

Teacher Guide: Legislation on Cloning – Activity One: How a Bill Becomes A Law

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Abstract:

This activity is the first in a series of three that introduces students to the process by which a bill becomes a law in the United States Congress. After learning about the process (Activity 1) and modeling it (Activity 2), students write bills related to cloning and take them through the legislative process (Activity 3). *How a Bill Becomes a Law* is an activity that introduces the process by which a bill becomes a law (by Powerpoint presentation or overhead transparency), compares the process between the House and the Senate, and provides a sample bill for students to examine.

Module:

Cloning in Focus

Key Concepts:

Congressional processes, legal and ethical issues related to cloning

Prior Knowledge Needed:

Basic congressional structure and function

Materials:

PowerPoint presentation or overhead transparencies, student handouts

Appropriate For:

Ages: 12 - 20

USA grades: 7 - 12

Prep Time:

30 - 60 minutes

Class Time:

45 minutes

Activity Overview Web Address:

<http://gslc.genetics.utah.edu/teachers/tindex/overview.cfm?id=bill>

Other activities in the *Cloning in Focus* module can be found at:

<http://gslc.genetics.utah.edu/teachers/tindex/>

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I. PEDAGOGY

A. Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to outline the process by which a bill becomes a law in the United States government.
- Students will compare the similarities and differences between the House of Representatives and Senate in review of and voting on bills.
- Students will examine a copy of an actual bill regarding human cloning that was submitted to the Senate.

B. Background Information

The legislative process in the U.S. Congress can be summarized as follows:

- **Introduction of bill** – A bill is introduced (submitted) to the House of Representatives or the Senate by a member of that body. The idea for a bill can originate with anyone, but only a member of Congress can introduce it. The bill is assigned a number that begins with H.R. for House of Representatives or S. for Senate.
- **Referral to committee** – The bill is referred to a (standing) committee that has jurisdiction over the subject matter addressed by the bill. There are 20 standing committees in each house of Congress.
 - **Referral to subcommittee** – The committee often refers the bill to one of its subcommittees. Each subcommittee addresses a subset of the topics that comprise the overall jurisdiction of the committee. All subcommittee members are also members of the committee.
 - **Schedule for discussion** – The chair of the subcommittee, in consultation with other subcommittee members, decides whether to schedule a bill for discussion. The committee may decide to stop action on a bill that they think is not necessary or wise, at which point the bill dies.
 - **Hearings** – Subcommittees often begin their consideration of the bill by holding public hearings. The hearings provide an opportunity for supporters, opponents and experts to voice their views.
 - **Amendments to the bill** – After the hearings, amendments (changes) to the bill are proposed and voted on by subcommittee members. The subcommittee may also decide to write an entirely new bill.
 - **Subcommittee vote** – The subcommittee members vote on whether to refer (send) the bill to the full committee for voting. If the bill is defeated, it dies.
 - **Committee discussion and vote** – The full committee decides whether to schedule the bill for discussion, makes amendments and votes on the bill.
 - **Committee report** – If the committee passes the bill, it writes a report explaining (1) the key points of the bill; (2) the changes they have made in the

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bill from its original form; (3) how this bill compares to current laws; and (4) why they recommend passing the bill. The committee report is sent with the bill when it is referred to the full House or Senate.

