there penalties for non-compliance?</li> <li>Who enforces these penalties?</li> <li>How much funding is provided?</li> <li>When does the program take effect?</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Section 2. Evaluation of Teaching Technologies.</b></p> <p>The Director of the National Science Foundation shall enter into an agreement with the National Academies of Sciences to review existing studies of the effectiveness of technology in the classroom. The study shall include information about the type of technology used, why such technology works, and the teacher training that is conducted in conjunction with the technology.</p> <p>The evaluation shall be completed not later than one year after the date of enactment of this Act.</p> <p>There are authorized to be appropriated to the National Science Foundation for the purpose of conducting the evaluation, \$600,000.</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Section 3.</b> (example of a 'savings' clause)</p> <p>Nothing in this Act authorizes any department or employee of the United States to exercise control or direction over any educational institution or school system.</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Section 4.</b> (example of a 'severability' clause)</p> <p>If any part of this Act is found to be in conflict with federal or state law, the conflicting part of this act is inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict. The remainder of this act is not affected.</p>   | <p>Provisions that apply to the whole bill are included in additional sections.</p> <p>The sum of the appropriations authorized in each of the sections of the bill.</p>   |
| <p><b>Section 5.</b> (example of a 'sunset' clause)</p> <p>This program terminates on September 30, 2007.</p>   |  |
| <p><b>Authorization of Appropriations</b></p> <p>\$50,600,000</p>   | <p>Note: Legislation that proposes to alter an existing program or law should indicate the specific changes to the original law, as is the case with amendments (see below)</p>  |

