

Authoring a Bill, Part I – How to Begin

The following handout will guide you through the bill writing process.

Picking a topic:

It is strongly recommended that if your senator sits on the Environment and Public Works Committee, you should write a bill regarding solutions to climate change. Similarly, if you sit on the Judiciary Committee, you should write a bill respecting immigration reform.

* Preamble: address the problem, tell us why your senator feels this issue is a problem

* Propose a long-term economically viable solution from your senator's perspective

Find a Co-Author

Your bill must be coauthored together with 1 person who feels equally passionate about a particular topic, 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.

Perspective and Partisanship

You will be walking a fine line here. While we are going for realism, we also need to be a bit pragmatic in our approach to bill writing. Your bill must make some attempt to compromise with the opposing party, and/or reconcile a specific issue. If it will not make it through committee, what's the point?

Formatting:

See DP: You will be provided a template to use in order to follow appropriate formatting and structure. See "How To Write A Bill w/Examples" on my Docs page.

Assessment and Due Date:

The first draft of your bill will be due at the beginning of class Thursday, Dec 4. It must be printed and refined to the best of your ability. The final draft will be due at the end of class on the same day. It will be assessed out of 12 points on your formative grade based on the following:

Criteria	4	3	2	1
Solution: Do you pose a realistic, thoughtful solution?				
Research: Does this bill demonstrate you have a grasp on current law/policy				
Writing: Structure, verbal phrasing, punctuation, and formatting are all appropriate				

Authoring a Bill, Part II – The Writing Process

Once you've found an interesting and relevant approach and have done the necessary research, the next step is actually getting your bill ready for discussion in committee. A bill should have three parts:

- **Preamble:** This section should provide your reasons for the necessity of your bill. Why is your topic something that should be addressed by the government?
 - This section's clauses should always begin with a "Whereas..." and include verbal phrases throughout. Take a look at the preamble in both sample bills and follow their example
 - The preamble should show that you have done your research, know how current law affects your issue, and be able to outline briefly why law needs to be altered and/or replaced.

- **Body:** This section should be separated into sections and subsections. Each proposed idea for the implementation of the bill should be a section.
 - A quality bill will have 5-8 sections, and will be approximately 1.5 pages in length.
 - If a clause requires a subsection, it should follow the appropriate punctuation (--). See examples.
 - Subsections should be used to provide further detail and clarification (definitions, etc.) for their appropriate bill sections.
 - At least two sections must contain subsections where more detail is needed.
 - Funding: How will the enactment of the bill, should it become law, be paid for? Will you cut from another program, or borrow the difference? Funding strategies should be clear.

- **Enactment Clause:** This is the final section of the bill (and can be labeled as a section as normal). EACH BILL MUST HAVE AN ENACTMENT CLAUSE!!
 - The enactment clause tells your fellow congressmen when your bill will take effect if passed. It may specify a future date (September 30, 2005) or a certain number of days following the passage of the bill (60 days after passage). Enactment dates within 30 days of passage are used for EMERGENCY legislation only. Enactment dates more than 90 days after passage is used for most legislation and is the enactment period for normal legislation. Be mindful of instant financial/economic impact!
 - *Helpful tip:* enactment clauses usually range from 90 days to two years and are very political. It may hurt you politically, try amending the enactment clause to take effect after you have left office!