- **Floor debate** – The bill is placed on the calendar of the House or Senate until it is scheduled for discussion. The two chambers of Congress have different rules for debate:
 - **House** – The House is chaired by the Speaker of the House. Before debate begins, a time limit is set for how long any member can speak (usually 1-5 minutes), and for the total debate time (usually 1 hour). Speakers alternate between Democrats and Republicans. Debate on a bill can be ended by a simple majority vote. Following debate, the bill is read. Amendments to the bill are then proposed, debated (5 minutes each allowed for pro and con) and voted on. All amendments must be pertinent to the bill. Finally, the bill (which now includes any amendments) is put to a vote.
 - **Senate** – The Senate is chaired by the Vice President or, in his absence, by the President Pro Tempore. There are no time limits to debate in the Senate; members may speak for as long as they choose. A member speaking at great length to postpone further action on a bill which they oppose is called a filibuster. Ending debate in the Senate is often one of the most challenging aspects of the legislative process. Unless a Senator voluntarily yields the floor, they can only be silenced through a formal procedure called cloture, which involves three days and 60 votes. The Senate places no restrictions on the process of amending a bill. Senators may propose as many amendments as they choose, and the amendments do not have to be relevant to the bill's subject matter. Despite these challenges, the bill is finally put to a vote.
- **Passage in both chambers** – Both the House and the Senate must pass similar versions of a bill in order for it to progress further through the legislative process. If a bill is passed in only the House or the Senate, it is introduced into the other chamber, where it goes through the process of committee and floor debate and vote. Often, similar versions of a bill are introduced in both the House and the Senate at the same time. After both chambers have passed similar bills, the two bills are sent to a conference committee to reconcile the differences between them.
- **Reconciliation of differences between House and Senate versions** – The conference committee is composed of both House and Senate members who support the bill. The committee rules limit discussion to the differences between the two bills; they may not delete provisions that are identical in both bills or insert new subject matter. However, in practice, these rules may be violated in the interests of reaching agreement on a version of the bill that the committee members think will pass in both chambers. After they pass the re-written bill,

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the committee writes a report that contains: (1) the re-written bill; and (2) an explanation of how they worked out the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill. The conference committee report is sent to one of the chambers, usually the House, for a vote.

- **Floor debate on the conference committee report** – The version of the bill passed by the conference committee is debated according to the rules of that chamber and voted on. After it has passed one chamber, it is sent to the other; e.g., if it was sent to the House first, and passed, it is then sent to the Senate for debate and a vote. When both chambers have passed the bill it becomes an Act of Congress and is sent to the President.
- **Presidential action** – Once the President receives the Act of Congress, he has 10 days to choose among the following four options:
 - **Sign into law** – He can sign the bill, showing that he supports it. The bill then becomes a law.
 - **Law without signature** – He can let the bill sit on his desk for 10 days without signing it while Congress is in session. The bill then becomes a law. The President may choose this option if he does not strongly support the bill.
 - **Veto the bill** – He can veto (not sign) the bill and send it back to the chamber of Congress which initiated it, along with a message detailing the reasons for his decision. If 2/3 of the members present vote to override the President's veto, the bill is sent to the other chamber. If the bill also receives a 2/3 vote in this chamber it becomes a law.
 - **Pocket veto** – If, after 10 days he has done nothing and Congress is no longer in session, the bill is considered vetoed.

C. Teaching Strategies

1. Timeline

- 4-8 weeks before activity:
 - Reserve a laptop computer and projector if you plan to use PowerPoint for the presentation.
- Day before activity:
 - Photocopy student pages S-1, S-2, S-3 and S-4.
 - Make overhead transparencies of pages S-1 and S-2.
 - Optional: Make overhead transparencies of the PowerPoint presentation if not using a computer.
- Day of activity:
 - Use the PowerPoint presentation or overheads to discuss how a bill becomes a law.
 - Review the process using the Process Summary (page S-1).

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- Examine the Sample Bill and answer the accompanying questions (pages S-2 and S-3).
- Have students write and/or research key definitions (page S-4).

2. Classroom Implementation

- Use the PowerPoint presentation or overhead copies of it to discuss the steps in how a bill becomes a law.
- Review the steps using the Process Summary (page S-1).
 - Point out differences and similarities between the House and the Senate.
- Go through the Sample Bill and discuss the Questions (pages S-2 and S-3).
 - Note: This is a copy of an actual bill submitted to the Senate.
- Have students write and/or research the Definitions on page S-4 to help build their understanding of the terms and process. The Answer Key is on page 8.

