

What is a Youth in Government bill?

A bill is an idea for a new law, and is written by students (delegates). The bill will be printed in a bill book. Every delegate will receive a bill book. Bills will be discussed in committees formed of delegates at the state conference. 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.

It is very important to always remember that the purpose of writing a bill is not to get it passed into law, but to bring forth an important issue and make sure it is discussed. Authors should take pride in presenting their bill and discussing something they care about. Many great ideas had to be brought forward multiple times before becoming law.

Step 1- Develop an Idea for a Bill

Ideas for state laws come from citizens who have ideas on how to improve their lives. There are many laws already in existence in Ohio, but these laws can be amended for further 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. This means that you will need to do some RESEARCH. In the box below, write down your ideas for a law, which would improve the lives of the citizens of Ohio. Some topics for ideas are:

1. Education
2. Green Technology
3. Public Health and Safety
4. Crime
5. Pollution
6. Racial Problems
7. Internet censorship
8. Civil Rights
9. Unemployment

With your partner(s), brainstorm some topics that are important to you:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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?

You can also:

- Study newspaper editorials and local, state and national sections.

- Make appointments with community leaders and interview them, such as newspaper editors, city officials, public officials and their staff, League of Women Voters officers, civic club leaders, attorneys, ministers, social workers, union leaders, law enforcement officers, physicians, AND last but not least, YOUR PARENTS and TEACHERS.
- Ask these people what they feel is the most important issue affecting the state or nation which might be discussed in a forum such as the state legislature.
- Develop a list of possible topics on which to write a bill. Decide which of these you feel are most important. Explore these topics for further study and research in your local library or on the internet. Make sure it is something that the state legislature has the authority to change.

Once You have your topic or idea:

1. Ask these questions concerning the bill:
2. -Does it serve the public interest?
3. -Is it permitted by State and Federal Constitutions?
4. -Does it infringe on any basic rights guaranteed in the Constitution?
5. -Could it be performed better by another level of government?
6. -Would private enterprise be involved or could do it better?
7. -What would it cost to implement the idea? Remember, nothing is free.
8. -Who would pay the cost? New tax? Where would the funds come from? -If the funds are already in existence, like the lottery, what would be cut from the budget that is already there?
9. -If the bill idea will require administration or enforcement, who will provide it?

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

1. Go to <http://codes.ohio.gov/> and type in a keyword. The site will do a search for you.
2. Talk with your advisor and principal.
3. Talk to your city council representative.
4. Call your senator or representative's office.

Step 2 – Draft the Bill

Writing Your Bill

Bills are to be written by students only. You and your partner(s) should work as a team so that each of you contributes about the same amount of work. Listen to each other's ideas and cooperate in the writing process. Your advisor, teachers, Principal, parents, and elected officials can offer helpful suggestions that will help you prepare your bill. Remember, your bill must be an Ohio state issue. Bills must be researched, and no longer than one typewritten page.

Great Resource to use: <http://www.lsc.state.oh.us/guidebook/chapter6.pdf>

Bill Contents

1. Title
2. Amending or Enacting Clause
3. Body of the Bill

Title: The first part of the bill. Clearly states the subject without going into detail. Begin with, "A bill to..."

Enacting Clause: BE IT ENACTED BY THE YOUTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO

Body of the Bill: The body of the bill specifies how the bill will fulfill the requirements you wrote in your title. These specifications are separated into **sections**. A good bill should have enough information to need at least 5 sections. Each section is a sentence or short paragraph with complete thoughts. Say what you want to say in as few words as possible. See the sample bill attached for an example of how to write your sections. YIG bills are limited to 33 lines double spaced.

Your sections need to include:

1. Definitions of the terms of the bill
2. How the bill will be funded
3. Who will enforce the bill
4. A penalty for not following the new law
5. An effective date

Definitions: Define specifically who or what this bill is about.

Funding: Where will the money come from to fund your idea?

Enforcement: Who will make sure everyone follows the new law?

Penalty: A bill must specify a penalty for non-compliance. The penalty could be a fine, loss of a privilege, mandatory community service, jail time, etc. The penalty should match the severity of the crime.

Effective Date: A bill must specify a time when the bill will become effective. Consider how long it will realistically take to follow all the specifications you have outlined.

Now you are ready to draft your bill. Below is a bill template. Write your draft in the spaces provided. Use only the number of sections you need. Additional sections can be added if necessary. The Final Section of your bill should answer the following about your bill/topic:

Justification – Why do we need this bill?

Financial Considerations – What are the financial costs of implementing this new law?

References – State at least 2 references

Checking Your Bill:

A Bill is a proposed law that is put in writing and debated by the members of the Ohio Youth Legislature. The following tips will help you to correctly write a bill:

- The bill considers only one subject matter.
- It expresses the subject of the bill in the Title.
- It expresses the subject in concise language.
- The bill is as brief as necessary to explain the subject and propose the law adequately.
- It contains the appropriate enacting clause (see above).
- It is divided into sections.
- If it amends an existing law, both the current law and the proposed changes must be stated.
- Major provisions of the bill are stated in the first sections.
- Definitions of terms are included, if necessary.
- If money will be required to enforce the new law, where will the money come from? Perhaps a new tax, existing tax or other source?
- What will be the penalty if people do not obey the law?
- The bill states (usually in the last section) when the law would become effective. Many bills state, "This bill will go into effect 90 days following passage." However, your new law can become effective any time after signature of the Governor.

The final copy of your bill should be limited to one page and typed neatly on the appropriate bill form.

Ohio YMCA Youth in Government
Sponsors: Sen. / Rep. _____
City of _____, Ohio

2014

Bill # _____
Committee # _____
Member of: _____

A BILL

Title of Bill. Required by the Ohio Constitution and lists the sections of the Revised Code being amended, enacted, or repealed.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE YOUTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF OHIO

Section 1.

Section 2.

Section 3.

Section 4.

Section 5.

Justification

Financial Consideration

References

Congratulations! You've completed the first draft of your bill! The first draft is the hardest part. You can review the previous year's bills at www.ohioymcayiq.org.