Congressional Simulation Activity

As a class, we will be holding our own session of congress. Each student will be given a state to represent and a political party. Like the U.S. congress, our congress will be a bicameral legislature. Each state will have one Senator and the number of congressmen will be determined by the states’ population.

The Speaker of the House and the President Pro Tempore will then lead the discussion of the bill. Members should give reasons why they support or oppose each bill. After members have had a chance to discuss the bills, a vote will be taken. Roll call method shall be used.

If a bill receives less that 51% of the vote, it is dead. If the bill receives 51% or more, it passes and goes to the other chamber of Congress for discussion and a vote. If a bill passes both houses, it will be presented to the President. If the President signs it, it’s law. If it’s vetoed, it is returned to both houses for another vote. It takes 2/3rds vote to override the President’s veto.

Some important things to consider:

* What does the text Constitution say about this topic? How about the broader principles in the Constitution? (Ideas like freedom, equality, limited government, federalism, ect.)
* What might the founding fathers say about the proposed bill?
* What sort of impact will this bill have if it becomes law?
* What do your constituents think? How about your campaign donors? Are you risking losing your next election if you vote a certain way?

Day 1

* Meet with the party members of your chamber and try to come up with some bills to propose. Remember, you want to propose bills that most members of your party can agree on. Choose one person to write out each proposed bill (someone who is well informed and/or cares about the issue the most). You should consider the needs/wants of your constituents and your campaign donors. You will then hand in this paper to Mr. Hollister at the end of class. For the sake of time, Mr. Hollister will choose which bills go to committee. The Senate Democrats must elect a President Pro Tempore and the House Republicans must elect a Speaker. Each party must elect a leader in the Senate.

Day 2

* Mr. Hollister will hand out the finalized bills for you to review and discuss in your party. Party leaders will assign each of you to a committee to discuss the bill with members of the other party/chamber. Once we have grouped the committees, we will head to the computer lab. Your job is find an article related to your bill. You must print it out, annotate it, and complete the source analysis sheet. If you do not finish this in class it will be homework. You need to staple your annotations checklist to your article before you turn it in.

Day 3

* Everyone will meet with your committees. You need to share your articles that you researched with your committee members. You may bring this article to the debate. You will have the day to work in your committee to discuss and any bills your committee has been assigned. Each bill must have a Senator/Representative designated to propose it. Anyone except the Speaker of the House and President Pro Tempore may introduce a bill. When congress is in session YOU MUST SPEAK ABOUT ANY BILLS THAT YOU STUDIED IN COMMITTEE. This can include simply introducing the bill, sharing your opinion, providing statistics, or quoting your article.

Day 4

* We will walk through the procedure for the debate and Mr. Hollister will answer any questions you have. We will then go to the lecture hall to present each bill in the House of Representatives. House members must dress professionally. You may use any notes you have while congress is in session.

Day 5 (and possibly Day 6)

* We will be in the lecture hall to present each bill in the Senate. Senators must dress professionally. Once all bills in the Senate have been voted on the House will reconvene and vote on anything that has passed the Senate. Mr. Hollister will then act as president and sign or veto each bill. In order to override a veto, a bill must receive 2/3rds of the votes in both chambers.

When Congress is in session you are expected to…

* DRESS PROFESSIONALLY. No jeans, shorts, t-shirts, hoodies, ect. Failure to do so will result in a loss of points.
* BEHAVE RESPECTFULLY. Remember, you are representing the people of your state. You should be courteous to your fellow Senators/Representatives.
* LISTEN CAREFULLY and take Cornell notes when others are speaking. Notes will be turned in at the end of this activity.
* In order to speak, you must first be recognized by the leader of the chamber.
* You must stand once recognized and remain standing while speaking.
* Each member of the House is only allowed to speak once per bill. You may speak for up to a minute. Once everyone has had a chance to contribute, the Speaker will call for a vote.
* There are no limits on how often or how long senators wish to speak. Once everyone is finished speaking the President Pro Tempore may call for a vote.
* Address the members of your chamber using their title and last name.
  + Example: “Senator Hollister” or “Representative Awesomesauce”
  + This also includes the leaders of your chamber. “Mr. Speaker” or “Madam President”

At the end of the activity you need to write one paragraph (3-5 sentences) explaining why you voted the way you did for each bill. Lastly, you need to write a paragraph explaining whether or not you think your constituents will reelect you.

Good luck, have fun, and remember that Mr. Hollister likes to give extra credit for participation in class discussion!