3. Extensions

- Show “I’m Just a Bill” from the Schoolhouse Rock video, available from Amazon.com (see Additional Resources).
- Invite a present or past member of your state House of Representatives or Senate or the national Congress to speak to your students about the legislative process.
- Follow this activity with *Activity 2: The Perfect Sandwich Law* and/or *Activity 3: A Bill on Cloning*. Both are available at <http://gslc.genetics.utah.edu/teachers/tindex/>.

4. Adaptations

- Coordinate with the Social Studies or U.S. Government teacher(s) at your school to jointly carry out this activity. If appropriate, they may decide to go into more details on the legislative process.
- You may want to give students a copy of page S-4 (Definitions) while you are going through the PowerPoint presentation so they can follow along and fill in definitions as they are presented.

5. Assessment Suggestions

- Use students’ answers to the Questions (page S-3) as an assessment.
- Use students’ written and drawn definitions (page S-4) as an assessment.
- Provide information on a current bill before the House or Senate (see the Thomas Legislative Information on the Internet website in the Additional Resources). Have students determine where the bill is in the legislative process and describe what the next steps will be.

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II. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A. Activity Resources - linked from the online Activity Overview:

<http://gslc.genetics.utah.edu/teachers/tindex/overview.cfm?id=bill>

- Powerpoint: *How a Bill Becomes a Law* – Summarizes the legislative process.
- Teacher Guide: Activity Two: *The Perfect Sandwich Law*
- Teacher Guide: Activity Three: *A Bill on Cloning*
- Website: Thomas Legislative Information on the Internet – A U.S. government website that includes the following:
 - A document on *How Our Laws are Made* from the perspective of the U.S. House of Representatives
 - A document on *Enactment of a Law* from the perspective of the U.S. Senate
 - Links to Committee websites for the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate
 - Present and past bills submitted to the U.S. Congress (see Legislation section)
- Website: The Center on Congress at Indiana University – A document providing more details on *The Legislative Process*
- Website: Office of the Clerk, U.S. House of Representatives – Includes:
 - A summary of the legislative process in *How Laws are Made*
 - A *Glossary* of terms related to the legislative process
- Website: Schoolhouse Rock website – Words to the *How a Bill Becomes a Law* song.
- Video: Schoolhouse Rock video (Amazon.com)

III. MATERIALS

A. Detailed Materials List

- *How a Bill Becomes a Law* PowerPoint presentation or overhead transparencies of the slides
- Photocopies of the PowerPoint presentation for students (optional) – one per student
- Photocopies of How a Bill Becomes a Law Process Summary, Sample Bill, Sample Bill Questions and Definitions student pages (S-1, S-2, S-3 and S-4) – one per student
- Overhead transparencies of student pages S-1 and S-2

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IV. STANDARDS

A. National Standards for Civics and Government:

III. How does the government established by the constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?

B. How is the national government organized and what does it do?

B. Utah Core Curriculum in Social Studies:

Standard 6210-0104 Investigate the organization and functions of the United States Government

- Describe how the United States Congress makes laws

V. CREDITS

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A. Sample Bill Questions - Answer Key

1. Who is responsible for enforcing this bill?
At the national level, the National Institute of Health; at the local level, the Review Board at each institution/university.
2. What are the penalties if someone does not comply with this bill?
Researchers will not receive any federal funds.
3. What are the key definitions in this bill?
Public funding – any institution or university that receives grant money from the federal government
Human cloning – any method of cloning used solely for the purpose of producing a viable embryo which sole purpose is [to] be [a] baby
Baby – an embryo after birth
4. Where will money for enforcing this bill come from?
Excess money in the transportation budget.
5. Extra Credit: What key terms are not defined in this bill?
Cloning
Embryo
Committee (that will be sent to institutions/universities to inspect research techniques)
Research techniques
Review Board (what types of members will be on it)

