

BILL WRITING GUIDELINES

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.

Visit <http://www.ymcanys.org/yag/middle-school/> to see bills from previous conferences.

Developing Bill Ideas:

1. 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.

Ideas for state laws come from citizens who have ideas on how to improve their lives. There are many laws already in existence in New York, 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 New York. Some topics for ideas are: Other tips:

- 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. Have your students decide which of these they 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 or the national Congress (for Congressional program bills) has the authority to change.

2. Ask these questions concerning the bill:

- Does it serve the public interest?
- Is it permitted by State and Federal Constitutions?
- Does it infringe on any basic rights guaranteed in the Constitution?
- Could it be performed better by another level of government?
- Would private enterprise be involved or could do it better?
- What would it cost to implement the idea? Remember, nothing is free.
- 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?
- If the bill idea will require administration or enforcement, who will provide it?

3. Seek out opposite views on the subject; it will be helpful to know how to form arguments.

4. Revise your bill idea, if necessary.

Preparing Your Bill:

1. Determine your bill topic and research the issue thoroughly. After gathering information, identify your views and opinions regarding the selected topic and begin to draft the bill.

2. An actual bill consists of the following parts, and is usually no more than 2 pages long:

a. **Title**

This is a brief statement of the purpose of the bill, as well as the number of the statute it is amending.

b. **Enacting Clause**

"The people of the State of New York, represented in the Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:" This statement will automatically appear on the bill format

c. **Purpose**

General idea of the bill- a short statement of 1-2 sentences describing the purpose of the bill - why the bill?

d. **Summary of Provisions**

This is the actual bill. The body is made up of two or more sections. Each is labeled with an Arabic numeral

Section 1

Definitions only if needed to define some terms used in your bill that are not found in the dictionary.

Or this section contains only the amending section of a current bill.

Section 2 (or Section 1 if you have no definitions)

Explain exactly what the bill is doing; which section it is amending and how.

Underline all materials that you want to add to the revised bill and strikeout what you want to delete. You may use subsections if needed. Be sure the language is correct and formal.

e. **Justification**

Approximately 1 (maybe 2 paragraphs that describe the bills concept offering an argument in favor of the proposed solution. This section utilizes research to describe the problem being addressed and how to fix it. This is the place for facts, figures, history, narratives (ex. Campaign spending needs to be limited because...). Don't include all of your facts; you will have time to present arguments during debate.

f. **Fiscal Implications**

Simply state the financial impact this bill will have on NY State residents. As necessary identify revenue sources, projected savings and impact on the current state budget (that is 132 Billion or 132,000,000,000 dollars).

g. **Effective Date**

This just states when the bill will actually go into effect if passed.