**How you will be graded…**

**Participation Rubric**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Professional Attire. Do come to class and ask to be excused to the bathroom so you can go change. | 15 points |
| Contribution to Discussion. You must offer your opinion on every bill you studied in committee. You must also make meaningful contributions at least three times for other bills to receive full credit. Extra credit for additional contributions. | 20 Points |
| Respectful to other members. (Addressing by title and last name, listening carefully to their opinions, no personal insults, no interrupting, ect.) You also need to behave in a professional manner. You should be sitting up straight in your chair, not chewing gum, and your phone should be out of site. | 15 Points |

**Homework Grade**

Cornell Note Sheet: 10 points

Annotated Committee Article: 10 points

Article Analysis Sheet: 10 points

**Assessment Grade**

At the end of the activity you need to write one paragraph (3-5 sentences) explaining why you voted the way you did for each bill. Lastly, you need to write a paragraph explaining whether or not you think your constituents will reelect you. This will be worth 50 points.

**Extra Credit Opportunity**

If there are any bills passed in class that you would like to see made into law you may write your congressman or senators. The letter needs to be typed and must be at least one page in length. You must first turn in a rough draft to Mr. Hollister for revision. Once your final letter is complete you can give it to Mr. Hollister to be mailed in. This will be worth 30 points in your homework grade. THE LAW MUST BE PASSED IN CLASS FOR YOU TO COMPLETE THIS ASSIGNMENT.

If they respond you will receive an additional 20 points extra credit. If they say they agree and will take action, we will have a pizza party as a class.

Letters will be due no later than \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