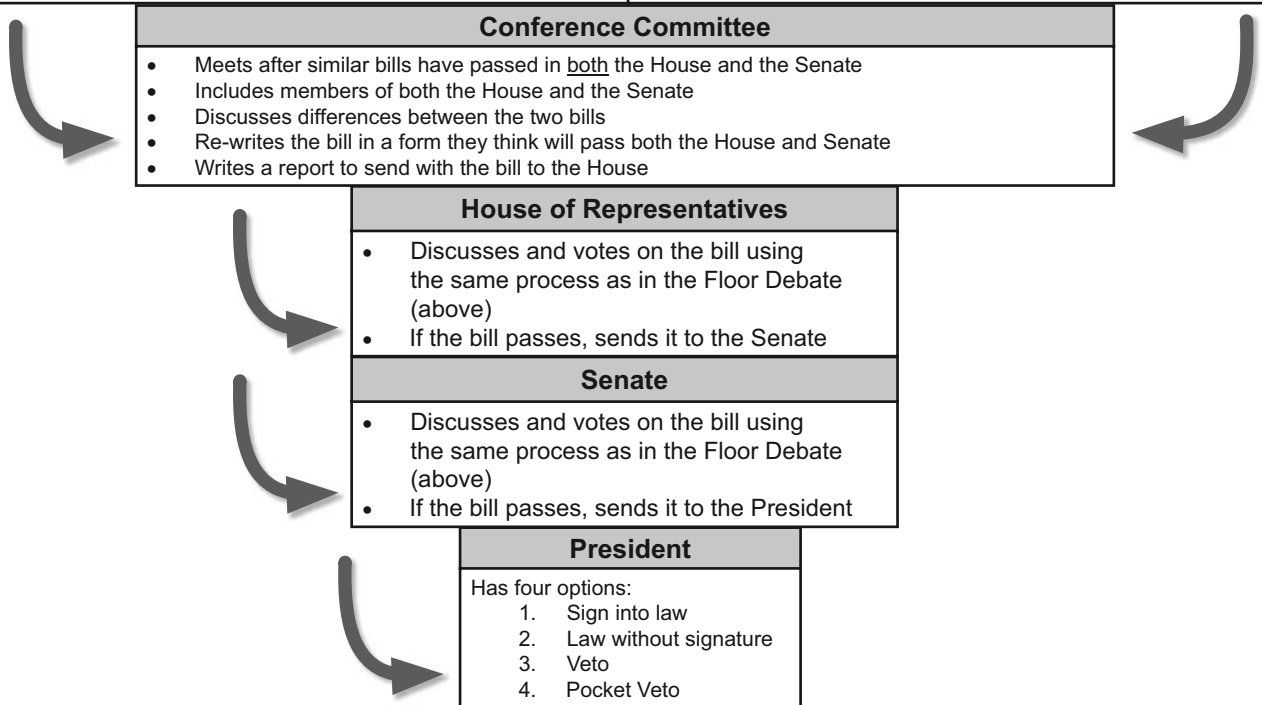
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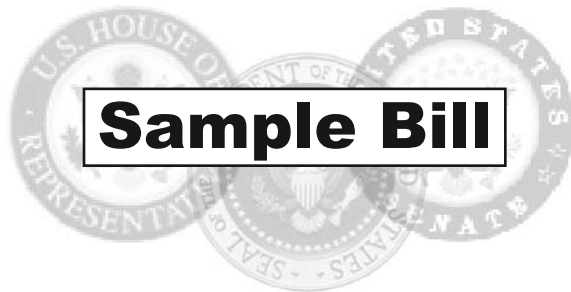
B. Definitions - Answer Key