* California
  + Senator
    - (Democrat)
  + Representatives
    - (Democrat)
    - (Democrat)
    - (Democrat)
    - (Republican)
  + Constituents
    - Your state is typically liberal and extremely diverse. People in your state tend to support gun control, a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, freedom of religion, freedom of expression, equal pay for women, raising the minimum wage, gay rights, legalization of marijuana, women’s right to abortion, strict regulations to protect the environment, and government programs intended to help the poor. They tend to oppose tax cuts for the rich, deregulation of big business, the death penalty, and war in the Middle East.
  + Donors
    - The film industry is a pretty big deal in your state. Companies like Disney make large campaign donations. Predictably, Disney is concerned with a broad range of issues, including strong copyright protection of its television and movie works on the Internet and excessive government regulation over the amount of violence on television. It was one of several media companies to support normalized trade relations with China, allowing it to exploit cheap foreign labor. Thirty-one members of congress own shares of Disney and the majority of Disney’s lobbyists once held government jobs.
* Colorado
  + Senator
    - (Democrat)
  + Representatives
    - (Republican)
    - (Democrat)
  + Constituents
    - Your state tends to lean blue. People in your state tend to support background checks for gun owners, a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, gay rights, equal pay for women, legalization of marijuana, abortion rights for women, and government programs intended to help the poor. People in your state favor the death penalty. Your state held a referendum that has decriminalized marijuana and the industry has been booming, however many are concerned that there will be negative effects from this social experiment.
  + Donors
    - The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association donates money to conservative campaigns who favor lower taxes. They oppose environmental regulations.
* New York
  + Senator
    - (Democrat)
  + Representatives
    - (Democrat)
    - (Republican)
    - (Democrat)
  + Constituents
    - Your state is typically liberal and extremely diverse. People in your state tend to support gun control, a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, freedom of religion, gay rights, legalization of marijuana, raising the minimum wage, and government programs intended to help the poor. They tend to oppose tax cuts for the rich, deregulation of big business, the death penalty, and war in the Middle East.
  + Donors
    - Michael Bloomberg is the former mayor of New York City. His company made over $11 million in campaign donations during the last election cycle. Bloomberg supports a wide range of liberal causes and his software company, Bloomberg LP, lobbies for issues such as copyright protection, finance, and banking laws.
* Nevada
  + Senator
    - (Democrat)
  + Representatives
    - (Democrat)
  + Constituents
    - You state tends to lean blue. People in your state tend to support background checks for gun owners, a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, gay rights, equal pay for women, legalization of marijuana, abortion rights for women, and government programs intended to help the poor. People in your state support the death penalty. You state is home to Las Vegas so gambling and tourism are a large part of the economy. Parts of your state have legalized prostitution. 80% of your states’ land is owned by the federal government and is used for military purposes.
  + Donors
    - Sheldon Adelson is a billionaire businessman/casino owner who spends more on political campaigns than any other individual in the United States. In the 2012 elections he gave $92,796,625 to conservative candidates who tend to favor deregulation of business, tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans, and military intervention in the Middle East in support of Israel. Adelson opposes the legalization of marijuana, online gambling, and raising the minimum wage.
* Oregon
  + Senator
    - (Democrat)
  + Representatives
    - (Democrat)
  + Constituents
    - Your state is typically liberal and has a young population. People in your state tend to support gun control, a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, freedom of religion, gay rights, legalization of marijuana, and government programs intended to help the poor. They tend to oppose tax cuts for the rich, deregulation of big business, the death penalty, and war in the Middle East. On October 27, 1997 Oregon enacted the Death with Dignity Act which allows terminally-ill Oregonians to end their lives through the voluntary self-administration of lethal medications, expressly prescribed by a doctor for that purpose. Many people in your state are concerned with the use of genetically engineered crops. They want to buy food that has been grown by local farmers and has not been genetically modified or treated with chemicals.
  + Donors
    - Food companies like Monsanto spend big bucks in your state to advocate for the use of genetically engineered crops. They also don’t want the government to force them to label what kind of chemicals go into the food they sell. Twelve members of congress own shares of Monsanto.
* Texas
  + Senator
    - (Republican)
  + Representatives
    - (Democrat)
    - (Republican)
    - (Republican)
  + Constituents
    - Your state is typically conservative. Texas has a “tough on crime” reputation with the most executed criminals in the country. You constituents are big supporters of the second amendment. Many people in your state are highly religious and oppose the idea of secularism. Your state’s economy and population are growing and changing rapidly. Many of your citizens are demanding more boarder protection with Mexico to stop illegal immigrants from entering the country; however this does not sit well with the growing number of Latino families in your state.
  + Donors
    - Regarded as one of the top corporate political donors, AT&T regularly donates millions of dollars to candidates, most of whom are members of the Republican Party. The organization lobbies extensively in Washington, primarily on matters involving telecommunications, copyright, patents and trademarks, radio and TV broadcasting and taxes.
* Louisiana
  + Senator
    - (Republican)
  + Representatives
    - (Republican)
    - (Republican)
  + Constituents
    - Your state is typically conservative. You constituents oppose abortion, an assault weapons ban, a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, legalization of marijuana, and same-sex marriage. The BP oil spill had a disastrous effect on Louisiana’s economy and environment. Citizens are wary of trusting big oil companies out of fear the same type of event could repeat itself. They want tough environmental regulations on oil companies.
  + Donors
    - British Petroleum (BP) is a large oil and gas company operated out of London. The federal government has forced the company to pay billions of dollars to help clean up the spill. BP spends money lobbying against regulation of oil companies and laws intended to protect the environment. They also support tax cuts for large corporations and military intervention in the Middle East. Documents uncovered in an investigation of the British government showed that BP set up plans to access oil reserves in Iraq five months before the war.
* Kansas
  + Senator
    - (Republican)
  + Representatives
    - (Republican)
  + Constituents
    - The people in your state are typically conservative and very religious. They tend to oppose secularism, same-sex marriage, assault weapons bans, legalization of marijuana, a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, and abortion. People in your state favor lower taxes and the use of the death penalty.
  + Donors
    - The second-largest private company in the United States, Koch Industries is also a conglomerate, whose businesses operate in some of the world's most profitable markets. Given such a diverse portfolio, it's no surprise that the company has spent millions of dollars lobbying the federal government this past decade on a range of issues, from defense appropriations to financial regulatory reform. Koch's biggest industry, however, is petroleum refining and the bulk of their lobbying is related to energy issues. The company's lobbying totals skyrocketed in the two years Koch is also one of the Republican Party's most reliable donors. In every election cycle since 2000, people and political action committees associated with the company have donated at least 83 percent of their cash to Republican candidates and committees. The company is headed by brothers Charles and David Koch who have also advocated for ending social security, re-segregating schools, strict voter ID laws, legalization of anonymous political donations, and defunding the environmental protection agency.
* Indiana
  + Senator
    - (Republican)
  + Representatives
    - (Republican)
    - (Democrat)
  + Constituents
    - Voters in your state tend to lean conservative. They typically oppose same-sex marriage, assault weapons bans, a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, legalization of marijuana, and abortion. People in your state favor lower taxes and the use of the death penalty.
  + Donors
    - ExxonMobil Corp. is one of the world's biggest energy companies, involved in virtually every segment of the energy sector from coal mining and electricity to the production, exploration and marketing of oil and gas. The company long has enjoyed a close relationship with Congress, successfully lobbying to gain commercial access to federal lands as well as the rollback of several Environmental Protection Agency initiatives deemed unfriendly to the oil industry. Perhaps the company's biggest coup, however, was winning federal support for its very creation. In 1999, lawmakers were initially hesitant to allow Exxon to purchase Mobil because of antitrust concerns, but after heavy lobbying from both sides, not to mention the support of President Bill Clinton, the merger was approved and the nation's No. 1 supplier of gasoline was created. As oil prices have soared in recent years, so have ExxonMobil's profits and executive salaries
* Wyoming
  + Senator
    - (Republican)
  + Representatives
    - (Republican)
  + Constituents
    - The people in your state are typically conservative and very religious. They tend to oppose secularism, same-sex marriage, assault weapons bans, legalization of marijuana, a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants, and abortion. People in your state favor lower taxes and the use of the death penalty.
  + Donors
    - The National Rifle Association goes to great lengths (and spends a huge sum of money) to defend the right to bear arms. It is opposed to virtually every form of gun regulation, including restrictions on owning assault weapons, retention of databases of gun purchases, background checks on purchasers at gun shows and changes in the registration of firearms. The NRA's influence is felt not only through campaign contributions, but through millions of dollars in off-the-books spending on issue ads. Lobbying expenditures for the National Rifle Association regularly exceed $1.5 million, as the organization's lobbyists frequently try to exert their influence over government agencies including members of Congress, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, and the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau.

Debate Procedure

Speaker of the House Instructions

* You are the leader of your respective chamber. You will be seated at the middle table. It is you responsibility to guide the conversation and keep things moving. No one may speak unless you choose to recognize them. Every representative may speak for up to one minute per bill.
* At the beginning of the activity the Speaker will bang the gavel and say…
  + THIS CHAMBER WILL COME TO ORDER. THE CHAIR RECOGNIZES THE MAJORITY LEADER.
* The Majority Leader may propose any bill. They have one minute to speak. If they reach the one minute mark the Speaker must say…
  + THANK YOU REPRESENATIVE (LAST NAME). YOU TIME IS UP.
* If they speak for less than one minute they must end by saying…
  + I YEILD THE FLOOR. (then sit down)
* If the Majority Leader wants to allow someone else to propose a bill they may yield the floor immediately.
* Allow any representatives to speak for up to one minute if they choose. To be recognized a representative must stand and say…
  + MR./MS. SPEAKER
* Speaker will then say…
  + THE CHAIR RECOGNIZES REPRESENTATIVE (LAST NAME)
* Once everyone has had a chance to contribute the Speaker will say…
  + WE WILL NOW HOLD A VOTE FOR HOUSE RESOLUTION (number)
* The Clerk will call out each Representative’s name. When your name is called you must stand and say…
  + AYE or NAY
* If the bill passes the Speaker will say…
  + THE BILL PASSES
* If the bill does not pass the Speaker will say…
  + THE BILL IS DEFEATED
* The process will then repeat itself until we have gone through all of the bills. Once all bills have been voted on the Speaker will bang the gavel and say…
  + THIS SESSION IS ADJOURNED

President Pro Tempore Instructions

* You are the leader of your respective chamber. You will be seated at the middle table. It is you responsibility to guide the conversation and keep things moving. No one may speak unless you choose to recognize them. There is no time limit to how long a Senator wishes to speak.
* At the beginning of the activity the President Pro Tempore will bang the gavel and say…
  + THIS CHAMBER WILL COME TO ORDER. THE CHAIR RECOGNIZES THE MAJORITY LEADER.
* The Majority Leader may propose any bill.
* Once a Senator is done speaking them must say…
  + I YEILD THE FLOOR. (then sit down)
* If the Majority Leader wants to allow someone else to propose a bill they may yield the floor immediately.
* Allow any senators to speak if they choose. To be recognized a representative must stand and say…
  + MR./MS. PRESIDENT
* Speaker will then say…
  + THE CHAIR RECOGNIZES SENATOR (LAST NAME)
* Once everyone has had a chance to contribute the Speaker will say…
  + WE WILL NOW HOLD A VOTE FOR SENATE BILL (number)
* The Clerk will call out each Representative’s name. When your name is called you must stand and say…
  + AYE or NAY
* If the bill passes the President Pro Tempore will say…
  + THE BILL PASSES
* If the bill does not pass the President Pro Tempore will say…
  + THE BILL IS DEFEATED
* The process will then repeat itself until we have gone through all of the bills. Once all bills have been voted on the President Pro Tempore will bang the gavel and say…
  + THIS SESSION IS ADJOURNED

Article Analysis Sheet

Title: Name:

Date:

Author:

How do you know this is a credible source?

What kind of report is this? Is it an opinion piece, poll results, news report on a current event?

How could this article be used to support your cause?

How could this article be used against your cause?

List any important statistics or facts from your article. (Be sure to share these with your committee and during our debate)

Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Annotations Checklist**

* Paragraphs Numbered
* Key terms circled
* Support underlined
* Comments/Questions in the margins
* Effort: Is it clear that you have read, analyzed, and connected with the text.

Final Score: \_\_\_\_\_/5