Term	Definition
Bill	A proposed law.
Standing committee	A permanent committee in the House or Senate that considers bills related to a broad topic, such as education, agriculture, science, etc.
Subcommittee	A small part of a standing committee that considers bills related to more specific topics that are part of the standing committee's broad topic.
Debate	A formal discussion of a bill.
Amendment	A proposal to change a bill in some way. A vote is taken on this suggested change.
Floor	A meeting of the whole House of Representatives or Senate.
Conference committee	A committee formed to work out the differences between versions of a bill passed in both the House and the Senate.
Law without signature	A bill becomes a law if the President lets it sit on his desk for 10 days without signing it while Congress is in session.
Veto	The President chooses to not sign a bill, so it does not become a law.
Pocket veto	A bill does not become a law if, after 10 days, the President has not signed it and Congress is no longer in session.
Law	A rule of government that can be enforced.

Legislative Process Summary

House of Representatives	Senate
Bill is drafted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bill is submitted to the House by a member 	Bill is drafted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bill is submitted to the Senate by a member
Standing Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sends the bill to a subcommittee 	Standing Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sends the bill to a subcommittee
Subcommittee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decides whether to schedule the bill for discussion or to kill it Holds hearings to gather information Committee members discuss the bill and suggest and vote on amendments (changes) May write an entirely new bill Votes on whether to take the bill to the full committee; if not, the bill dies 	Subcommittee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decides whether to schedule the bill for discussion or to kill it Holds hearings to gather information Committee members discuss the bill and suggest and vote on amendments (changes) May write an entirely new bill Votes on whether to take the bill to the full committee; if not, the bill dies
Standing Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goes through the same process as the subcommittee without holding hearings Votes on whether to send the bill to the full House; if not, the bill dies If the bill passes, writes a report to send with it 	Standing Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goes through the same process as the subcommittee without holding hearings Votes on whether to send the bill to the full House; if not, the bill dies If the bill passes, writes a report to send with it
Floor Debate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time limits for speaking are enforced A member speaks first who supports the bill followed by one who does not Debate is ended by a vote Amendments to the bill are suggested and debated in the same way Votes on the bill If the bill passes, sends it to the Senate (if they have not passed a similar bill) 	Floor Debate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No time limit on how long each Senator can speak Amendments may be suggested at any time Votes on the bill If the bill passes, sends it to the Senate (if they have not passed a similar bill)





107th Congress
1st session

S120

In the Senate

August 8, 2001

Senator Jone Edna introduced the following bill, which was referred to the committee on Health and Medicine Advances.

**A Bill
To Place Restrictions On Public Funding Of Human Cloning.**

1. Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in the
2. Congress assembled that all public funding in the United States not be used for human cloning. Public
3. funding can be defined as any institution or university that receives grant money from the federal
4. government. Human cloning can be defined in any method of cloning used solely for the purpose of
5. producing a viable embryo which sole purpose is be baby. Baby is defined by being an embryo after
6. birth. The National Institute of Health will be responsible for monitoring what funds are being used
7. for. Members of this committee will be sent to institutions/universities to inspect research techniques,
8. data, and results. Each institution/university will have a Review Board to make sure that the research
9. under their jurisdiction is monitoring research. The money for this bill will come from excess money
10. in the transportation budget. Researchers will not be provided with any funds if it is proven that they
11. are conducting human cloning research. All laws or parts of the laws in conflict herewith are hereby
12. repealed to the extent of the conflict. If any portion of this act is declared unconstitutional, now it is
13. the intention of this legislature that the other portions shall remain in full force and effect.

President's Signature

Presidential Seal



Sample Bill - Questions

1. Who is responsible for enforcing this bill? _____

2. What are the penalties if someone does not comply with this bill? _____

3. What are the key definitions in this bill? _____

4. Where will money for enforcing this bill come from? _____

5. Extra Credit: What key terms are not defined in this bill? _____



Instructions: Write a definition for each of the following terms.
Sketch a picture that will help you remember what each definition means.

Term	Definition	Picture
Bill		
Standing committee		
Subcommittee		
Debate		
Amendment		
Floor		
Conference committee		
Law without signature		
Veto		
Pocket veto		
Law		